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State Tracking to Measure Student Progress Toward IEP Goals

by Paula Burdette, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION

When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 2004, it eliminated the requirement that individualized education programs (IEPs) include short-term objectives or benchmarks, except for students with disabilities who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards. Instead, the IDEA regulations at §300.320(a)(B)(3)(i) require “a description of how the child’s progress toward the annual goals ... will be measured.” In response to this change, states have instituted policies and practices to ensure that IEP teams provide for the measurement of student progress toward annual goals. The purpose of this document is to describe state approaches to ensuring that this is taking place. Project Forum at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) conducted this analysis as part of its cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).

METHODOLOGY

Project Forum distributed a survey in June and December of 2008 to all states and nonstate jurisdictions. By January 2009, Project Forum had received responses from a total of 39 state education agencies (SEAs). The appendix provides links to state policies regarding student progress on IEP goals. Three of the states that indicated they conduct specific monitoring activities of local education agencies (LEAs) and/or provide suggested procedures for LEAs around tracking of student progress were interviewed. Results were analyzed and findings are reported in the following section of this document.

FINDINGS

Survey: Mechanisms to measure student progress on IEP goals

Although the 2004 amendments to IDEA eliminated the requirement of short-term objectives or benchmarks for most students with disabilities, states may continue to require one or the other. Twelve of the reporting states still require this measurement of student progress. Twenty-one states amended their statute, regulations and/or guidance using language taken directly from IDEA regulations. For example:

The IEP must include a statement describing how the student's progress toward IEP goals will be measured and when the parent or adult student will be informed of the student's progress toward meeting the annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with the issuance of report cards).

Although not requested in the survey, twelve states stated that they went beyond IDEA when they developed their mechanisms to track student progress. Four of these states described specific IEP training and technical assistance and eight explained that they specifically monitor for implementation of the IDEA regulations regarding this topic. Seven states apparently do not specify how they will measure student progress on IEP goals in code or regulation, but all have some form of insurance that it will happen. For instance, at least four of those seven states have standardized IEP forms that guide the team to describe how the student's progress will be measured and at what intervals progress will be reported to the parent and/or student. One state described IEP guidance regarding how to write objectives that enable parents, students and teachers to gauge at intermediate times during the year how well the student is progressing toward the annual goals.

Interview: State strategies for tracking progress

Three states were chosen for follow up interviews based on their survey responses. The states indicated a variety of specific methods they use to track student progress.

California

In *California* as part of its focused, quality assurance process at all onsite reviews (approximately 20-25 LEAs annually), state staff complete an Educational Benefit review process for selected IEPs. This process uses a *California* Department of Education-designed form to compare current year student performance to three prior years and determine if goals were increasingly complex and if services were adjusted to be consistent with supporting the student to make progress. Also, each LEA in the state completes the Educational Benefit review process every four years as part of its special education self review. *California* provides mini trainings on how to conduct the special education self review and the state has found that some LEAs use the Educational Benefit review process during off-cycle years as a helpful training tool for IEP development and review.

The Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA) in *California* have developed an IEP template that supports the LEAs as they track student progress. *California* staff has also found that standards-based IEP goals, which are required for students participating in the California Modified Assessment, are an effective tool for LEAs to track student progress on IEP goals. Currently, the state's standards-based IEP training is being revised, and will be posted on the *California* State Training and Technical Assistance (CalSTAT) website for use on an as-needed basis.

Idaho

Idaho reviews data as listed on IEPs to measure progress on student goals during onsite monitoring visits. Two types of monitoring visits based on needs seen in the LEAs would assess tracking of student progress: data verification visits and intense general supervision visits. During these visits teachers are interviewed and data regarding student progress on IEP goals is requested.

Progress monitoring reports can be developed on IEP software that the SEA makes available for every student's IEP. For students in Kindergarten through grade three, the SEA makes a specific web-based progress monitoring tool available for monitoring reading, math and behavior goals. This tool can inform IEP teams as they monitor student progress on goals. Also, as part of *Idaho's* response to intervention process, many teachers have been trained on curriculum-based measurement that provides direct information on student progress toward goals.

Idaho's regional consultants are onsite frequently and conduct file checks with teachers as a technical assistance rather than a monitoring effort. During these file checks, consultants provide suggestions for improving data collection and presentation (e.g., developing notes, charts and graphs) to track student progress.

North Dakota

North Dakota's state methods for tracking student IEP progress are currently in flux due to switching from a typical IEP system to a web-based system in which all IEPs in the state are housed on the web. The state has access to all of *North Dakota's* IEPs through this new system. Through this web-based system, state staff can review student progress reports, which are embedded in the IEP. Once IEPs have been on the system for more than one year, state staff will be able to compare IEPs across years. During this transition period, *North Dakota* continues to use the checklist, which requires a review of annual goals with the expectation that they have a basis in the student's present level of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAPF) and be "reasonably attainable within one year." The checklist also requires review of progress reports to parents in which each goal should be addressed. Through the web-based IEP system, this tracking can all take place without an on-site visit to the local education agencies. However, *North Dakota* staff plans to conduct on-site visits if "questionable" data are uncovered. This will consist of, at a minimum, review of the data with LEA personnel and interviews with teachers, administrators, parents and students as appropriate.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

States are instituting a variety of methods to accurately ensure tracking of student progress on IEP goals. They have utilized or are planning to utilize high-tech solutions as well as common training and technical assistance measures to achieve this. This information from states helps us better understand the current state of measuring progress toward goals for students with disabilities.

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**APPENDIX
LINKS TO STATE POLICIES REGARDING
STUDENT PROGRESS ON IEP GOALS**

Arkansas—<http://arksped.k12.ar.us>. Go to the policy page and click on rules and regulations. Scroll down to the Appendix in the Table of Contents to item three, IEP and click on the subject line. Go to the goals page and review the measurement portion.

California—<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/qu/qap.asp>

Connecticut—<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/IEPManual.pdf>

Indiana—<https://ican.doe.state.in.us/beta/index.php>

Kansas—<http://www.kansped.org/ksde/lasw/bill82.html>

Kentucky—
<http://education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Exceptional+Children/Special+Education+Regulations/Kentucky+Special+Education+Regulations.htm>

Louisiana—<http://doa.louisiana.gov/osr/reg/0806/0806.doc>

New Mexico—<http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/laws/6.31.2.pdf>

New York—<http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/lawsandregs/sect2004.htm>

Oklahoma—The standardized IEP form is located at:
http://se.sde.state.ok.us/documents_and_forms/Form7.pdf.
IEP directions (guidance for IEP teams) are located at:
http://se.sde.state.ok.us/documents_and_forms/IEP_Instructions.pdf.
General Supervision Student File Checklist is located at:
<http://se.state.ok.us/compliance/monitoring/student%20checksheet.pdf>.

Pennsylvania—www.pde.state.pa.us. Look under regulations.

Rhode Island—Guidance documents are located at:
<http://www.ritap.org/iep/publications/publication.html>.
Regulations are located at:
http://www.ride.ri.gov/Special_Populations/State_federal_regulations/special_education_regulations_2008.pdf.

South Carolina—<http://ed.sc.gov/agency/offices/ec/stateregs/StateRegulations2007.html>

South Dakota—Administrative Rules of South Dakota are at
<http://doe.sd.gov/oess/specialed/docs/2405%207-07.rtf>. Look for page 110.
The IEP Technical Assistance Guide is at:
<http://doe.sd.gov/oess/specialed/IEP/IEPProcessTAGuide8.22.07.pdf>. See Pages 26-29.

Texas—"A Guide to the Admission, Review and Dismissal Process" can be found at
http://framework.esc18.net/ARD_Guide_English_8_16_07.pdf.

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) and Guidance can be found at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/guidance/sblEP.html>.

Virginia—http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dueproc/final_sped_regs.pdf
Go to page 88.

Washington—www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/forms.aspx

West Virginia—<http://wvde.state.wv.us/osp/p2419.pdf> Go to page 56.

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Ph: 703-519-3800 ext. 326 or Email: Hnancy.tucker@nasde.org