

Winter 2021

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Director's Welcome



Dear Readers,

I look back at 2020 with gratitude for the incredibly hard and important work that every one of you undertook to keep students and families in the forefront as we managed learning goals in some of the most complex dynamics our educational systems have ever experienced. Educators and stakeholders consistently brought urgency to issues impacting students with disabilities. You worked tirelessly to ensure that your systems provided quality leadership focused on equitable outcomes, while simultaneously responding to new professional and personal demands that changed how we each worked and managed our homes and families. Thank you. Truly.

As we launch into 2021, I find myself daring for some optimism as we continue to test new and potentially promising innovations for kids, try to harness lessons learned to keep improving, and double down on taking care of ourselves and others as we ride this storm to its completion (hopefully sooner than later?!). Toward that end, I wish you all good mental and physical health, as well as hope.

Along that line, I'd like to point you to a presentation offered at our NCSI Learning Collaborative Virtual Convening in November, provided by my colleague Christina Pate, Deputy Director of the Center to Improve Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety. She focused on creating a much-needed culture of care. I know I left the presentation with a wonderful list of ideas for both self-care and community care so that I can foster mental health and well-being among my colleagues, friends, and family. You can find [Christina's presentation here https://vimeo.com/481431185](https://vimeo.com/481431185).

And in terms of hope, even amidst the challenges we are experiencing now, I do believe there are things about which we can be hopeful. In my opening session for the November Convening, I shared ideas about seizing the opportunity to use collective action to rebuild our education system to be more equitable and to better serve students and their families. You can view the [related presentation here](#)

With commitment to your success, we remain, as ever, here to help. Thank you for letting us partner with you.

Warmly, Rorie Fitzpatrick
NCSI Director



Featured Resources



Thought Leader Conversation Series

In November, NCSI launched a new virtual Thought Leader Conversation (TLC) series: “Pursuing Equity for Black Students in K-12 Education: Exploring the Intersection of Race and Disability.” This series examines how systems can actively improve teaching and learning conditions as well as outcomes for Black students.

Each session is led by a cadre of esteemed Thought Leaders ([read more about the Thought Leaders here](https://ncsi.wested.org/meet-the-thought-leaders/) <https://ncsi.wested.org/meet-the-thought-leaders/>) who are highly regarded experts in the field of education and who have expertise in the areas of race, disability, or both. During the foundational session on November 10, the Thought Leaders explored reasons for long-standing inequitable learning conditions and outcomes for Black students and identified systemic beliefs, policies, procedures, and practices that contribute to these inequities. The second session in the series, held on December 15, focused on equity-driven, culturally relevant data literacy practices at the state and local levels.

Future sessions will consider the role of stakeholder and family engagement, research-informed practice, and systems coherence in the pursuit of equitable systems. You can view the previous session recordings and resources as well as learn about upcoming sessions on [NCSI's website](https://ncsi.wested.org/resources/pursuing-equity/). <https://ncsi.wested.org/resources/pursuing-equity/>

Tools to Support Effective Virtual Stakeholder Meetings

Web-based meetings, necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic, continue to be the new way of getting work done. How can you structure these meetings to ensure that the virtual environment is welcoming and accessible to all participating stakeholders? How can you be an effective participant? NCSI has released a [collection of four tools](https://ncsi-library.wested.org/collections/178) <https://ncsi-library.wested.org/collections/178> to help participants and stakeholders effectively engage during virtual stakeholder meetings. The collection includes two checklists for facilitators and a set of considerations, as well as an accompanying checklist for participants. Additional resources will be added over time.

Removing Barriers to Effective Distance Learning by Applying the High-Leverage Practices: Tips and Tools

NCSI and the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center recognized a need beyond emergency school closures to develop practical and applicable guidance and resources to help teachers use established High-Leverage Practices (HLPs) to address some of the most common barriers teachers face when engaging students, and specifically students with disabilities, in effective teaching via distance learning.

The result of the collaborative work between NCSI and CEEDAR Center is a special issues brief that will be used as a central resource for ongoing professional learning and coaching for special education teachers.

This brief is designed to support all teachers who are striving to ensure students of all backgrounds and abilities are provided equitable access to high-quality instruction in distance learning environments by:



- identifying several common barriers that impede effective distance learning;
- strengthening educators' understanding and use of the HLPs to address common barriers;
- identifying potential strategies that teachers can apply to improve equitable access to content and learning; and
- providing resources for teachers to further develop their knowledge and skill in implementing the HLPs.

On December 8, 2020, CEEDAR Center and NCSI continued their collaborative work by facilitating a webinar that included panelists who shared their practical applications of using the brief to support teachers.

[December 8 webinar recording https://cedar.education.ufl.edu/portfolio/webinar-removing-barriers-to-effective-distance-learning-by-applying-the-high-leverage-practices/](https://cedar.education.ufl.edu/portfolio/webinar-removing-barriers-to-effective-distance-learning-by-applying-the-high-leverage-practices/)

[Removing Barriers to Effective Distance Learning by Applying the High-Leverage Practices brief https://ncsi-library.wested.org/resources/680](https://ncsi-library.wested.org/resources/680)

[High-Leverage Practices for Students with Disabilities website https://highleveragepractices.org/](https://highleveragepractices.org/)

Results-Based Accountability Fast Fives

NCSI's Results-Based Accountability and Support (RBAS) team works with states to design, implement, and evaluate general supervision systems that improve outcomes for students with disabilities while maintaining compliance with IDEA. NCSI's RBAS team has developed a collection of "Fast Fives," friendly, short briefs focused on key components of general supervision systems. We are excited to announce that five new "Fast Fives" are now available! NCSI was pleased to collaborate with the IDEA Data Center (IDC) in the production of two of these new "Fast Fives," which are focused on the role of data in special education accountability and support systems.



The newest "Fast Fives" now available on the NCSI website include:

- Five Lessons Learned from States in Designing and Implementing Results-Based Accountability and Support Systems
- Five Recommendations for Engaging Stakeholders in the Development, Implementation and Evaluation of Results-Based Accountability and Support Systems
- Five Considerations When Planning to Include Results Data in General Supervision Systems (NCSI in collaboration with IDC)
- Five Ways to Center Results Data in State General Supervision Systems (NCSI in collaboration with IDC)
- Five Questions Answered About Risk Assessments

These “Fast Fives” complement the two briefs released earlier this year focused on state and LEA determinations. Explore the full collection of RBAS “Fast Fives” in the NCSI Resource Library. <https://ncsi-library.wested.org/collections/166>

NCSI Achievements



NCSI Awarded the Martha J. Fields Award

NCSI was awarded the Martha J. Fields Award at NASDSE’s 82nd Annual Conference and Business meeting this past fall. This award is presented each year to an individual or organization that has made extraordinary contributions in supporting state special education directors.

Here’s what NCSI Director Rorie Fitzpatrick said in acceptance of the award: *“On behalf of the NCSI Team, I’m extraordinarily proud, and also incredibly humbled by this award. The work of a state special education director is challenging in a good year. It can feel downright exhausting in a pandemic year – especially as state leaders and staff take to heart the responsibility and commitment to ensure that historically marginalized students and their families are well-supported to succeed in varying school models such as distance and hybrid learning. We pledge to keep up the strong support for directors and their teams, as they do the hard and deep work each day. We are grateful for this honor to our work, and the opportunity to serve states to support positive outcomes for the nation’s almost 7 million children and youth with disabilities ages 3-21.”* A full listing of past award recipients can be found on [NASDSE’s website. https://www.nasdse.org/nasdse_award_winners.php](https://www.nasdse.org/nasdse_award_winners.php)

Updates from ED



SSIP Template Release



OSEP recently released the updated [SSIP template https://sites.ed.gov/idea/grantees/#SPP-APR,SPP-APR-Resources](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/grantees/#SPP-APR,SPP-APR-Resources) for optional use for state reports due in April 2021. The template aligns with the online submission form and leads to a 508 compliant document, which is required for all materials. Key features in the template include character counts and the disallowance of figures or graphs. States will need to be mindful of how they report on their SSIP progress to OSEP, as well

as mindful in communicating with stakeholders. With this in mind, NCSI will be offering support in writing, reviewing, and providing examples as needed through individual TA facilitators, as well as through collaborative work. For more individualized support, reach out to your state’s TA facilitator.



Mark Your Calendars

Authentic Stakeholder Engagement for SAPs and SICCs, January 28, 2021
Come join your colleagues from State Advisory Panels (SAPs) and State Interagency

Coordinating Councils (SICCs) across the country for a webinar on January 28, 1–2:00 p.m. ET. The purpose of SAPs and SICCs is to provide state education agencies and lead agencies with the authentic voice of stakeholders to advise and/or assist in a state's effort to serve children with disabilities and their families. Join other SAP and SICC members throughout the country to share your experiences and to learn about ways to engage and bring authentic constituent voices to the work of members' respective groups.

The webinar is open to anyone interested in the work of SAPs and SICCs.

Register in advance of the session at:

[SAP/SICC_January_2021_Webinar_Stakeholder_Engagement_https://wested.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJErFuusqTwoG90NIXwIHIGKon7jgRC0wRZd](https://wested.zoom.us/j/91234567890)

After you complete the registration, you will receive a confirmation email with information for connecting to the webinar. To learn more about resources for SAPs and SICCs, go to: <https://collab.osepideasthatwork.org/SAP-SICC>

Pursuing Equity for Black Students in K-12 Education: Exploring Intersection of Race and Disability TLC Series - Stakeholder & Family Engagement, February 16, 2021

Mark your calendars for February 16, 3:30-5:00 p.m. ET / 12:30-2:00 p.m. PT. The purpose of this session is to examine ways to engage and partner with students, families, and communities impacted by racial inequities to identify problems and to create and implement systemic solutions to ensure equitable learning conditions and outcomes for Black students with disabilities or who may be identified as needing special education services. Registration coming soon!



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