**SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM**

**A Collaborative System of Focused Based Monitoring**

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The School Support System (SSS) is being facilitated by the Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports (RIDE, OSCAS), to improve outcomes for students with exceptionalities who receive special education services. The SSS evaluates both the quality and effectiveness of special education (results/outcomes), as well as the extent to which the educational setting (LEA) meets special education laws and regulations. *(State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Plan)*

**It emphasizes**:

* Involving the entire educational setting, including administrators, special and general educators, students and parents;
* Gathering and analyzing data in addition to multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative information;
* Conducting on site reviews, interviewing administrators and staff with a focus on state performance plan indicators along with general information regarding the delivery of programs and services to students; and
* Developing a School Support System plan for strengthening programs and correcting essential areas in order to improve student performance outcomes and gap closure.

The School Support System is a collaborative system of focused monitoring. The Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports has continuously refined the School Support System in order to ensure alignment with the newly authorized federal IDEA legislation. These are state general education initiatives designed to close gaps in student performance and prepare students for the 21st century. Hence, the School Support System is designed to align with current curriculum standards and reform efforts and supports the following beliefs and assumptions:

* An assigned category or level of special need does not define the educational needs of students.
* To the maximum extent possible, students with exceptionalities are meaningfully included in the general education program.
* The curricula are based on standards that are sufficiently broad to support the learning needs of all students and include academic and skill areas.
* Individual Education Plans reflect state and local standards for student performance, incorporate varied assessments, and utilize a broad array of accommodations for testing and learning.
* A comprehensive system of professional training must support and encourage the involvement of all personnel in addressing the learning needs of students with the full range of abilities and exceptionalities.

The School Support System integrates multiple sources of information in order to develop a support plan that is directed at improving student performance and is founded on research-based practice. Moreover, RIDE, OSCAS seeks to create collegial and collaborative relationships with the LEA thereby involving the entire educational setting in evaluating the quality of special education services and supports. As a result, the process delineates the educational settings strengths and needs, culminating in the development of a plan to improve service delivery.

In order to determine the appropriateness of special education delivery systems, the School Support System studies programs and services in general and in relation to specific students. Students with exceptionalities within schools are selected from the special education census via a stratified random sample. The School Support System team reviews these students’ records, observes the students in their classroom, and/or interviews the student. Additionally, the team interviews their parents and teachers and other service providers. RIDE personnel review Individual Education Programs (IEP) to determine if the student has made progress from one year to the next. Reviewing student growth and progress clarifies how the student performs in the school setting.

**Elements of the School Support System Collaborative System of Tiered Monitoring**

***Tier I: All LEAs on the monitoring roster for a given year***

**ORIENTATION MEETING / LOGISTICAL PLANNING**

**Purpose**

The public school district/local educational agency (LEA) meet with members of the School Support System core team to participate in an orientation and overview of the School Support System, to plan for the site review, to discuss logistical issues, and to begin collecting key indicators on special education services. The orientation includes a description by the core team of the elements of the School Support System.

#### Persons Involved

* LEA personnel as appropriate
* Senior Administrator, Quality Assurance Services
* Quality Assurance Services Specialist
* LEA District Liaison (if available)

**Benefits**

LEA personnel are informed of their roles and responsibilities in the process prior to the school review. They will become aware of their participation in the study of their program and services for students with exceptionalities. They will also become aware of their role in the SSS review and their contribution in the development of the final SSS report and support plan.

**STUDENT RECORD REVIEW**

**Purpose**

A stratified random selection of student records are reviewed. These are to be determined through an analysis of special education indicators and identified from the special education census. The record review addresses IDEA mandated documentation of activities along with the review of the Individual Education Program (IEP) to determine if the student has made progress from one year to the next. Reviewing student growth and progress clarifies how the student performs in the school setting.

**Persons Involved**

* Senior Administrator, Quality Assurance Services
* Quality Assurance Services Specialist
* Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports (OSCAS) Team Leaders

**Benefits**

The review of student records provides the process with detailed information regarding the educational program of students chosen for the monitoring process. Detailed information presents systemic, school based and/or student specific areas of compliance and/or result to then further explore with the educational setting for future planning.

***Tier I: All LEAs on the monitoring roster for a given year (continued)***

**IDEA OVERVIEW AND DATA ANALYSIS MEETING**

**Purpose**

As part of the self-assessment/review process the LEA and OSCAS personnel meet to review and discuss the data that presents the current status of programs and services for students with exceptionalities. The School Support System not only looks at the school

districts degree of compliance with special education laws and regulations, but also the relationships among the educational setting’s teaching and learning practices and the performance indicators for students with exceptionalities. Hence, the system not only

examines the school district performance/result and compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the State’s Regulations, but how the educational setting’s practices relate to critical performance indicators for students with exceptionalities. The process includes a review of qualitative and quantitative data sources that have the most direct relationship with student performance and program effectiveness. These include:

* Collecting and reviewing a range of performance measures. Data sources include the following:
* District and School report cards
* State assessment results
* SurveyWorks (Special Education Family Survey)
* State performance plan/annual performance plan indicators
* Prior School Support System report and verification follow-up
* Consolidate resource plans (CRP) including performance reports
* Statistical information on services and placements (special education census)
* Compliance information - complaints, hearings, resolution sessions, and mediations
* Findings from the student record reviews and parent interviews
* Survey findings of administrators, special educators, general educators, and related personnel

#### Persons Involved

* LEA personnel as appropriate
* Senior Administrator, Quality Assurance Services
* Quality Assurance Services Specialist
* Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports (OSCAS) Team Leaders

**Benefits**

Valid and reliable information from multiple sources provides an emerging picture of the present status of programs and services for students with exceptionalities.

***Tier II: Only those LEAs who, based on the above described data sources,***

***are to receive an on-site review***

**ON-SITE REVIEW**

**Purpose**

The on-site review includes interviews with administrators, special educators, general educators, specialized program coordinators and anyone who provides instruction and/or support to the specific students identified through the record review process. Student interviews are facilitated with secondary students (middle/high school) with students being observed at the elementary level within class settings. All instructional programs are addressed through the interview process and classroom observations. IDEA focus area inquires include free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment (FAPE/LRE), evaluation, individual education program and IDEA transition. Review teams debrief with school administrators prior to leaving the school site for verification and confirmation of the special education findings. The full review team reconvenes to debrief their findings and to identify systemic and/or specific trends/themes identified.

**Persons Involved**

* District/educational setting personnel
* Full School Support System team

**Benefits**

From the data and on-site information, a report is generated on:

* The quality and effectiveness of programs and services provided by the district/educational setting
* How the educational setting’s practices relate to critical performance indicators for students with exceptionalities.
* A plan for professional development and technical assistance that will enable the district/educational setting to improve programs and services

**TEAM MEMBER TRAINING**

**Purpose**

Team members are comprised of general and special educators, parents, administrators, and service providers identified through an application of interest process. A requirement of participation on a special education monitoring team is attending the team member training meeting. This meeting provides the team members with an overview of the elements of the School Support System, and the overall schedule/activities. The preliminary findings generated from the IDEA Data Analysis Meeting are provided to the team members with an overview of significant or emerging issues. During the site review, team members have access to student record reviews, school personnel and family surveys. Team members also receive policy information pertaining to confidentiality and a code of conduct.

**Persons Involved**

* The School Support System core team led by Senior Administrator, Quality Assurance Services
* Volunteers from other districts/educational settings
* Representatives from the State Special Education Advisory Committee
* Representatives from RI Family Organizations
* OSCAS Team Leaders as appropriate

**Benefits**

All School Support System team members, particularly those from outside the Core Team, become familiar with the components of the School Support System and are prepared to be active participants in the on-site review. Team members will begin to become familiar with their role in the monitoring process.

***Tier III: LEAs who received an on-site review and/or had cited concerns will engage in***

***Support Plan/Corrective Action Development and Verification Process and Reporting***

**SUPPORT PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

**Purpose**

The Local Educational Agency (LEA) and RIDE, OSCAS representatives meet to finalize the School Support System report and to develop technical assistance/corrective action plans (School Support Plan) with timelines for implementation and procedures for verification. The final report describes the nature and extent of programs and services as well as areas for improvement. It further details technical assistance and training needed to enable the district/educational setting to strengthen selected educational programs and correct essential areas. Resources are identified and made available to the district/educational setting to assist in carrying out their support plans.

**Persons Involved**

* LEA Special Education Administrator
* Senior Administrator, Quality Assurance Services
* Quality Assurance Services Specialist
* OSCAS District Liaison

**Benefits**

The District/Educational Setting and RIDE/OSCAS work in a partnership that results in a joint ownership of the report and mutually directed and supported goals.

**Persons Involved**

* Senior Administrator, Quality Assurance Services
* Quality Assurance Services Specialist
* OSCAS District Liaison

**Benefits**

The School Support System Plan will include action plans, specific resources, staff responsibilities, timelines for completion, and mechanisms for verification. It is critical that these plans focus on continuous improvement in delivery systems and curricula that lead to higher achievement for students with exceptionalities.

**VERIFICATION PROCESS AND REPORTING**

**Purpose**

RIDE, IDEA Quality Assurance personnel work with the LEA to verify that the School Support Plan has been completed. One year from the final report follow-up documentation is provided by the district for RIDE Quality Assurance personnel for review. Pending verification, a letter closing out the SSS process is then issued.

**Persons Involved**

* Senior Administrator Quality Assurance Services
* Quality Assurance Services Specialist
* OSCAS District Liaison

**Benefits**

Improving performance outcomes for students with exceptionalities.