An Analysis of States' 2007-08 Annual Performance Report Data for Indicator 2 (Dropout)

A Report Prepared for the
U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs
by the
National Dropout Prevention Center
for Students with Disabilities

July 2009

INDICATOR 2: DROPOUT RATES

INTRODUCTION

The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) was assigned the task of compiling, analyzing and summarizing the data for Indicator 2—Dropout—from the FY2007 (2007–08 school year) Annual Performance Reports (APRs) and the revised State Performance Plans (SPPs), which were submitted to OSEP in February of 2009. The text of the indicator is as follows.

> Percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school.

In the APR, each state reported its dropout rate for special education students, compared its current dropout rate with the state target rate for the 2007-08 school year, discussed reasons for its progress or slippage with respect to the target rate, and described the improvement activities it had undertaken during the year.

In the amended SPP, states revised their targets for improvement or their strategies and activities, as was deemed necessary by the state or by OSEP. The main reasons given by states for making such changes were: 1) the identification of additional needs during the year, 2) revision or replacement of activities that were not working satisfactorily, and 3) changes in requirements or definitions. Table 1 shows a breakdown of the revisions made.

Table 1

Revisions to the State Performance Plans, as submitted in February 2009

Type of revision made	Number of states
Activities only	35
Targets only	3
Activities and targets only	3
Activities and calculation only	1
None	18

This report summarizes the NDPC-SD's findings for Indicator 2 across the 50 states, commonwealths and territories, and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), for a total of 60 agencies. For the sake of convenience, in this report the term "states" is inclusive of the 50 states, the commonwealths, and the territories, as well as the BIE, except when noted.

The evaluation and comparison of dropout rates for the states was confounded by several issues, which are described in the context of the summary information for the indicator.

The definition of dropout

Some of the difficulties associated with quantifying dropouts can be attributed to the lack of a standard definition of what constitutes a dropout. Several factors complicate our arrival at a clear

definition. Among these are the variability in the age group or grade level of students included in dropout calculations and the inclusion or exclusion of particular groups or classes of students from consideration in the calculation. For example, some states include students from ages 14-21 in the calculation, whereas other states include students of ages 17-21. Still other states base inclusion in calculations on students' grade levels, rather than on their ages. Some states count students that participated in a General Education Development (GED) program as dropouts, whereas other states include them in their calculation of graduates. As long as such variations in practice continue to exist, comparing dropout rates across states will remain in the realm of art rather than in that of science.

COMPARING DROPOUT RATES – CALCULATION METHODS

Comparison of dropout rates among states is further confounded by the existence of multiple methods for calculating dropout rates and the fact that different states employ different ones. The dropout rates reported in the 2007-08 APRs were calculated using one of three methods: an event rate calculation, a leaver rate calculation or a cohort rate calculation.

The event rate yields a very basic snapshot of a year's group of dropouts. While the cohort method generally yields a higher dropout rate than the event calculation, it provides a more accurate picture of the attrition from school over the course of four years than do the other methods. As the name suggests, the cohort method follows a group or cohort of individual students from 9th through 12th grades. The leaver rates reported this year were generally higher than those calculated using other methods. This is attributable to circumstances specific to the states using this calculation as well as to the broadly inclusive nature of the calculation.

Event rate

As reported in the 2007-08 APRs, 47 states (78%) calculated special education dropout using some form of an event rate. Calculations of this type were generally stated in the following form.

$$\frac{\text{\# SpEd dropouts from Grades 9 – 12}}{\text{Total Sp Ed enrollment in Grades 9 - 12}}$$

Leaver rate

Eight states (13%) calculated leaver dropout rates for their special education students. These rates are calculated using an equation that generally follows the form below.

$$\frac{\text{\# of dropouts 14-21+ in year A}}{\begin{array}{c}\text{\# dropouts age 14-21+ in year A + \# grads ages 18+ in year A + \# grads age 17 in year A-1 + \# grads} \\ \text{age 16 in year A-2 + \# grads age 15 in year A-3 + \# grads age 14 in year A-4 + \# certifs ages 18+ in} \\ \text{year A + \# certifs age 17 in year A-1 + \# certifs age 16 in year A-2 + \# certifs age 15 in year A-3 + \#} \\ \text{certifs age 14 in year A-4 + \# age 18+ who maxed in age in year A + \# age 17 who maxed in age in} \\ \text{year A-1 + \# age 16 who maxed in age in year A-2 + \# age 15 who maxed in age in year A-3 + \# age} \\ \text{14 who maxed in age in year A-4)}\end{array}}$$

Cohort rate

Only five states (8%) used a true cohort method to calculate their special education dropout rates. These calculations generally follow the form of the following equation.

$$\frac{\text{\# dropouts from Sp Ed who entered HS as 1}^{st}\text{ time 9}^{th}\text{ graders in 2004}}{\text{\# Sp Ed students who entered HS as 1}^{st}\text{ time 9}^{th}\text{ graders in 2004 + transfers in – transfers out}}$$

2007-08 DROPOUT RATES

Across the 60 states, the highest special education dropout rate reported for the 2007-08 school year was 38.6% and the lowest rate was 0%. It should be noted that the state with the dropout rate of zero has a very low number of students in special education.

Figure 1 shows the special education dropout rates for all of the states. In this figure, states are grouped by the method used to calculate their dropout rates.
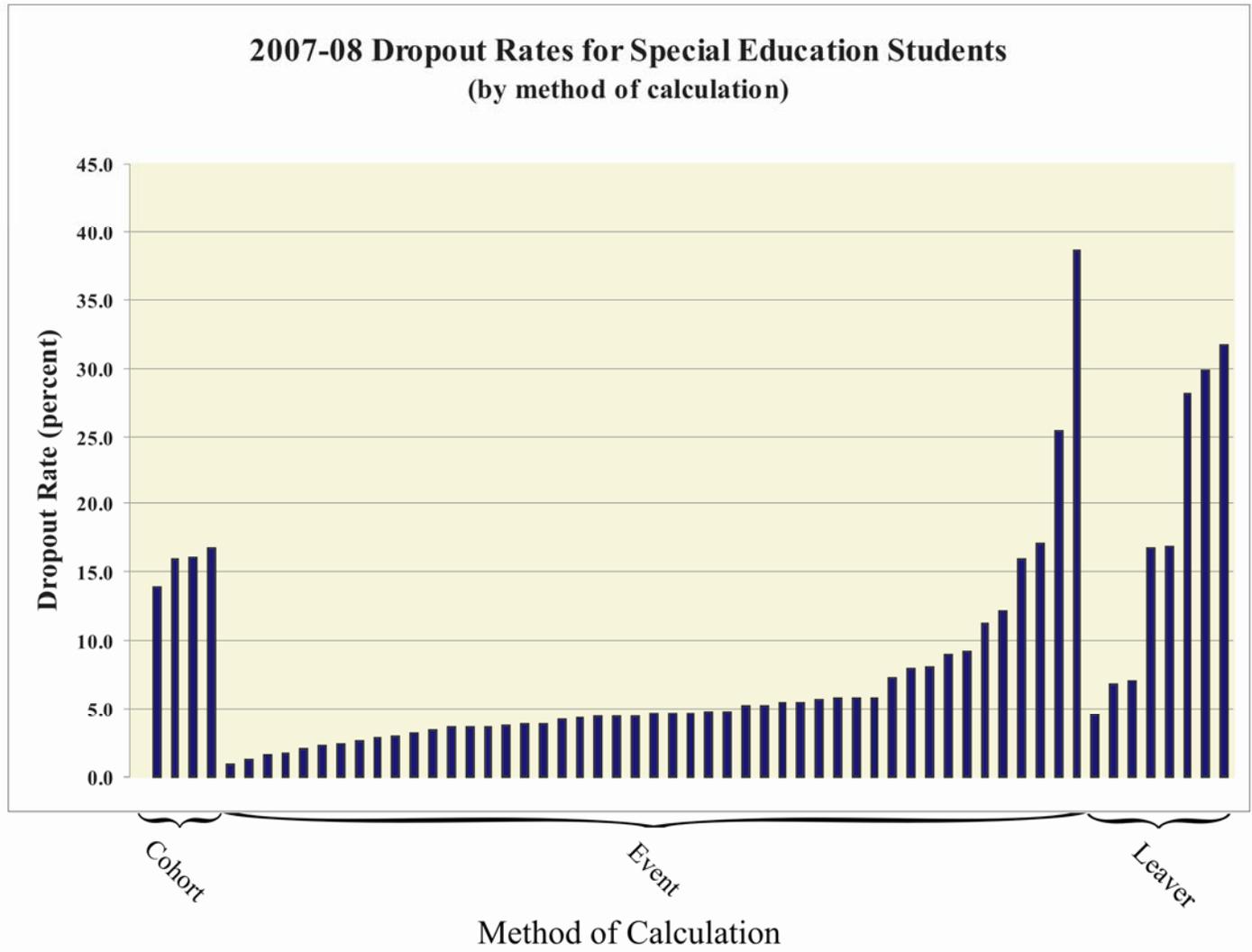

Figure 1

3

The states were sorted by the method employed in calculating their special education dropout rates. The sorted data were then plotted as Figures 2 – 4. Figure 2 shows the special education dropout rates for states that used an event method; Figure 3 shows the data for states that calculated a leaver rate; Figure 4 shows the data for states that used the cohort method of calculation.
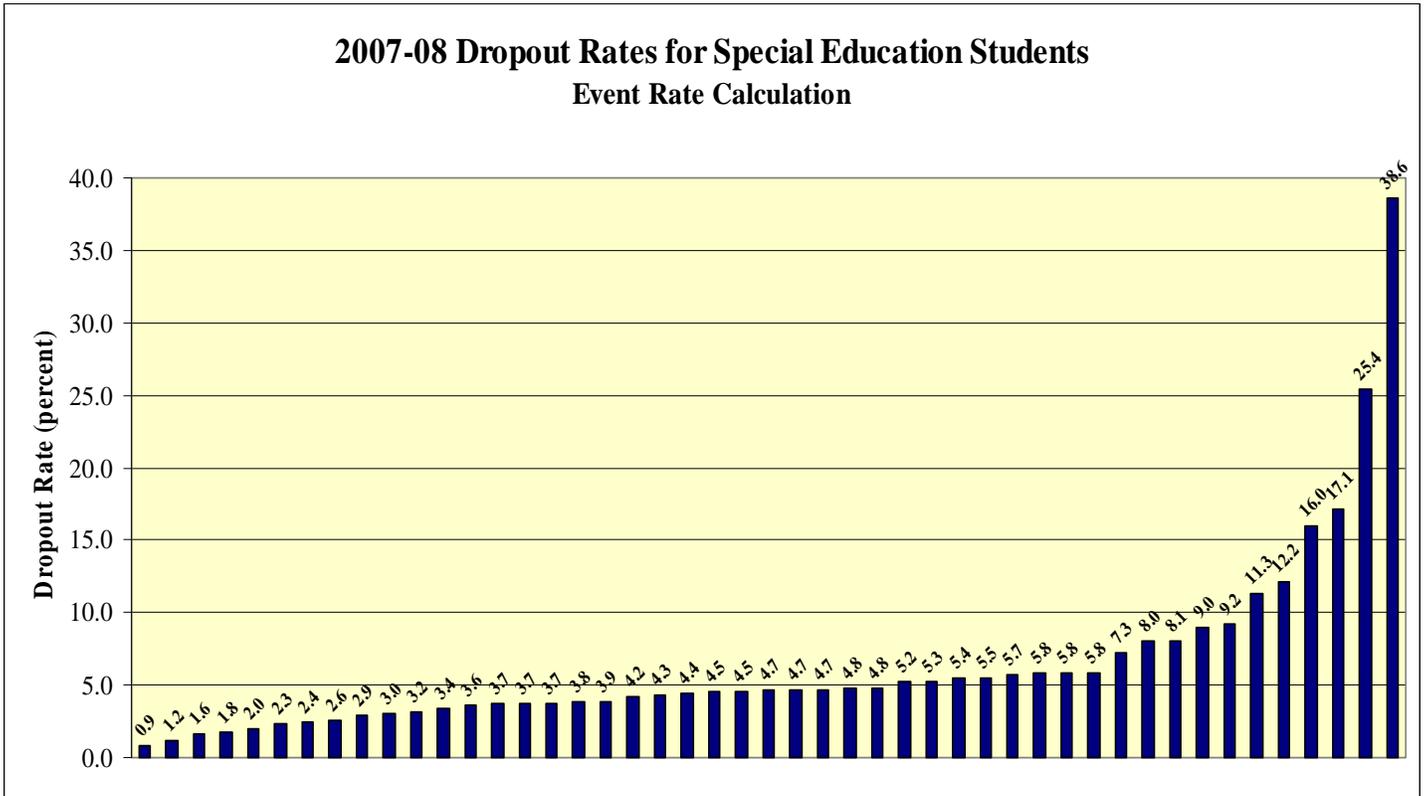

Figure 2

2007-08 Dropout Rates for Special Education Students
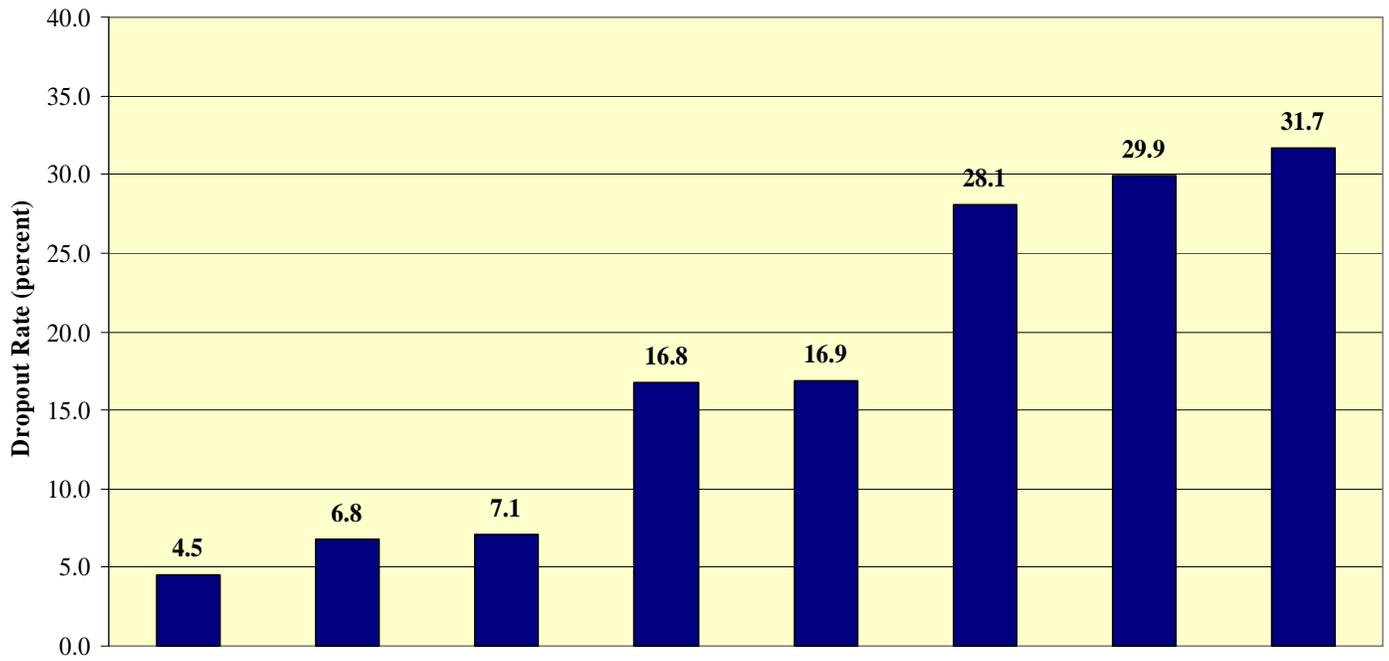### Leaver Rate Calculation

Figure 3

2007-08 Dropout Rates for Special Education Students
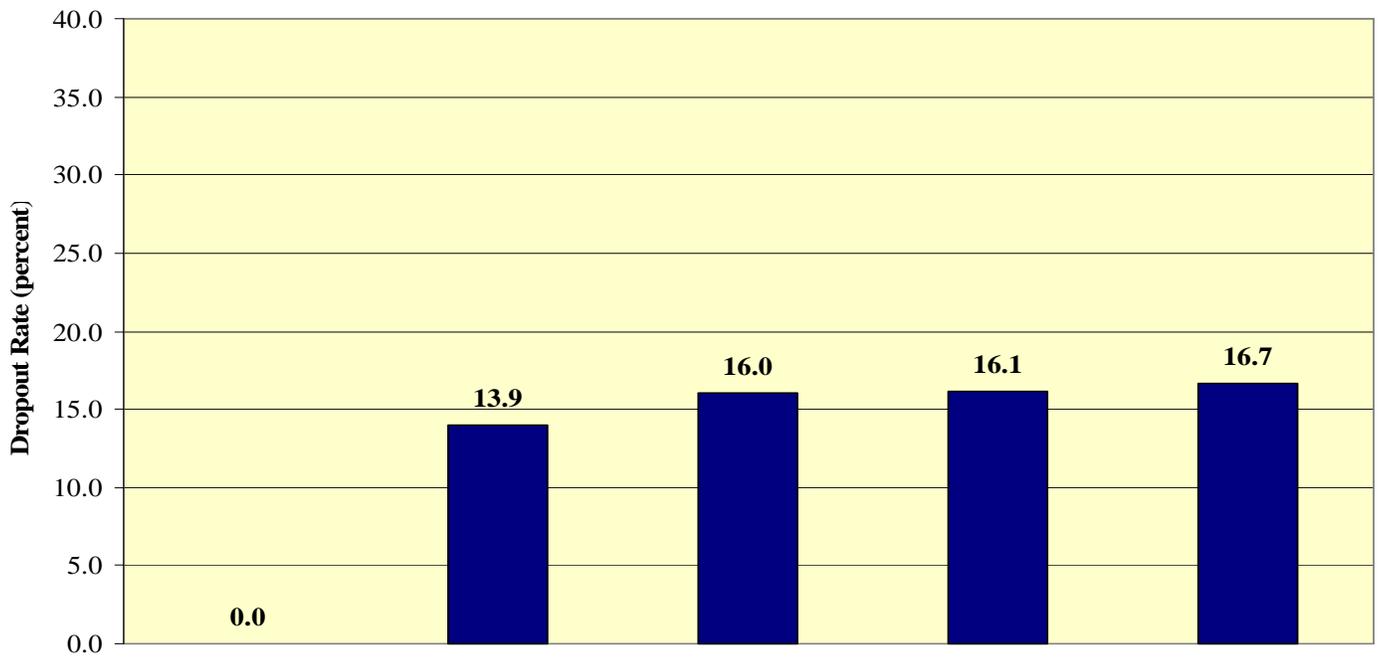### Cohort Rate Calculation

Figure 4

DROPOUT RATE TARGETS

Twenty-four states (40%) achieved their targeted dropout rate for students with disabilities and 36 states (60%) did not. This represents slight slippage, by two states, from the results reported in the 2006-07 APRs.

PROGRESS AND SLIPPAGE

Thirty-one states (52%) made progress from their rates reported in the 2006-07 APR and lowered their dropout rates. Twenty-four states (40%) experienced slippage during the year, showing increased dropout rates. Five state's rates (8%) remained unchanged from the previous year—this number up from one state, as reported in last year's APRs.

Across the states, the degree of change in dropout rates observed in this report's comparison (FY2006 to FY2007) is less than it was in last year's report, which compared the dropout rates for FY2005 with those for FY2006. This year, the mean change was +0.1 with a standard deviation of 2.6, as opposed to last year, when the mean change was -1.2 with a standard deviation of 5.4.

Figure 5 represents the changes in reported dropout rates from the 2006-07 school year to the 2007-08 school year. Unlike the graduation rate data, positive values represent slippage and negative values indicate an improvement in dropout rate from the previous year's data.

Figure 5

6
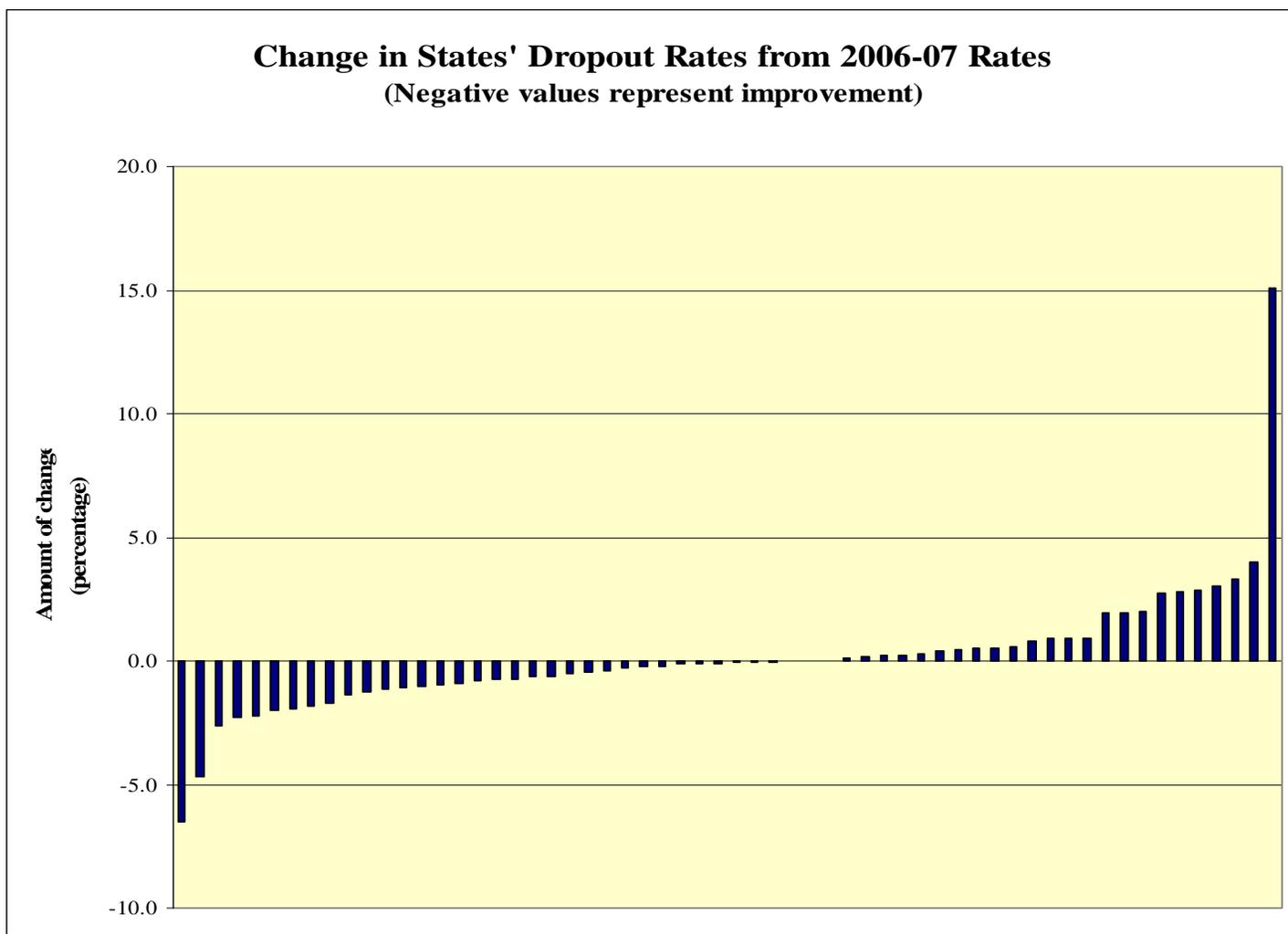
CONNECTIONS AMONG INDICATORS

Fifty-five states (92%) made explicit or at least implicit connections between Indicators 1 and 2, and frequently included the other transition indicators, Secondary Transition and Post-School Outcomes (Indicators 13 and 14, respectively), as well. Several states also included connections to Indicator 3 (Assessment), Indicator 4 (Suspension/Expulsion) and/or Indicator 8 (Parent Involvement) in their reports.

NDPC-SD INTERACTIONS WITH STATES

All 60 states received some form of technical assistance from NDPC-SD during the 2007-08 school year. Twelve states (20%) received technical assistance from the Center at the universal level (Tier 1 in NDPC-SD parlance). This level of technical assistance may take the form of participation in a Teleseminar or Webinar, receipt of the Center's Big IDEAs newsletter, downloading of documents or other materials from the Center's website, or short-term consultation with the Center via email or telephone. Forty-two states (70%) received targeted technical assistance (NDPC-SD Tier 2), which represents participation or small-group assistance from NDPC-SD. Finally, 6 states (10%) received intensive or sustained technical assistance from NDPC-SD in 2007-08, representing Tier 3 in the Center's hierarchy. NDPC-SD worked to establish model program sites in 3 of these states and worked with 3 other states in an ongoing manner during 2007-08.

These results represent an increase from the figures reported in the 2006-07 APR. Table 2 shows a breakdown of these interactions in 2007-08 using the categories specified in the OSEP template for this report.

Table 2

NDPC-SD Interactions with States during the 2007-08 school year

Nature of interaction	Number of states
A. NDPC-SD provided information by mail, telephone, teleseminar, listserv, or Communities of Practice to State	12
B. State attended a conference sponsored by NDPC-SD or received small-group or direct on-site assistance from NDPC-SD	42
C. NDPC-SD provided ongoing, on-site TA to the State and/or worked toward the end of developing model demonstration sites	6

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

States were instructed to report the strategies, activities, timelines and resources they employed in order to improve the special education graduation rate. The range of proposed activities was considerable. Many states are implementing evidence-based interventions to address their needs. Table 3 shows the number of states employing various evidence-based practices.

Table 3

Evidence-based practices listed in improvement activities of the 2007-08 APR

Type of activity	Number of states
One or more evidence-based practices	48
Positive Behavior Supports	26
Literacy initiatives	13
Response to Intervention	20
Mentoring programs	8

Forty-eight states (80%) listed one or more evidence-based improvement activities in their APR, while the remaining 12 states (20%) did not propose any evidence-based improvement activities. There are a limited number of evidence-based programs that have demonstrated efficacy for students with disabilities; however, there are a number of promising practices.

Using the 9 categories listed in Table 4, NDPC-SD coded each state's improvement activities. Figure 6 shows the number of states engaging in each of the categories.

Table 4

Activity categories for the 2007-08 APRs

Code	Description of activity
A	Improve data collection and reporting
B	Improve systems administration and monitoring
C	Build systems and infrastructures of technical assistance and support
D	Provide technical assistance/training/professional development
E	Clarify /examine/develop policies and procedures
F	Program development
G	Collaboration/coordination
H	Evaluation
I	Increase/Adjust FTE
J	Other activities

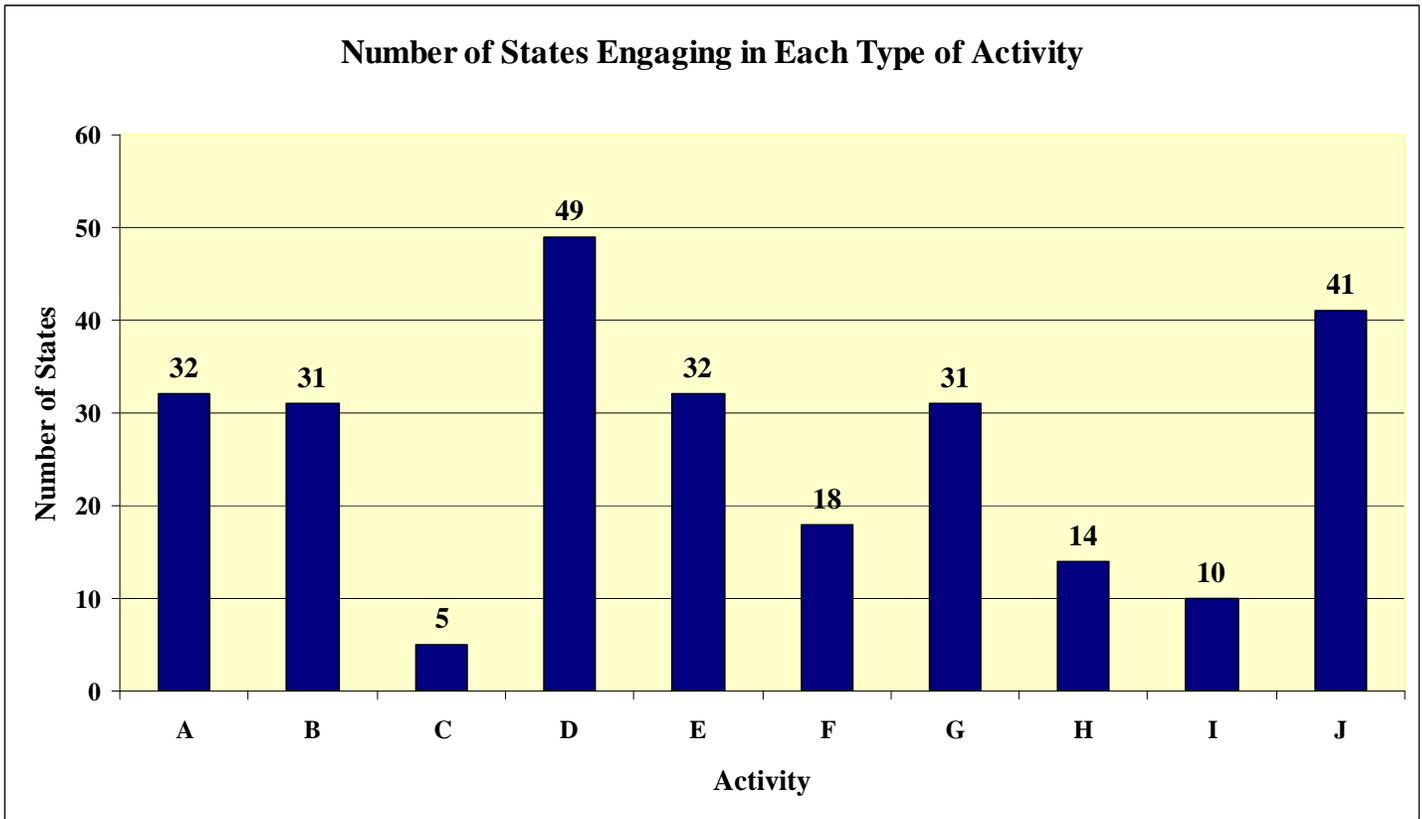**Number of States Engaging in Each Type of Activity**

Figure 6

Figure 6 shows that the majority of states (49 states, or 82%) engaged in one or more technical assistance, training or professional development activity (D). This was followed by forty-one states (68%) that engaged in one or more unique improvement activities, specific to the state, which were designed to improving their dropout rates (J). Thirty-two states (53%) took steps to improve the quality of their data or addressed data collection and/or data management systems (A). Additionally, thirty-two states (53%) developed, reviewed and/or adjusted their policies and procedures that related to dropout and school completion (E). Thirty-one states (52%) carried on activities that would improve their monitoring or systems administration (B). Thirty-one states (52%) engaged in some form of collaborative activity with technical-assistance providers, other state or local agencies, community organizations, or businesses (G). Eighteen states (30%) implemented new programs or initiatives directed at improving their dropout rate (F). Fourteen states (23%) engaged in the evaluation of improvement processes and/or outcomes related to their improvement activities (H). Ten states (17%) added or reassigned staff to address dropout issues (I). Finally, five states (8%) reported activities related to the development of statewide or regional support systems or infrastructure designed to deliver technical assistance (C).

As was the case in last year's APRs, the collections of activities listed in states' APRs seem improved over those of the previous years. More states appear to be recognizing the benefit of combining activities across indicators to minimize waste and maximize effect. A substantial number of states described a group of activities that would work well to address their students' needs across the transition indicators (Inds. 1, 2, 13, and 14). Several other states included activities that addressed Indicators 3, 4, and 5 in addition in their mix of improvement activities in support of school-completion. Appendix A contains selected examples of each activity.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOL-COMPLETION ACTIVITIES

There is no magic bullet to improve graduation or dropout rates for students with or without disabilities, though there are strategies that appear to help in these issues of school completion. Among the successful strategies described in this year's APRs are several, which will be discussed below. Some are obvious—some less so.

The use of data spanning multiple SPP indicators to identify needs and risk factors at the system level as well as at the building and student level has increased. While there is not a great deal of evidence to support this practice in the arena of school completion (because the studies have not been done), it is a logical step to take when considering any new initiative or intervention program. Among the states that reported developing or using some sort of cross-indicator risk calculator for identifying students in need of intervention were Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, and Oklahoma.

Sharing information and strategies at all levels—state-to-state, agency-to-agency, LEA-to-LEA, and teacher-to-teacher—is an effective strategy that is increasingly being adopted around the country. While sometimes difficult to initiate, it offers benefits that, once experienced, become difficult to do without. Most capacity building efforts within a state or LEA can benefit from such collaboration. To this end, many states held or participated in a statewide forum on graduation, dropout and/or transition at which district and school teams participated in content sessions about the topic(s), shared experiences and strategies, and developed or continued work on a state improvement plan in the area(s) of concern.

OSEP's three transition-related technical assistance centers (NDPC-SD-SD, NSTTAC and NPSO) co-hosted one such annual institute in Charlotte, NC in May 2007, which was attended by teams from 43 states. Additionally, states, with and without the participation of these national TA centers, hosted other such forums. Among the states that held such forums were Colorado, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Idaho, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Texas.

Tiered systems of intervention offer a practical approach to managing and delivering both technical assistance and student interventions. Kansas provides one example of a state that is adopting a multi-tiered system to support LEAs in their efforts to improve dropout and graduation rates. Nineteen states reported having adopted the use of an RtI model for identifying and delivering interventions for students with disabilities in a tiered fashion. Among these states are California, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Georgia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, the Virgin Islands, and Wisconsin.

Efforts to provide smaller learning communities, such as career academies, freshmen academies and graduation academies have been adopted with success in many states. Such programs can offer students a personalized and/or focused learning experience and, as in the case of freshmen academies, can provide some of the supports that will help students make the difficult transition from middle school to high school. Among the states reporting the use of such programs were Georgia, Maryland, South Dakota, and Virginia.

Some state and local policies actively support school completion, whereas, others inadvertently can push some students out of school. Many states described efforts to review policies, program structures and procedures that impact school completion for students with disabilities toward the end of revising such hostile policies and putting into place policies that would support school completion.

Among the states that reported activities of this nature were Florida, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Louisiana, Montana, South Dakota, and Washington.

Finally, the involvement of parents/family in the education of their children is a critical factor impacting school completion. Several states reported their activities to bolster participation of, and support for parents of students with disabilities. Such statewide efforts included parent mentor networks (SD, GA). At the local level, programs to foster communication among the school, parents and students were also reported in several states.

While the majority of states engaged in a variety of improvement activities that supported school completion, a few states' activities were more concerted and exhibited a higher level of scope, organization and potential effectiveness. For example, Georgia's statewide dropout-prevention initiative, the *Georgia Dropout Prevention/Graduation Project*, has involved teams from districts from around the state in capacity-building training with the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, analysis of the factors impacting their districts and schools, identification of their most pressing school-completion needs, development of focused and sustainable plans for addressing the needs, implementation of the plans, and evaluation of the efforts throughout the entire process. This approach appears to be an effective one. The state, as a whole, achieved its graduation-rate target and made progress. Additional information about the project may be found at www.pioneerresa.org/programs/glrs/default.asp.

NOTES

- While the comparison of special-education graduation rates to all-student rates has been removed from Indicator 2, it is important that states not lose sight of the significance of this relationship. In order to continue the push for progress in closing the gap between dropout rates for students with disabilities and those of their non-disabled peers, it is imperative that we remain aware of how students with disabilities are achieving in relation to all students. While there are various data-related barriers to making such comparisons easily, keeping such comparisons in mind may help us avoid complacency in this area. This said we were pleased to note that several states continue to provide data for their students with disabilities as well as their entire student population.

- This year, many states cited improvements in their procedures around data collection as well as the newly gained ability to follow individual students' progress and movement among districts as having impacted their graduation rates. Some of those states credited their improvement in dropout rate to this, whereas others blamed it for their decreased rates.

- Activities that raise states' awareness of the interconnectivity among the Part B Indicators and assist states in understanding and managing data related to those activities will continue to be beneficial to states.

  In one 2008 example of such an activity, the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center, National Post-School Outcomes Center, and Regional Resource Centers collaborated to deliver three regional institutes, "*Making Connections Among Indicators 1, 2, 13, and 14.*" These were attended by teams from a total of 38 states. The institutes focused on the relationships among these four indicators as well as the collection, reporting and use of Part B Indicator data related to school completion, transition from high school to post-secondary education and/or employment, and post-secondary outcomes. Using their own data, states worked through a series of guided questions and activities that helped them understand and identify strengths

and needs around these indicators. After this step, each state team developed a plan for addressing their perceived data-related needs in these areas and described the technical assistance they would use to support the plan. The three centers have been following up with these states to provide requested assistance and to monitor their progress.

IN SUMMARY

In general, we have observed an improvement in the overall quality and organization of the APRs as well as continued improvement in the nature of the data submitted by states. The improvement activities are generally more concerted and focused than in previous years. There is a recognized lag between the time at which implementation of an intervention begins and the point at which it begins to shows measurable results. Despite this lag and the annual periodicity of the measurement for this indicator, it appears that things are gradually improving with Indicator 2.

While the 2008 NCLB regulations specified that states will move to the use of a uniform adjusted cohort calculation for determining the graduation rates of all students by the 2010-11 school year, no such change was specified for dropout rates. Until such a standardized dropout calculation becomes available, comparing dropout rates for students with and without disabilities across the nation will remain a challenge.

DROPOUT – APPENDIX A

Activity A – Improve data collection and reporting– improve the accuracy of data collection and school district/service agency accountability via technical assistance, public reporting/dissemination, or collaboration across other data reporting systems. Developing or connecting data systems. Arizona: Modification of statewide calculation of graduation rates for students with/without disabilities via SAIS cohort approach. Revision of the SPP/APR baseline, targets, and activities to reflect revised graduation calculations.

Colorado: Improve consistency between AUs in methods of reporting graduation and dropout rates. The Special Education data group continues to work with the general education data group on aligning data definitions and codes.

Activity B – Improve systems administration and monitoring – refine/revise monitoring systems, including continuous improvement and focused monitoring. Improve systems administration.

Colorado: Use the CIMP system to support the development of improvement plans for administrative units identified with high dropout rates

North Carolina: Annually review and analyze the LEAs' Continuous Improvement Performance Plans (CIPPs) to identify LEAs that are reducing dropout rates and identify their effective practices as well as those LEAs that are in need of additional and/or targeted technical assistance. EC Division staff reviewed and analyzed each LEA's CIPP and 2007-08 data. From the review and analyses, an LEA profile was prepared for each LEA for use in the 6 regional follow-up meetings (traditional LEAs and State-Operated Programs) conducted during February 2008 and 1 public charter school meeting conducted in March 2008.

Activity C – Build systems and infrastructures of technical assistance and support – develop Statewide or regional infrastructures to maximize resources.

Illinois: Develop an infrastructure that allows for the scaling up of evidence based programs. **Outcome**: Illinois began actively scaling up evidence based programs with the national SISEP center in 2008

Iowa: Establish infrastructure to support the Mission and Vision of state-wide Learning Supports – Develop, pilot, revise and implement: a. Standardized data reporting tools across audience, use and message type; b. A comprehensive list of programs/strategies within Core/Universal, Supplemental/ Secondary and Intensive/Tertiary and across the 6 content areas of Learning Supports; c. An online tool to access (b) d. Content and Connections with the Iowa Core Curriculum

Activity D – Provide technical assistance/training/professional development – provide technical assistance and/or training/professional development to State, LEAs and/or service agencies, families and/or other stakeholders on effective practices and model programs, etc.

Alabama: Continue to guide LEAs to implement various intervention techniques, such as early intervention based on appropriate assessments, incentives, counseling, mentoring, tutoring,

instructional design and delivery, service-learning, career academies, and programs that use school reform or restructuring methods to reduce dropouts.

Hawaii: Survey high schools with high graduation rates (79%+) for students with IEPs. Have schools rate their level of implementation of the 15 effective strategies that positively impact student graduation/ dropout rates. (Strategies identified by the National Dropout Prevention Center.)

Hawaii: Work with Transition Teachers and school staff at high schools to promote activities that focus on planning for a successful high school experience and preparation for post high school. Encourage parent participation which is necessary to support the transition of a student with a disability.

Iowa: A Dropout Prevention Leadership Summit was implemented as a strategic plan to reduce dropout rates, specifically disproportionate rates. Community teams from 17 districts participated in the Dropout Summit. Districts were selected for participation based on over-representation of minorities in district dropout and suspension/ expulsion rates. Teams were introduced to a community planning process and asked to develop a Dropout/Graduation Action Plan for submission in FFY 2008. Each team was assigned a state-level liaison to serve as a support to the community teams and communicate successes, needs and barriers of these districts to the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development and Learning Supports Advisory Team.

Activity E – Clarify /examine/develop policies and procedures – clarify, examine, and or develop policies or procedures related to the indicator.

Arizona: Examine the impact of the change in IDEA moving the required transition planning from age 14 to age 16. At this time, anecdotal information indicates approximately 1/3 of the PEAs which have received transition support from the ADE/ESS transition specialists have indicated the staff will not change current practices, preferring to continue transition planning at age 14.

Indiana: The Indiana General Assembly to pass graduation legislation including School Flex and Fast Track diploma options.

Activity F – Program development – develop/fund new regional/statewide initiatives.

Michigan: Implement the Reaching and Teaching Struggling Learners initiative as a strategy to increase graduation and decrease dropout rates.

Mississippi: The Office of Dropout Prevention developed the Roadmap to Success: A Framework for LEA Dropout Prevention Plans. The LEA Dropout Prevention Plan process required each LEA to complete a needs assessment, describe the implementation of current LEA-level activities related to K-12 dropout prevention, and describe proposed initiatives. The plan is required to include the following components: LEA Dropout Prevention Plan Cover Sheet and Dropout Prevention Team Signature Page; Statement of Assurances; Outcomes of the Needs Assessment; Details of Current LEA Initiatives; Proposed Initiatives with Prioritized Actions.

Activity G – Collaboration/coordination – Collaborate/coordinate with families/agencies/initiative.

Alabama: Special Education, Classroom Improvement, and Prevention and Support Services staff collaborate on and support the implementation of statewide programs and initiatives. Some of the initiatives include; High Hopes AHSGE remediation, Alabama Reading Initiative, Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative, and the Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators, & Students State wide (ACCESS) Distant Learning Program.

Georgia: Georgia received additional funding from the Office for Special Education Programs (OSEP) for a SPDG effective September 1, 2007 for a five-year cycle. A major focus of the SPDG is dropout prevention. GaDOE worked directly with the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD), to provide school districts with in-depth training in proven research based strategies to decrease dropout rates and improve graduation rates.

Virginia: VDOE will continue to participate in the Virginia Team for Youth which is a collaborative effort among VDOE, Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia Department of Correctional Education, Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services, Job Corps, and Workforce Investment-Youth Coordinators. The team initiates and facilitates networking at a local level for the purpose of providing transition services to all at-risk youth.

Activity H – Evaluation – conduct internal/external evaluation of improvement processes and outcomes.

Illinois: Determine whether SPP/APR improvement activities are being implemented as planned and are reaching the target audience. Outcome: Process Evaluation completed Activities continued, revised or removed per evaluation data

Activity I – Increase/Adjust FTE – Add or re-assign FTE at State level. Assist with the recruitment and retention of LEA and service agency staff.

American Samoa: Increase highly qualified SPED teachers, RSs and related services to generate IEP student's curricula rubrics that provide interesting creative outcome for completing high school.

Connecticut: Assign a consultant from the Bureau of Special Education to dropout prevention and graduation for students with disabilities. This person will work with the Department and other state agencies (DCF and DMHAS) to strengthen and promote interagency collaboration.

New Hampshire: A second RFP for TA Consultants went out in the summer of 2008 and two new TA Consultants are expected to be hired for FFY 2008. The five TA Consultants that were hired for FFY 2007 had their contracts renewed during the summer of 2008 for the upcoming FFY 2008 school year.

Activity J – Other - Any additional types of improvement activities specific to their topic/area.

Connecticut: A request for proposals (RFP) was disseminated to targeted districts with significantly high rates of suspensions to consider participating in a demonstration project to increase graduation and decrease dropout through a focus on school engagement to decrease suspensions and expulsions.

Hawaii: Involve all feeder schools within a complex in the discussion, planning, and actions to decrease the number of students who leave high school without a diploma.

Kentucky: Develop a marketing strategy for districts on dropout prevention with follow-up on a regional basis

APPENDIX B – NEW YORK: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RECEIVED AND ACTIONS TAKEN TO CORRECT ISSUES

The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) obtained and utilized technical assistance resources and materials from the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD). Also see technical assistance resources accessed as identified for Indicator 1 (improving graduation rates).

Activities completed:

1. See graduation *Improvement Activities Completed* # 1-4 reported for Indicator 1.

2. See transition *Improvement Activities Completed* reported for Indicator 13.

3. See Indicator 1 *Improvement Activities Completed* #1 - Of the 83 school districts identified as needing assistance or intervention based on 2006-07 data, 63 school districts were identified as a direct result of their dropout rates for students with disabilities (54 as needing assistance and 9 as needing intervention).

    ▪ VESID funded Transition Coordination Sites (TCS) prepared and disseminated professional development materials and resources for school districts that identify research-based practices for engaging students in their high school programs with an emphasis on transition planning, supports and services, that encourage students to stay in school. These professional development materials draw connections among school district's graduation, dropout, transition planning, post-school outcomes and parent involvement results.

    ▪ A webinar for school districts was conducted by TransQUAL on January 15, 2009 featuring resources for a systemic approach to dropout prevention analysis and intervention based on the Dropout Prevention Intervention Framework phases and components advanced by NDPC-SD.

    ▪ In 2007-08, TCS networks distributed information cards, specific evidence-based practice descriptions, and other handouts to VESID's other technical assistance networks and school districts. These materials were obtained from NDPC-SD and National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC).

Indicator 13 Activities

Actions taken to correct noncompliance:

1. Upon submission of results of the self-review monitoring protocol where noncompliance was indicated, each school district received a written notification that it:
    o must correct the noncompliance as soon as possible, but not later than 12 months of notification;
    o review a sample of student IEPs to verify correction of noncompliance;
    o report its correction of noncompliance to the State and that the State would publicly report on the school district's correction of noncompliance in the Special Education School District Data Profiles (see http://eservices.nysed.gov/sepubrep/); and

o would be required to conduct another review of the district's IEPs the following year in order to verify continuing correction of noncompliance (see the schedule of the school years in which school districts must re-submit data on this indicator, posted at http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/sedcar/resubschedule.html).

2. The State directed its TCS to provide technical assistance to the school districts with noncompliance. 86 of the districts listed in the table above as improving their compliance did so with the provision of TCS technical assistance.

3. The New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) corrective actions included a requirement for a written improvement plan to include professional development and development of additional transition services. VESID provided direct technical assistance to NYCDOE to improve NYC's transition planning results. In May 2008, the State Education Department (SED) and Cornell University presented the use of TransQUAL to NYC IEP specialists, and TCS initiated the TransQUAL workgroup in NYC.

Improvement Activities Completed in 2007-08

VESID accessed federal technical assistance to further inform its activities to improve transition planning for students with disabilities. This included a review of information and resources, including but not limited to information available through the following Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) technical assistance centers: National Post-School Outcome Center (NPSO), National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD), and National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC). Also see resources accessed as identified for indicator 1.

Activities Completed:

- VESID convened three meetings with its funded TCS during 2007-08 to foster communication and collaboration among these regional technical assistance providers on effective practices to improve transition planning outcomes. Data regarding regional performance was shared and strategies discussed to further inform the State's transition improvement activities. Professional development was provided to clarify questions raised by schools regarding acceptability of IEP content.

- In collaboration with VESID, NYCDOE implemented three new vocational training programs sponsored by Educational Training Institute for overage and under credited students, and began development of additional programs for 2008-09.

- In 2007-08, as part of ongoing efforts to facilitate the transition of students into appropriate post-secondary options, NYCDOE worked collaboratively with VESID and the NYS Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities on making procedural changes to overcome barriers to services eligibility.

- The NYC Special Education Quality Assurance (SEQA) office monitoring activities focused on both intermediate and secondary-level schools, including some that were identified as having a graduation rate less than 55 percent for students with disabilities. The Academic Achievement Focused Review examined the schools' transition activities and services.

- Statewide, TCSs provided targeted technical assistance to school districts on effective transition practices, particularly related to student-focused transition planning in the IEPs. In 2007-08, the TCSs actively engaged with school districts in their regions during the self-review process and correction of noncompliance issues. This was done by providing individual technical assistance and through regional professional development sessions. 86 of the districts listed in the table above as improving their compliance did so with the provision of TCS technical assistance.

- To assist school districts to prepare for reviews during 2008-09, VESID notified school districts scheduled to report on this indicator in the 2008-09 school year of resources for technical assistance, and the State Performance Plan (SPP) web page for the Indicator 13 Self-Review Protocol was updated during 2007-08, including links to technical assistance resources (http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/spp/indicators/13.htm).

- 121 school district teams created work plans to improve transition planning and services using TransQUAL Online. TransQUAL Online, funded by VESID, assists school districts to develop strategic work plans to improve development and implementation of transition IEPs (http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/edi/transqual/open-portal.cfm). It also assists a school district to conduct a self-review of its transition IEPs. Since its inception, approximately 51 percent of NYS school districts have TransQUAL work plans.

- VESID provided direct technical assistance to NYCDOE to improve their transition planning results. In May 2008, SED and Cornell University presented the use of TransQUAL to NYC IEP specialists, and TCS initiated the TransQUAL workgroup in NYC. The workgroup's goal is to gain individual high school participation with TransQUAL within the boroughs of NYC in order to facilitate the positive growth of transition policies, procedures, and practices at the individual school level. The workgroup meets almost monthly, shares ideas and problem solves, and prepares for TransQUAL trainings within the boroughs.

- Throughout 2007-08, work groups of TCSs used the resources of several national technical assistance centers to assist in development of their technical assistance and resource packets, shared with school districts, students and families. This includes NDPC-SD, NPSO, NSTTAC and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Partnership Communities of Practice.

Indicator 14 Activities

Improvement Activities Completed in 2007-08

The Office of Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) accessed technical assistance to further inform its activities to improve transition planning for students with disabilities. This included a review of information and resources, including but not limited to information available through the following OSEP technical assistance centers: NPSO, National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) and National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC). Also see resources accessed as identified for indicator 1.

Activities Completed:

- See Indicators 1, 2, 8 and 13.

- Workgroups of the Transition Coordination Sites (TCS) network developed reference and technical assistance materials (e.g., presentation packages, reading lists and articles that discuss dropout prevention strategies) that show how effective delivery of transition services contributes to increased graduations and reduced dropout rates. Resources accessed to compile these resources include NDPC-SD, NPSO, NSTTAC and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Partnership Communities of Practice.

- In April 2007, VESID issued revised policies regarding college and university training vocational rehabilitation services http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/current_provider_information/vocational_rehabilitation/policies_proced ures/0405_college_and_university_training/policy.htm.

  In August 2008, VESID issued updated vocational rehabilitation policies regarding serving youth in school http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/current_provider_information/ vocational_rehabilitation/policies_procedures/0421_youth_in_school_transition_planning_and_ser vices/policy.htm.

  Taken together these policies are designed to enhance the availability of vocational rehabilitation counseling and career development services for students two years prior to school exit and increase access to post-secondary education services and supports. Beginning in fall 2008, all 15 vocational rehabilitation District Offices began professional development on the new policies. TCS and Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) Technical Assistance Center (TAC) representatives supported the training by presenting information on school policies and procedures to increase vocational rehabilitation counselors' awareness of effective ways to communicate with school districts. Through questions and answers discussions, the networks advised on strategies to work collaboratively in the secondary transition process.

- Eleven Independent Living Center (ILC) transition projects worked with students in transition, their families and school district personnel to improve student access to community based work experiences, student and parent participation in IEP meetings to discuss transition planning and identified student needs for and facilitated access to community services (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, housing, social security income (SSI) and social security disability income (SSDI) benefits, Medicaid, driver licensing). ILCs worked with TCSs on transition implementation support teams, planning informational conferences for students with disabilities transitioning to college or work settings, providing information on benefits and advocacy training, helping to prepare job coaches, and participating in career and technical education fairs. The 11 projects provided 285 training programs to 2,583 students with disabilities, 1,471 parents, 1,016 school personnel and 783 community service agency personnel.

- VESID's Model Transition Program (MTP) funded 60 collaborative projects involving more than 180 private and public high schools to develop school-wide plans, activities and programs that facilitate the transition of students with disabilities to post-secondary placements. These placements include college, vocational training programs and competitive employment with and without supports. At the end of this project, successful transition strategies will be identified and shared with high schools throughout the State. As of June 2008, a total of 9,454 students received transition services; over half of those were expected to achieve a Regents Diploma. Highlights include:
  – Sixty-five percent (6,104) of MTP students had measurable post-secondary goals in their IEPs.
  – Sixty-one percent (5,769) of students participated in career development activities.

- Nineteen percent (1,782) of MTP students participated in paid/unpaid work experiences, most of this being part-time work.
- Eighteen percent (1,664) of MTP students participated in activities aimed to facilitate transition to post-secondary education. Most of these were college information nights and assistance with college applications.
- More than 3,000 referrals to vocational rehabilitation were made.

- Technical assistance resources for Indicator 14 were provided in the annual determination letters sent to school districts scheduled to report on this indicator in the 2008-09 school year. The State Performance Plan (SPP) web page for Indicator 14 was updated during 2007-08 http://www.vesid.nysed.gov/specialed/spp/ 14postschool0809.htm. Links for national technical assistance resources for improving post-school outcomes in the protocol on the web included NPSO (http://psocenter.org/index.html).