



RESULTS DRIVEN ACCOUNTABILITY (RDA) AND CSPD

THIS SECTION REVIEWS MONTANA'S
SYSTEM OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND
INCLUDES A POWER POINT RELATING
TOPICS DISCUSSED AT THE SCHOOL
DISTRICT LEVEL

“INSANITY: DOING THE
SAME THING OVER AND
OVER AGAIN AND
EXPECTING DIFFERENT
RESULTS.”

-ALBERT EINSTEIN

Results Driven Accountability (RDA) and Montana’s Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

Introduction and Purpose

In March 2012, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced that the U.S. Department of Education would be taking steps to close the achievement gap for students with disabilities by moving away from a compliance focused approach to monitoring to one that would provide for better balance in analyzing how well students with disabilities are educated, while continuing to protect their rights under the law. This shift in focus, known as Results Driven Accountability, impacts how states will monitor districts in the future—states will now be held accountable for the performance of students with disabilities and their compliance with the requirements of IDEA. This paper will examine the role of Montana’s CSPD in support of the state’s efforts to improve results for all students with disabilities.

Overview of RDA

Section 616 of the 2004 amendments to IDEA describes the primary focus of federal and state activities as “(A) improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities; and (B) ensuring that states meet the program requirements under this part, with a particular emphasis on those requirements that are most closely related to improving educational results for children with disabilities.” This language implies that state accountability is more than ensuring compliance with the requirements of the law—it also includes accountability for improving educational results, which elsewhere are specified as the academic and functional performance of students with disabilities.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) describes a RDA system that includes three major components:

1. **The State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR):** These measure results and compliance. States have developed State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIP) to improve results outcomes in targeted areas.
2. **State Status Determinations:** These reflect on state performance in results areas, as well as compliance.
3. **Monitoring and Technical Assistance:** This includes all states, with an emphasis on those with greatest need.

A key instrument in the shift toward RDA was revealed when OSEP published revised criteria for a new SPP and APR. Moving forward, the SPP/APR would be required to include a SSIP that would focus on improving state results for students with disabilities. The SSIP is a five-year comprehensive improvement plan that focuses on a state-identified measurable result (SiMR). Each state is required to analyze its data and infrastructure and—along with the input of stakeholders—develop a target for the SiMR, as well as a coordinated, coherent, and efficient support system that will lead to the desired student improvements.

In Montana, the SiMR was developed following discussions with a number of important stakeholder

groups. The primary stakeholder group is the State Special Education Advisory Panel; however, there are a number of other important groups in which OPI sponsors and participates:

- State and regional CSPD councils
- Early Childhood Partnership for Professional Development (ECPPD)
- Paraprofessional Consortium
- Montana's Regional Education Service Areas (RESAs)
- OPI School Mental Health/Children's Mental Health Bureau at the Department of Health and Human Services (DPHHS)
- IDEA Partnership with the School Administrators of Montana (SAM); Montana Education Association (MEA) and Montana Federation of Teachers (MFT); Montana Association of School Psychologists (MASP) and others who comprise the Montana RtI Council
- OPI Special Education Division staff as participants on agency advisory councils
- The Montana Higher Education Consortium (MT HEC)
- Parents, Let's Unite for Kids (PLUK)

Collectively, these stakeholder groups have considered the possibilities for Montana's SSIP and provided input to the State Special Education Advisory Panel. The focus of the Annual CSPD Spring Partnership meeting the last two years has been dedicated to stakeholder input on Montana's SSIP. In 2014 that effort focused on Phase I of the SSIP which included:

- Data analysis;
- Analysis of state infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity;
- Development of the State identified measurable result for children with disabilities;
- Selection of coherent improvement strategies; and
- Theory of action.

The focus of that stakeholder input was **centered on successful school completion and graduation rates**. This led to the development of Montana's SiMR, which is:

The number and percentage of American Indian students with disabilities who successfully complete their secondary education will increase.

The focus of the SiMR was based on data that shows a significant discrepancy in the completion rates of American Indian students, who represent the largest minority group in the state, when compared to all other students with disabilities across Montana.

This year, the 2015 Annual CSPD Spring Partnership meeting will address Phase II of the SSIP. With the SSIP developed and the SiMR identified, stakeholders will be considering such things as:

- Infrastructure development;
- Support of local educational agency (LEA) implementation of evidence-based practices; and
- Evaluation.

Similar stakeholder input has also led to the development of Montana’s SSIP for Part C and that SiMR which will focus on the outcome of improving the social-emotional skills for children in preschool services.

Just as these stakeholder groups provided critical input on the development of the SiMR, progress toward meeting this goal will only be possible with the continued involvement Montana’s CSPD stakeholders.

Status Determinations under RDA

In 2014, OSEP included results data in its matrix for making state determinations for the first time. This resulted in a large decrease in the number of states falling into the “meets requirements” category. The data used in making Part B determinations included:

- Percentage of students with disabilities participating in statewide assessments;
- Proficiency gaps between students with disabilities and all students, as measured by statewide assessments;
- Percentage of students with disabilities scoring Basic or Above Basic on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP); and
- Percentage of students with disabilities excluded from NAEP testing.

While the NAEP was used for the first determinations under RDA, it is OSEP’s intent to change that assessment to a new, individually adopted, statewide assessment that will be implemented in the spring of 2015. In addition, some discussion has considered the inclusion of a graduation rate component to the RDA rubric; however, no specifics have been announced on that issue.

OSEP’s focus under RDA, while not abandoning the monitoring of states for compliance, is on providing a stronger emphasis on technical assistance to improve results. OSEP will support states through a concept known as differentiated monitoring and technical assistance that will focus resources on the areas of greatest need. To this end, the National Center for Systemic Improvement was created to assist states in transforming their systems to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. The center employs a technical assistance model that identifies three levels of assistance:¹

- Universal TA – designed to support all states.
- Targeted TA – for specific states identified as needing assistance.
- Intensive TA – for a select number of states that have been identified as having longstanding challenges in reaching desired outcomes for students with disabilities.

States are now moving in the direction of OSEP’s lead by looking to revise their monitoring and support systems to incorporate this differentiated monitoring and technical assistance concept as a vehicle for improving results.

¹ National Center for Systemic Improvement, TA Model, <http://www.wested.org/project/national-center-for-systemic-improvement/>

Montana's CSPD in the Age of RDA

Montana's CSPD has maintained the vision, since its inception in the early 1990s, that it is a "unified personnel development system that ensures quality educational programs and services for all children and youth with disabilities." Montana's CSPD has enhanced the capacity of the state to provide professional development and technical assistance that is connected to data from the state's APR and SSIP. By connecting the data to quality training and professional development, Montana CSPD is uniquely positioned to play a key role in RDA.

With its state council and regional council structure, Montana's CSPD interprets APR and SSIP data from each of these perspectives, thus informing a differentiated monitoring and support system that focuses resources on identified needs. This support system has the ability to move the data related to Montana's SiMR and includes the consideration of data from Part C and Section 619 as graduation rates and not just about high school. The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) recognizes Montana CSPD as an active extension of the department and the primary means of delivering improvement activities to educators around the state. Montana has long recognized that improved results for students with disabilities require a "whole school" approach that is not merely focused on special education. As such, the majority of educators who participate in CSPD-sponsored events are from general education.

Montana's CSPD and its diverse stakeholder group will play a key role in the state meeting its SiMR as it provides a responsive infrastructure capable of addressing needs on state, regional, and local levels. As many states explore ways to create such an infrastructure, Montana's state and regional CSPD councils are uniquely positioned to deliver to all of Montana's children and youth with disabilities both today and tomorrow.