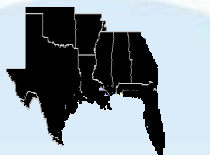


Regional Resource Center (RRC) Network Accountability Report



SERRC
Southeast Regional Resource Center



The First RRC Network
Performance Measurement Look
January 2002 – May 2004



This report is provided by members of the Regional Resource Centers' Reporting, Evaluation and Dissemination (RED) Workgroup and was developed pursuant to cooperative agreement # H326R040004, CFDA 84.326R. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs and no endorsement by that office should be inferred.

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Report Purpose

The Regional Resource Center (RRC) Network Accountability Report documents the efforts and results of the RRC Network to:

- a) agree on a common set of performance measures;
- b) collect the data on those measures, by region; and
- c) aggregate those data and use them to make statements about the effects of RRC technical assistance for clients and their systems.

This straightforward description understates a most significant achievement in the Network's long history of attempts to demonstrate the extent to which RRC technical assistance makes a difference.

The Report is organized by Performance Measure, followed by a collection of lessons learned, not only from the findings but also from the process of obtaining them. Appendices offer the original protocols, and the full texts of the original Network Evaluation Framework and the Network Accountability Report Plan. An Executive Summary provides a succinct overview and highlights of the findings and lessons.

It is important to stress that this effort focuses on the performance of RRCs, on their efforts and effects working with client states. In its RRFC Network partnership, the Federal Resource Center (FRC) provided substantial support, but as its mission, clientele and expected effects are distinct, no suggestion as to the FRC's functions or performance are intended or should be inferred. Network, as used in this report, refers to the six RRCs.

Executive Summary

Background

The Regional Resource Center (RRC) program mission is to strengthen the capacity of state systems of education and early intervention to improve results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities and their families. It is one of the longest and most successful technical assistance projects of the Office of Special Education Programs, US Department of Education. The full program currently includes six individual RRCs and one Federal Resource Center, but the focus of this effort is on RRC performance. Network, as used in this report, refers to the six RRCs.

Despite continuous evaluation of efforts with clients and in regions, connecting client effects to improved child/student results has challenged the RRCs for years. Their 2002 introduction to the Results Accountability framework (M. Friedman, Fiscal Policy Studies Institute) provided the most systematic approach to date to attempt tracking and connecting changes in student results to changes in the educational infrastructure attributable to RRC technical assistance. RRC Director approval of the RRFC Reporting, Evaluation and Documentation (RED) Workgroup proposal launched the first program-wide effort to aggregate activities and effects of RRC technical assistance.

Process

The RRC Network agreed on four common performance measures:

- 1) *A "story" from each Center describing activities and effects to date in one state that reflect efforts in a priority area.*
- 2) *Percent of states regularly implementing, reviewing and revising improvement plans based on results data.*
- 3) *Percent of clients reporting satisfaction on information requests.*
- 4) *Percent of TAA evaluations that indicate TA was of high quality.*

The Network agreed to collect data on those measures by region, and then aggregate and report those data to make statements about the effects of RRC technical assistance for clients and their systems. Although the data the Network was able to collect did not always correspond to what was anticipated in the planning, the performance measures are presented as they were adopted, and experience became a lesson for planning the next round.

Findings

Performance Measure 1: All Centers reported positive changes occurred as a result of the technical assistance provided. Evidence suggested that increased awareness among state-level and university-level policy-makers have led to improved state policies, such as changes in teacher certification standards or to improved practices in the areas of inclusive assessment, as well as data collection and analysis.

Some Centers were able to report improved state data in the area corresponding to the technical assistance, such as increased rates of exit with a regular diploma and decreased dropout rates, increased rates of participation and achievement within inclusive assessment systems, and increased Part C identification rates.

Performance Measure 2: RRC staff reported high percentages of states using results data to implement, review and revise improvement efforts, based on involvement with 37 Part B and 36 Part C agencies. Seven categories of improvement activities were weighted and displayed: self-assessment, improvement planning, focused monitoring, data systems, BPR/APR, GSEG, and SIG.

A mean ranking of 6.4 (scaled 1-low, 8-high) was given by state clients to the connection between improvement planning and activities, and increased data-based decision making. State clients rated RRC assistance to their improvement processes very highly, with a 7.1 overall mean.

Performance Measure 3: Percent of clients reporting satisfaction on information requests was high, a reported 4.4 mean (scaled 1-low, 5-high) on an aggregate of 126 respondents.

Performance Measure 4: Percent of TAA evaluations that indicate TA was of high quality was similarly positive, an overall mean of 7.0 (scaled 1-low, 8-high) on a Network aggregate of 479 evaluations.

Lessons Learned

The challenges to mounting a first effort to establish, collect and report common performance measures across a national Network were significant but necessary to the RED Workgroup and the RRC Network's commitment to program accountability. This ambitious effort yielded numerous lessons, expected and serendipitous. Measures, protocols and expectations underwent revisions as plans were put into place and experiences suggested modifications.

The lessons that follow are a selection, those synthesized by the RED Workgroup members presenting the process and results in a session at the American Evaluation Association's annual meeting in November, 2004. They are framed in statements of action that will contribute to the next stage in the RRC Program's demonstration of its efforts and effects.

Communication

- Clarify wording of Performance Measure (PM) questions
- Include representation from all interested entities in the redesign of instruments
- Build in periodic check-ins of a PM's ability to collect appropriate data
- Communicate regarding performance measures throughout the process, between and among Centers

Actions...

- Set expectations with clients regarding data collection
- Ensure that data collections are timely as well as collected at regular, agreed-upon intervals
- Ensure that we are asking the right questions and collecting the right data
- Distinguish data as useful to Centers and State clients
- Sometimes let data guide the performance measure, rather than the performance measure guide the data
- Examine staffing patterns for evaluation across all Centers

Collaboration

- Establish expectations and common agreements among Centers
- Finalize a written Network evaluation plan

Introduction/Context

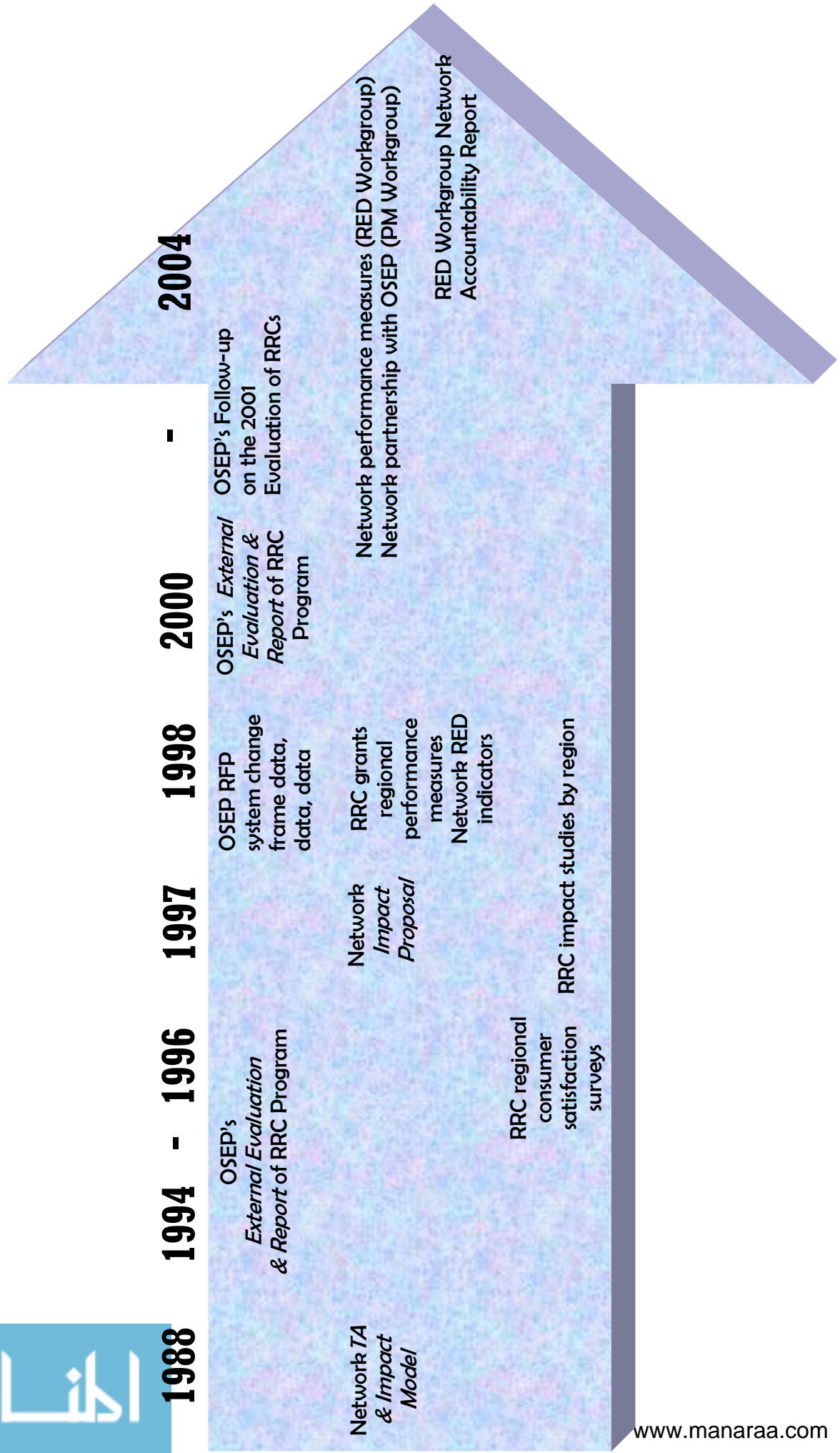
Regional Resource Centers (RRCs) have endeavored since initial funding of the program in 1969 to document how they have performed and what difference that performance might have made for their clients. Ultimately, RRCs hoped their efforts would reach the intended beneficiaries of the system, children with disabilities and their families. In 1988, program grantees gathered to define and structure the nature of RRC technical assistance, and propose ways to evaluate and document that assistance. Figure 1 on the following page illustrates the growing attention and method brought to the puzzle by both RRCs and OSEP since that seminal event.

Each period brought with it successes, challenges and increasing interest in getting better. The most recent RRC grant (1998 - 2003) occurred in the midst of heightened attention to accountability at all levels, and partnerships with states and OSEP in systematic improvement efforts offered an unprecedented opportunity to pursue individual Center and Network-wide efforts in performance measurement.

In 2001, the Reporting, Evaluation and Documentation (RED) Workgroup of the Regional Resource and Federal Centers' (RRFC) Network began building an evaluation framework to demonstrate the effects of RRC technical assistance on a program-wide basis. The RED group proposed to select common performance measures, collect data on them from each region, and aggregate the results and report them at the end of the RRCs' most recent five-year grant cycle (originally, May 2003). The RRC Directors reviewed and approved this proposal. The RED group agreed on four common performance measures and on an approach to collecting the data on these measures. The extension of the grants to May 2004 provided critical additional time for refining the approaches and collecting the data.

This document reports the results of those efforts.

Figure 1
Regional Resource Centers' Measuring...



Findings

Performance Measure 1:
RRC Efforts and Effects

Performance Measure 2:
State Use of Results Data

Performance Measures 3 & 4:
Client Feedback

PERFORMANCE MEASURE 1 Stories of RRC Efforts & Effects

In the course of collecting data on the measures, the RED Workgroup agreed to adjust the Network's Performance Measure (PM) 1,

*Percent of states where the RRC intervened and positive trend lines are evident in one or more of the OSEP priority areas,
to
A "story" from each Center describing activities and effects to date in one state that reflect efforts in a priority area.*

This decision came with the realization that there likely would be insufficient data for each region (and therefore also the Network) to confidently report a percentage.

Priority areas targeted by the Centers included **Exiting, Inclusive Assessment, Disproportionality, and Part C Identification**. To address these areas of State need, RRCs partnered with OSEP, an array of TA&D Centers and other interested entities in developing and implementing technical assistance plans. These partners included: the National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO), Interstate New Teacher Accreditation Standards Consortium (INTASC), Center for Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (CPBIS), National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC), Department of Children and Families, the African and Caribbean American Families of Children with Disabilities, the NAACP, parent advocacy centers, state and local departments and boards of education, education associations, and multiple colleges and universities.

All Centers reported positive changes occurred as a result of the technical assistance provided. Centers offer evidence that increased awareness among state-level and university-level policy-makers have led to improved state policies, such as changes in teacher certification standards or to improved practices in the areas of inclusive assessment, as well as data collection and analysis.

Some Centers were able to report improved state data in the area corresponding to the technical assistance, such as increased rates of exit with a regular diploma and decreased dropout rates, increased rates of participation and achievement within inclusive assessment systems, and increased Part C identification rates.

These stories offer a modified national "baseline" of data collection and analysis, and will contribute to continuing Network efforts to obtain and report reliable data at both individual Center and program levels. The Network has long attempted to effectively demonstrate the results of its technical assistance while recognizing that the clients (states) actually hold the ultimate data (Figure 1). These stories comprise the first collective endeavor, in what is anticipated to be an ongoing effort, to align RRC technical assistance with those state data.

Region 1: Northeast Regional Resource Center (NERRC) Involvement with Connecticut Disproportionality Activities

State Context:

Connecticut (CT) identified concerns about overrepresentation of minorities in Special Education in several of its larger, urban centers. To assess and help address some of these issues, the CT SEA representatives requested technical assistance from the NERRC.

In October of 2002, NERRC held a two-day meeting in Springfield, MA, entitled "Addressing Disproportionality in Special Education," which had a significant impact on CT's efforts to address the issue. Director George Dowaliby, Bureau Chief for Special Education and Pupil Services for the CT SEA, led a team that included Dr. Nancy Cappello, a Bureau consultant. The team used the conference to begin planning for a statewide summit it was holding in March 2003 to address disproportionality. Dr. Cappello was the lead contact person for CT on the project. NERRC participated on the team that planned the summit.

Following the NERRC-sponsored conference in MA, CT identified 34 LEAs that had serious issues with disproportionality, based upon district data, and invited them to send teams to participate in the summit. As part of their work at the summit, the 34 district teams drafted action plans about how they would tackle disproportionality. An analysis showed many common strategies or activities that districts identified: reviewing and using data effectively, providing staff training, improving instructional practices in general education (e.g., implementing differentiated instruction), and providing professional development on cultural competence.

CT invited three of the speakers from NERRC's MA conference – Drs. Gwen Webb-Johnson, Margaret McLaughlin and Darren Woodruff – to participate in the March 2003 summit. Dr. Webb-Johnson was the keynote speaker for the first day of the CT summit and also conducted a workshop. Drs. McLaughlin and Woodruff conducted workshops and served on a panel. NERRC sponsored Dr. Woodruff's participation. NERRC also researched other participants for the summit, including Dr. Eric Smith, superintendent of schools for Anne Arundel County, MD, who was the keynote speaker for the second day of the event.

In May 2003, the CT SEA invited the local district teams back for a follow-up meeting. NERRC researched the keynote speaker for the event, Dr. Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University. Twenty-two districts participated. Each district received a \$1,500 planning grant and 11 of the districts received \$5,000 grants to implement their plans.

As part of the summit work, two state level teams, one on Policy and Governance and the other on Teacher Preparation, met and developed a series of recommendations to address disproportionality and the achievement gap. NERRC participated on the State Policy and Governance Team that drafted recommendations on how to close the achievement gap and address disproportionality and over-identification.

Evaluations gave high marks for both the March and May 2003 events. In May, almost two of three participants reported they were doing things differently as a result of the summit. Action steps being taken included: analyzing data, sharing information with colleagues, assembling committees, reviewing assessment tools, offering professional development and forging new alliances between special and general education.

Summit II was held in March 2004. NERRC identified and recommended the keynote speaker, Dr. Pedro Noguera of New York University, formerly of Harvard University, and he was given high marks for his presentations. Twenty-nine districts were represented and 255 people attended. Participants said it was a success, with half calling it “excellent” and 41 percent saying it was “very good.” Eighty percent said they believed a third summit is needed to keep repeating the message and to monitor progress.

NERRC’s Technical Assistance:

- Our October 2002 conference gave CT information they could use in planning their summits, but also informed how they think about disproportionality. CT SEA staff also made contacts with several speakers and presenters they invited to present at their summit.
- NERRC researched and made recommendations on other participants in CT summits, including the keynote for Summit I, the keynote for the May 2003 follow up and one of the two keynote speakers and presenters at the Summit II in March 2004.
- NERRC participated on the stakeholders’ group that planned the summits and the Policy and Governance State Team which made a series of recommendations to the education commissioner’s office on how to address disproportionality and the achievement gap.
- NERRC regularly supplied the SEA with important articles and resources that address disproportionality or the achievement gap.

In addition to NERRC, some of the partners involved with the DOE in this effort are: the Department of Children and Families, the African and Caribbean American Families of Children with Disabilities, the CT Association of Boards of Education, the State Advisory Council, the CT Parent Advocacy Center, the Commission on Children, the CT Education Association, the NAACP, and several colleges and universities.

Results to Date:

According to the DOE contact leading the disproportionality effort, although there is as yet no “hard” data to show activities are working, there is a **demonstrable change in education officials**, who now understand the issue much better and realize they can do things to reduce disproportionality and close the achievement gap.

The CT Data Manager reported that the formula they used to assess disproportionality changed between the two years so they are not equivalent groups, thus it is not possible to attribute improvement at this time. She continued, *“We used 2001- 2002 data to invite districts to the summit in March of 2003. We then used 2002- 2003 data to invite districts to the summit in March of 2004. But, the year two analysis data, 2002- 2003 data, were already collected (Dec. 2002) before we held the first summit in March of 2003. Impact from the Summits should be seen in the Dec. 2003 data that is being ‘cleaned’ right now.”*

NERRC has contributed to the dramatic change in mindset in the SEA about disproportionality. Many special educators admitted earlier that they did not see the importance of disproportionality, or they believed it was only an economic issue they could not influence. Now, there is a focus from the commissioner’s office to the school building level that disproportionality is an important issue and there is much that can and must be done about it.

Region 2: Mid-South Regional Resource Center (ASC/MSRRC) Delaware's Assessment System

State Context:

The Delaware (DE) Department of Education tried for several years to move toward a fully inclusive large-scale assessment system. Among their initiatives were a research project funded through the U. S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement on accommodations to the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP), development of an alternate assessment approach using a portfolio, and extensive work on the state accountability formulas to better include students with disabilities and students who have English as a second language. However, the data indicated that a significant number of students with disabilities were still exempt from the DSTP. There was a need to broaden the range of acceptable accommodations, complete and implement the alternate portfolio efforts and integrate all students with disabilities in the accountability formulae. As test data became available and the DE database became more sophisticated (in 2001-2002), new questions arose regarding such issues as:

1. The extent to which students who were scoring poorly were poorly instructed or were inappropriately tested,
2. The relationship between placement and test scores,
3. The extent to which students were being successful over time (longitudinal data), and
4. The extent to which there was bias in the test items.

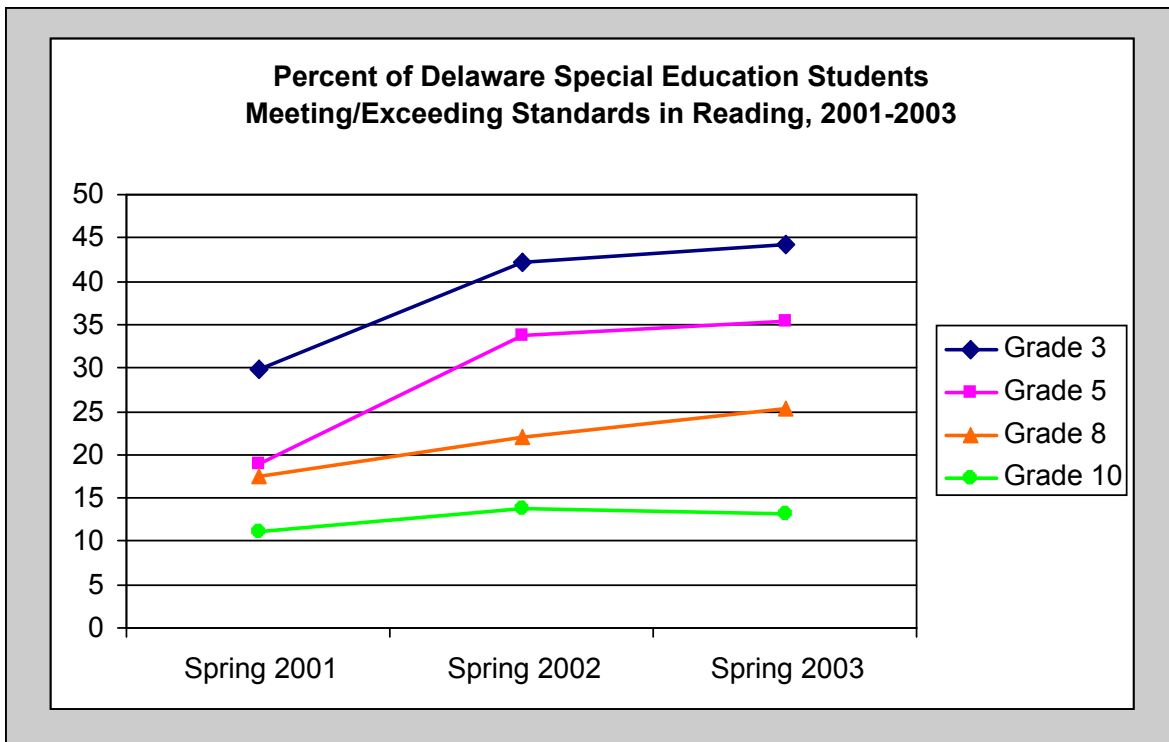
ASC/MSRRC's Technical Assistance:

ASC/MSRRC assisted Delaware in moving toward a fully inclusive large scale assessment system by providing information and consultation to SEA staff about policy and state practices, by advising the state task force on accommodations, by serving on the alternate assessment advisory committee and general Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP), by providing consultation on question writing and data analysis and by assisting them with an analysis of data on students who are scoring in less-than adequate ways on the DSTP. The RRC assistance was in part a collaborative effort with Martha Thurlow from the National Center for Educational Outcomes (NCEO) and other assessment stakeholders.

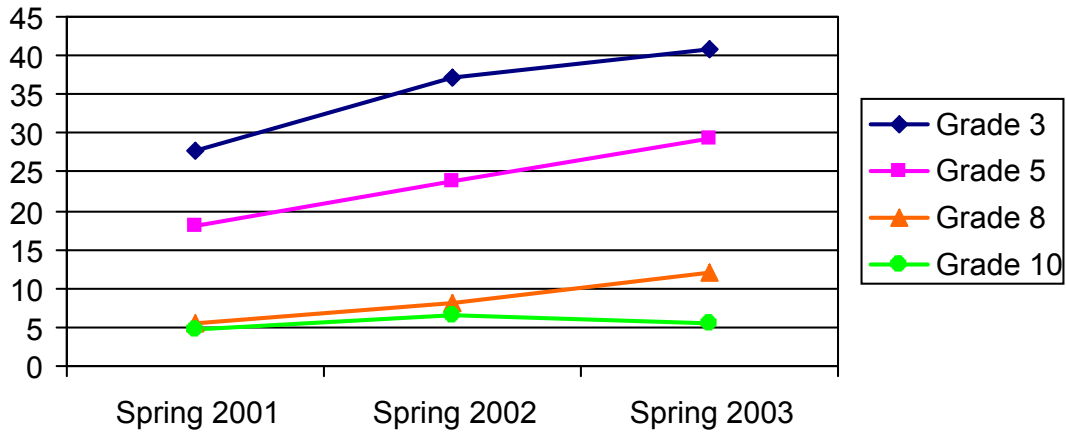
Results to Date:

TAC participants and Delaware state staff were interviewed regarding the impact of ASC/MSRRC assistance on the state testing program. Each interviewee mentioned that ASC/MSRRC had been integral in assisting the state make connections with other states, NCEO, TAC experts from around the nation, and introducing them to the Tindal and Fuchs article on assessment and instructional accommodations, an article ASC/MSRRC contracted to write. The interviewees noted an impact as a result of ASC/MSRRC work. A Delaware SEA staff member declared, *“All kids are included in the alternate [assessment] or the regular assessment with accommodations. We wouldn’t be there without MSRRC help.”* Other participants made comments such as: *“With [ASC/MSRRC] help, Delaware is one of the first groups to meet federal assessment requirements.”* Overall, Mid-South’s assistance has been shown to be effective in informing the correct state staff of policy issues and assisting in achieving policy change that brings Delaware closer to full compliance with many federal education requirements. Its influence has stretched to the classroom level since students have access to a variety of accommodations for both instruction and assessment that were not available prior to 1999.

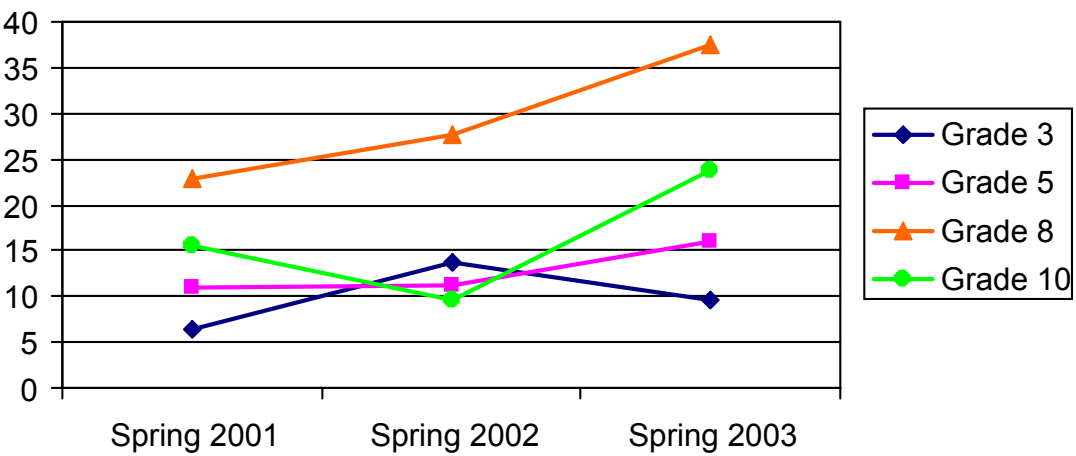
The following charts show the percent of special education students meeting the DSTP content standards for reading, math, and writing. The number of students with disabilities participating in the large scale assessments has increased from 2001 to 2003. Concurrently, the scores for students with disabilities have generally increased during this time period in each of the grades tested, as the trend graphs below depict.



Percent of Delaware Special Education Students Meeting/Exceeding Standards in Mathematics, 2001-2003



Percent of Delaware Special Education Students Meeting/Exceeding Standards in Writing, 2001-2003



Region 3: Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) SERRC, INTASC, CPBIS, and the Alabama Teacher Education Standards Alignment Project

State Context:

The State of Alabama was one of the first states to implement an exit exam as part of the requirements for students to receive a regular diploma. Since its inception in the early '80s, the exam has been revisited on a regular basis to confirm that its difficulty ensures that students are well prepared to meet workforce and college preparatory demands, as well as the necessary Carnegie units required for successful high school completion. The present graduation requirements were in place for the graduating class of 2001 and included four years of electives and higher-level English, math, science, and social studies (also referred to as the 4 x 4 curriculum), thereby increasing the required number of credits from 21 to 24. The graduation requirements also increased the examination's difficulty from the previous eighth grade level to eleventh grade level, and science and social studies exams were phased in during subsequent years.

Alabama's high school graduation requirements were – and still remain – among the nation's highest. However, the increased rigor was not without its cost. Prior to the increase in the exam's difficulty, just over 30% of students with disabilities had been able to pass the exam and receive a regular high school diploma. Many of those students had historically been taught basic subject matter by special education teachers (e.g., general math) who did not necessarily hold certification in the subject area taught, but those teachers had still been able to assist the students to pass the exam. However, state officials could see that the new, more rigorous academic demands could only be met by teachers with appropriate content area expertise – usually, the regular education teacher.

Although Alabama had previously made progress toward including more students in general education classes, many teachers cited their lack of expertise in providing appropriate accommodations to assist students with disabilities in regular classes. *I didn't go to school and get prepared to teach special education students!* teachers often said. Since the state education budget was dependent upon sales tax revenue, recent economic downturns had resulted in budget cuts in local education agencies, so additional personnel for co-teaching was, at best, mere wishful thinking for local superintendents. A systemic intervention aimed at the “root cause” was necessary to achieve the level needed to pass the new graduation exam and the required rigorous coursework. Clearly, the confluence of the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act, the demands of the modern workforce, and greatly increased graduation standards meant that all teachers needed to be prepared to teach all students in their

least restrictive environment, if increased numbers of students with disabilities were to receive a regular high school diploma. Improved post-secondary outcomes for students with disabilities depended upon the students' receipt of a regular diploma, as post-secondary options were limited for recipients of the Alabama Occupational Diploma and graduation certificates.

SERRC's Technical Assistance:

The Alabama state director of special education and members of his staff, the Alabama state director of teacher certification, a dean of a school of education, and the Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC) director and staff determined that, without intervention, the graduation rate would gradually improve; however, the rate of improvement or of turning the curve, was not adequate. SERRC and the Alabama directors met with the INTASC staff to design a meeting composed of a variety of stakeholders to align Alabama's teacher certification standards with those of CEC and the Interstate New Teacher Accreditation Standards Consortium (INTASC), a TA&D funded entity. The initial meetings were facilitated by SERRC in partnership with INTASC in November and December 2002, with follow up meetings held in 2003. The stakeholders present at the meetings included deans of all Alabama state schools of education, higher education faculty, general and special education teachers, business representatives, parents, and concerned citizens.

Results to Date:

Although it may be many years before the promise of this strong innovation is evident in student data, the meetings have thus far shaped new policy directions. The revised teacher certification standards have been approved by the state board of education and have been codified. Students in all state schools of education receive a copy of the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) they are expected to demonstrate before being certified as teachers in the state of Alabama. Education coursework is structured based upon the KSAs and teachers design tests accordingly. Students who fail to meet the standards are counseled by their instructor and meet to develop improvement plans.

In addition to changes in policy and expectations for teacher education students, a clustering of professional development opportunities has been offered to Alabama teachers in a wide range of venues. For example, teachers have access to electronic professional development CDs that offer information on their desktops regarding accommodations for students. The Alabama State Improvement Grant (SIG), in collaboration with SERRC, has been vigorous in its efforts to provide teachers with scientifically based strategies to improve teaching and learning for a wide range of students. Partnerships have been strong with the OSEP-funded Center for Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to implement training for schools to improve student behavior. Moreover, there is an increased awareness on the part of

the education community from higher-education faculty to classroom teachers that all teachers are expected to teach all students. This expectation is creating positive results, including changes in state board regulations that now extend waivers to students with documented disabilities who fail graduation exam sub-tests while still encouraging students to work toward high standards in the other subject areas.

Julia Causey, Alabama State Department of Education: We had a difficult task which SERRC made possible and feasible through their planning. As a result of this technical assistance from SERRC, we went to the State Board of Education with the recommendations from our committee's work and made changes in the SDE guidelines. We have revised our certification procedures at the SDE and are now planning next steps – long lasting results.

Although available data indicate low numbers of students with disabilities (as well as of students without disabilities) exiting high school with a regular diploma, **Alabama has implemented a number of initiatives designed to increase the high school graduation rate**, including teacher pre-service and inservice training, as well as exploring additional options to increase the avenues available for students to achieve graduation with a regular diploma. The table below shows graduation rates for students with disabilities receiving the regular diploma and the Alabama Occupational Diploma.

Year	Graduation Rate for SWD	Diploma Rate for AOD
98 – 99	31.6	n/a
00 – 01	22.0	n/a
01 – 02	22.5	22.3
02 – 03	17.4	21.4

SWD = Students with disabilities
AOD = Alabama Occupational Diploma

Region 4: Great Lakes Area Regional Resource Center (GLARRC) Complaint Investigator Training

State Context:

Driven by requests from State Directors of Special Education, GLARRC contracted with Kevin C. McDowell, J.D., General Counsel for the Indiana Department of Education, to train new and experienced State Complaint Investigators and others on conducting investigations and writing reports.

GLARRC's Technical Assistance:

The Complaint Investigator Training course addressed the following four objectives:

- To introduce a model framework for conducting legally sufficient complaint investigations.
- To identify the steps which a complaint investigator must follow and the decisions to be made when conducting an investigation.
- To introduce cognitive and procedural strategies which are used by experts in the field.
- To provide a forum to discuss ideas, techniques, issues, and problems relating to the investigation of complaints.

Five Complaint Investigation Training courses were held. State Complaint Investigators and Regional Resource Center staff members from across the nation were invited; a total of 129 representatives from 38 states attended. Table 1 displays participants by state for each of the five training sessions (RRC participants are not included in this table). Massachusetts (n=17), Illinois (n=12), New York (n=9), Pennsylvania (n=9), Maryland (n=8) and West Virginia (n=8) had the highest state representation at the five training sessions.

Table 1: State Participants in the Complaint Investigation Training Sessions

State	6/00 CO	8/00 MO	7/01 MA	7/01 IL	7/02 MO
Arizona	1	3			
Bureau of Indian Affairs	1				
Colorado	2				
Connecticut	1		2		
Delaware				1	
Kansas	1	2			
Hawaii					2
Idaho		1			
Illinois		1		9	2
Indiana					2
Iowa	1				
Kentucky				1	
Louisiana				2	
Maine			1		
Maryland		3		5	
Massachusetts			17		
Michigan	3				2
Minnesota	3				
Missouri		2			1
Montana	1				
Nebraska	1				
New Mexico	3				
New Jersey		1	2		
New York	1		8		
North Carolina	1	1			
South Carolina				1	
Ohio	1	3			1
Pennsylvania	2			5	2
North Dakota	1				
South Dakota	1				
Texas		1			
Utah	1				
Vermont		1	2		
Virginia				1	2
Virgin Islands					3
West Virginia	2	3		3	
Wisconsin					1
Wyoming	1				
Total = 38 states	29	22	32	28	18

Methods

Data were collected through a participant survey, sent to 89 State Complaint Investigators who participated in the five training sessions. Twenty-one participants returned the survey for a response rate of 24%. The survey asked about the impact of the Complaint Investigator Training:

1. In what ways did State Complaint Investigators use the information presented at the training?

2. Did participation in the Complaint Investigator Training help facilitate change at the state and district levels?
3. Are the complaint investigative procedures implemented in the states meeting the needs of students with disabilities and their families?

Results

Table 2 responses indicate that the information was used predominantly for investigating and writing complaints; 20% used the information in providing consultation/technical assistance services.

Table 2: Participant Responses Identifying Activities For Which the Information Was Used

Activities	Tot %	6/00 CO	8/00 MO	7/01 MA	7/01 IL	7/02 MO
Providing consultation/technical assistance services	20%	3	3	0	1	7
Planning and conducting training	4%	1	1	0	0	2
Developing & disseminating print information	10%	2	3	0	0	2
Investigating complaints	29 %	4	6	2	1	7
Writing Complaints	28%	4	5	2	0	7
Others:	9%	1	1	0	0	4

The participant survey also asked participants in what types of tasks they used the information associated with Complaint Investigations. Table 3 illustrates the array and percentages from the respondents.

Table 3: Participant Responses Identifying the Complaint Investigations Tasks For Which the Information was Used

Activities	Tot %	6/00 CO	8/00 MO	7/01 MA	7/01 IL	7/02 MO
Determining the validity of complaint allegations	14%	3	4	2	1	7
Determining sufficiency of findings of fact	14%	3	5	2	1	7
Determining the need for additional supporting documentation	13%	2	4	2	1	7
Defining solutions to the presenting problem	10%	3	2	1	0	6
Determining corrective actions	10%	3	3	1	0	5
Writing formal complaints	10%	4	3	1	0	4
Determining corrective actions	10%	3	3	1	0	5
Writing letters of findings	13%	3	4	2	2	5
Making legal decisions	10%	1	2	1	1	5

Seventeen respondents indicated their participation in the training helped facilitate a change in their states; four reported no change. Table 4 summarizes the participant responses to ways that training impacted on or resulted in a change at the state level. Table 4 illustrates that 13 (24%) of the responses indicated that investigative procedures and report writing changed at the state level, while 12 (22%) responses indicated evaluation of complaints and nine (17%) indicated writing complaints changed at the state level.

Table 4: Participant Reports of Training Impacts at the State Level

	n	%
Investigation procedures changed/refined	13	24%
Review of investigations changed	7	13%
Writing complaints changes	9	17%
Report writing changed	13	24%
Evaluation of complaints changes	12	22%

Table 5 displays responses to the same question about impacts at the district level. Eight respondents reported change at the district level in their states, while 11 respondents indicated no change.

Table 5: Participant Reports of Training Impacts at the District Level

	n	%
Investigation procedures changed/refined	3	23%
Review of investigations changed	3	23%
Writing complaints changes	3	23%
Report writing changed	3	23%
Evaluation of complaints changes	1	8%

Changes for Students and Families

Participants were asked, “Do you think the complaint investigative procedures that are implemented in your state are meeting the needs of students with disabilities and their families?” Of the 21 responses, 18 (86%) indicated **yes** while 3 (14%) indicated **no**.

Participants also responded to an open-ended question on how complaint investigative procedures are meeting the needs of students with disabilities and their families. Individual

responses included:

- √ The process complies with the law.

- √ Complaint procedures have been streamlined.
- √ An appeal process helps ensure correct results.
- √ Parents are not shy about using the system.
- √ Parents know they will get immediate action.
- √ There is a timely resolution of complaints.
- √ Parents are provided with various alternatives.
- √ State Departments of Education are rarely contacted regarding final reports and decisions.
- √ Parties feel that the process is fair and impartial.
- √ A statewide system of parent advocates was developed using state and federal funding.
- √ Advocates are trained in special education law.
- √ Information provided to school officials and parents is clear.

Participants identified the following needed improvements:

- √ Principals need to be held accountable for decisions made at the building level.
- √ The process needs to focus more on the provision of FAPE and achievement for the student, not just the specific complaint allegations.
- √ The complaint regulations do not address relationship issues the ways mediations can.

Summary

The Complaint Investigator Training provided state personnel with information used to investigate complaints, write complaints, provide consultation/technical assistance services, and develop and disseminate print information. Participants reported that the information was used in determining the validity of complaint allegations, sufficiency of findings of fact, and the need for additional supporting documentation. Participants also indicated that the information helped them to define solutions to the presenting problems, determine corrective actions, and write formal complaints, and reported that their participation in the training helped facilitate changes at the state level. Respondents reported specific changes that included revision or refinement of complaint procedures, process for complaints review and writing, and how reports are written. Respondents to the impact evaluation indicated that the investigative procedures being implemented in their states are meeting the needs of students with disabilities and their families.

Other unsolicited impact of the training included the following comments made by state staff:

- *"I thought the training was excellent at the time, but it's in the reflecting on the training during our practice that I've realized how really great the training was."*
- *"I liked having time with people from other states doing the same thing as I do."*
- *"We enjoyed the training conducted by Kevin McDowell. By the way, we had him conduct training for our region (sponsored by MPRRC) in June 2002."*

Region 5: Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (MPRRC) Transition in Montana

State Context:

Montana, upon completing a self-assessment and OSEP visit as part of the Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP), recognized that despite almost 10 years that included a federal transition grant and considerable training, secondary transition was not occurring as it was intended. It was obvious that the IDEA regulatory requirements for transition planning were still missing from many student files. While MT realized that focusing on regulatory requirements did not automatically lead to better outcomes for students, MT staff did realize the importance of quality transition planning for improved student outcomes. They realized that many IEP teams did not understand “what” or “how” to implement the transition requirements and thus did not have the foundation needed for effective transition planning.

MPRRC’s Technical Assistance:

Montana learned about a pilot project operating in Wyoming under the leadership of MPRRC. This pilot project, which has become known as TOPs (Transition Outcomes Project), was demonstrating some impressive preliminary results in pilot districts. Montana expressed an interest in replicating this project and requested assistance from MPRRC.

MPRRC met with representatives from the Montana Office of Public Instruction and a preliminary plan was developed to pilot the TOPs project. Initially, a video conference was held across the state to explain the project to districts. Following the video conference, two districts volunteered and within three months an additional 53 districts had volunteered. While improved post-school outcomes was the long range desired result, it was clear that the first step was to increase the documentation that transition planning was taking place in line with the IDEA regulatory requirements. To reach the immediate result of improved transition planning, the following activities were identified and implemented:

- Refine evaluation instruments and IEP review procedures.
- Identify and train evaluation team members on the instrument, process, and procedures.
- Select districts and review team members, and visit districts for IEP reviews.
- Compile, analyze, and summarize findings.

- Follow up in local districts to report findings from the IEP review; develop strategies; and set target goals, timelines, and schedules for addressing the transition requirements that were found to be a problem.
- Provide training to local education agency personnel and associated staff.
- Provide follow-along advice and training as local education agencies implement the skills, knowledge, strategies, and interventions.
- Conduct a final review of files to determine if change had occurred.

These activities were based upon the TOPs conceptual framework and belief that *if* one could

- determine the specific problems in developing and implementing each of the transition requirements,
- work with teachers and have them help identify and develop strategies to try to resolve the problems at the level where the problems existed (in schools and buildings, with IEP teams), and
- ◆ provide concrete examples and strategies for possible changes that could be put into place that demonstrate improvement,

then the requirements could be met, improvement demonstrated, and results shown.

Results to Date:

Baseline data using the TOPs Checklist was gathered on over 1,000 students 14 years of age and older from across Montana during the 2000/2001 school year. One year later, during the 2001/2002 school year, final data were gathered on students from the same districts to determine any change regarding the transition requirements. Below is a summary of the baseline and final data.

Requirement	Baseline ¹	Final, ^{2,3}
Student Invitation	67%	95%
Invitation of other agency	27%	29%
Statement of Transition Service Needs	46%	65%
Statement of Needed Transition Services	74%	91%
SNTS – coordinated set of activities	38%	43%
SNTS – activities promote movement to post school	46%	61%
Statement of interagency responsibilities/linkages	17%	47%

While none of the **transition requirements** met 100% compliance, it was clear that they **had improved**. In addition to the training conducted with review teams, specific training on each of the requirements was a large part of the Report Out meetings in local districts. The Report Out Meeting process in the TOPs project recognized several key aspects to change with staff in local districts.

1. Staff in each district was presented with the baseline data with the understanding that the information had nothing to do with compliance. It was

¹ Baseline n = approximately 1,100 IEPs of students 14 years of age and older

² Final n = approximately 1,000 IEPs of students 14 years of age and older

³ Time period from baseline to final was 12 months.

explained that if they choose to do something different they first must know and understand what they are doing and how well – a function of the baseline data.

2. The TOPs model recognizes that if change is going to occur with staff that is primarily responsible for the requirements (i.e., special education teachers) they must “own the problem.” Staff was presented with the option to set whatever goal they desired on each of the requirement findings. If their goal was greater than the baseline data results then they – the staff – “owned the problem.”
3. The TOPs model also recognized that the staff must “own the solution” to the problem. As a part of the Report Out Meeting process, staff was asked to identify solutions in order to achieve their desired goal. It was believed that the teachers, once they understood the requirement and where they were currently functioning, could identify solutions or strategies in order to improve.
4. Another critical component to the Report Out Meeting process was to allow the staff to set a timeline for making the necessary changes with the understanding that at the designated future date the review team would come back to review files once again. Most staff stated that they needed one full year or one full IEP cycle to make the changes.

Data from the MT Annual Performance Report shows a substantial rise in graduation rates from the 1999-2000 to the 2000 - 2001 school year, then years of slight decline for both populations. Testimony from one teacher (below) would indicate that graduation rates can be affected in a positive direction with effective transition planning. However, to realize this more fully, it may be necessary to move into phase two to determine what other strategies will support an even higher rate of graduation for students with disabilities.

MONTANA GRADUATION RATE COMPARISON
Baseline and Trend Data
For School Years 1999-2000 Through 2002-2003

School Year	12th Grade Enrollment for School Population ¹	Graduate Count for School Population ²	Graduation Rate for School Population ³	Students with Disabilities, Ages 14-21, Leaving School ⁴	Graduate Count for Students with Disabilities	Graduation Rate for Students with Disabilities ⁵
1999-2000	11,571	10,925	94.4%	911	512	56.2%
2000-2001	11,371	10,903	95.9%	1,055	739	70.0%
2001-2002	11,307	10,628	94.0%	1,113	765	68.7%
2002-2003	11,433	10,554	92.3%	1,126	769	68.3%

Data Notes:

¹School population (enrollment) reported on October 1 includes students with disabilities and can't be disaggregated.

²School population (graduates) reported on October 1 includes students with disabilities and can't be disaggregated.

³Graduation Rate for School population = Graduates divided by 12th grade enrollment for school population.

⁴ Special Education **School Leavers** include: Number of students, ages 14-21+, all disabilities, leaving school by graduation (23), certificate (32), dropped out (04), died (22), or reached maximum age (15).

⁵Students with Disabilities Graduation Rate = Graduates divided by Special Education School Leavers.

In some cases the graduate count is relatively low causing a wide variation in the rates. This variation may suggest a discrepancy where, in fact, the numbers are too small to be statistically significant.

Testimonial:

Participation in the Transition Outcomes Project had a significant impact on the graduation rate of our special education students at Ronan High School. Typically, our high school would start out with about 13 freshman and graduate on the average only two students from that class. Since implementing an authentic transition program in our school, we now have significantly reduced the dropout rate and greatly increased the graduation rate. We have gone from graduating two students to graduating eight. The project provided our high school with the tools and information we needed to organize teams of parents, students, and outside community agencies all with a common goal: to create a viable plan for

the student that would allow the student an attainable future. Having this plan kept many students in school that would have otherwise dropped out. As a teacher, I felt as if I made a difference in students' lives that would have been otherwise minimized or negated.

— Maer Rubley, Special Education Teacher, Ronan, MT

MONTANA DROPOUT RATE COMPARISON
Baseline and Trend Data
For School Years 1999-2000 through 2002-2003

School Year	Total School Population, Grades 7-12 ¹	Dropout Count for School Population, Grades 7-12 ²	Dropout Rates for School Population ³	Total Students in Special Education, Ages 14-22+ ⁴	Dropout Count for Special Education, Ages 14-22+ ⁵	Dropout Rates for Special Education ⁶
1999-2000	77,070	2,211	2.9%	5,907	350	5.9%
2000-2001	76,275	2,295	3.0%	6,078	297	4.9%
2001-2002	75,222	2,047	2.7%	6,139	321	5.2%
2002-2003	74,961	1,901	2.5%	6,268	325	5.2%

Data Notes:

¹School population (enrollment) reported on October 1st includes students with disabilities and can't be disaggregated.

²School population (dropouts) reported on October 1st includes students with disabilities and can't be disaggregated.

³Dropout Rates for School population = Dropouts divided by Total School Population (enrollment), grades 7-12.

⁴Students with Disabilities, ages 14-22+, as reported on the December 1st Child Count.

⁵Students with Disabilities reported as dropping out of school on the Exiting Report.

⁶Dropout Rates for Students with Disabilities = Dropouts divided by Total Students with disabilities, ages 14-22+.

In some cases the dropout count numbers are relatively low causing a wide variation in the dropout rates. This variation may suggest a discrepancy where, in fact, the numbers are too small to be statistically significant.

Reports from the clients:

My staff told me that they have sent you some information. I hope that someone passed along that we made our new Transition [Outcomes Project] goals last year with 100 percent of our students who were eligible for a driver's license graduating with one. [Also], 100 percent of our students graduated from high school with an unpaid or paid work experience or two!

The Outcomes Project has given renewed meaning for special education staff. It gave importance and relevance to what they were doing with and for kids. It changed the focus of our programs at Ronan Middle and High Schools. Students understand that the choices they make today will affect them for future employment. We have become acquainted with our local service providers and held our first transition fair last spring with great attendance.

— Joan Graham, Director of Special Education, Ronan, MT

The MTOP [Montana Transition Outcomes Project] has served to “keep the Transition fires burning” in Montana. The project has become the foundation to build on for improved Transition activities. The benefits include

- *Development of a cadre of people who have knowledge and expertise and are now poised to provide technical support and training to others in the State;*
- *A forum to develop more consistent practices and a greater understanding of Transition, statewide;*
- *Allowing OPI to provide leadership to educators and develop guidelines;*
- *Improved student/parent invitation forms to reflect federal transition requirements;*
- *Established systematic approach to review schools' IEP forms regarding compliance with federal guidelines;*
- *Established systematic approach to provide technical assistance to schools ensuring ongoing improvement; and*
- *Improved agency/school interaction and dialogue resulting in better transition outcomes for students.*

—Mike Peterson, Director, Montana Center on Disabilities, MSU, Billings

Region 6: Western Regional Resource Center (WRRC) Process to Performance: Nevada Part C Turns the Curve

State Context:

In Summer 2000, NV Part C staff attended the Self-Assessment Institute co-sponsored by the RRFC Network, NECTAC and OSEP. In July 2001, the WRRC sponsored a meeting for Alaska, Oregon, and Nevada, those states in the Western region about to embark on their first self-assessment (SA) process. The meeting focused on expectations and resources, and featured the SEA Director from Idaho describing their just-completed experience. Although NV Part C was not at this meeting, staff had separately contacted the WRRC for help with its Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process. NV Part C staff attended the 2001 Summer Institutes on Self Assessment (SA) and Implementation Planning (IP), again jointly offered by the RRFC Network, NECTAC and OSEP.

WRRC's Technical Assistance:

NV Parts B and C formed a Joint Coordinating Committee for their SA, but maintained parallel processes, with WRRC support to both. Each Part had its own manager, and a representative from "the other" Part on its Steering Committee, and used the WRRC for information and facilitation and NECTAC assistance during the process.

In December 2001, NV Part C submitted its final Self Assessment to OSEP. In January 2002, the WRRC held a seminar on Results Accountability (RA), intended to support the region's states in both their SA and IP processes. NV Part C asked the WRRC to introduce RA to its Steering Committee during their Improvement Planning orientation meeting in March. The RA tools were adopted to facilitate and complete the IP process, for which the WRRC provided continuous facilitation.

Concomitantly with the IP process, NV Part C was being relocated from the Department of Human Resources to the Department of Health. The SA process had provided "the state" a public forum for informing and engaging stakeholders to look hard at the major noncompliance areas (reported in their SA document). During this same period, an internal audit had revealed inconsistencies in the Part C program; that report suggested part of the difficulty was flat funding from the NV Legislature for the past seven years. Part C staff became much more public with their frustrations and the lack of progress. *Being transparent was the best thing we ever did*, reported Wendy Whipple, the Part C Coordinator. Taking OSEP's offer of amnesty for honesty at face

value, NV Part C staff purposefully used the SA and IP processes to promote significant changes in services to infants and toddlers. When OSEP made its verification visit in July 2003, and asked “the state” (now the Department of Health) whether they were interested in fixing their issues, the answer was a resounding “yes.” The shift in scrutiny and in lead agency highlighted the variations in service delivery models in the state. This, coupled with the growing recognition of the need for data, fostered a re-examination of the overall philosophy and mission of Part C. Stemming from this came a renewed team-based approach to family-centered services in natural environments. Families were increasingly involved in choices and decisions. The trend in “drop-outs” from early intervention began to turn. [NV Part C presentation at WRRRC Forum on Focused Monitoring, 2003]

Once NV Part C completed its Self-Improvement Plan in July 2002, agency staff set about implementing its improvement strategies. The agency again asked NECTAC and WRRRC staff to continue their resource and facilitation partnership for the various committees charged with priority activities. The involvement and resources from these technical assistance sources promoted stakeholder and provider considerations of different models; NECTAC’s guidance and the WRRRC’s support in helping NV Part C “re-engineer its services” have resulted in significant improvements in the service system. There were also changes in community collaboration and a focus on best practices for providers, and a concerted effort to systematize the new approaches and practices statewide, using data to target where needs were greatest. The Legislature appropriated a significant increase in funding, now being realized in increased numbers of personnel and changes in local programs through training and family supports. The earlier, multiple divisions of early intervention based on population centers, geography, etc., have merged into one EI program with two districts for the state of Nevada.

Despite the fuzziness of their data, the Part C Committees persisted in looking at results. [WRRRC Evaluation Report, 12/02] Their focus on the data, applying and using them have enabled NV Part C to reliably display and act on the strategies and activities in their improvement efforts. The agency holds regular “data checks” with stakeholders to verify the extent to which targets are being reached or need adjustment.

“I think one of the smartest things we did was involve facilitators from the WRRRC, people from outside ... able to be objective. [They] explained the RA model and how and why it worked. We were clear enough we could explain it to our Steering Committee; used it to work through indicators and measures. Really gave us a plan that would give us direction and data that would answer what we wanted to know. Our struggle all along has been our data. Continues to be something we work on.”

“We are reconvening the Steering Committee and ICC; this is a real data collection point, six months after [the IP document was submitted]. Some EI programs were implemented quicker than others; this will be our first opportunity to look at the data to see what’s different, what results we can see. It’s our opportunity to re-examine and ensure that what we planned is still valid. Key time to reflect and get a handle on what we need to be doing, where we need to be going next. Look at data: is it an isolated problem, or is everybody doing not so well. Looking at those data again, suggestions for what we should be doing in the next six months.”

OSEP's NV contact held a teleconference in March 2004 for a status check. In addition to the NV Part C staff, this forum included NECTAC and WRRC staff, providing input and perspective from all the partners in NV Part C's improvement efforts. Key themes were the commitment to the process, the continued scrutiny and application of data, and using a consistent process throughout. *Having TA providers give a national perspective lends invaluable credibility to the process and discussions. Being able to say "This is the intent" has helped participants change perceptions.*

Results to Date:

In July 2003, Nevada Part C was moved from the Department of Human Services to the Department of Health. By July 2004, the agency had become the Bureau of Early Intervention Services and recorded these major achievements in that one year's time:

- √ a 61% increase in employees (from 157 to 253)
- √ an 11% increase in number of children served
- √ a **"steady decrease" by 62% of children waiting more than 45 days for initial IFSP development** (510 recorded in September 2003; 196 in March 2004)
- √ an effective "services re-engineering:" changing the philosophy behind and approach to direct services of children and families, including a streamlined, coordinated statewide process for appropriately finding and screening children

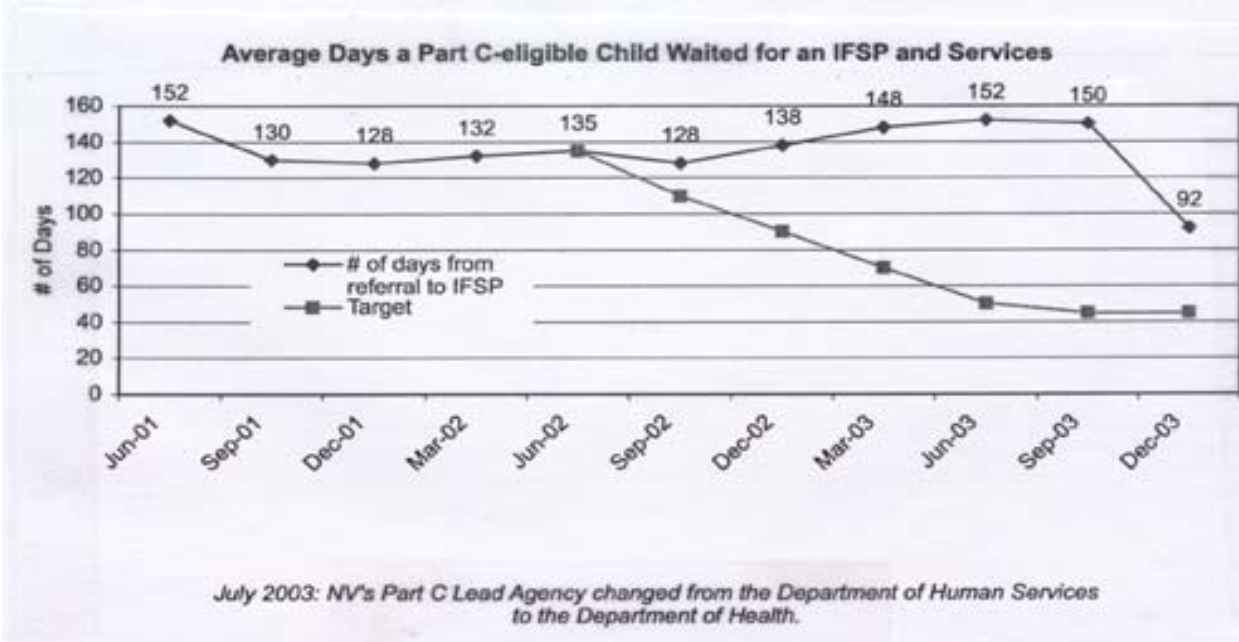
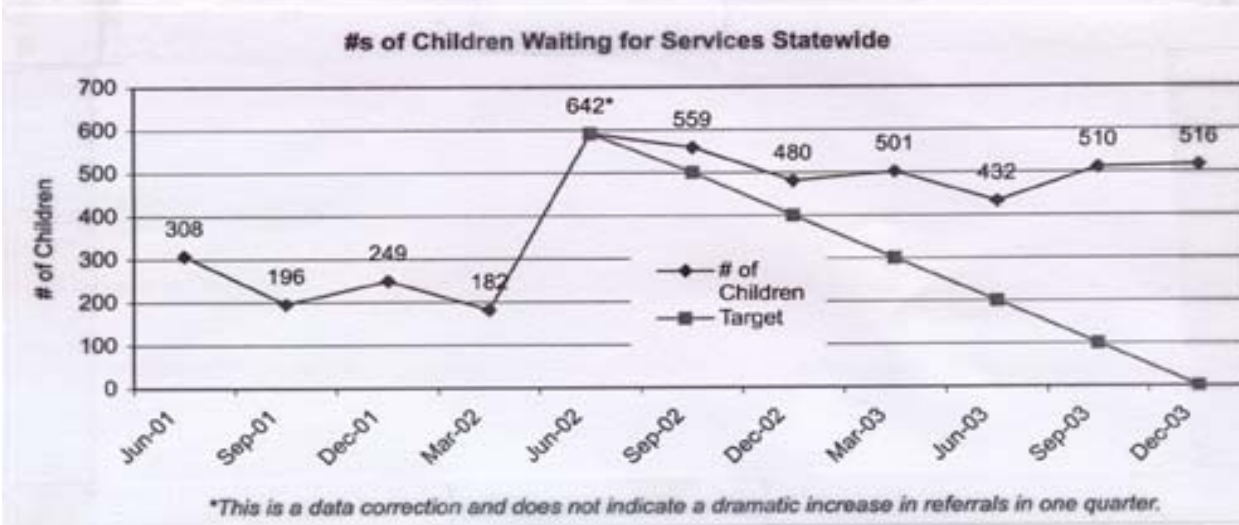
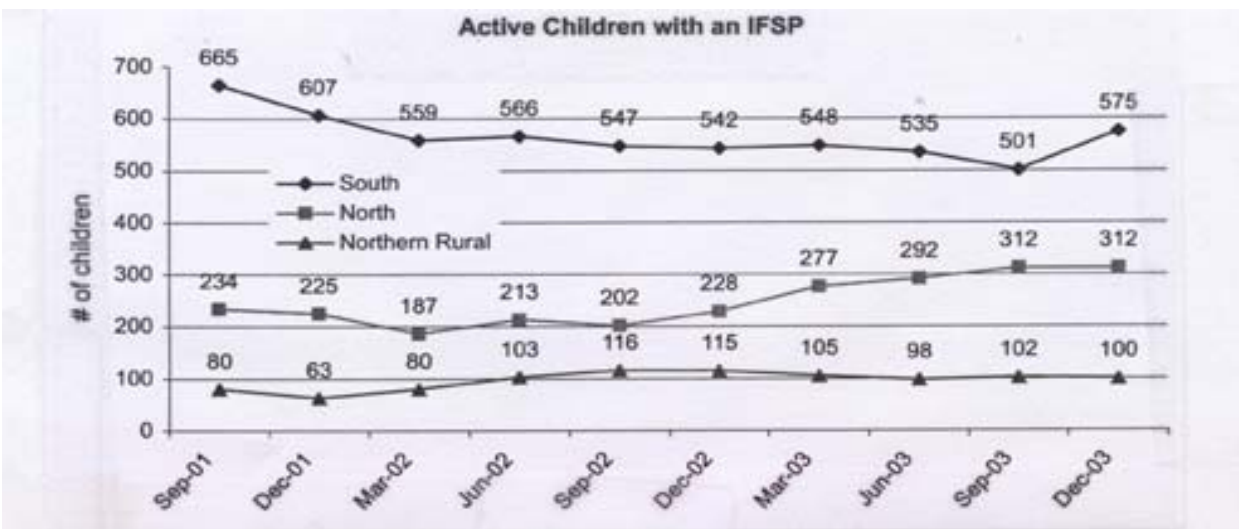
NV Part C's APR (3/04) describes the variety of effort and results during SY 2003; its report to OSEP (3/04) contains information on achievements and challenges up through December, 2003; the Anniversary Achievements from the Bureau of Early Intervention Services (7/04) provides the most current picture of the substantial progress Nevada's Part C agency, its stakeholders and its local programs have made in a concentrated timeline. The following charts display those key indicator data (compiled from the NV Part C APR, 3/04).

Direct assistance from the WRRC and partnered support between NECTAC and the WRRC to NV Part C have supported that agency in making significant and measured progress in improving services and results for children in Nevada.

“This process is one of the more positive things I’ve worked on in disabilities; lots of others feel like wastes of time. On this [the SA and IP] we saw beginning and end, and it was set up so I believed it could really make a difference, that I helped to make a positive process.”

“I think the TA we got from WRRC was extremely helpful: helped us think about things differently. For example, we’d had training with Friedman [RA], but hadn’t thought about applying it to the IP process until Stephen and Jane suggested it. They made suggestions that helped us stay on track. They were so willing to preplan, understand issues for NV, debrief every meeting to help us focus on what’s ahead, what’s needed to move forward for next time.”

The following charts on three key indicators appear in NV Part C's APR.



PERFORMANCE MEASURE 2

States' Use of Results Data

Endorsing the importance of focusing on results, RED workgroup members chose a performance measure to describe the extent to which RRC Network efforts assisted states in applying results-based decision making: *Percent of states regularly implementing, reviewing and revising improvement plans based on results data.*

Establishing a data collection protocol

Describing progress on this measure used a protocol outlining how this 'regular review based on data' would be measured. As originally envisioned, this protocol was meant to address both level of RRC involvement, and the data-based approach of the state. As two RRCs began piloting the protocol, the need for revisions became evident. The structure of the protocol emphasized the level of RRC involvement, but did not seem to capture a true sense of states' results focus. In addition, there was an evolution in OSEP's vision for states that was not reflected in the original protocol design.

The RED revisions to the protocol included trying to resolve the tension between collecting information on RRC assistance begun in the previous OSEP construct and that being provided under the newly articulated OSEP approach. An additional consideration was the gradual inclusion of Part C Lead Agencies in RRC technical assistance. Each RRC was at varying levels of involvement with its regional Part C systems. In the end, the revised protocol was designed to capture RRC assistance across old and new approaches, B and C agencies, and the states' perspective on the improvement planning process in general (whether CIMP or APR driven). [See Appendix A for the final protocol.]

Results

RRC Perspective on Improvement Planning Process

RRC staff members were asked to identify improvement planning activities in states. Using definitions standardized for this inquiry, an individual RRC staff would mark "yes" if the RRC *assisted the state in any capacity* with an improvement planning activity. Five of the six RRCs provided data for states in their regions. The amount of state representation ranged from 11 states to one state, resulting in data for 37 Part B agencies and 36 Part C agencies.

The following definitions defined the type of RRC involvement with states for this question:

- **Planning:** Work with state leadership to layout the process. Assist in timeline development.
- **Facilitation:** Lead meetings, design the agenda, lead public forums
- **Development:** Design formats, present frameworks, create procedures, writing/assistance to writing

- **Presentations:** Offer information about the overview of the process, deliver OSEP's message (regional or individual state)

The following tables, for Part B and Part C agencies, display weighted distributions of activities by RRC staff in any of several improvement efforts. Since RRC involvement often occurred in more than one activity, multiple responses were possible, and the weighting formula was designed to equalize the varied number of states' data submitted by each RRC (see footnotes for more detail).

PART B Type of Involvement (Yes/No to Each)					
Activity	Y	Planning	Facilitation	Development	Presentations
Self-Assessment	91.89% ¹	88.24% ²	91.18%	79.41%	73.53%
Improvement Planning	89.19	87.88	84.85	72.73	84.85
Focused Monitoring	72.97	37.04	33.33	25.93	92.59
Data Analysis/Data Management Systems	59.46	31.82	13.64	31.82	95.45
BPR	37.84	14.29	0.00	14.29	78.57
APR	78.38	79.31	37.93	62.07	86.21
GSEG	59.46	50.00	36.36	31.82	68.18
SIG	67.57	40.00	52.00	40.00	84.00
Other: CADRE	20.00	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

PART C Type of Involvement (Yes/No to Each)					
Activity	Y	Planning	Facilitation	Development	Presentations
Self-Assessment	48.65%	88.89%	88.89%	83.33%	66.67%
Improvement Planning	50.00	88.89	83.33	55.56	55.56
Focused Monitoring	58.33	19.06	14.29	14.29	90.48
Data Analysis/Data Management Systems	21.62	50.00	37.50	62.50	75.00
BPR	2.78	100.	0.00	100.00	0.00
APR	52.78	36.84	10.53	15.79	64.21
GSEG	50.00	44.44	27.78	38.89	88.99
SIG	38.89	21.43	14.29	14.29	92.86
Other: Regional Part C Workgroup	20.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00

¹The involvement was calculated using the following formula: (# of states that received type of assistance/# of states that were represented in this particular survey)*100. For example, if MSRRRC only included data for 6 states, and 5 received a particular type of assistance, the "Yes" response =83%. This formula was used to account for the varied number of states' data submitted by each RRC (1-11 states) and to weight the percentages accordingly.

²The type of involvement was calculated using the following formula: (# of Yes responses to type of involvement/# of Yes responses to a particular activity)*100. For example, of the 5 MSRRRC states that received assistance, MSRRRC was involved with planning activities for 4 of them (80%) and facilitation activities for 2 of them (40%).

State's Perspective on Improvement Planning Process

State respondents were asked four questions about their experiences with the improvement planning process.

RRC Involvement: The first question asked what worked well with, and what might have improved the involvement of, the RRC.

There were several themes among the narratives states provided for this question:

What worked well:

- ☞ The general support the states receive from the RRCs,
- ☞ The skill-based expertise of the RRCs (e.g., planning, facilitation and organization),
- ☞ The network opportunities provided by the RRCs through connections to other states,
- ☞ The RRCs are a readily available and useful resource,
- ☞ The RRC consultants provide up-to-date information, and
- ☞ The RRCs work at meeting the individual needs of the states.

Specific examples/comments included:

- ◆ Self-assessment models
- ◆ RRC-facilitated communication across agencies
- ◆ Helping states gather stakeholder input
- ◆ RRC overview of the CIMP process for stakeholders
- ◆ Regional conference calls/support
- ◆ RRC staff content expertise and facilitation skills
- ◆ Accommodations for TA depending on need of the state
- ◆ Assistance with GSEG and SIG applications
- ◆ Evaluation, performance indicator, and results accountability TA/training

Possible Changes:

- ☞ More clearly define the role of the RRCs,
- ☞ States take advantage of the resources made available through the RRCs more often,
- ☞ Consistency of the improvement planning process TA,
- ☞ More RRC staff per geographical area.

Effects on state decision-making: For the question on the extent to which improvement planning activities moved the state toward data-based decision making, the mean across RRCs was 6.4 on an 8-point scale (1-low, 8-high).

Process influences: State respondents were then asked to describe the aspects of the improvement planning process most influential in moving their state in the direction of data-based decision making.

Themes in response to this question included:

- ⌘ Communication among stakeholders/agencies,
- ⌘ Reviewing the quality of the data
- ⌘ Information and support provided by the RRCs
- ⌘ Monitoring process/efforts,
- ⌘ Standard process for reviewing the data,
- ⌘ Accountability for data and results.

Overall quality of RRC assistance: This item, ranked on an 8-point scale, was an overall mean of 7.1 for all RRCs.



PERFORMANCE MEASURES 3 and 4 Client Satisfaction

Performance Measure 3: *Percent of clients reporting satisfaction on information requests.*

In order to assess the quality of the RRC Network's Information Services function, selected clients were sent a three-item survey. The survey item of interest for the network accountability framework asked about the quality of information provided.

The ways in which each RRC selected the clients to receive the survey varied as did the intervals at which the survey was sent. Aside from the three items included in the survey, there was no uniform method for soliciting the responses. Some RRCs included the items in an e-mail form, others printed post cards and sent the survey via postal mail. This item was ranked on a scale of 1 - 5 (1-low, 5-high).

Result: Across the network respondents (n=126) ranked the utility of information with a mean score of 4.4, being of "high quality."

Performance Measure 4: *Percent of TAA evaluations that indicate TA was of high quality.*

In order to assess the quality of TA activities each RRC agreed to a common rating scale (1-low, 8-high) and protocol for using it to solicit response from clients. The Network agreement was to use this scale at the end of a specific TA activity, asking clients to rate the quality (outcomes accomplished, relevant to the need, facilitated solving the problem).

Additionally, following completion of a Technical Assistance Agreement (TAA), or periodically in the course of a TAA, state contacts were asked to rate the overall quality of the TA provided (timeliness, relevant to the need, facilitated solving the problem).

Result: When aggregated across these two scales, respondents (n=479) ranked TA activities with a mean score of 7.0, of "high quality."

Lessons Learned

The challenges to mounting a first effort to establish, collect and report common performance measures across a national Network were significant but necessary to the RED Workgroup and the RRC Network's commitment to program accountability. This ambitious effort yielded numerous lessons, expected and serendipitous. Measures, protocols and expectations underwent revisions as plans were put into place and experiences suggested modifications.

The lessons that follow are a selection of those synthesized by the RED Workgroup members presenting the process and provide results in a session at the American Evaluation Association's annual meeting in November, 2004. They are framed in statements of action that will contribute to the next stage in the RRC Program's demonstration of its efforts and effects.

Communication

- Clarify wording of Performance Measure (PM) questions
- Include representation from all interested entities in the redesign of instruments
- Build in periodic check-ins of a PM's ability to collect appropriate data
- Communicate regarding performance measures throughout the process, between and among Centers

Actions...

- Set expectations with clients regarding data collection
- Ensure that data collections are timely as well as collected at regular, agreed upon intervals
- Ensure that we are asking the right questions and collecting the right data
- Distinguish data as useful to Centers and State clients
- Sometimes let data guide the performance measure, rather than the performance measure guide the data
- Examine staffing patterns for evaluation across all Centers

Collaboration

- Establish expectations and common agreements among Centers
- Finalize a written Network evaluation plan

APPENDIX A
Performance Measure Protocols

Protocol for Performance Measure 2:
Measurement of Intermediate Outcomes Resulting from
Comprehensive, Data-Based Planning Technical Assistance Activities

State _____

Date _____

RRC Perspective on Improvement Planning Process [To be answered by the RRC]:

1. Please indicate the level and type of involvement for each of the following improvement planning activities for **Part B**.

- ◆ If the RRC assisted the state *in any capacity* with an improvement planning activity, please mark “yes” in the first column next to the activity.
 - ◇ Indicate the type(s) of assistance (planning, facilitation, development, and/or presentations) by marking “yes” or “no” in each of the columns within that row.
 - ◇ Please refer to the definitions below for clarification of the types of assistance.
- ◆ If the RRC did not assist the state with an activity, please mark “no” and go to the next activity/row.

Definitions

- **Planning:** Work with state leadership to layout the process. Assist in timeline development.
- **Facilitation:** Lead meetings, design the agenda, lead public forums
- **Development:** Design formats, present frameworks, create procedures, writing/ assistance to writing
- **Presentations:** Offer information about the overview of the process, deliver OSEP’s message (regional or individual state)

PART B TYPE of Involvement (Yes/No to Each)					
Activity	Y/N	Planning	Facilitation	Development	Presentations
Self-Assessment					
Improvement Planning					
Focused Monitoring					
Data Analysis/Data Management Systems					
BPR					
APR					
GSEG					
SIG					
Other (Please list)					

2. Using the same process as above, please indicate the level and type of involvement for each of the following improvement planning activities for **Part C**.

PART C TYPE of Involvement (Yes/No to Each)					
Activity	Y/N	Planning	Facilitation	Development	Presentations
Self-Assessment					
Improvement Planning					
Focused Monitoring					
Data Analysis/Data Management Systems					
BPR					
APR					
GSEG					
SIG					
Other (Please list)					

3. Describe your overall assessment of the quality of **RRC involvement**: Specifically, what worked well and what would you change if you were starting over? [Please provide qualitative data or stories.]

4. To what extent has working on Self Assessment, Improvement Planning, CIMP, CIFMS, et moved your state toward data-based decision making?

Not at all (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) Great extent

5. What aspects of the entire improvement planning process were most influential in moving your state in the direction of data-based decision making?

6. Please rate the overall quality of RRC assistance in your improvement planning process.

Poor (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) Excellent

Protocol for Performance Measure 3:

Percent of clients reporting satisfaction on information requests

In order to assess the quality of the network's Information Service function, selected clients were surveyed and asked to rate the quality of information provided using the following scale:

Was the information sent to you:				
Very useful		Somewhat useful		Not useful
5	4	3	2	1

Protocol for Performance Measure 4:

Percent of TAA evaluations that indicate TA was of high quality

In order to assess the quality of TA activities, clients were asked to rate all TA events according to the following scales:

Please rate the overall quality of the TA provided (timelines, relevant to the need, facilitated solving the problem):							
8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Excellent							Poor

Additionally, following completion of a TAA, or periodically in the course of a TAA, state contacts were asked to rate the activities along the following scale:

Please rate the overall quality of this activity (outcomes accomplished, relevant to the need, facilitated solving the problem):							
8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Excellent							Poor

APPENDIX B
**RRC Network
Evaluation Framework**

APPENDIX B DRAFT

RRFC Network Evaluation Framework

Context for this Framework

The RRC program has a long and often unsatisfying history trying to account for its work. In the early 70s, the RRCs developed and maintained a detailed tracking system, maintained with direction and support from the Coordinating Office for RRCs and an accountability task force. This system was neither as useful nor efficient as hoped. It collected information on task FTE, and numbers of clients served, products produced and information responses, but the data were not comparable across Centers and not knowingly used to inform decisions within RRCs or for the program as a whole. This system was scrapped in 1977, when a new RRC program structure was launched.

The next several iterations of data collection and reporting suffered from lack of a common vision. Absent a clearly-articulated set of expectations and an acknowledgement of slightly different foci from region to region, RRCs gathered in 1988 and channeled their frustrations and efforts into the RRC Impact Assessment System (IAS), the first agreed-upon description of the mission, purpose, goals and measures for the program. In 1992 the MidSouth RRC made another edition, and the IAS continued to serve as a reference in individual Centers and in the Network (predominantly through Reporting, Evaluation and Documentation (RED) Workgroup efforts). The 1994/95 third party evaluation of the RRC program employed some of the IAS concepts in its design, and suggested common indicators of successful RRCs.

In 1997 the Network made another attempt to establish a common foundation in its proposal for an impact study of the RRC Program that would establish performance measures, provide feedback on the program to date, and inform the design for the upcoming RFP. The proposal was grounded in the IAS concepts, in findings of the external evaluation, in the collective program experiences and in the belief that the Network actions and results ought to be based on data. The proposal was turned down by OSEP, at the time intending that RRC resources be targeted to help states move into the requirements of the newly-reauthorized IDEA.

The 1997/98 RRC RFP, mirroring IDEA's emphasis on data, explicitly aligned the workscope with state systemic changes to improve outcomes. In addition, the RFP's requirement for a third party evaluation of the program offered an unprecedented opportunity for stakeholders (funding agency, grantees and clients) to provide input on common measures across the Network. Again the RED Workgroup contributed design, forms and procedures recommendations and suggestions on how the results could best inform the Network and OSEP. Although this third-party evaluation itself did not move the Network further toward measures or mechanisms for better demonstrating effects and impact, its stimulus coincided with other substantial shifts in the program: RRCs find themselves focused on increasingly common clients

and approaches across regions as states respond to the CIMP, and the demand for accountability and program improvement information continues to increase. OSEP needs more discrete data to justify programs, states are required to report according to specific performance goals and indicators, and there is a commensurate need for RRCs to be accountable.

The following represents the RED Workgroup's most recent attempt toward a common and consistent Network framework to help us talk about what we do in common, understandable terms, and employ tools that will help confirm how what we do makes a difference. It complements recent Network efforts to describe the future needs for RRC TA services, linking RRC, state and OSEP accountability measures, and offers an approach to develop a workable framework for common, results-based accountability that minimizes cost and maximizes utility.

In addition to its broader purpose of facilitating results-based accountability, this framework is designed to respond to the third party evaluation recommendations to the RRFC Network:

- ◆ Define common evaluation criteria and measures and look for inter-relationships between RRC activities and field impacts, rather than linear cause-effect chains.
- ◆ Develop methods for assessing 'intervening events' that erode or undermine the impacts of the RRC efforts and determine how such assessments can lead to strategies that help the RRCs respond to these events strategically.
- ◆ Reinvest evaluation 'lessons' in RRC improvement and strategic planning processes.
- ◆ Ensure that linkages and work with the OSEP TA&D network and US Department of Education funded projects are systematically documented.
- ◆ Engage clients in the evaluation plan and process in order to a) fully integrate evaluation into the TAA process; b) expect states to contribute effort and data to evaluate results of assistance; and c) include clients views on the reasons for success and failure of TA.

The *Results Accountability* process developed by Mark Friedman was used as a starting point for developing the Evaluation Framework. Key points of Dr. Friedman's Results Accountability process are:

1. Start with ends, work backward to means. [What do we want? How will we recognize it? What will it take to get there?]
2. Be clear and disciplined about language; use plain language, not exclusionary jargon.
3. Use data (indicators and performance measures) to gauge success or failure against a baseline.
4. Consider the story (or epidemiology) behind the baselines.
7. Involve a broad set of partners.
8. Develop an action strategy.

(See <http://raguide.org/> for a detailed description.)

These key points align with the RRFC Network's approach. They are results-based, focus on common language, involve partners, and describe the context, not just report the data.

Parameters & Principles

Drawing from the Results Accountability method, experience working as a network, and recommendations from the third party evaluation report, the following principles for the Evaluation Framework were developed.

Reflects the RRFC mission

The general purpose of the RRFC Network - deduced from individual RRC mission statements - is to work collaboratively to provide technical assistance to State Education Agencies and their partners to assist them in systemic improvement policies, procedures and practices which will result in quality programs and services for children and youth with disabilities and their families. The RRFC Network strives to build relationships within and among the regions of the country in order to link resources and information designed to improve results for children and youth with disabilities and their families.

Demonstrates effort as well as effects

RRFC technical assistance is provided primarily at the state level, sometimes making connections to student level outcomes challenging. Reporting effort as well as effects provides an opportunity to describe the context into which RRFC technical assistance fits and its intended contribution to improving state systems.

Describes the "story behind the baseline"

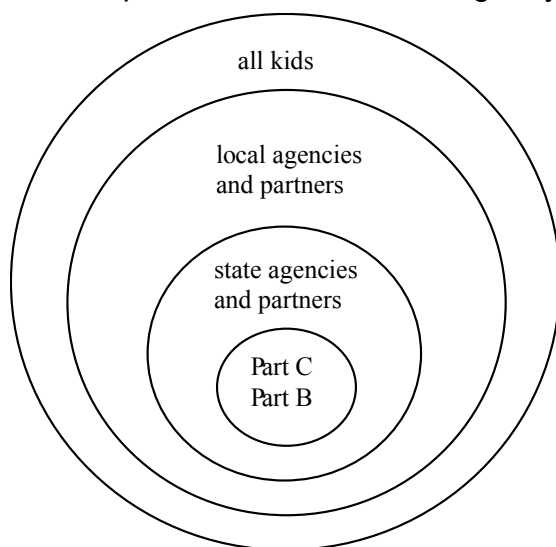
The *story* is a description of forces at work behind the data trend(s). Understanding this *story* could assist in developing strategies for addressing intervening factors that undermine effort and effects.

Recognizes multi-layered logic models or multiple pathways

The range in TA activities and context in which these are conducted require a flexible approach to evaluation which includes collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. The Evaluation Framework provides a common core that fits the whole with flexibility for individual RRCs to add, expand, and/or adjust as needed.

Performance Measures

The first step in developing the Network Evaluation Framework was to identify the RRFC Network clients. The direct clients for the RRFC Network are the Part B/Part C agency staff. This relationship in the context of the larger system is depicted below:



With the clients identified, a list of RRFC Network efforts (what we do) and effects (how well we do it) was generated using the Results Accountability method. The table below describes the general approach to listing these efforts and effects. (A complete list can be found at the end of this document.)

Quantity		Quality
What We Do		How Well We Do It
Effort	How many clients served? How many activities conducted?	What percent of clients report satisfaction with service? What percent of activities are reported to be of high quality?
Is Anyone Better Off?		
Effect	How many clients report RRC services are helpful?	What percent of clients report RRC services are helpful?

From the list of effort and effects, the following are the primary performance measures chosen for the Network Evaluation Framework:

- ◆ Percent of Part B/C staff reporting RRFC TA contributed to improving their state system.
- ◆ Percent of states increasing the number of students with disabilities fully **participating** in the state accountability system.
- ◆ Percent of states reporting **improvement** on performance of students with disabilities.
- ◆ Percent of TAA evaluations that indicate TA was of high quality.

Using these performance measures the RRFC Network will describe the quality of RRFC effort and effect. In addition, a list of common terms and definitions has been developed to ensure clear communication of achievement. This list of terms can be found at the end of this document.

Data Collection and Reporting

Below is a description of the process for collecting data on the performance measures. Each Center will report this information biennially to the Federal Resource Center. The final report will be a stand alone document that describes RRFC Network contributions to the national picture presented.

Performance Measure	Data Source(s), Collection, Analysis, and Reporting
<p>1. Percent of Part B/C staff reporting RRFC TA contributed to improving their state system.</p>	<p>Each Center will survey clients (SEA Director, Part C lead, and/or Primary TAA contact) using a set of common items. These items may be included in existing procedures/forms or distributed as a separate piece.</p> <p>Each Center will report their aggregated information to these items biennially to the FRC.</p> <p>Potential survey items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IRD workgroup Network Evaluation: <i>How was the information used? and How did the information you received affect the issues you are addressing?</i> 2. Survey items (2-3) which address evidence of change: <i>TA achieved outcomes which measurably benefit children and youth, or resulted in systemic impacts, benefits, and changes or...</i>
<p>2. Percent of states increasing the number of students with disabilities fully participating in the state accountability system.</p>	<p>A RED group member or members will be assigned responsibility for collecting the information and reporting biennially to the FRC. The following are potential data sources:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NCEO survey results: survey instrument and June 2001 Report available on NCEO web site [http://education.umn.edu/nceo] 2. Biennial Performance Reports: required goals and indicator data on participation in and performance on assessment, drop outs, and graduation. Next BPRs due 5/31/2002. 3. RRFC State Similarities Database: includes data on graduation rate. <i>Update schedule to be determined.</i> 4. Consolidated Performance Reports: Title I reporting of number of students with disabilities participating in assessment. 5. <i>Report on Ed Indicators with focus on Title I</i> available at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/esed/2000_indicators/ 6. State web sites.

<p>3. Percent of <i>states</i> reporting improvement on performance of students with disabilities.</p>	<p>A RED group member or members will be assigned responsibility for collecting the information and reporting biennially to the FRC. The following are potential data sources:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NCEO survey results: survey instrument and June 2001 Report available on NCEO web site [http://education.umn.edu/nceo] 2. Biennial Performance Reports: required goals and indicator data on participation in and performance on assessment, drop outs, and graduation. Next BPRs due 5/31/2002. 3. RRFC State Similarities Database: includes data on graduation rate. <i>Update schedule to be determined.</i> 4. Consolidated Performance Reports: Title I reporting of number of students with disabilities for each proficiency level. 5. Report on Ed Indicators with focus on Title I available at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/esed/2000_indicators/ 6. State web sites.
<p>4. Percent of TAA evaluations that indicate TA was of high quality.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Each Center will survey clients (SEA Director, Part C lead, and/or Primary TAA contact) using a set of common items. ◆ These items may be included in existing procedures forms or distributed as a separate piece. ◆ Each Center will report their aggregated information to these items annually to the FRC. <p>Potential survey items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. IRD workgroup Network Evaluation: <i>Was the information request response useful (1-5 scale)?</i> 2. Consumer satisfaction items (2-3) which address quality TA: was TA targeted, accessible, worth the effort?

Full list of RRFC efforts and effects generated using the Results Accountability process.

	Quantity	Quality
	What We Do	How Well We Do It
Effort	<p><u>Clients</u> # Part B staff # Part C staff # Children with IFSPs/IEPs # Families with children in SpEd # Other stakeholders</p> <p><u>Activities</u> # Consultations (onsite, phone, e-mail) # Written, substantive recommendations # Reports prepared # Information request responses # Products disseminated # Meetings facilitated # TAAs created # Trainings/conferences # Evaluations # Web site hits</p>	<p>Clients % IEP/IFSP of need Ratio of SEA staff to RRC staff + consultants Cost per TA agreement Staff turn over (% employed 1 year or more) % fully trained staff</p> <p>Activities % On time responses to information requests % Consultation repeat customers % SEA staff engaged in RRC activities Products per month (requested, other) % of states per month with active engagement (on site, phone) Products disseminated % of total "market" % of positive evaluations for training and/or facilitation % of satisfaction with evaluations Rate of web site hits per month</p>

Is Anyone Better Off?		
Effect	# students with disabilities included in accountability system # states with PGs & Is in place # states who <u>use</u> PGs & Is to improve performance # states with "integrated initiatives" # states in compliance (based on OSEP involvement) # Part B/C staff who report that RRC helped them in their jobs	% students with disabilities fully participating in the accountability system % states with PGs & Is in place % states who <u>use</u> PGs & Is to improve performance % states with "integrated initiatives" % states in compliance (based on OSEP involvement) % Part B/C staff who report RRC helped them in their jobs

APPENDIX C
Network Accountability
Report Plan

APPENDIX C

RRC Network Accountability Report Purpose, Timelines and Structure Updated June 2004

Purpose of the Network Accountability Report

As accountability for student results has become the target for all federal programs, connecting the effects to improved child/student results has been a challenge for the RRC Network. Since January 2001, the RRFC Reporting, Evaluation, and Documentation (RED) workgroup has been working on an *accountability framework* to describe effects of RRC activities using a set of common measures. The RRC Directors approved the measures and plan to collect and report the data and the RED group developed procedures for collecting the data.

The Network Accountability Report will provide data on each of these measures and observations about the process of constructing and implementing the Network accountability framework. Though each RRC submits progress reports on efforts and effects, this report will provide a picture of effects of the RRC program – something not captured in the individual Center reports.

Structure of the Network Accountability Report

Each RRC has agreed to collect and report data on a set of common measures. The following outlines the measures and format for reporting the data collected.

- I. Performance Measure 1: Percent of states where RRC intervened and positive trend lines are evident in one or more of the OSEP priority areas.

Each RRC will provide a *story* describing its activities and effects in one state. These 2-3 page stories will then be assembled to provide a picture of the Network on performance measure 1. [Note: This is a shift from the original plan to collect data that would result in a report of *percent of states* with positive trend lines.]

The elements of this story are:

- What the RRC did
 - ◊ State context (including barriers, variables)
 - ◊ Partners involved
 - ◊ Immediate results
- Progress to date - including state reported 618 data where appropriate

- II. Performance Measure 2: Percent of states regularly implementing, reviewing and revising improvement plans based on results data.

Each RRC will use an agreed upon form to collect data on this performance measure. The data will then be analyzed and a percentage reported for the Network as a whole. Observations and/or clarifications will be included as appropriate.

- III. Performance Measure 3: Percent of clients reporting satisfaction on information requests.

Each RRC will collect and report data from selected clients requesting information using the following item:

Was the information sent to you:

Very useful		Somewhat useful		Not useful
5	4	3	2	1

The percentage of clients finding this assistance of high quality (useful) will be reported for the Network overall.

- IV. Performance Measure 4: Percent of TAA evaluations that indicate TA was of high quality.

Each RRC will collect and report data using the following items:

For all events: (asked of participants in the event)

Please rate the overall quality of this activity (outcomes accomplished, relevant to the need, facilitated solving the problem):

8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
excellent							poor

For end of a TAA, or periodically in the course of a TAA: (asked of state contacts for the TAA)

Please rate the overall quality of the TA provided (timeliness, relevant to the need, facilitated solving the problem):

8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
excellent							poor

The percentage of clients finding this assistance of high quality will be reported for the Network overall.

Timelines

June 30:	data collected and submitted to designated RED group members
July 20:	data analyzed and draft of analysis for each performance measure reviewed by RED workgroup
August 10:	draft of full report delivered to the RRC Directors and OSEP project officer