

LOUISIANA'S BIENNIAL REPORT TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Louisiana has undertaken a number of initiatives in the past several years to improve results for all of its school children, including those with disabilities. A rigorous new accountability system was initiated through efforts of the Louisiana Legislature, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Louisiana Department of Education. Children with disabilities are included in this accountability system. High stakes testing for all Louisiana school children has been implemented, ending social promotion. Children with disabilities must take the same criterion and norm referenced tests as students without disabilities, except for those students who qualify for alternate assessment or out of level testing.

The process for LEAs to apply for IDEA Part B funds was changed to require analysis of data provided by the Louisiana Department of Education and target funds in areas which were found to be in need of improvement, such as suspension and expulsion rates.

Through the process of developing the Self-Assessment for OSEP's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process, data about how Louisiana's students with disabilities was examined. Concomitant with that process was Louisiana's development of a new state monitoring process that includes examining data on student participation in assessments, regular class placements, graduation rates of students with disabilities, and other issues. Each school district was issued a Performance Profile from which systems were then selected for the purposes of monitoring. A sample of the Performance Profile used for each school district is included as Attachment 5. It is anticipated that Part B funds will be redirected at the LEA and State level based on the Performance Profiles and the Self-Assessment conducted in response to OSEP's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process.

Through the Louisiana Department of Education's Strategic Plan and Operational Plans, performance results in areas required by IDEA are included for the purposes of budget requests and reporting to the public and the Louisiana Legislature. Information about the Strategic and Operational Plans are found in Attachment 1. Revisions to the state statute regarding children with disabilities to be consistent with IDEA 97 were made in the 1998 Extraordinary Session of the Louisiana Legislature. Other activities include revisions to regulatory bulletins and guidelines.

This Biennial Performance Report (1997-1998) is provided as required by the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR)

34 CFR§80.40.

PERFORMANCE GOALS AND INDICATORS

The goals the state has established for the performance of children with disabilities in the State and to what extent those goals are consistent with other goals and standards for children established by the State.

The Louisiana Department of Education, through its Strategic Plan and Operational Plan, includes students with disabilities in its objectives and performance indicators. Although there are specific performance indicators for students with disabilities, objectives and performance indicators for the Office of Student and School Performance in which the Division of Special Populations is located, include all students in programs administered by the Office of Student and School Performance.

The Department of Education includes students with disabilities in its new accountability program, implemented at the elementary schools in the 1998-99 school year. Special education students' performance on norm and criterion referenced tests, as well as their attendance and drop out rates, are included in the formula to measure the schools' performance and calculate growth targets for the schools.

The Performance Profile (included in Attachment 5) for each LEA, a component of Louisiana's new monitoring process, provides state, regional and local data on performance of students in school year 1998-99. For monitoring purposes during the 1999-2000 school year, three state level goals were recommended by state monitoring stakeholders and adopted by the Steering Committee for federal monitoring. They include: a 20% increase in participation of students with disabilities in regular class, a 100% increase in students with disabilities exiting with a high school diploma, and a goal of at least 85% of students with disabilities participating in regular assessment.

Attachment 1 includes excerpts from the strategic plan for 1998-99 through 2002-2003. Also included is information about how students with disabilities are included in Louisiana's Accountability Program. Progress the State has made toward meeting the goals established and the progress that has been made in reaching goals specifically addressing performance of children with disabilities on assessments, drop-out rates, and graduation rates is outlined in Attachment 2.

Presented below is a graphic of the data collected and reported annually to the Office of Special Education Programs. The data in the report reflects the December 1 data submitted by each LEA. This table reflects numbers calculated only in those categories required by the Office of Special Education Programs. Below is a chart indicating the number of students with disabilities exiting special education and the number of students with disabilities who were considered drop-outs as reported to OSEP.

	Drop Out Data		
	July 1999	July 1998	July 1997
Number Exiting	7,329	7,251	6,661
Number/Sp. Education Dropout	2,052	2,044	1,801

PARTICIPATING IN ASSESSMENTS

Describe the participation of children with disabilities in State and district-wide assessments for each fiscal year covered by this report.

Students with disabilities in Louisiana have been participating in statewide assessments for a number of years prior to the 1997 revisions to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Prior to school year 1998-99, students with disabilities participated in criterion and norm referenced assessments, depending on the grade they were in, in accordance with their Individualized Education Program. Participation in regular assessments in 1998-99 ranged from 29.25 % to 96.88% with a statewide average of 81.39%, as indicated in the chart located in Attachment 3.

In 1998-99, significant changes in the Louisiana Education Assessment Program were initiated. A new criterion referenced test was administered to all students in grades 4 and 8. Students with disabilities, under specific criteria and in accordance with their IEPs, could be assessed below their grade level, except the students who were eligible for alternate assessment. A norm-referenced test, The Iowa Test of Basic Skills, was administered to students in grade 3, 5, 6, 7, and 9. Students in grades 10 and 11 are administered a Graduate Exit Exam.

The number of children with disabilities participating in regular assessments and their performance results are included in Attachment 3 for the 1997-98 and 1998-99 school years. This data is presented aggregated and disaggregated, except for the 1998-99 norm-referenced test data. That data will be forwarded to OSEP by January 31, 2000. The number of children with disabilities participating in alternate assessments is not available. Louisiana is field-testing its alternate assessment this school year and it will be implemented in school year 2000-20001 and results will be available for the next biennial report, due in December 2001.

It is evident from examining the data that children with disabilities, although varying across the state, do participate in statewide assessments. The performance of children with disabilities in these assessments needs to improve. The initiatives Louisiana has undertaken to improve these results include the development of the Access to the General Curriculum, training and technical assistance, and the inclusion of students with disabilities in the accountability system.

LONG-RANGE SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS

Describe the results of the State's examination of data to determine if significant discrepancies are occurring in the rate of long-term suspensions and expulsions of children with disabilities.

The Louisiana Department of Education, Division of Special Populations, collected data from the LEAs that indicate the suspension/expulsion rates for students with disabilities. This data was reported to OSEP on Table 5, Sections A and B for the

1998-99 school year. This data was also collected via the Student Information System (SIS), which collects data on all students in the Louisiana public schools. Performance indicators on suspensions/expulsions have been reported as part of our annual budget process. Attachment 4 outlines the suspensions/expulsion rates and shows the discrepancies between students with disabilities and those students in regular education.

The rate of suspensions and expulsions of children with disabilities in 1997-98 has been gathered, examined, and reported on the Performance Profiles, in percentages and ratios among LEAs. The Performance Profile for each LEA includes the state, regional, and local report of suspensions and expulsions for regular and special education students. There were 24 LEAs that had above state average suspensions/expulsions for students with disabilities. In school suspensions for students with disabilities are 5% higher than regular education students. Out of school suspensions for students with disabilities average 10% higher than regular education students. In school and out of school expulsions for students with disabilities compared to regular education students shows minimal difference. A more detailed analysis of this data within each school system will be completed and the LEAs with significantly more suspensions and expulsions of students with disabilities when compared to regular education will be encouraged to participate in Department sponsored initiatives to decrease the discrepancy as well as target their flow-through Part B funds to this problem. The State will likely establish this as a performance goal in 2000-2001 for the purposes of selecting compliance monitoring sites.

During the annual LEA application process for Part B funds, LEAs had an opportunity to examine their data on expulsions and suspensions and target funds for resolving significant discrepancies between rates for children with disabilities and children without disabilities. Twelve LEAs targeted funds to reducing the number of suspensions and expulsions of children with disabilities.

DISPROPORTIONALITY BASED ON RACE

Describe the results of the examination of data that the State collected to determine if significant disproportionality based on race is occurring in the State with respect to the identification and placement of children with disabilities.

Policies and procedures have been revised in several areas that impact on the issue

of disproportionality. First, after a two year development process, the revised Continuous Monitoring System has been implemented, drawing on quantifiable data that is analyzed and used to develop a State Performance Profile of each LEA in selected indicator areas, three of which were used to determine site visit locations for the 1999-2000 year. Included in the revised monitoring system is an enhanced, now annually reported, LEA Self Review Component of the monitoring system which includes disproportionality as one of the areas. A third area of policy and related procedural change is reflected in the LEA application for Part B funds, including a mandated analysis of Performance Profile data and the setting of priorities based on this review as well as the use of federal priority indicators and any Office for Civil Rights data that has been provided to the LEAs. A parallel revision of the Part C monitoring and merging with the Part B system has resulted in data reporting change requests and changes in the reporting formats to make them more user

friendly. A copy of the State Special Education Data Profile for the period of time for this report is appended, as is a copy of the Monitoring Performance Profile that establishes State, Regional and LEA performance data in key indicator areas. Disproportionality is included.

The issue of disproportionality based on race has been examined primarily through the collection and examination of data through existing electronic data and reporting systems.

The Louisiana Automated Network of Special Education Records (LANSER) is the first major data base, consisting of extensive child specific data concerning IEP components and child identification and evaluation issues. The Student Information System (SIS) contains attendance and other data, which along with the performance data of all students in the statewide assessment is also analyzed.

A third source of data are LEA Self-Review Component of Continuous Monitoring Summaries submitted in hard copy to the Department of Education's Division of Special Populations. Data is reported as citations in 14 specific areas, including disproportionality. Additionally, each of the 66 LEAs included in their applications for Part B funds information used to plan their 1999-2000 program plan. This section also directed the review of priority training needs of school personnel, parents, and others, based on eleven state-established priorities, or designated locally determined needs based on local need assessment.

The Policy, Research and Program Effectiveness Section compiled the data, analyzed the results and generated statewide reports. An attempt has been made to correlate the data from the various sources and determine if LEA recognition of needs is in concert with state level review. The trends will be used to establish program and funding priorities and make decisions concerning professional development. Ongoing statistical analysis will indicate true significance, based on any initial appearance of disproportionality.

An overview of the state as of October 1, 1998, is presented first.

Total School Population	747,648	
Black	363,876	47.1 %
White	383,772	49.7 %
Total Special Education	94,636	7.8 %*
Black	49,266	52.1 %
White	43,735	46.2 %

* The figure for Public and Non-Public Count is 10.31 % disabled.

The overall count of students with disabilities increased by 2.20 % in 1996, by 1.70 % in 1997, and 1.2 % in 1998. As a percent of total student registration, special education increased from 10.2 % in 1997 to 10.3 % in 1998 as a result of a decrease in regular education and a slight increase in special education.

Obvious discrepancy is not immediately evident. Analysis of LEA demographics and geographic location is more revealing. Particularly noteworthy is discrepancy in certain disability categories, and an inferred placement discrepancy in placement of students from those categories in more restrictive settings, based on the 20th Annual Report to Congress and state data profile analysis.

Using the Public/Non-Public figures:

State average disabled 10.31 %.
 Above state average 42 LEAs
 Below state average 24 LEAs

Regional averages and LEA specific averages have been established, reflected in the attached Performance Profile. There is evident discrepancy, explainable by demographics in some instances and on possible disproportionality in others.

Categorical Identification by Race

Emotional/Behavioral Disorders

Black	65.94 %
White	33.00 %

Mild Mental Disabilities

Black	72.82 %
White	26.15 %

Placement of Category

Emotional /Behavioral Disorders

Self Contained	64.41 %
Segregated Schools	5.33 %

Mild Mental Disabilities

Self Contained	82.66 %
Segregated Schools	3.03 %

Louisiana ranked at the top in numbers of students served in self contained classes for students ages 6-21, with a rate of 42.29 %, according to the 20th Report To Congress and a rate of 1.07 of all exceptionalities served in segregated schools. More recent State data indicates a rate of 22.17% in 1996-1997 and a rate of 34.29 % in 1998-1999(not including ages 3-5). Reporting to coincide with the federal guideline is in part responsible for changes. The impact of the State Accountability System is being monitored to determine any trends resulting of implementation.

Based on the higher placement rate of black students in the Mild Mentally Disabled and the Emotionally/Behavioral Disorder categories, it is inferred that there is a higher rate of placement of black students in the self contained setting, child specific issues not withstanding. Racial make-up of the specific LEA would determine the rate in the systems. Data indicates identification indicates that current data is consistent with 1996, and 1997 data. Louisiana's percentages for Mental Disabilities for 1997 and 1998 are above the federal average. The percentages for Emotional/Behavioral Disorders are below the federal average for that time.

- Analysis of the Self Review Summaries from 66 LEAs indicated that four LEAs identified disproportionality as a need to be addressed in corrective actions.
- Applications for Part B funds directed selection of four target indicators from the four general federal priority areas of FAPE in the LRE, Secondary/Transition, Early Childhood Transition, and Parent Involvement.

Only two of the LEAs cited disproportionality in their application priorities.

Each LEA has received the state level Performance Profile used in Continuous Progress Monitoring. In the course of the implementation of the newly revised State Continuous Monitoring System, the analysis of the reviews is provided to the state monitoring team leaders prior to their team visits to focus monitoring sites. Discrepancies can be investigated on site.

This document, submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education on December 17, 1999, is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This document is being made available via the Louisiana Department of Education's official web page to meet public dissemination requirements. Attachments relative to the performance report may be obtained by calling Susan Wagley Batson of 225-342-3633 or e-mail at Sbatson@mail.doe.state.la.us.