



fast five

Five Considerations When Planning to Include Results Data in 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. There are numerous factors states may want to consider when planning to incorporate results or outcomes data (e.g., performance on statewide assessments, graduation rates, postschool outcomes data, early childhood outcomes data) into 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 their thought processes around the inclusion of results data. What follows is a list of five considerations shared by these states. We express our sincere gratitude to Colorado, Indiana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Vermont for sharing their insights with us.

1. Plan for clear and intentional stakeholder partnership and communication.

States who have successfully incorporated results data in their general supervision systems have done so in partnership with stakeholders. The states we interviewed fostered effective communication between SEAs, LEAs, and community partners and named intentional stakeholder engagement as a critical component of their systems change efforts. Involving stakeholders and implementers early in the process helps states gain important insight from a wide variety of perspectives about the results data the community feels are important to include in the state's accountability and support system.

In addition, reaching out specifically to district stakeholders to give them a say in the way results data are included promotes buy-in and support for system changes, and



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it removes barriers to approval that can occur if local stakeholders are only briefed on proposed changes later. Furthermore, establishing clear channels of communication at the front end of the process encourages districts to surface challenges and concerns that arise during implementation, thus helping the system continuously improve.



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2. Select data points that will inform both state- and local-level improvement efforts and decision-making.

States that have heightened their focus on results data have done so because their previous monitoring and evaluation systems were not providing a complete picture of their districts, and not revealing how well districts were supporting the success of students with disabilities. During our interviews, states noted that focusing only on compliance indicators had not yielded the changes to student outcomes they desired and did not help them assist districts in conducting the type of root cause analyses needed to drive improvement.

As part of the move to more robust, results-driven accountability and support systems, states considered what additional data points would help spotlight barriers to student success and support more improvement-focused data inquiry. They carefully considered both the availability of data as well as what type of information was most critical to inform state and local improvement efforts. The states we interviewed shared the following types of questions they used to identify potential results or outcomes data to incorporate into their accountability and supports systems:

Questions to Consider

What data would help us determine how districts are actually performing in terms of student outcomes?

Which data points reveal gaps? What data would help us pinpoint where districts need support?

Are we routinely disaggregating data in ways that help us identify differences for groups of students? When we find differences, what do we do?

Do we need to look beyond outcome results to changes in outcomes over time (growth or slippage)?

How are the data we are using aligned to priority areas for both general education and special education (ESSA, etc.)?

Are the data we are considering of sufficient quality to be useful (reliable, valid, timely, accurate)?

What will we do if data we incorporated into our accountability and support system are unavailable? Is there a reasonable data “surrogate” that could be used instead?

Are the data available to the SEA sufficient to inform state and local improvement efforts? Do we need to look beyond statewide data points to district or locally collected data?

Are the data we are considering easily available to the SEA? To LEAs? If not, does the usefulness of these data outweigh the effort needed to find or collect these data?

3. Support districts to understand and use their own data to drive improvement.

The states we interviewed mentioned that as they shifted their attention to focus more on results, their districts followed suit. And while some districts may be highly skilled at analyzing and using data to drive systems improvement, others may need additional support to take a comprehensive look at their own

results or outcomes data and then conduct an effective root cause analysis. Some states mentioned that the first step in this work is often to help districts ensure their data are of sufficient quality to be useful. Often this requires assisting districts in documenting, evaluating, and improving their data collection, validation, and submission procedures. Once users have faith in the integrity of their data, they



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may also benefit from tools and resources to help them disaggregate and question their data in meaningful ways. Several states interviewed have provided districts with tools for data use or have offered data retreats to support district staff in conducting root cause analysis.

4. Consider how including results might impact other aspects of your general supervision system.

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.

The states we interviewed reported that this work is iterative. As with any systems-change process, states found that they needed to design the best system they could, implement it, and then use their experiences and stakeholder feedback to continue improving the process.

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. Expect to make changes to your original design.

The states we interviewed reported that this work is iterative. As with any systems-change process, states found that they needed to design the best system they could, implement it, and then use their experiences and stakeholder feedback to continue improving the process.

States noted their desire to be transparent with stakeholders and district partners throughout the process, setting an early expectation that they would work together and use implementer feedback to inform needed changes to the system. States often began their work by making smaller or gradual modifications to existing systems and phasing in new elements over time. The state teams interviewed described their systems as evolving and acknowledged the need to pause and reassess when planned activities did not yield expected results.

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