**SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM**

**A Collaborative System of Cyclical Monitoring**

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###  Protocol and Procedural Overview

IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act) monitoring in Rhode Island is called the School Support System (SSS). It is facilitated by the Rhode Island Department of Education, Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports (RIDE, OSCAS), to improve outcomes for students with disabilities who receive special education services. This cyclical monitoring process evaluates the quality and effectiveness of special education (results/outcomes) and the extent to which the Local Education Agency (LEA) meets special education laws and regulations (compliance).

**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;
* Monitoring activities (detailed on page 2) including data 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 cyclical monitoring. The Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports (OSCAS) has continuously refined the School Support System in order to ensure alignment with IDEA (Individual with Disabilities Education Act) 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 disabilities 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 Programs (IEPs) reflect state and local standards for student performance, incorporate varied assessments, and utilize a broad array of accommodations for testing and learning. This is done with the lens of improving outcomes for students.
* 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 disabilities.

The School Support System integrates multiple sources of information in order to develop a corrective action 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 while understanding compliance 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.

To determine the appropriateness of special education delivery systems and compliance with the IDEA, the School Support System studies programs and services both in general and in relation to specific students. Records of students with disabilities within schools are selected from the special education census via a stratified random selection. This means that RIDE will review the district’s special education census to ensure a balanced record pull of gender, race, age, schools, and disability areas. Further if a district is disproportionate RIDE will select records in the disproportionate area(s) across varied ages. The baseline number of records will not go below six.

The School Support System team then reviews these students’ records for compliance with the IDEA and based on the student’s IEP examine if the student made progress from one year to the next. Reviewing student growth and progress clarifies how the student performs in the school setting. This is done with the lens of improving outcomes for students. The team member who reviewed the specific student’s record will then interview the parents/guardians to garner their thoughts about their child’s progress, their services and supports.

**Procedures/Protocols of the School Support System Collaborative System of Leveled Monitoring**

 ***All the*** ***LEAs on the cyclical monitoring roster for a given year engage in* monitoring activities.**

The chart below delineates both levels of monitoring activities.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Level l Monitoring Activities** | **Level II Monitoring Activities** |
| Orientation Meeting | Orientation Meeting |
| Record Reviews | Record Reviews |
| Data Analysis Meeting | Data Analysis Meeting |
| Not applicable\*   | School-based visits |
| Identified compliance findings cited as applicable  | Identified compliance findings cited as applicable  |
| Corrective action plan developed | Corrective action plan developed |
| A final report, containing identified findings of noncompliance as applicable, is issued, and posted on the RIDE web. | A final report is issued, containing identified findings of noncompliance as applicable, and posted on the RIDE web |
| Subsequent and timely verification commences. LEAs have one year from the public posting of the final report to complete their corrective action plans. | Subsequent and timely verification commences. LEAs have one year from the public posting of the final report to complete their corrective action plans. |
| Within the one-year monitoring timeframe RIDE personnel (School Support System Liaison and additional Team Leaders as needed) will return to the district and follow up to ensure compliance is maintained. | Within the one-year monitoring timeframe RIDE personnel (School Support System Liaison and additional Team Leaders as needed) will return to the district and follow up to ensure compliance is maintained. |
| \* If new data emerges during the Level I monitoring activities that warrant school-based monitoring activities then that will be scheduled. |  |

The following data is reviewed, in advance, for **both** Level I and Level II LEAs on the cyclical monitoring roster. A pre-monitoring summary is then developed, and a determination is made. Again, **both** Level I and Level II LEAs engage in monitoring activities. The **only** difference is that RIDE engages in a school-based monitoring activities for a Level II LEA. The data summary includes:

1. Prior School Support System report and verification follow-up: <https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/accountability/school-support-system> Prior School support system reports and verification follow up will be re-reviewed.
2. State performance plan/annual performance plan indicators: <https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/accountability/state-performance-plan.> RIDE will review the SPP/APR LEA determination for areas of noncompliance and overall data patterns that will be part of the review.
3. SurveyWorks (Special Education Family Survey): <https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/ri-education-data/surveyworks.> This is the indicator 8 data and other annual survey information about district and school climate and student and teacher perceptions of climate and safety.
4. School Classifications: <https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/accountability/school-classifications> RIDE’s school classification system which includes star ratings and school report cards for LEAs and schools is reviewed
5. District and School report cards: <https://ride.ri.gov/students-families/ri-public-schools/school-district-report-cards> School Support System reviews RIDE’s school accountability system which includes star ratings and school report cards for LEAs and schools is reviewed.
6. State assessment results: <https://ride.ri.gov/instruction-assessment/assessment/assessment-results>

 The LEAs and school assessment results are reviewed to determine performance trends.

1. Consolidate resource plans (CRP) including performance reports: <https://gms.ride.ri.gov/> This is the electronic federal funding program that displays how the LEA is utilizing their federal IDEA dollars. It is reviewed as is their responses to the State Performance Plan update questions that are part of the Performance reporting aspect of this platform.
2. Statistical information on services and placements (special education census) is reviewed for the record review selection and any overall data trends.
3. Dispute Resolution Information (including trends and themes)- complaints, hearings, resolution sessions, and mediations. The dispute resolution database is reviewed for patterns of noncompliance and/or compliance. This is reviewed over a three-year period of time.
4. Survey findings of administrators, special educators, general educators, and related service personnel. The School Support System survey is sent electronically to all special education teachers in the LEA (**both** Level I and Level II) general education teachers that service the students we selected for record reviews and all related service providers. This data is then reviewed by RIDE and shared with the LEA at the data analysis meeting.

**ORIENTATION MEETING / LOGISTICAL PLANNING**

(For **both** Level I and Level II)

**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. This is always done with the lens of improving outcomes for students with IEPs. The orientation includes a description by the core team on the elements of the School Support System.

#### Persons Involved

* LEA personnel as appropriate
* Senior Administrator, Quality Assurance Services
* Quality Assurance Services Specialist
* LEA School Support System Liaison (as available)

**Benefits**

LEA personnel are informed of their roles and responsibilities in the process prior to the commencing of monitoring activities. They will become aware of their participation in the study of their program and services for students with disabilities. They will also become aware of their role in the SSS monitoring activities and their contribution in the development of the final SSS report and support plan. This is always done with the lens of improving outcomes for students with IEPs.

**STUDENT RECORD REVIEW**

**Purpose**

A stratified random selection of student records is selected and reviewed. This means that RIDE will review the district’s special education census to ensure equity of gender, race, age, schools, and disability areas. Further if a district is disproportionate RIDE will select records in the disproportionate area(s) across varied ages. Our baseline number of records will not go below six. 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. The team member who reviewed the specific student’s file will then interview the parents/guardians to garner their thoughts about their child’s progress and, service and supports.

**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 results (that focus on improving outcomes for students with IEPs) which then informs the educational setting for improvement planning and refinement.

**IDEA OVERVIEW AND DATA ANALYSIS MEETING**

(For **both** Level I and Level II)

**Purpose**

As part of the 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 disabilities. 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 disabilities. Hence, the system not only examines the school district performance (results/outcomes 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 disabilities. The process includes a review of qualitative and quantitative data sources that have the most direct relationship with student performance and program effectiveness with the lens of improving outcomes for students with IEPs.

At the data analysis meeting RIDE and the LEA examine and discuss a range of performance and compliance measures. These include:

 1.State performance plan/annual performance plan indicators: https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/accountability/state-performance-plan. RIDE and the LEA will discuss their SPP/APR LEA determination for areas of noncompliance and overall data patterns. The LEA will use these data patterns in alignment to any professional development/technical assistance that the LEA was engaging in to improve their data.

2. Prior School Support System report and verification follow-up: <https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/accountability/school-support-system> . Prior verification follow up will be reviewed and discussed.

3. SurveyWorks (Special Education Family Survey): <https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/ri-education-data/surveyworks.> Indicator 8 data, district and school climate student and teacher perceptions are reviewed and discussed.

4. School Classifications: <https://ride.ri.gov/information-accountability/accountability/school-classifications> RIDE’s school accountability system which includes star ratings and school report cards for LEAs and schools is reviewed

5. District and School report cards: <https://ride.ri.gov/students-families/ri-public-schools/school-district-report-cards> District and school star ratings and school report cards for LEAs are reviewed and discussed.

6. State assessment results: <https://ride.ri.gov/instruction-assessment/assessment/assessment-results> Performance Trends of the LEAs school assessment results are reviewed and discussed.

7. Consolidate resource plans (CRP) including performance reports: <https://gms.ride.ri.gov/>

How the LEA is utilizing their federal IDEA dollars in relation and alignment to the district data is discussed as is their responses to the State Performance Plan update questions that are part of the Performance reporting aspect of this platform.

8. Statistical information on services and placements (special education census) is reviewed and discussed.

9. Dispute Resolution Information (including trends and themes)- complaints, hearings, resolution sessions, and mediations. Dispute resolution database information and patterns of noncompliance and/or compliance are reviewed and discussed with the LEA. This is done over a three-year period.

10. Findings from the student record reviews and parent/family interviews are shared with the LEA. These findings are discussed in terms of potential patterns of noncompliance and/or compliance and any overall trends.

11. Survey findings of administrators, special educators, general educators, and related service personnel. The School Support System Survey is sent electronically to all special education teachers (**both** Level I and Level II) general education teachers that service the students we selected for record reviews and all related service providers. This data is then reviewed and discussed. RIDE looks to align any potential patterns /trends with the annual Survey Works data.

12. Findings from the student record reviews and parent/family interviews with a lens toward any patterns /trends.

13. Survey findings of administrators, special educators, general educators, and related service personnel are reviewed and discussed with a lens toward any patterns /trends.

#### 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 disabilities.

***Level II:* School-Based Monitoring Activities**

School-based monitoring activities include 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. Monitoring teams debrief with school administrators prior to leaving the school site for verification and confirmation of the special education findings. The full monitoring 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 (School Support System Liaison and any additional Team Leaders)

**Benefits**

From the data and school-based monitoring activities, a report is generated on:

* The quality and effectiveness of programs and services provided by the district/educational setting to improve outcomes for students with IEPs
* How the educational setting’s practices relate to critical performance indicators and improvement for students with disabilities.
* 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/family members, 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 procedures/protocols 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 (Rhode Island) Family Organizations
* OSCAS, IDEA School Support System Liaison and 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 school-based monitoring activities. Team members will begin to become familiar with their role in the monitoring process.

**CORRECTIVE ACTION PLANS / SUPPORT PLAN DEVELOPMENT**

**(Both Level I and Level II)**

**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 and areas for improvement. Again, with the intent of improving outcomes for students with IEPs. It further details technical assistance and training needed to enable the district/educational setting to strengthen selected educational programs and correct any identified compliance findings. Resources are identified and made available to the district to help implement their corrective action plans.

**Persons Involved**

* LEA Special Education Administrator(s) and other LEA personnel as applicable
* Senior Administrator, Quality Assurance Services
* Quality Assurance Services Specialist
* OSCAS School Support System Liaison
* OSCAS Team Leader (as applicable)

**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. These are aligned to the overall goal of improving outcomes for students with IEPs.

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 sustained improvement in delivery systems and curricula that lead to higher achievement for students with disabilities.

**SUBSEQUENT & TIMELY FOLLOW UP / VERIFICATION PROCESS AND REPORTING**

**Purpose**

RIDE, IDEA Quality Assurance personnel and the OSCAS, IDEA School Support System Liaison work with the LEA to verify correction, including reviewing subsequent data to ensure correction of noncompliance. Also, within the one-year monitoring timeframe RIDE personnel (School Support System Liaison and additional Team Leaders as needed) will return to the district and follow up to ensure ongoing compliance is maintained. This will include, as applicable, program spot checks/reviews and record reviews. Our baseline number of records will not go below six. Pending subsequent and timely verification, a letter closing the SSS monitoring process will be issued.

**Persons Involved**

* Senior Administrator Quality Assurance Services
* Quality Assurance Services Specialist
* OSCAS School Support System Liaison
* OSCAS Team Leaders (as appropriate)

**Benefits**

Improving performance outcomes for students with disabilities.