Special Education in Texas

TCASE – Great Ideas Conference
February 20th, 2019
A Need for Change

Current Performance in Texas
• Historically, Texas has identified fewer students than the national average
• Gap in identifying students has widened since 2004
• Students may not be receiving necessary services to benefit their learning
Four-Year Graduation Rates

- Students with disabilities continue to lag behind their peers in graduation
- During the past 10 years, graduation rate gap between students with disabilities and non-disabled peers grew by 2 points, from ~10% to ~12%
2017 STAAR results show students with disabilities across all disability types have significantly lower achievement rates than peers.

Reading and Math achievement are the best indicators of 4-year graduation and postsecondary success.
Opportunity Gap Persists

College- and Career-Readiness:
Every child prepared for success in college, a career, or the military.

- Students with disabilities are significantly behind their peers in college readiness
- Represents gap in long-term opportunities for students with disabilities compared to non-disabled peers
OSEP Timeline of Events

- **January 2018**
  - Letter from OSEP

- **April 2018**
  - TEA Corrective Action Response and Strategic Plan

- **October 2018**
  - OSEP Response to TEA Response

- **January 2019**
  - Submit Corrections to OSEP

- **2019**
  - OSEP revisit
Improving Opportunities & Outcomes

TEA Strategic Plan for Improving Special Education
# Moving the Needle to Improve Student Achievement

## SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN

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**Monitoring**
- Strengthen monitoring to ensure districts are meeting federal requirements and support districts in improving practices.

**Identification & Evaluation**
- Ensure Texas is identifying students with special education needs and providing appropriate services.

**Training, Support & Development**
- Provide professional development and resources to increase educator capacity to support student needs.

**Student & Family Engagement**
- Lead outreach campaign targeting students with disabilities and their families to increase awareness and provide resources.

**Technical Assistance Networks**
- Provide assistance with best practice execution. Networks provide support in areas such as autism, inclusion, sensory and impairments.
The Review and Support team has been established to review programs and services provided to students with disabilities and enhance the guidance and support for districts and charters in improving these efforts.

Expand team by ~ 50 FTEs, paid for by IDEA-B Discretionary
- Desk reviews and on-site visits
- Include a detailed planning process with significant stakeholder engagement

Focus on improved outcomes, not just compliance
- Include easily searchable published reports
- All review materials will be accessible to LEAs
- Additional data elements added to PEIMS/TSDS for enhanced monitoring
OSEP’s January 10, 2018 Letter Indicated:
TEA’s use of the 8.5 percent indicator contributed to a statewide pattern of practices where some LEAs took actions specifically designed to decrease the percentage of children identified with disabilities.

TEA’s Response:
- TEC 29.011 was amended to prohibit the use of an indicator that solely measures performance based on the percentage of children receiving special education.
- IDEA does not limit or restrict the number of children who can be identified as meeting IDEA’s definition of a “child with a disability.”
OSEP’s January 10, 2018 Letter Indicated:
Some students receiving Section 504 services were not referred for an initial evaluation under the IDEA, even when teachers suspected the students may have a disability and need for special education and related services.

TEA’s Response:
The suspected need for special education requires referral to IDEA. Effective monitoring, periodic review, and re-evaluation of students and their Section 504 plans will inform those decisions. One way to satisfy requirements is to follow IDEA timelines for students being served under Section 504.
When a child with dyslexia or any other condition included in the definition of "specific learning disability" is suspected to need special education and related services, the LEA must conduct an evaluation in accordance with IDEA.

OSEP’s January 10, 2018 Letter Indicated:
Inconsistent application of policies and procedures associated with referring a student with dyslexia for special education at the district and school levels demonstrates LEAs in the State are not properly implementing the IDEA child find requirements.
OSEP’s January 10, 2018 Letter Indicated:
A pattern of practices in ISDs in which evaluations were delayed or not conducted for children suspected of having a disability due to local policies and practices requiring completion of all tiers of RtI prior to a referral for special education.

TEA’s Response:
- TEA will be developing an MTSS framework and guidance to clarify:
  - The goal of MTSS is to screen early and deliver targeted supports quickly to close achievement gaps.
  - Students **do not** have to go through an MTSS process before they are referred for a special education evaluation.
Strategic Plan: Identification, Evaluation, and Placement
Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

OSEP’s January 10, 2018 Letter Indicated:
In different schools within the same ISD and across different ISDs, staff expressed a lack of clarity as to:
- Entry/exit criteria
- Length of intervention
- How and when children move from one tier to the next

TEA’s Response:
- TEA will provide enhanced guidance to support LEAs in effective implementation of MTSS components:
  - Universal Screening
  - Evidence Based Intervention
  - Progress Monitoring
  - Data Based Decision Making
TEA Evaluation Capacity Support –

Due to under-identification of students eligible for special education services, TEA responded to potential LEA needs in evaluating students requiring service:

• $10 million is set aside to assist LEAs across the state with any unexpected increase in the number of Full Individual Evaluations (FIEs) requested by Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committees

• A grant has been awarded to ESC Region 20 to facilitate the distribution of these funds. More information can be found at this link:

  https://projects.esc20.net/page/eval.home
Strategic Plan: Training, Support, & Development

**Special Education**
- Developing Training and Resources
- Statewide Leadership Networks Redesign
- Expanded Stakeholder Engagement
- Outreach Campaign

**Dyslexia**
- Developing Training and Resources
- Handbook Revised November 2018
- Dedicated Program Specialist within Special Education Division

**Section 504**
- Developing Training and Resources
- Dedicated Program Specialist within Special Education Division

**MTSS**
- Developing Training and Resources
- National Center for Intensive Interventions Pilot Project
- Developing Statewide Framework
Strategic Plan: Training, Support, & Development

**CERTIFICATION**
Work with State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) to improve teacher certification practices, specifically in relation to special education and dyslexia

**GOVERNANCE**
Enhance school board training to improve local monitoring and increase fidelity of implementation

**STATEWIDE PARTNERSHIPS**
Continue working with Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and other workforce stakeholders to improve supports for students with disabilities transitioning into the workforce
Family Support Call Center, Portal, and Resources –

TEA will develop resources that inform and educate parents about available and appropriate special education services using the following methods:

- Paper- and web-based products in multiple languages
- Clarification of Section 504, Dyslexia, and MTSS
- Clear definition of eligibility and Child Find process
- Enhanced call center and interactive online services
Stakeholder Engagement –

TEA values the engagement of all stakeholders in implementation of the strategic plan. Having voices from diverse LEAs, regions, and backgrounds will inform the effectiveness of implementation and ensure that we are fully addressing the needs of all children in Texas.

- TEA will build on the 110 focus groups already convened since February 2018 by continued engagement of all stakeholders (over 7,000 comments submitted)
- Outlines more stakeholder meetings to take place in the 2018-2019 school year.
- Opportunities for stakeholder engagement will occur such as: webinar-based virtual town halls, surveys, interviews, public engagement volunteers.
TEA will redesign and provide grant opportunity to enhance technical assistance networks into the following areas:

1. Child Find, Evaluation, and ARD Supports
2. School, Family, and Community Engagement
3. Inclusive Services and Practices for Improved Student Outcomes
4. Support for Students Identified with Autism
5. Intervention Best Practices
6. Support for Students with Intensive Needs
7. Support for Students with Sensory Impairments
8. Support for Students in Small and Rural LEAs
9. Child-centered Transitions
10. Support for Students with Multiple Exceptionalities and Multiple Needs
Questions and Answers will be posted at:  
https://tea.texas.gov/TexasSpEd  

Further questions or comments can be sent to us at: sped@tea.texas.gov
TEA Special Education

Email: SPED@tea.texas.gov
Phone: (512) 463-9414

Thank you!
U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights

- Protecting Students With Disabilities
  - [https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html)

- Parent and Educator Resource Guide to section 504 in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools
  - [https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/504-resource-guide-201612.pdf](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/504-resource-guide-201612.pdf)
MTSS Resources

- Center on Response to Intervention

- National Center on Intensive Intervention
  - https://intensiveintervention.org/

- Texas Center for Learning Disabilities- University of Houston and University of Texas
  - https://www.texasldcenter.org/

- Building RTI Capacity- Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk at the University of Texas
  - http://buildingrti.utexas.org/
Using evidenced-based practices:

- What Works Clearinghouse (Institute of Education Sciences)

- Best Evidence Encyclopedia (Johns Hopkins University)
  - www.bestevidence.org/

- National Center on RtI Instructional Intervention Tools Charts (American Institutes for Research)