



fast five

Five Ways to Center Results Data in State General Supervision Systems



Many states are working to establish accountability and support systems designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities while ensuring compliance with IDEA. A core feature of such results-based state approaches is that they center results or outcomes data (e.g., performance on statewide assessments, graduation rates, postschool outcomes data, early-childhood outcomes data) within their general supervision systems.

In the fall of 2020, the NCSI RBAS team interviewed five states who have implemented results-based accountability and support systems to learn more about their experiences and the ways in which they have incorporated results or outcomes data into their monitoring and technical assistance practices. What follows is a list of five strategies mentioned by these states. We express our sincere gratitude to Colorado, Indiana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Vermont for sharing their insights with us.



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1. Use results data to differentiate monitoring and support to LEAs.

Some states also use results or outcomes data to differentiate the intensity of LEA monitoring and technical assistance support. States have chosen to do this in different ways. Some states have identified specific results data, such as assessment, graduation, or dropout rates, to include as part of their LEA determinations. Other states use results data as

one or more element(s) of their risk assessment. States then use their LEA determination or risk assessment to determine which LEAs will be monitored and/or the intensity of monitoring activities or TA support. Results data can also help state teams pinpoint LEA professional development and TA needs by revealing specific topics, procedures, or practices for which LEAs need more support.

2. Incorporate results data into LEA-monitoring questions and processes.

Some of the states interviewed shared that they now include results data as part of their LEA-monitoring questions and processes. The inclusion of such data into the monitoring experience allows states to undertake a broader consideration of local policies, procedures, and practices and pose different types of questions related to supporting student success than a monitoring process that focuses exclusively on compliance data. Moving beyond compliance also allows for a different type of engagement with LEAs. As one state explained, “Action planning and process improvement is different than correcting noncompliance.” One state interviewed has developed a results-based risk assessment to identify LEAs for monitoring.



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When the state monitors LEAs, the data from the risk assessment (i.e., assessment data) features prominently in the types of questions and issues they explore during the monitoring process. Examining results data such as the rate of students referred for evaluation who were later placed or the percentage of students with disabilities meeting their IEP goals provides additional context to monitoring data that can be useful not only in determining compliance but in considering ways to improve the services students with disabilities receive.

3. Use results data to support evaluation of SEA and LEA efforts.

Several of the states interviewed expressed a desire to use results data to help determine the efficacy of their improvement efforts. State agencies and LEAs can benefit from using both fidelity and results data to assess the implementation and impact of their policies, procedures, supports, and practices. States that analyze results data to evaluate the impact of their own monitoring and TA efforts also model a continuous improvement approach for the districts they support.

By using data to monitor progress, SEAs and LEAs have evidence to support decision-making and to guide adjustments. Several of the states interviewed noted that comprehensively evaluating the implementation and impact of their results-based accountability and support systems is a future goal and that improvement in LEA results or outcomes data will be an important measure of their success.

4. Include results data beyond special education to improve alignment.

States that are including results data in their special-education accountability and support systems are not limiting these data to APR indicators only. States have found that looking beyond typical special-education data has provided opportunities to build stronger connections between general education and special education and to align special education efforts with other SEA and LEA priorities. For example, in Colorado, stakeholders expressed an interest in including a growth measure (based on statewide assessment data) in special-education LEA determinations, as this was a key feature of the state's ESSA accountability framework and therefore of high importance to general-education leadership at the LEA level.

Similarly, Vermont expressed that, through their LEA determinations, they are “trying to paint a whole picture for the state” by including data points that are also used in their ESSA state plan, such as assessment participation and performance, CSI determinations, and preschool indicators. Through an alignment of special- and general-education accountability metrics, Vermont is “now working toward intertwined puzzle pieces instead of silos.” It may be helpful for states to consider which internal stakeholders are a part of their special-education accountability and support-system design conversations and consider the value of including general-education colleagues in order to strengthen linkages between IDEA and ESSA frameworks.

5. Initiate conversations at the state and local levels around results data.

At all levels of the system, the inclusion of results data in state accountability and support systems helps prompt questions about the relationship between students' IEP goals, the quality of instruction and support, and, ultimately, student outcomes. In choosing to use these data, states are starting a different and important conversation at the state-agency level as well as with their districts about the role of special education in supporting students to be successful in the K–12 setting and beyond.

These states are moving the goalpost beyond compliance and conveying that a compliant IEP alone is insufficient to ensure students with disabilities succeed and thrive. As states use results data for monitoring and improvement, LEAs may be encouraged to follow suit and look closely at data from the school, classroom, and district level to determine what is working for students and what is not.

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