

## Pacific Entities, U.S. Territories, and Bureau of Indian Education Participate in a Technical Assistance Meeting After the 2017 Office of Special Education Programs Leadership Conference

As has become a tradition after national meetings, the U.S. entities had the opportunity to get together with Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) staff and their technical assistance (TA) providers after the OSEP Leadership Meeting. The attendees included staff from the Bureau of Indian Education, the five U.S. Territories (American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), and the three Freely Associated States (the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau). The meeting was sponsored by the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy) and organized by TA providers from DaSy Center, the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA), the Center for the Integration of IDEA Data (CIID), IDEA Data Center (IDC), and The National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI). Other OSEP-sponsored centers including the Center for IDEA Fiscal Reporting (CIFR) and National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT) participated in the meeting.

The U.S. entities share similar challenges in their implementation of IDEA. Some of them, especially the Pacific entities, have difficulty accessing information and technical assistance services due to geographical distance, time zones, and problems with phone and Internet access. These face to face meetings provide unique opportunities for representatives from the entities to share their progress in implementing IDEA, maintain contact with OSEP and their technical assistance providers, receive appropriate assistance, and plan future support on critical information that impacts their implementation of IDEA.

The 2017 meeting focused on data issues and on the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and included sessions on data for measuring SSIP progress and on coaching practices. OSEP staff presented information on specific Results Driven Accountability (RDA) policies tailored to these entities. In addition, the entities had both formal and informal opportunities to share their progress.

The session on data for measuring SSIP progress included an overview of the [Data Visualization Toolkit](#), developed by DaSy in partnership with NCSI, IDC, and ECTA. In this session, staff from the entities participated in a hands-on activity where they used concepts learned in the toolkit to improve their own SSIP data. The focus was on designing information displays that more effectively tell the story of their data.



Arthur Albert Part B Special Education Director from Federated States of Micronesia

The session on coaching strategies to implement evidence-based practices included basic information on the importance of coaching, examples of evidence-based coaching practices applicable to Part C and B agencies, and tools that allow agencies to measure the fidelity of implementation of coaching strategies. Entities shared their progress implementing and using coaching strategies and discussed their needs in this area.



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The umbrella theme for the meeting was “sharing is caring,” an approach the entities use when they get together. Entities formally presented their progress implementing the SSIP, their success stories, challenges, and recommendations to their peers. Staff from three entities gave presentations: the Federated States of Micronesia, the Bureau of Indian Education, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Other entities contributed to the discussion.

Finally, the meeting included a presentation by OSEP staff on critical changes to the entities’ determination process for Part B. As a step toward implementing its RDA policy, OSEP presented various options for including results data in the entities’ determination criteria. OSEP encouraged feedback from the entities on how to phase results data into the determination process. As a result of this presentation, Part B representatives from the entities held a meeting to discuss next steps for organizing their suggestions for OSEP.

A formal evaluation was conducted and results indicate that the meeting was very well received. Of the 39 participants, 23 responded to the evaluation survey, for a 59 percent response rate. The overall relevance and usefulness of the technical assistance meeting was rated 96 percent between Very Relevant/Useful and Highly Relevant/Useful. A large portion of the meeting was about sharing, and 100 percent of the participants indicated they gained knowledge about challenges, successes, and strategies for SSIP Phase III from other entities and territories specifically focused on improvements in SSIP implementation and evaluation. The following comments represent a sample of statements from participants:

*“Entity meetings are always helpful for me and feel way more relevant to me than any other session”*

*“Appreciated the networking opportunities with other entities. Sharing is truly caring! There is great knowledge and skills with the folks from the Pacific.”*