

Focused Monitoring 2013-14 Framework

Background:

As part of the State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Progress Report (APR) submission anticipated for February 2015, a new Indicator 17 (I-17) calls for states to have a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) that focuses on improving results for students with disabilities. This new requirement from the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) builds upon its initial focus on the results that the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), Bureau of Special Education (BSE) experienced during last year's OSEP visit. The 2015 submission will be based on federal fiscal year (FFY) 2013 data. It is important that the BSE begin the process of addressing these requirements as soon as possible.

In carrying out the requirements of the new I-17, the four areas of focus are the following:

- data analysis;
- identification of the focus for improvement;
- infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity; and
- theory of action.

To examine possible courses of action for 2013-14, a team representing data, focused monitoring (FM), general supervision (GS), and the new I-17 SSIP met to review options.

Process and activities:

Each year in May/June the CSDE, BSE will conduct student file reviews for compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) for participating local education agencies (LEAs). Each LEA will receive feedback and, as needed, corrective actions. Approximately 30 new LEAs will be chosen to participate each year which allows every Connecticut LEA to receive this type of monitoring within a six-year cycle.

It is recommended that the BSE utilize the 2013-14 FM system to prepare for the implementation of I-17, the SSIP, by implementing a district-level version of I-17's SSIP Phase 1 as follows:

- Each year in June, the Focused Monitoring Steering Committee (FMSC) will analyze district level data for each of the LEAs participating in the student file reviews. The FMSC will identify districts with 'data of concern.'
- Each year in October, the CSDE will conduct a "How to Build a Data Wall" event, offered to the LEAs that were identified with data of concern.
- Using the Data Wall event the BSE will select six to eight of the represented LEAs to participate in the 2013-14 FM cohort of districts receiving additional support and technical assistance.
- At least three to four of the selected LEAs will be those that, through a review of their data wall, appear to have well-articulated plans of action related to the identified data of concern. These three to four districts will be considered 'study' districts and the focus of

the FM process described below will be to identify the aspects of the interventions and activities that have brought them success toward addressing the data of concern as well as to assist them in continued improvement.

- In order to ensure a range of participating LEAs, three to four districts will also be chosen that do not have well-articulated plans and/or demonstrate a significant need for additional assistance. It is important to note that the BSE will seek to select LEAs that do not have similar areas of concern (based on the data) in order to have the opportunity to examine the plans and gain an understanding of a broader range of topics/concerns relevant to the field.
- These six to eight LEAs will be notified that they have been chosen for full participation in the 2013-14 FM system, while the remainder of the LEAs will be released from any further obligation for the 2013-14 FM cycle.
- The six to eight selected LEAs will participate in up to four in-district support/technical assistance sessions that will serve to assist with improving the data of concern while informing the implementation of the state's I-17 SSIP Phase 1. These sessions are directly aligned with the four areas of focus outlined in the new I-17 SSIP:

- *Session 1: **Data Analysis***

During a full day in-district session, a FM team consisting of two CSDE, one SERC (State Education Resource Center), and one CPAC (Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center) staff will facilitate a comprehensive root cause analysis of the LEAs data of concern.

Included in this discussion/activity will be such questions as:

- Related to improved results for students with disabilities, in what area(s) do you think your district needs to improve?
- What leads you to believe that this area(s) needs to improve?
- What supports/assistance do you need to make this improvement?
- What supports/assistance are already available or in place (e.g., in district?, from the CSDE?, from SERC?, from other sources?)

- *Session 1 (Continued): **Identification of the Focus for Improvement***

Following the comprehensive data analysis, the CSDE will facilitate the LEA's selection of a "focus for improvement." As mentioned earlier, with different LEAs identifying different foci, it will assist the CSDE in identifying the primary areas in need of intervention statewide.

- *Session 2: **Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity***

The FM Team will facilitate up to a full day in-district session to assess LEA progress and to assist the LEA in further identifying assets relative to addressing and sustaining change in their focus for improvement through examination of their governance, fiscal practices, quality standards for student programming, professional development, use of data, family engagement, and accountability.

- *Session 2(Continued): Theory of Action*
Based on the analysis of data and infrastructure, the LEA will develop a plan of general improvement strategies and activities designed to improve data related to their focus for improvement.
 - *Sessions 3 and 4: Theory of Action Follow Up*
The FM Team will facilitate two additional in-district half-day sessions to discuss the LEA's progress on their plan, assist in adjusting the plan and offering feedback as necessary. The final session will also solicit feedback from the LEA regarding what was helpful/not helpful about the FM process, serving to further inform the development and evaluation of the new I-17 SSIP activities.
- It is anticipated that all in-district sessions will be completed by the close of the 2013-14 school year and district-level information gathered by the FM Teams will be available to inform the larger process of developing and implementing the CSDE's Phase 1 of I-17 of the SSPP which is due to OSEP on February 1, 2015.
 - The above described activities for 2013-14 will support the implementation of Phase 1 of I-17 SSIP (2014-15) as well as Phase 2 (2015-16) and phase 3 (2016-17) in that they will inform the evaluation of the I-17 SSIP as well as evaluation and revision of that plan.
 - The 'Focused Monitoring System' will begin to be identified as the 'Focused State Systemic Improvement Plan Monitoring,' in alignment with the direction in which OSEP is currently going.

Anticipated Outcomes:

It is anticipated that the above course of action will:

- allow the requirements of the new I-17 SSIP to be addressed effectively using resources available through Data, FM and GS;
- allow these systems to work smarter and more efficiently together rather than independently;
- better ensure that additional burden is not placed on LEAs through independent activities of each system;
- allow the CSDE to further act as a support and a resource for school districts;
- make in-district assistance more relevant to what LEAs identify as their greatest challenge(s) and areas of need;
- streamline the FM activities without compromising integrity of the system, thereby increasing the number of BSE consultants available for other critical functions of the Bureau;
- continue to improve the effectiveness of efforts to educate students with an individualized education program (IEP); and
- through annual student file reviews, continue to meet OSEP monitoring requirements by monitoring each LEA for compliance with IDEA on a six-year cycle.