

Special Education Outcome Measurement, Reporting, and Incentive Program

Key Facts to know while reading:

- TEA will, with an extensive collaboration effort, create a web based data gathering, agregation, and reporting platform.
- LEA responsibility will be limited to only a few things:
 - After each ARD meeting walk the parent to a computer station to fill out a web based survey.
 - Once per year get one teacher per special education student and the paraprofessional if the student has one to a computer station to fill out a web based survey, 15 minutes absolute maximum per survey.
 - For students who attend ARDs once per year get the student in front of a computer station to fill out a survey.
 - Once per year download and print a copy of the snapshot to include with the paperwork package for the ARD meeting.
- LEA's will NOT have to do any of the following:
 - Call or contact students or parents to deliver survey.
 - Deliver, report, agregate, or submit to TEA surveys. There will be no information system update or integration projects at the LEA level.
 - Install any software.
 - There are no additional or new special education indicators which districts will be required to report as part of this legislation.
- There is NO penalty, accountability, or other "line" which must be met by LEAs. There are no enforcement actions of any kind tied to this legislation. This is a data gathering and reporting system to help everyone, including parents, teachers, special educators, administrators, ESC's, the TEA, and policy makers better understand what works for a very special population of students.

Special Education Outcome Measurement, Reporting, and Incentive Program

Statement of need:

Special education in Texas costs taxpayers approximately 4 billion dollars each year and the purpose of special education according to federal law is to ensure all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate education designed to prepare and enable them to access post-secondary education, employment, and independent living. The State of Texas has a considerable fiscal interest in ensuring special education systems in Texas meet these outcomes as our health and human services spending is approximately 50 billion dollars per year. Current measurement systems although providing useful information do not give an accurate picture where we are meeting those endpoints, and where we are not. They do not provide us useful interim indicators of success. They do not provide district and campus level measurement nor foster a climate where programs producing best results with limited resources are rewarded, and conversely programs producing poor results are widely recognized as such. The basic assumption that if a student succeeds at the general education curriculum he will continue to post-secondary education, employment, and independent living does not hold water for all students with disabilities. If students with disabilities are to reach these outcomes we must measure these outcomes, create accurate interim measures of success, and drive resources toward creating these outcomes. Due to the number and complexity of disabilities standardized testing does not accurately reflect success or failure for these students. A better measurement system is needed and can be realized today by using technology not available only a few years ago.

Summary of Proposal:

Implement a comprehensive special education measurement, reporting, and incentive system for special education students in Texas. To accomplish this TEA shall:

- Survey every special education student who graduates from Texas schools one year and five years post-graduation to determine if they are attending a secondary or vocational school, living independently, and working competitively. This is the purpose and measurable outcomes of special education and federal IDEA law.
- Survey every parent, teacher, paraprofessional, and where applicable each special education student each year to determine if each stakeholder perceives the student to be appropriately progressing toward secondary school, living independently, and working competitively.
- Survey every parent of a special education student who leaves school, regardless of reason. Understand the reasons for the student leaving the district (e.g. move, home school, private placement, etc).
- Create working stakeholder groups, including one member appointed by the Senate Education Chair, to define a suitable survey question flowchart, not to exceed 15 minutes, for each survey to be completed (e.g. parent survey, teacher survey, student survey, school leaver survey, school graduate survey, interim measure of success questions broken down by 11 disabilities and ages 3-5, primary school and secondary school)
- Ensure these survey question flow charts are designed to gather data directly from stakeholders on interim measures of success including whether or not student is on target to reach desired

outcome, IDEA rights understanding, ARD meeting satisfaction, due process and conflict resolution systems, teacher training needs, factors affecting teacher retention, student and parent contact information in order to facilitate higher response rates for post-outcome surveys, and other information each stakeholder workgroup deems most important. In no case shall a survey take longer than 15 minutes to complete.

- Create a state wide web based information system which provides current and historical survey results for each district and campus, disaggregated by disability and age range both in discrete numbers and percentile ranking versus peers in the state and nationwide where applicable. This website shall integrate existing special education success measurements and indicators.
- Create and ensure delivery of a Special Education Snapshot to each parent reporting the discrete and relative performance on their district, campus, age range, disability prior to the annual ARD meeting which shows critical consumer information, allowing each parent to better fulfill their duties as a team member in the ARD process. This report card shall include existing special education success measurements and indicators. It shall also include information regarding any district non-compliance for existing measurements and indicators in a format designed for the use of a parent consumer.
- Offer rewards totaling 2 million dollars per year to top districts and campuses that show best outcomes by disability, age, and district size. Part of the reward shall require the district write up a detailed description of their program highlighting the aspects which create success; these best practices shall be made available to the public, districts and ESCs. This measure is designed to create the information feedback loop and competitive foundation of a continuous improvement system.
- Create an ongoing process of statistical analysis where a qualified individual performs data mining and statistical analysis to find the best interim measures of success or other factors that predict future measured outcome success and their finding shall be made available to the public, districts and ESCs.
- Ensure all raw data scrubbed of personal identifying information will be available to researchers, advocacy groups, and other interested parties for analysis.
- Allow parents and teachers who wish to opt-in and share their contact information the ability to be contacted by third parties who can offer training, advocacy, education, or other targeted offerings which may assist in creating educational success.
- Ensure the system is designed to provide measurement and reporting for charter schools or other non-standard special education placements.
- Work in a collaborative way to ensure the completed project implementation plan is developed and reviewed by key disability stakeholders including the Texas Disability Council, Advocacy Inc., Children's Policy Council, Texas Council on Autism and PDD, and the National Post School Outcomes Center as well as key education stakeholders such as TCASE, TCTA, TASA, TASB, etc.

Estimated Costs of Proposal:

- Dual post outcome assessment for 27k graduates/dropouts is less than 1m per year – or less than 3/100ths of one percent of state special education expense. This includes the financial incentives needed to create higher response rates.
- One time development costs of the IT system and infrastructure are estimated not to exceed 10 million dollars – about ¼ of one percent of special education expenditures for one year.
- Surveys will be limited to 15 minutes maximum. Each parent, teacher, and paraprofessional will spend a total of 15 minutes per year per student. This is compared to the 95,000 paid minutes each school professional will spend during the school year – or less than 2/100ths of one percent.
- Each campus and district already has computers and internet connectivity. There is no additional cost here.
- TEA staff and contractors needed to maintain the system, website, and complete data analysis are estimated not to exceed 2m annually – 5/100ths of one percent of annual special education expense.
- Printing expenses to print out Special Education Report Card and include in ARD packet will add approximately one dime to the cost of all ARD meetings.
- Annual Incentive Program rewards of 2m each year - 5/100ths of one percent of annual special education expense.

Details of Proposal:

1) Post Outcome Measurement

- a) Each year all graduates and school leavers will be contacted using all methods gathered during the annual parent and student surveys. This survey can be contracted to a third party under a confidentiality contract or completed by TEA. The contact methodology is as follows:
 - i) Email 26,000 students in their native language at their email address with a request to complete a secure online survey, also email both parent's email with request as well, expected response rate from a family member 20% - if multiple family members respond to a survey the student's answers will be the ones reported
 - ii) Email folks who did not complete survey again in 1 week – Expected response rate an additional 5%
 - iii) Email remaining in 1 week and add a \$10 per completed survey Amazon gift certificate for completing the survey – Expected response rate an additional 20%
 - iv) Mail remaining people postcards with \$10 incentive for completing the survey either by going online or calling an English or Spanish hotline – Expected response rate an additional 20%
 - v) After 2 weeks contact remaining people by telephone at all numbers available multiple times, requesting and trying forwarding numbers if they are available, offer \$10 gift

certificate if we cannot get them to volunteer to take the survey. – Expected response rate an additional 25% - Total 90%

b) A question flowchart shall be developed.

2) School Dropout Measurement

a) The same contact methodology listed above can be used for all students who leave school including those who choose private settings, home school, move out of state, etc. Specific questions will target our understanding of these populations. Students who move to a different district inside Texas will be questioned at the annual parent survey and these questions should include questions to determine if the education of their child played a part in their choice to move.

b) A question flowchart shall be developed.

3) Annual Online Surveys

a) Special education students have always been a challenge for standardized testing and as such often do not benefit from measurement and accountability systems designed for the general education students. However by combining the perceptions of the parent, teacher, and paraprofessional who work with that student each year a quality measurement system across all disabilities can be derived. The preamble of IDEA states that special education is for the purpose of creating a graduate who is pursuing secondary education, living independently, and working competitively. These three measures create the basis whereby asking a simple question to a few key stakeholders results in an interim metric which can be tracked directly against the true post-graduate outcome measures discussed above.

b) There are two parts to any question used in this metric:

- i) Answer – assume each stakeholder gets an equal percentage of weighting to their yes/no answer. Add each weighted answer together to get an answer based on a 75 point scale.
- ii) Agreement – How closely do parents/teachers/paraprofessionals see the situation? Using a statistical method to determine agreement we can report this agreement or disagreement using a 25 point scale.
- iii) Overall Metric – Adding the Answer to the Agreement score gives us a metric based on a 100 point scale, which reports in a single, district and campus comparable metric, overall scoring for the question.

c) Multi-question metrics – giving each question a 100 point scale we can also create multi-question metrics. For instance adding the results for secondary education, independent living, and competitive employment questions then dividing by three would give us a single, district and campus comparable metric, on a 100 point scale.

4) Annual Parent Survey

a) Every student with a disability is represented in person once per year at the annual ARD meeting. After this meeting is completed the parent will be ushered to a private computer terminal where they will be required to take the online survey in their native language. The survey will not in any case be longer than 15 minutes. In the case of non-reading parents the person who helped translate during the ARD meeting will facilitate reading the questions and helping the parent input their answers. Appropriate warnings will be given to the parent to

ensure they are comfortable that their answers cannot be viewed by ARD committee personnel or other district personnel and will only be used to help understand the effectiveness of special education in Texas and how the system can be made better.

- b) Parents will have the option of choosing to allow 3rd parties to contact them via email, mail, and/or telephone with information, services, or training specific to their child's disability. This can be used for many positive programs including interagency service coordination, notification of free and/or online trainings, advocacy opportunities, etc. Of course this will require an OPT-IN on the part of the parent and which can be rescinded at each annual survey or by going to the TEA website. This OPT-IN list will be available to state agencies, non-profits, or other organizations deemed to potentially provide valuable education or services relating to the student's disability.
- c) A question flowchart shall be developed.

5) Annual Teacher Survey

- a) The primary teacher responsible for the special education of the student will be required during the last 30 days of school to complete a similar online survey for each student they are responsible for. The survey will under no circumstances require more than 15 minutes. In the case of a student who spends no time with a special education teacher and has multiple inclusion teachers only a single teacher will be required to complete the survey. This teacher should be a primary subject teacher or the teacher who spends the most time with the student each day.
- b) A question flowchart shall be developed.

6) Annual Paraprofessional Survey

- a) Any student who spends more than 20 percent of the day in contact with a paraprofessional will have that paraprofessional designated for a once annual online survey during the last 30 days of school.
- b) A question flowchart shall be developed.

7) Annual Student Survey

- a) If the parent during their survey chooses to include the student in the ARD process then that student will be required to complete a similar online survey once annually during the last 30 days of the school year.
- b) A question flowchart shall be developed.

8) Statewide Website

- a) A part of the TEA website, linked to from the TEA homepage, will be a comprehensive reporting site that allows users to access Special Education Snapshots for any district, campus, and disability. It will also allow more detailed drill down analysis on all data points collected across districts and campuses. The user interface of this site can be considered a success when it eliminates nearly all Freedom of Information Act requests for additional data analysis. A survey tool will be included which allows users to request data in report formats not currently

available. When 100 requests for the same data report are received that report will be generated as a standard report available on the site.

- b) Researchers, advocates, and education reform organizations will be allowed access to a full dataset after completion of appropriate NDA . This dataset will be scrubbed of personal identifying information for purposes of performing third party data analysis.

9) Special Education Snapshot

- a) Each district and campus will download the once annually updated special education report card and include this with materials sent to the parents in preparation for the first ARD meeting of each year.
- b) This card will include the website address to access more detailed data.
- c) This card should be no more than 1 page, front and back, and must be printed in color.
- d) Where sample size is less than 5 respondents, and this would violate FERPA privacy law, additional data shall be included to bring the number of respondents to this minimum number. (e.g. If there is only one student with Autism in a particular middle school campus data could be included from students with same disability a grade above and grade below to increase sample size. Or in the case of similar disabilities multiple disabilities from the same campus might be put together to get to the minimum. Or in the case where no effective information can be garnered due to the sample size limitation the campus reporting section can be removed and just district information included) The best methodology to use to allow disaggregated data while still keeping a sample size of 5 respondents will be determined in the final implementation plan.
- e) A sample copy of the special education report card shall be developed.

10) Best Practices Incentive Program

- a) For each of the eleven disability categories and segmented by district size (small and large) and funding level (high and lower) and age group (PPCD, Elementary, Middle, and High School) an incentive program can be implemented for the top performer in any of the 176 available categories. Winners in each category will be notified and can receive \$10,000 per winning category simply by filling out a detailed explanation of their program.
- b) A sample of this program explanation, including minimum data to be included, shall be developed.
- c) All winners and their program explanations will be made available on the website.
- d) All winners will retain a special stamp of recognition on their special education report card for that disability for one year.

11) Trend Analysis Program

- a) A data analysis statistician at TEA will be tasked with doing longitudinal studies to try and garner useful information such as:
 - i) Tying post graduate outcomes to earlier indicators of success
 - ii) Doing specialized reporting to better understand significant trends affecting different disabilities, geographic differences, racial or ethnic differences, other factors affecting success or failure.

12) Data Update Program

- a) Upon the direction of TEA or the legislature additional questions to be asked can be added to any of the flow diagrams so as to provide better information as future needs change.
- b) Educational research institutions will be allowed to request and TEA may grant inclusion of specific survey questions in order to further our general educational system knowledge.