

# IEP Analysis Project - Frequently Asked Questions

July 17, 2017

## Analysis and Reporting

**1. What information/data will be shared with the TEA?**

*Neither the LEA reports nor the raw data shared will be shared with the TEA. The reporting is for the LEAs. TEA will only receive state level patterns and trends.*

**2. How do you account for instructional impact of the teacher? What if goals are not well written but teacher quality is high, or vice versa?**

*From an analytic standpoint we would separate out these two phenomena. First we want to know what goals seem to matter. Then, we'd want to test the goals by teacher quality. For the present analysis, we are interested in the first issue independent of the teacher quality.*

**3. How are we going to anonymize data and do this analysis so quickly?**

*In previous work we have built and tested scripts and protocols to anonymize the data quite efficiently. Also, we are using a set of standard questions that most LEAs would like to answer while preserving some flexibility for custom questions. It may be the case we are not able to answer every question but our goal is to get to the most important ones.*

**4. What research has there been on this kind of program?**

*To date it has been time consuming and nearly impossible to study IEPs at scale. Given that most IEPs are now created electronically, it's more feasible than ever to conduct a systematic analysis of IEPs. Additionally, recent advances in statistics, mining unstructured data, and machine learning make the task more efficient. Given the importance of IEPs in the special education process, not to mention the time and resources it takes to create them, we felt that IEPs are a huge, untapped source of information for educators and worthy of inquiry.*

5. **STAAR data- state assessment data- is the only growth measure that will be used?**

*For the present analysis, we will include students with STAAR testing data. In subsequent analysis we may be able to use other outcome measures.*

6. **How will you factor in progress data that is not STAAR related such as TPRI or progress on functional goals? How will students exempt from state assessment be factored in?**

*Unfortunately, we will only be able to include students in tested grades with STAAR data. In subsequent analyses, we may be able to use other outcome measures.*

## Data Sharing

1. **We switched data systems a year ago, can I still participate?**

*Yes, especially if the data you are storing in the two systems is the same. We can handle separate export files. If the data fields have changed significantly from one system to the next, please explain how and list the differences in detail. We will most likely be able to handle that too.*

2. **Should districts only share records of students who have been in special education for all three years?**

*No, districts should send all students who are in special education for each particular year regardless of whether or not those students were special education in the other two years. We would like to receive the most comprehensive data that is available.*

3. **Which ID number is best to use for students (TSDS, PEIMS, SSN)?**

*In most cases, the TSDS number will cover across all needed platforms. If the TSDS number is not a field in the IEP, then the PEIMS numbers is a secondary option. We will work directly with each LEA based on their current systems to ensure the proper data is shared. Please, no SSN numbers.*

**4. Can we handle paper forms? What if they are printed PDFs?**

*Please schedule some time to discuss this with SPEDx personnel. We want to try to accommodate all school districts as much as we can, but we do not want to make any promises about timeline or resources available, especially given the need for manually verifying any automated processing of scanned documents.*

**5. Can districts get assistance with the challenge of getting data out of systems and uploaded?**

*Please schedule some time with SPEDx personnel to discuss. We will do our best to accommodate all districts.*

**6. We use a third party system for our IEP information, how do you get the reports from them?**

*We will work directly with the LEA to generate the needed reporting. In cases where contact with an outside vendor is needed, we will obtain authorization and permission from the LEA before contacting the vendor.*

**7. Is there a specified file format districts should use to send the data?**

*A .csv file is the ideal format to share the data.*

**8. What is the process to submit documents?**

*A representative from SPEDx will work directly with you to determine the best way and form to share the documents.*

## **Data Sponsorship Grant**

**1. Are the grants funds restricted?**

*The funds are intended to cover costs associated with providing the data. The funds must be used for special education but are not restricted beyond that. The TEA Grants Office will coordinate payments and final guidance.*

**2. How will this grant impact Maintenance of Effort for LEAs?**

*As these grant funds come from TEA's IDEA discretionary funds, they will not impact Maintenance of Effort for LEAs.*

**3. Are the funds used to pay for this project impacting other district funding?**

*The funds from this project come from IDEA discretionary dollars designated for state level activities and does not impact other funding to districts/LEAs.*

## **Data Security and Privacy**

**1. Is there a requirement to inform parents of this project under FERPA regulations?**

*This project meets the conditions under FERPA that permit the disclosure of education records without prior parental consent. Prior parental consent under FERPA is not required because SPEDx is a contractor to whom the TEA and LEA has outsourced this specific analytics function to understand patterns and trends relating to special education in the LEA and state. Further, SPEDx is required to comply with the requirements that TEA has established related to education records. SPEDx is only receiving education records for the limited purpose of IEP analysis.*

**2. How will personally identifiable information be secured?**

*We request that you do not provide any name or SSN data. However, if that information is inadvertently shared, our data analytics software will run a keyword search to separate personally identifiable information from the IEP data prior to analysis to ensure that none of the analysis or reporting can be traced back to a specific student.*

## **Miscellaneous**

**1. How will Shared Service Cooperatives work as part of this project?**

*One, several, or all LEAs in a shared service agreement can participate in this project. In order to participate, LEAs can either sign their own data sharing agreement or be parties to one data sharing agreement for the entire cooperative. Reporting will be at the cooperative level; however, each LEA participating is eligible for the reimbursement.*

**2. Is the report that LEAs receive subject to the Freedom of Information Act?**

*Information contained in or derived from a student's educational records is confidential in accordance with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. Section 1232(g), et seq., ("FERPA") and Tex. Gov. Code Section 552.114, and any derivative products developed from the student data are confidential as well. LEAs should also consult with their own legal counsel for guidance.*

**3. What else is required of LEAs after data is shared?**

*We only ask for a point of contact for any issues that could come up with the data analysis. No further effort or expenditure is required.*

**4. We are interested but many people are on vacation or are preparing for the start of school, can we still participate?**

*Yes, please let us know as soon as possible as there is a limit on the number of LEAs with whom we can work.*