School Accountability
under No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Creating trusting environment for schools, families, and community partners to work toward student success!
Attitude

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life.

Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company... a church... a home.

The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.

And so it is with you...we are in charge of our attitudes.

Charles Swindoll
Welcome

Things are changing in our schools today. No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) require more accountability for schools to provide high quality instruction for all children. This book was developed to unravel the complex accountability requirements of the laws and provide a picture that includes each of us in the continuous process of school improvement. Schools are required to collect information around certain critical areas of education and use that data to make decisions. You will learn about the importance of public reporting and how these reports can be used as tools to help us plan more effectively to make every resource count. You will learn how the requirements of NCLB, IDEA, and other mandates can be addressed in the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) to improve results for children.

What is accountability?

Accountability: subject to having to report, explain or justify; being answerable, responsible; an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions

The roots of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that we now call No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) have been in place for decades. Changes in these laws require schools to improve results for all students. All schools have to make sure that students are taught to high standards and families are involved in decision making. States and school districts have the obligation to report results and must follow through to provide the support and assistance that schools need to improve teaching and learning. No exceptions. No Excuses.

Children and young adults in our schools will reap the rewards or suffer the consequences of the actions we take today. Families, schools, and communities each have a stake in this process. We have a shared responsibility. Pointing fingers or placing blame will not improve results for students in today’s schools. We all need to take a hard look at the facts. We need ask questions and work toward solutions that will close the opportunity gap that exists for so many children in New Mexico. Schools can’t do this alone. Families and educators must make informed decisions to ensure quality instruction for every child in every school.

The accountability requirements of NCLB and IDEA call on schools to provide all families with facts about their children’s progress and the educational performance of their schools. Families must not only have access to the facts but also be able to understand the facts we are given. Schools, districts, and state education agencies will need to foster a trusting atmosphere that welcomes our questions and offers information so that we can work together for positive change. The responsibility for great schools is in our hands. By sharing information, we can identify areas for improvement and become part of the solution! By showing trust in one another, families and schools can be true partners in helping our children succeed. We all can “work smarter, not harder.” We can make a difference for our children by doing things differently!

"The time is always right to do what is right."

Martin Luther King, Jr.
DATA

Under No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, education systems are required to use data to make decisions and research based programs to meet the needs of students.

As families we often hear the term data. In fact, when data is not explained in clear ways that that we understand, we may even feel this term has become a weapon used against us and our children.

Webster defines data as: factual information (as measurements or statistics) used as a basis for reasoning, discussion, or calculation

We, at Parents Reaching Out, continue to share our belief with systems and families that it’s important that families make an informed decision that is right for their child and family. When a family makes an informed decision, they gather all the facts and reports. They ask questions to clarify information to be sure they understand the information they have received. They may even check with trusted sources to make the best possible decision based on the information they have gathered.

Families want the best possible program for their children based on the information they have. Schools have to use research based programs to meet the needs of children. Schools find the best research based program by asking questions, reviewing information and comparing data to identify programs with proven results to meet student’s needs and improve outcomes.

Hmmm…sounds like we all want the same thing.
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In this time of federal and state mandates for improving student achievement through setting high standards, providing highly qualified teachers, and holding schools accountable for results, we must not overlook one of the most important components for raising the performance of schools and students—parent engagement. In a recent poll, 86% of the general public believes that support from parents is the most important way to improve schools.

As education stakeholders, we must create those best practices of parental involvement that create a successful system that not only enables parents to support the learning process of their own children but also allows them to be smart consumers of education—in advocacy, decision-making, and oversight roles. The more parents participate in schooling, in a sustained way, at every level, the better for student achievement.

Dr. Stephen D. Dolinger, President, Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education
Section I

Accountability under No Child Left Behind

When the Elementary Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was reauthorized in 2001 and titled the No Child Left Behind Act, Congress included accountability requirements for the first time since the original law was passed in the 1960s. At first, schools reacted to these new requirements with defiance before complying with the law—much like the way our children react to a new household rule that holds them accountable for their actions. It’s now 2008. The ESEA is still in place, and no matter what this law is called (NCLB or a new name), the bottom line is that schools are accountable for improving results for our children.

It is important for families to know that the federal government did not pass down an edict of how accountability would work. Guided by the belief in local control, the federal government set the guidelines and timelines for states to develop a plan for how they were going to meet the requirements of the ESEA. Each state is held accountable for meeting the plan they developed.
Excerpts from:

It Takes a Parent: 
Transforming Education in the Wake of the No Child Left Behind Act

Based on its research and interviews, Appleseed\(^1\) has made the following findings:

1. Too many parents fail to receive clear and timely information about their children and their schools.
2. Poverty, limited English proficiency, and varying cultural expectations are among the biggest barriers to parental involvement.
3. Poor communication with parents hinders their ability to exercise NCLB's choice and supplemental education services options.
4. Creative, multi-faceted communication and engagement strategies can promote better parental involvement in schools.
5. Parental involvement is not uniformly valued by school leaders as a key accountability strategy.

Based on these findings, explained in their 2006 report, IT TAKES A PARENT, Appleseed makes the following recommendations:

1. **Quality of Information.** States, districts, and schools must provide meaningful, understandable, and timely information to parents regarding key school and student performance data.
2. **Proactive, Targeted Engagement Strategies.** States, districts, and schools must pursue multiple, proactive strategies for communicating with and engaging parents -- particularly parents who are low-income or whose first language is not English.
3. **Community Support.** Districts and schools should leverage their own limited resources by engaging community organizations.
4. **Professional Development.** Federal, state, and district officials need to prioritize and fund more comprehensive professional development for teachers and administrators, with special emphasis on challenges of culture and language.
5. **Better Implementation and Stronger Accountability.** Federal, state, and local policymakers and educators should recognize parental involvement as central to school improvement and place parental involvement strategies on par with other steps taken to improve student achievement.

In sum, this report makes the case that if we are as serious as we should be about promoting effective parental involvement strategies designed to improve educational opportunities and results for all students, then it is **time to match our words with action.** Appleseed hopes these recommendations provide an impetus for continuing efforts by education leaders, teachers, policymakers, and parents to understand what is needed and what works and to take action accordingly—promoting better student and school outcomes for all.

\(^1\) Appleseed is a non-profit network of 16 public interest justice centers in the U.S. and Mexico. Appleseed is dedicated to building a society where opportunities are genuine, access to the law is universal and equal, and government advances the public interest. The NM center participates in activities of the Family, Parent Involvement Advisory Council (FPIAC) sponsored by the NMPED.
Accountability under No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

Change does not happen overnight, and the road to change may not be an easy journey. As a society, it generally takes about 7 years for systems changes to happen. In this case, the public school system is huge, and the new rules brought by No Child Left Behind not only mean change for schools but also change for universities and all entities connected with public schools. NCLB calls for school accountability with family involvement in the decision-making process for school improvement. These changes touch each of us in some way. We have new terms to learn, new processes to follow, and partnerships to build focused on positive results for our kids!

Parents Reaching Out has developed a series of Did You Know (DYK) fact sheets that are referred to in this section. To learn more about NCLB, we invite you to get your copy of these fact sheets by calling 1-800-524-5176 or visiting www.parentsreachingout.org.

What is Required by No Child Left Behind?
Under NCLB, each state sets academic standards that all schools are expected to meet. Accountability means that educators take responsibility for teaching all students up to these standards. If schools don’t meet the state standards, NCLB requires the state to set up a system for helping to change what’s going on in that school.

→ The NCLB Act requires all students to take their state’s test in reading/language arts and math once a year from grade 3 through grade 8, and at least once during high school.

→ States must set goals for what constitutes Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) based on the results of these tests. (Did You Know fact sheets #14 and #16)

→ If a school doesn’t make Adequate Yearly Progress for two consecutive years, it is identified as a school in need of improvement. In that case, the school, district, and state must develop a plan for raising student achievement. Parents must be notified and given the option to send their children to a higher performing school in the district.

→ If a school continues not to meet goals, different strategies must be considered. The aim is to help the school more successfully educate its students. Ultimately, after six years of not meeting goals, the school community must decide on a plan for “restructuring” the school. The state, school district, and local community are responsible for choosing the restructuring plan.

Why is this important?
For too long, our society has blamed children and their families when children have not done well in school. Of course parents and children have to meet their educational responsibilities; however, schools must be held accountable for teaching students well. NCLB goes further than any other law in making sure that will happen. Public schools in the United States have consistently put the least amount of educational resources into areas where they are most needed.

Research shows that schools serving low-income and minority students usually get the fewest qualified teachers, are issued the oldest textbooks and other resources, and are generally housed in the worst facilities. This creates an “opportunity gap” for students attending these schools. The accountability requirements in No Child Left Behind help families who want to challenge these opportunity gaps. All schools have to make sure that all students are taught to high standards. States and school districts need to own up to their responsibility to provide the support and assistance that schools need to improve teaching and learning. No excuses. No exceptions.
What can I do?
NCLB pushes all schools to improve, but parents and community leaders have a responsibility to help as well. Public schools are public institutions, funded by taxpayer dollars. We all must get involved to make sure our schools meet their responsibilities to our children.

- Stay up to date with the progress of schools in your area. Read the Annual Report for your school. If you don’t understand the data, ask questions and get answers.

- Be an active participant in the school improvement process. Go the extra mile and help write a plan that describes how change will take place in your school. Ask about the monitoring process to ensure that the plan is implemented with *fidelity*.

- Help your school identify successful strategies for improving teaching and learning. Call or visit schools that are having more success in raising achievement. Share what you learn with others who are concerned with school improvement.

- When a school is identified as needing improvement, work with the school to ensure the process is taken seriously. We all need to demand that real changes be put into place. (Schools do not become schools in need of improvement overnight. There are plenty of warning signs as data is reviewed.)

- Go to school board meetings and ask for updates on the school improvement process. Find out how the state and district will support improvement efforts. Advocate for more help and more resources from the district and state. Become a voice for children!

- Work in your community to organize outside services like tutoring, counseling, and mentoring that can help struggling students improve.

_No Child Left Behind is a complex law. As parents and advocates for our children, it is important that we learn all we can about this law so we can do all we can to make sure our children receive a quality education. In this section, you will learn how schools are held accountable for student success under NCLB._

- Public Reporting
  - Using Data to Show Results
  - Parent / Family Involvement
  - Parents, Families, Right to Know
  - Standards and Curriculum
  - Highly Qualified Teachers
  - Testing and Assessments
  - Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
  - School Improvement
  - Public School Choice
  - Supplemental Educational Services
Public Reporting

No Child Left Behind requires schools to make certain information publicly available in a simple format and in languages that people can understand. Beginning with data from the 2002-03 school year, each school district must issue a “report card” for each school. Districts and states must also issue reports. School Accountability Report Cards (SARC) must contain these items:

- Student achievement levels overall in addition to separate reports by race, poverty level, students with disabilities, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students as well as by gender and migrant status
- Student achievement levels compared to the district and the state, by subject, and student group
- Student achievement levels compared to statewide goals
- Two-year trends in student achievement to see if the school is making progress
- Whether the school has been identified as needing improvement
- Information documenting the school’s teacher qualifications, including the percentage of classes taught by unqualified teachers or teachers teaching outside of their subject areas

Why is this important?
Information about schools provides families with important facts about their children’s schools, including how each school compares to other schools in the district and other schools in the state. Public reporting is the part of the accountability picture that

- Helps parents make good choices about where to send their children to school,
- Helps voters choose wisely about school issues like school funding (bond and mill levy elections that impact taxes) and school board elections, and
- Involves everyone in improving education for all children.

What can I do?

- Ask the key question: How well are the children learning? Remember: Public information provided by the schools should help answer this question.
- Pick up the publicly available report cards that are published every year. Find them at your school, school district, or the New Mexico Public Education Department web site. Public libraries have computers available if you need access to the internet.
- Share the report with other parents and child advocates. Use Education Trust’s Parent and Community Data Guide to collect and analyze information (www.edtrust.org).
- As part of the school council or EPSS team, advocate for a family-friendly public report.
- Pay attention to local newspaper and TV stories about schools. The media play a key role in shaping public opinion about schools. As you become more familiar with the issues, you will be able to tell when news reports are painting an accurate picture.
- Write to your local newspaper to respond to articles, both when you agree and when you disagree. You can also submit an Op-Ed piece to the editorial section of your local newspaper to express your views.
This is a sample report from the NM Public Education website. See if you can identify the elements described under the AYP section.

Think about what you see in this report. Yes, the report does tell us the facts. However, it says nothing about what the facts mean or what the school district is going to do with the information. As we become involved with the school and district through school councils, etc., we need to advocate the district for a high quality public report. The public must receive reports that not only provide data but also include what the data means and how the district will use the data for school improvement.

As families and taxpayers, we need to request that our schools and districts provide public reporting in an easily understandable format. The information on the following page describes the benefits of quality reporting. To view a high quality, easily understandable report that is complementary to schools and friendly to families visit this website: www.schoolwisepress.com.
Quality Reporting: A Plus for Schools and Families

No Child Left Behind requires that schools report results to the public. We can do the minimum required by law or we can create reports that are useful for families, schools, and communities. The information adapted from SARC BITE (April 2006) may help to convince school leaders and policy makers about the benefits of quality reporting.

Let's think beyond compliance, for a moment, and consider what a quality report will bring in a different light. Suppose we asked this question: "What does a quality report produce?" This powerful question about practical results reveals more than asking the typical question, "What does something cost?" It requires asking, "What benefits result from every dollar spent?" It is called cost-effectiveness or cost-benefit analysis.

With accountability reporting, cost-effectiveness means relating three things: (a) the reports you create, (b) the actions you take with these reports, and (c) the cost of a report. Districts are producing annual reports of varying quality—some are developed with care and others are developed with little regard for the intended reader of the report. Very few district leadership teams are actually putting their schools' annual reports to work. The strategies below will help schools make wise use of tax payer dollars and benefit from the results reported each year.

1. **Marketing schools to parents choosing schools.** This is the way of the world, and not just because of charter schools' successes. Districts are advertising in newspapers, on billboards, on radio, and on television plugging the strengths of their districts. Winning one student for one year is worth serious money. Schools will see a quick return-on-investment of a quality report to the public. Well-designed, brief report summaries are a marketing tool. Give them to realtors, leave them in dentists' and doctors' offices, and hand them to parents with kids in preschools. To see an effective, one-page report of school facts, visit: http://www.schoolwisepress.com/SARC/ser/tou_fact/tou_fact.html.

2. **Marketing schools to parents with children in your schools.** There are no more captive customers. Parents know more about their options and, as a result, are increasingly ready to walk. The Census Bureau shows that one out of five American families moves every year. Give them reasons to stay by showing them your schools' healthy vital signs. Your parents are also your best referral messengers. Giving them a brief pass-along report to give to friends may be the best dollars your district ever spends.

3. **Marketing schools to teachers.** With teachers still scarce in math, science, and special education, and with the deadline for Title I schools this June (all teachers must be highly qualified), your HR director is on the hot seat. Finding strong candidates requires selling candidates—not just on your district but on the schools where they may work. Candidates will request school placements and know they've often got leverage. Candidates will research schools on their own. Why not give them your schools' key vital signs, the way you want them to see be seen?

4. **Helping principals tell their schools' stories.** Your principals meet their public at back-to-school nights and at open houses in the spring. What are you doing to help them tell their schools stories? Using fact sheets that distill schools' key vital signs into a one-page summary report, you can help your principals hand out a report that puts their school’s best image forward. Parents will read and reread what they have been given.
5. **Helping the staff of schools see themselves in a mirror.** When your schools that are on the state or federal watch lists get help from external evaluators, one of the first steps they'll take is to look at their schools' history of results. Seeing school-level results clearly is not easy. There's often too much detail, too much clutter, too much data, and far too little perspective. Good reporting should provide that view from 500 feet up. Seeing results over three years at a glance, so that anyone with fifth-grade math skills can get it, is key. Seeing how a school compares with other schools at the same grade level and in the county and state helps a school's instructional team know where they stand. Expect this information from good reports.

6. **Planning for site-based teams.** When it is time for school council members to tighten their belts and tackle the school improvement plan, what do you give them to work with? Among the key resources should be an accountability report that makes sense. Reports that follow only the minimum requirements do not tell the story. When you do the minimum, you get the minimum. *In New Mexico, school improvement plans are called Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS). Help the EPSS team do their best with their eyes wide open.* (Section 3, pages 65-74, includes more information about EPSS.)

7. **Building business partnerships.** When principals look for allies in the business community, they'll be expected to stand-and-deliver their school’s results coherently. If your principals are reluctant to give their accountability reports to a business leader, you should help them find an annual report that they'll be proud to deliver. The standard for reporting in the business world is the corporate annual report. See how your schools' accountability report compares to the annual reports of a local corporation.

8. **Helping seniors apply to colleges.** Many private colleges want to know about the high schools their applicants are applying from. This puts GPA and class rankings in context. It also helps admissions staffers decide if a student made ample use of a high school’s limited resources. A student who took two AP courses in a high school where only two were offered is a lot more attractive candidate than a student who took two AP courses when 14 were offered. Your high schools' accountability reports should be good enough for your seniors to use when applying to college.

9. **Helping inform citizens attending school board meetings.** Whether the issue is the district budget or closing schools, debates need to be anchored to facts. When citizens are debating policy, good things can happen. But when citizens are arguing about the facts themselves, time is wasted and tempers flare. Help anchor those debates by bringing school facts to board meetings for all to see. Good accountability reports should enable you to digest and distill relevant facts at any time.

10. **Helping high school leaders prepare for accreditation reviews.** If you have ever prepared for an accreditation review, you know that the data binder consumes dozens of hours of staff time. It is not fun or easy, and its educational value is debatable. Help your high school staffs with robust accountability reports focused on key factors from 500-feet elevation. Help them with reports that interpret results, not just present them.
Using Data to Show Results

Data is the driving force behind No Child Left Behind. Data allows us to make clear and accurate conclusions about the performance of our schools and identify areas of specific needs. The new NCLB requirements enable educators, parents, and advocates to get information about the groups of students who have historically been shortchanged by the opportunity gap, including the teacher quality gap.

Data can tell us where the most highly qualified teachers are teaching, which students are being exposed to the best curriculum and where the most resources are provided. Without data, we just have opinions. Data gives us facts to make better decisions to help students and schools improve. No Child Left Behind requires our education system to report more information and make it more available to the public. Here are some examples:

- Individual reports to parents describing their children’s achievement and specific areas of need
- Achievement levels for specific groups of students—in each state, district, and each school—including minority groups, children with disabilities, English language learners, and economically disadvantaged students
- Teacher quality and the distribution of qualified teachers among different schools within a district
- List of all schools in need of improvement and their plans for improvement
- Notice of school transfer choices parents have with data on the sending and receiving schools
- Information about free tutoring services for some children and data on the tutoring provider, especially the provider’s success rate in helping children to meet standards
- Information for parents of English language learners, including a description of the program for teaching English to students with limited proficiency in English and a timetable for when the student is expected to join the regular English language program
- If the student is in middle or high school, the expected graduation rate for students in the program

Why is this important?
Data is a tool not only for school districts and states; it is also a tool for parents to use in determining the quality of education their children are receiving. No Child Left Behind recognizes parents as consumers of educational services provided by public schools. The more you know about your children’s education, the more you can be an informed consumer. This means making good choices for your children and being involved at all levels of their education.

"Without data, you're just another person with an opinion".
What can I do?
Collecting and analyzing data sounds like something you had to do in math class, and some people don’t have pleasant memories of their math classes. Collecting and reporting data about schools does not need to be complicated. Once you see how important it is, you will be eager to do it. Here are some tips about how to collect data and information:

☞ **Be persistent.** Sometimes, people will tell you they don’t have what you are looking for. If you know you are in the right place, tell the person that you have a right to this information. If you find you are not in the right place, ask where you can get the information you need.

☞ **Do your homework.** The more you know exactly what to look for, the easier it will be.

☞ **Keep records.** If you send a request in writing, always keep a dated copy for your personal records so you can prove that you made your request or concern known. If you send an e-mail, send a copy to yourself and keep a paper copy of the e-mail. If you speak to someone by phone or in person, always ask for their name and keep track of the date. If that person refers you to someone else, use the first person’s name when you make the next call. “Mr. Jones at My Town Elementary referred me to you.”

☞ **Don’t give up.** It won’t always be easy, but don’t lose hope!

☞ **Work in teams.** More hands make lighter work. Talk with other parents—share ideas and concerns. Alone, you are a single voice. Join with others and form a choir!

☞ **Advocate** for easy-to-read and understand data reports. We can’t make informed decisions based on confusing facts. School Annual Report Cards must make the facts clear and easy to understand so that we can use these facts as partners for school decisions to improve outcomes for our children. To view samples of easy-to-read data reports visit the School Wise Press web site: www.schoolwisepress.com/.

Take Note!
Review your school report. Review the sample report from the web site listed above. Compare these reports. How they are alike? How they are different? How could information be shared your school report to make it a useful tool?
Parent / Family Involvement

The No Child Left Behind Act will not meet its full potential for improving schools without the action of parent and community groups that organize and push to make sure that policies are implemented according to the intent of the law. When parents combine facts with their passion to improve their children’s education, they become a powerful force.

No Child Left Behind provides the requirement that families receive data (hard facts) parents can use to evaluate the academic progress of their children. Each school district is required to develop an effective process for meaningful parental involvement. Each school district and school receiving Title I funds must have a written parent involvement policy that is developed in partnership with parents and families. (Did You Know fact sheets #2, #6, and #7)

What is new?

No Child Left Behind put some meat on the bones of parent involvement by specifying that parents are entitled to certain information. The school district parent involvement policy should specify how districts and schools will provide this information to all parents—in a language and format parents can understand. Schools have an obligation to encourage parental participation and promote broad representation of parents on school improvement committees. Schools can use NCLB funds for parent training to help families better understand standards, assessments, report cards, data, and other information parents are entitled to through this law. Title I funds can be used by schools to provide transportation and child care for parents, or home visits providing these services are related to parent involvement. Schools are also obligated to

- Assure parents that communications will be in the language spoken in the home,
- Hold meetings with flexible hours to accommodate working parents’ schedules, and
- Offer classes for parents who speak English as a second language or parents who would like to improve their own literacy skills.

Why is this important?

Most school systems and schools won’t change the way they do business without outside help and pressure. No Child Left Behind provides some leverage for parents and families. Schools and school districts benefit when parents and families are informed advocates.

What can I do? Join a parent group, stay informed—become active!

- Get to know your child’s teachers. Monitor your child’s homework to see if it’s on grade level. Talk to your child’s teacher. You don’t have to wait until “Back to School Night” or parent conferences. Your children will benefit if their teachers know that you are behind them every step of the way.

- Get copies of the standards and sample copies of tests and learn how they are used in the classroom. Find out how tests are used to evaluate and improve instructional practices.

- Learn about school issues. Go to meetings. Talk with other parents. Attend workshops.

- Study school report cards when they are released. Attend district school board meetings.

- Visit high achieving schools in your district and/or state with populations similar to your school and see how they improved academic achievement.
No Child Left Behind requires schools to keep parents informed.

Information is the key to making informed decisions about your child’s education. No Child Left Behind gives you, the parent, important new rights to receive information about your own children in Title I schools. All information should be in a simple format and in a language that you understand. As a parent, you should be informed about the following:

**Student Achievement**

- You have a right to receive a report of how your child performed on the state’s academic achievement test, with clear information about any needs that may have been identified for your child. You can then talk with your child’s teachers about how to help them address those needs.
- The state and district must release report cards, which you can use to compare your child’s achievement levels to those of other children in your school, district, and state.

**Teacher Quality**

At the beginning of each school year, you should receive a notice explaining that you have the right to ask for information about the qualifications of your child’s teachers.

- You have a right to know if teachers have emergency or temporary credentials.
- You have a right to know if teachers in your school are certified in the subject areas they are teaching.
- If your child is being taught by a teacher who is not fully qualified for four weeks or more, the school must send you a notice (even without your asking).
- You have a right to see the principal’s declaration of compliance with the teacher quality provisions of NCLB.
- You have a right to see the district’s plan for increasing teacher quality and how the district will make sure qualified and experienced teachers are fairly distributed among all schools in the district.

More information about Highly Qualified Teachers can be found on page 16. You can also learn more about Highly Qualified Teachers in our Did You Know fact sheet #8.

**Programs for English Language Learners (ELL)**

- If your child is designated as an English language learner, you have a right to know the level of your child’s English proficiency, what programs are used to help teach your child English, and how those programs will meet your child’s educational needs. You also have a right to know how long the program is expected to last and what it will take to exit out of the program. This must be written in a language you can understand.
- You also have a right to decline enrollment in the program, remove your child from the program, or enroll in another program if available.

Call Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176) to learn more about programs for English Language Learners or download Did You Know fact sheet #9 when you visit our web site: www.parentsreachingout.org.
School Improvement

↩ If your child’s school has been identified as “in need of improvement,” you should receive a notice explaining exactly why this happened and what the school is doing to improve.

↩ When schools are “in need of improvement,” you should receive a written notice (in a language that you understand) saying that your child might be eligible to transfer to another school or for free tutoring services.

(Learn more about these topics in our Did You Know fact sheets, #4, #13, #14 and #16.)

Why is this important?
There’s no question that parents can be an important voice in accelerating school improvement. It’s useful to understand policies and get involved in the decision-making process at the school and district levels and also monitor legislation impacting education policy at the state level.

What can I do?
Work with your children. Ask them about school. Listen to what they say. Follow what they are learning. Get to know your child’s teachers. Sit in and observe your child’s classes if your schedule will allow you this time. Check your child’s homework.

Compare homework assignments to state standards: are the two aligned? If you are unclear on this information, arrange a meeting with your child’s teacher so that you can find out how the class work and homework are aligned to the state standards. To support your child’s learning and make informed decisions about his/her education, you need to get the facts!

Look at school report cards and improvement plans. If you receive anything you do not understand, go to the school and find out more. If you receive anything in a language you do not understand, contact the school and make sure you get what you need. Get to know other parents and make sure everyone is being given the same information and is being treated the same way.

Take part in PTA or PTO activities at your school. Suggest No Child Left Behind and school improvement as topics for these meetings with information presented by school or district staff.

Join the school council. Find out if your school has formed an action team and participate in these activities. If your school has not formed an action team, visit with the principal and other parents in your school to work on plan to get an action team started!

When families become knowledgeable and involved in their children's schools, children begin to value school and their achievement improves.

Teach your child to value school.
Academic Standards

Academic standards are public statements about what all students should know and be able to do in each state. A typical mathematics standard, for example, states that all students should be able to solve multi-step mathematics problems and explain their answers in writing. Since 1994, all states have been required to adopt challenging academic standards in the core academic areas of mathematics and reading/language arts and make them available to the public.

Before statewide standards were established, expectations for learning varied greatly across schools and districts. Even within schools, different groups of students have traditionally been held to different standards. This has often worked to the disadvantage of low-income students, students of color, and children or youth with disabilities. With state standards, there are consistent goals for the knowledge and skills all students should learn in school. Teaching styles and methods will vary, but the educational goals remain constant. Now parents and community groups find out what students should know at the end of each grade or by the end of elementary, middle, and high school. New Mexico has some of the best standards in the US.

Why is this important?
We need standards for excellence and for fairness and equity. For too many poor and minority students, English language learners, or students with disabilities, school has been like trying to bowl with a curtain in front of the bowling pins. No one told students—or their parents—what their target looked like or described the steps to get to their target. Standards tear away the curtain and make the goals clear to everyone.

For example, if a child has a teacher who uses standards to ensure the curriculum and assignments are challenging and on grade level, the child will probably learn up to grade level (or will be identified for additional assistance). Another child, with a teacher who does not teach to the standards, might not be taught up to grade level. Both children could get an “A” on their report cards, but one student, however, may fall short on standardized assessments.

Without standards and the assessments linked to these guidelines, there is no way to gauge the progress of our children. Standards tell us what the child is supposed to be taught. Standards bring consistency to each school, classroom, and the instruction we provide to our students. If a child falls behind, standards provide a focus to help teachers and parents develop intervention strategies that will help the child learn. Standards-based assessments let us know if we are reaching our goals.

What can I do?
Start by getting a copy of your state’s academic standards from your local school or district. State standards are also available on the internet (http://www.ped.state.nm.us/nmStandards.html). Once you have the standards, read them. Learn about them with other parents or on your own.

Look at your children’s homework and class work and see how they are aligned to the standards. You can ask your child’s teacher, “What are the children supposed to be learning through this assignment?” It will not always be easy to understand how assignments relate to standards, but such attempts are a good way to get involved in your child’s education.
High Quality Curriculum

Standards set up an educational destination, but how students get to the destination is equally important. No Child Left Behind insists that all children should be taught up to the same standards. They need good teachers, challenging courses, and rigorous assignments—that is, the work they do in class or for homework. Schools and districts that perform at the highest level select curriculum based on state standards. Teachers with the highest success rate for academic performance by students are those who review the curriculum and select the portions of the curriculum that address the standards.

Why is this important?
Students can only learn what they are taught and can do no better than the work they are assigned. Standards tell us what students should know and be able to do at every grade level. It is the curriculum and assignments that provide the foundation for learning and building skills. What classes are students taking? What materials—textbooks, reading methods, etc.—are being used? Are their assignments designed to help them meet state standards?

A sad fact about American education is that students are often sorted or “tracked” for the learning opportunities they receive. This often happens at a very early age. Some children are given challenging classes and expected to reach high levels of achievement. Others are expected to learn only the most basic skills and are assigned to low level classes. NCLB levels the playing field and provides the opportunity for minority students, English Language Learners and students with disabilities to receive appropriate instruction following a high quality curriculum.

All children should receive college readiness curriculum in core academic classes. In today’s economy and to be prepared for the future. “Ready for work” and “ready for college” mean the same thing. Our children must be “ready for life.” Courses traditionally thought of as “college prep” are essential in today’s workplace. Most jobs that pay a family-supporting wage demand high skills and the ability to continue learning on the job. A challenging curriculum is the only way to ensure that all students are prepared to pursue their ambitions when they graduate from high school.

What can I do?
Look at the materials used to teach your child. Learn more about classes they are taking.

- In elementary school, make sure the materials used in your child’s classes are appropriate for their grade level. Are some children, for example, reading “below grade level”? If so, ask what the teachers are doing to make sure they catch up.

- In middle and high school, look at what classes your child is taking. Get to know your child’s teacher and guidance counselors from the very beginning. Make sure your child’s classes provide a challenging curriculum that will prepare him/her to be successful.

- Learn about the courses required for college and for different jobs and careers. Make sure your children are in courses that adequately prepare them to pursue their DREAMS.
Highly Qualified Educators

NCLB is the first federal education law to demand that states define what it takes to be a qualified teacher and take steps to address the unfair assignment of the least qualified teachers to the schools educating the most disadvantaged students. NCLB sets a minimum standard:

- All teachers must meet state certification requirements and have a license.
- All teachers must have at least a college degree and must demonstrate that they are knowledgeable in each subject they are assigned to teach.
- New elementary teachers must pass a test of subject knowledge and teaching skills. New middle school and high school teachers must demonstrate knowledge in every subject they teach, either by earning a college major in the subject or by passing a rigorous academic subject test.
- Veteran teachers also need to demonstrate subject matter knowledge (if they have not already). Veteran teachers can take the state tests, or the state can develop alternate measures of subject knowledge for veteran teachers. All states, including New Mexico, have promised that all new teachers hired in Title I schools will meet the state’s definition of “highly qualified.” By 2005-06, ALL school teachers were expected to meet the definition, including veteran teachers. Under NCLB, states and school districts must publicly report on the distribution of highly qualified and experienced teachers. This should help ensure that schools serving poor and minority students get their fair share of these teachers.

Why is this important?

Teacher quality is the most important factor affecting student achievement. Parents know this fact, which is why they fight to have their children taught by the best teachers. The last decade of research leaves little doubt—students who have several strong teachers in a row will soar no matter what neighborhood they come from. On the other hand, the results are devastating for students who are taught by three ineffective teachers in a row. Students of color and low-income students continue to be short-changed when it comes to qualified and experienced teachers. If we took the simple step of making sure that all poor and minority students had teachers of the same quality as other children, we could reduce the achievement gap. If we placed our most expert teachers with the children who need them most, we could close the gap entirely.

What can I do?

Look at the school and district report cards to see the qualifications of your school’s teachers. You are entitled to information about the qualifications of the teachers in your school and specific information about your child’s teachers. Check with the school to see what your child’s teachers studied in college and what subjects they’re licensed to teach. Are they teaching the subjects they studied? If not, what qualifications do they have? Have they taken exams to show they are qualified to teach this class? Schools are required to keep this information on site.

Look more widely to see how teachers are distributed, both within schools and within districts.

Make sure your school district is helping to get the best teachers for your schools. What support do teachers get? What kinds of ongoing professional development are provided by the school district? Ask your school district and state for their plans for raising teacher quality. NCLB requires states and school districts to publicly report progress toward ensuring low-income and minority students get their fair share of qualified and experienced teachers. Request copies of these reports.
Testing / Assessments

Assessments and tests are necessary in order to find out whether or not students are being taught to the standards. (See Did You Know Fact Sheet #19) Under the previous version of the law, states only had to assess students once in elementary, middle, and high school. It should be noted that the state assessments are based on the state standards. If the district has purchased curriculum that address state standards and teachers teach the curriculum, students should be prepared to pass the standardized test. The curriculum, tests/assessments, and teacher instruction should all be aligned to state standards.

Under the old system, teachers, parents, and students could not judge whether students were making continuous progress toward meeting standards. No Child Left Behind establishes new requirements for testing. Beginning in 2005-06, all schools will measure student achievement yearly in reading and math in grades 3–8 and at least once during the high school years. Some educators complain that it is too much to test children every year; most parents disagree. If they receive information that their fourth grader is not reading at grade level, they don’t want to wait another four years to find out whether their child has caught up!

Annual assessments allow teachers and administrators to keep better track of student progress and to intervene quickly to make changes in instruction to fix problems early on. Although some states have implemented high stakes tests, these tests are not required by NCLB. NCLB does not require that children pass any tests in order to go on to the next grade or to receive a diploma.

Why is this important?

Testing is important to a good education system because it provides information about how students are doing. The more we know, the better position we are in to fix problems when they occur. Tests should be used to provide feedback to administrators, teachers, parents, and students on the student academic strengths and weaknesses. This information helps instructional planning by highlighting concepts and skills that students may need more help learning.

Principals and teachers should also use this feedback to target areas where they may need additional professional development. Since tests required by NCLB measure student progress toward meeting standards, results are generally reported in the form of the percentage of students in categories equivalent to Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic although the terms vary by state. Our students are the ones being assessed. In reality, our schools are also being assessed at the same time, and they are monitored on how well they are teaching all students.

Information about how performance levels are defined in New Mexico is available from your school or district and from the NM Public Education Department web site. The purpose of instruction is to move students from the Below Basic and Basic categories into the Proficient and Advanced levels. Virtually all students can achieve at proficient levels with highly qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, extra time, and lots of support. This is the purpose of NCLB!

Teach to the Standards. Not to the test.
What can I do?
Here are some questions you can ask to inform yourself about your state and district testing program:

☞ Are the tests given on a daily basis aligned with state standards? Do they test the concepts, skills, and knowledge contained in the state standards?

☞ Does the district have a curriculum that is aligned with the concepts, skills, and knowledge required to do well on the standardized tests?

☞ Do teachers receive test results on student performance in a timely fashion so that they can be used to improve instruction?

☞ Are test results reported to the students, parents, and community in a timely fashion so they can monitor student progress toward meeting standards?

☞ Are test results reported to parents and students in a way that is easy to understand?

Remember, one of the best ways to reduce test anxiety is to make sure students are well prepared with the concepts, skills, and knowledge on which they will be tested.

Under NCLB, all schools in the state are held to the same standards. It is no longer acceptable to say that schools educating low-income students and students of color are doing all right if they’re not being taught to the same high standards as other schools.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a signaling system. It tells whether schools are on track to teach students what they need to know. Under NCLB, states set the same goals for all schools and students. The goals increase over time with the ultimate goal that all students will meet the state’s standards for "proficient" in reading and math by 2014. AYP is used to tell us whether schools are meeting state goals. Setting the same high standards for all students and schools is crucial for fairness and equity. We cannot close achievement gaps by having lower expectations for previously lower performing schools.

There are two ways for a school to make AYP:

1. If a school’s actual achievement is at or above the state goal in a given year, the school is designated as making AYP.

2. The AYP formula also gives credit to low-performing schools that have made significant progress. If a school or group of students within a school does not meet the goals, but the number of students below proficient is reduced by 10 percent from the year before, the school still makes AYP.

There are two important distinctions between AYP under NCLB and most previous school accountability systems: AYP is based not only on overall proficiency percentages but also on the performance of low-income students, racial and ethnic minorities, students with limited English proficiency, and students with disabilities. If a school does not make AYP for one of these subgroups, it does not make AYP. AYP Starting Points and Proficiency Targets are applied to the whole school regardless of size and to subgroups of 25 students or more.
Calculations are based on subgroups of 25 or more (other than All Students). However, for AYP reporting, there are special rules and percentages on how students in the sub-groups are counted:

- Only subgroups with 40 or more students are included in AYP participation goal.
- Students with cognitive disabilities take an alternate assessment. The national average is .8 percent are students with cognitive disabilities. As an example, in a school of 1000 students, 8 students would normally have cognitive disabilities and would take the alternate assessment (.8 of 1% is a national average).
- The NMPED has given permission for schools to report up to 1% of students taking the alternate assessment towards AYP.
- All schools must have a 95% participation rate in the standardized test. Only subgroups with 40 or more students are counted towards AYP. When the subgroup size is 95% of 40 students or 38 students, participation rate for AYP is met.
- Graduation Rate must be at least 90% and be equal to or greater than the previous year, or the average of the current and past two years must equal or exceed the previous year's rate.
- All schools will be held accountable for one additional academic indicator. The additional academic indicator will be attendance in elementary and middle schools and graduation rate in high schools.

Why is this important?
Did you ever hear someone say, “We have a great school”. What does this mean?

Adequate Yearly Progress is the cornerstone for a new way of defining success in schools. From now on, "all students" really means all students, and "progress" means progress toward a clearly defined goal. By basing the decision of whether a school needs to improve on the performance of its least-advantaged students, AYP promises to move achievement gaps front and center in our conversations about whether schools are making the grade. When state goals aren’t met and schools have not made adequate progress for two years in a row, the school is identified as a school "in need of improvement."

The law demands that the state, the district, and the individual school describe the specific steps they will take to raise student achievement. This is what is called a School Improvement Plan. In New Mexico, this document is called the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS). This requirement gives you more information than ever before about your schools. Steps are taken to help students in schools that do not make AYP and timelines are set with stronger interventions for schools over time when Adequate Yearly Progress is not met. Now, when you hear “we have a great school,” you will know what that means.

Take Note!
What is your school’s AYP status? Did your school make AYP? How are families are involved in the school improvement process?
**If a school fails to make AYP, what is the timeline for improvement plans?**

New Mexico has a more rigorous timeline than NCLB requires. Download the NM School Improvement Framework from:

http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/psb/dl08/SchoolImprovementFramework.pdf

Year 1 — AYP is not met. The school develops and files an Educational Plan for Student Success with the Public Education Department

Year 2 — AYP is not met. (SI-1) School Improvement Year 1—The school must offer Public School Choice.

Year 3 — AYP is not met. (SI-2) School Improvement Year 2 —Public School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services are offered. A family may choose either Public School Choice or Supplemental Educational Services.

Year 4 — AYP is not met. Corrective Action (CA)—School must now explain they are subject to corrective action, and must continue to offer supplemental services. The school is also subject to possible replacement of school staff, new curriculum, extending the school day or year, or appointment of an outside advisor to the school.

Year 5 — AYP is not met. (R-1) Restructuring—School must now explain that it must develop a plan for alternative governing to be implemented the following year. Alternative governing can include closing and reopening as a charter school, turning management of school over to a private organization, or establishing a community-based team to administer the school.

Year 6 — AYP is not met. (R-2) Restructuring Year 2

**What can I do?**

Adequate Yearly Progress is a crucial element in determining how well a school is doing toward improving its academic instruction and meeting state standards. If your school is identified as in need of improvement, find out why. The answer will be that one or more groups of students have not made AYP. The No Child Left Behind Act allows you to see precisely which group or groups of students are not making progress and in what areas.

- You can work closely with your child’s teachers and other pertinent school personnel to address your child’s needs.

- You can become part of the team developing the School Improvement Plan that addresses how to improve the area of need. Get involved with school activities to help with the implementation of that Plan.

- Counselors, resource providers, tutors, and others may be instrumental in helping children make progress. Get to know them and work with them as full partners in the process of improving the academic performance of your school.

**Not making AYP is not necessarily a bad thing. It may just be the opportunity that your school needs! Remember: AYP is the signal that gives us all an opportunity to develop plans for improvement.**
It is important to note that there are many scientific programs to teach students who have disabilities and those who are English Language Learners and other students who may not learn in a typical way. Families need to ask which proven programs are going to be used and request data to support their success. Parents Reaching Out has developed *The Book of Ideas* with tips and resources for planning appropriate instruction to meets the needs of students. More information on scientific programs for students may be found on these web sites:

- Academy for Educational Development
  
  http://www.aed.org/Projects/resourcecenter.cfm

- Federal Resource and Technical Assistance Network
  
  http://www.rrfcnetwork.org/content/view/137/192/
AYP Assessments: Special Factors

*AYP Assessment for English Language Learners (ELL)*

All students (in the district or charter school) who are non-proficient or partially proficient in English (whether they are participating in the Bilingual Multicultural Education program or not) must be assessed regarding their English language proficiency. There are also special considerations for their assessment in the statewide academic tests.

All students who are classified as ELL students must participate in the New Mexico Standards Based Assessment. Since 2001, state and federal laws require ELL students to appropriately participate in the New Mexico Statewide Assessment Program (NMSAP), which currently measures academic performance in Language Arts, Reading, Math, and Science.

**Length of Enrollment in U.S. Schools:** The options for how ELL students may participate in the NM Standards Based Assessment depend, in large part, on the length of time that the student has been enrolled in U.S. public schools.

* Students who are enrolled in their first year of school in the United States may receive a language exemption for the Reading subtest ONLY. In this situation, the student’s Language Proficiency Assessment (NMELPA) score, if available, will be substituted for the Reading subtest in determining the school’s and district’s participation rates. In all other content areas, however, the new student must participate in the Spanish language version of the assessment (if available and appropriate), or in the English language version with accommodations provided if these are determined to be appropriate by the local school’s Student Assistance Team. Because the student has not been in the school for a full academic year at the time of testing, his or her test results will not be included in the performance data used to determine Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP).

* Students who have been in U.S. schools for fewer than three consecutive years may participate in the NM Standards Based Assessment in one of three ways:
  - Student may participate in the standard administration of the Spanish-language version of the assessment (where available and appropriate).
  - Student may participate in the English language version of the assessment with appropriate accommodations.
  - Student may participate in the standard administration of the English language version of the assessment without accommodations.

* Students who have been in U.S. Schools for three or more consecutive years must participate in the English language version of the assessment (with or without allowable accommodations) unless a waiver to continue testing the student in his/her home language has been approved by the Secretary of Education.

**Waivers to Continue Assessing Students in Their Home Language:** If, after three consecutive years in U.S. schools, the district determines (on a case-by-case basis) that academic assessments in the student’s home language would yield more accurate and reliable information about his/her knowledge of a subject, the district may request a waiver from NMPED to continue to assess the student in his/her home language. Approved waivers are effective for the current year only. Waivers may be requested for a maximum of two years.

Contact Parents Reaching Out at 1-800-524-5176 or www.parentsreachingout.org for the NCLB requirements for instruction for English Language Learners (Did You Know fact sheet #9).
**AYP Assessment for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who receive special education and related services shall participate in all statewide and district-wide assessments of student achievement or in state-approved alternate assessments. Pursuant to Subsection E of 6.31.211 NMAC and 34 CFR Sec. 300.347 (a) (5), the individualized education programs (IEPs) for such students shall specify which assessments each student will participate in and what, if any, accommodations or modifications in administration are needed to enable the student to participate. The IEPs for students who will not participate in a particular statewide or district-wide assessment shall explain why that assessment is not appropriate for that student and how the student will be assessed using current state-approved criteria, methods, and instruments.

**Participation of Students with Disabilities in the NM Statewide Assessment Program**

All students with disabilities will participate in the statewide assessment program in one of the following three ways:

- Standard administration of the general assessment in the exact same manner as their non-disabled peers (without accommodations)
- Administration of the general assessment with appropriate accommodations
- Students with significant disabilities who are unable to participate in the general assessment, even with accommodations, may participate in the New Mexico Alternate Assessment provided they meet the participation criteria.

The IEP team is responsible for determining which option is most appropriate for each student. This decision should be made after careful consideration of the student’s unique needs and after careful consideration of the specific test or tests that the student is required to take at his or her grade level. There should be a clear understanding among all IEP members of how the student will participate in the assessment program.

The New Mexico Special Education Bureau (SEB) strongly recommends that IEP teams make the decision as to which option is most appropriate for students with disabilities long before the actual testing window. This provides time for the student, his or her teachers (and other staff if necessary) to adequately prepare for the test’s administration. IEP teams are encouraged to consult the SEB’s Technical Assistance Manual, *Developing Quality IEPs*, for information on how to meet the procedural requirements of the IEP process that pertain to participation in state and district-wide assessments (http://sde.state.nm.us/seo/iep/index.htm).

In addition to meeting the requirements of No Child Left Behind, states must also meet the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with regard to students with disabilities. Specific information about these requirements begins on page 29.

One of the things that generally goes through the public’s mind when they see only 1% of students with disabilities are taking the alternate assessment is, “We have 15% of students making up that subgroup population of our school. Why can’t all students with disabilities take an alternate assessment?” Answer: The other students do not have cognitive disabilities and, generally speaking, are capable of learning the material. They simply learn differently than other students and should be able to pass the test with normal everyday accommodations identified in their IEP.
School Improvement

When schools do not make AYP for two years in a row, they are identified as a school in need of improvement. From a parent’s perspective this is a good thing. It means the school district and state have greater obligations to help this school and its students. States get federal funds specifically to help schools with improvement. Once a school is identified as needing improvement, it must send a written notice to all parents at the school about the need for improvement and about how parents can get involved in improvement efforts. The school must begin working with many partners, including parents, to develop a plan that includes the following:

- Specific data showing exactly what areas need to be improved
- Strategies the school will use to raise achievement
- Strategies for training and supporting teachers and principals
- A description of how the district and state will help the school improve
- Strategies to increase parental involvement

The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) encourages schools and districts to use Working Together: School, Family and Community Partnerships—A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities developed by The Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP) and supported by NMPED. This resource and the Family Connections series by Parents Reaching Out provide strategies to involve families in continuous school improvement. All New Mexico school districts and schools, regardless of AYP status, are required to have an Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS). Schools identified as needing improvement must include specific targets areas within their EPSS and follow certain procedures in this process. The EPSS section begins on page 65.

Why is this important?

Many parents have known for a long time that their schools needed improvement. Families have also been concerned that their schools did not always receive the help or support they needed. The school improvement process under NCLB is designed to compel school districts and states to make much needed improvements in the instructional program of underperforming schools. It is also designed to make sure that students who are behind get extra help. This is the only way these students will be able to catch up and meet high standards.

What can I do?

The most important action you can take is to be there when your school needs help. The school improvement plan is a wonderful opportunity to get involved. The law says that schools in need of improvement must take steps to include parents. Some states or districts seem to almost panic when they find out that many or even a few schools will be given this “label.” This “label” is simply a way to identify problem areas and to set up plans to take care of those problems.

No Child Left Behind does not label schools as “failing” although the media may use this term. If your car’s engine light comes on, you need to find out what is wrong and figure out a way to fix it. AYP is the signal light for schools—it gets your attention and triggers action. NCLB requires a state plan that not only identifies schools that need to improve but also provides assistance and training in areas identified for improvement. There are times when more drastic measures will have to be taken. NCLB says that if a school still has not made progress after six years, the principal and the main staff can be replaced, or the school can be completely reorganized with parent involvement in the restructuring process.
Schools In Need of Improvement (SINOI)

School systems and accountability structures are complex!

**DESIGNATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESIGNATION</th>
<th>School Improvement I (SI-I)</th>
<th>School Improvement II (SI-II)</th>
<th>Corrective Action (CA)</th>
<th>Restructuring I (R-I)</th>
<th>Restructuring II (R-II)</th>
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<tr>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>Did not meet AYP for two consecutive years in the same subject and/or other academic indicator(s).</td>
<td>Did not meet AYP for three consecutive years in the same subject and/or other academic indicator(s).</td>
<td>Did not meet AYP for four consecutive years in the same subject and/or other academic indicator(s).</td>
<td>Did not meet AYP for five consecutive years in the same subject and/or other academic indicator(s).</td>
<td>Did not meet AYP for six consecutive years in the same subject and/or other academic indicator(s).</td>
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**Scaffolding of Mandates for SINOI Schools and Districts**

**State External Diagnostic Assessment**

District/School Internal Self Assessment

Technical Assistance Plan

Required Modifications to School or District Operations including Curriculum

EPSS with Action Plan to PED

Required Professional Development for Supt, Principal & Teachers

School and District provide data to PED on a quarterly basis

Includes previous requirements

**District External Diagnostic Assessment and Technical Assistance Plan (includes improvement process)**

**Needs Assessment to include:**

- Data analysis
- Target Groups
- District/School Improvement Plan
- Common Curriculum
- Aligned Professional Development
- District Discussion regarding Plan

**Core Educational Expectations**

- Standards Based Curriculum (curriculum mapping & Pacing Guide)
- Aligned Short Cycle Performance Assessments
- Common Curriculum
- Common Behavioral Expectations

- Indian Ed
- Rural Schools
- Early Childhood Assessment/Evaluation

**Services from Partners, RCOs, RECs, Ed Associates**

- Coaching (a monthly) of selected schools and districts,
  - Structural required Professional Development in areas as Data
  - Analysis, Standards Based Instruction, Looking at Student Work, Curriculum Mapping, Content Focused Training, Model Strategies, etc.

- Principal’s Academy (including training on Schools Reform, etc.)

- Regional Focus Teacher and Administrator Training

**Alternative Governance Plan Charter School**

**PED Oversight CA R1 R2**

**District Oversight S1 & S 2**

**School Oversight AYP 1**
Before families can understand which comes first, they need to find out their school's rating by the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED). School ratings are reported by districts. Visit the NMPED web site: http://www.ped.state.nm.us/.

Use the A to Z Directory to find in the District Report Cards section.

**Based on the school’s rating, the following timeline is used:**

**Year 1 AYP is not met:** The school develops and files an Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) with the Public Education Department.

**Year 2 AYP is not met:** The school must offer Public School Choice.

**Year 3 AYP is not met:** Both Public School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services are offered. A family may choose either Public School Choice or Supplemental Educational Services.

This is the process in New Mexico as the New Mexico Public Education Department has chosen a more rigorous standard than required by federal law.

### Public School Choice

Parents have the right to change schools if their child’s school has been identified as in need of improvement and has not met goals for two consecutive years. This option under NCLB extends to families of children with disabilities (See DYK #3).

- Parents have the right to transfer to a higher performing school in the same school district. As long as the original school remains in need of improvement, the school district must provide transportation to the new school.

- If student achievement improves at the sending school and the school is no longer in need of improvement, the family has the right to keep their child in the new school, but the school no longer has to provide transportation.

- When adequate spaces aren’t available, priority must be given to the lowest achieving children in low income families. School districts are encouraged to make arrangements to allow students to transfer to neighboring districts.

- If transfer options aren’t available to accommodate all transfer requests, the school district should offer supplemental services to children from low-income families in the first year of school improvement.

**Why is this important?**

All parents want their children to go to successful schools that provide a high quality education. In the past, parents often felt that their children were stuck in unsuccessful schools, and they had no choice but to stay. No Child Left Behind tries to make sure families have choices when their neighborhood school is not successfully educating their children.
**What can I do?**

Be aware of your rights under the law and make careful decisions about what is best for your child. When you are notified that your child’s school has been identified as "in need of improvement," you should find out why, what the school is doing to address its problems, and what choices you have.

Here are some important things to consider when you think about choosing a new school for your child:

- Does the school have a record of success with all its students or only some groups? Check their report card.
- What are the achievement levels at the new school? How do different groups of students do on the tests? For example, look to see if certain ethnic groups do much better on the tests than others. A good school should have narrow, if any, gaps.
- Visit the school. Talk to school officials, teachers, and students if possible. Talk to parents of children at that school.
- What is the atmosphere like in the school? **Were you welcomed?**

*Remember that even if you have the right to move your child to a new school, the decision is still yours.* Just because a school is in need of improvement does not mean that it is not good for your child. You should find out as much as you can about your rights and about the choices available to you. Get as much information as you can; think about the possible benefits and the possible difficulties. You also may decide that you want to keep your child in his or her neighborhood school and participate in the school improvement process.

You should make the decision that seems best for the needs of your child and family.

Use the space below to list questions you might ask if you are considering a different school for your child under the Public School Choice option of NCLB.

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______________________________________________________________________
Supplemental Education Services

Under No Child Left Behind, low-income parents can get free after-school or weekend tutoring for their children, including those with disabilities, when their school has not met goals for three or more years. (Low income students are generally those who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.) Supplemental Education Services (SES) instruction must take place outside of the regular school day. (Priority must be given to the lowest achieving, low income students when request for services exceeds availability.)

The school or school district must let you know if your children are eligible for this program. They should send you a notice, and this notice should be easy for you to understand. The notice should give you a list of all the accredited tutoring programs near where you live. The programs on this list have to be approved by the state. There should be a description of each program on the approved list.

If you want supplemental services for your child, the school district will make the arrangements at no cost to you (federal funds are used to pay for supplemental services). If your child does begin a tutoring program, the program must work closely with the school and with you to make sure that it is helping your child with the specific difficulties he or she is having in school. (See DYK Fact Sheets # 5, #15, and #20.)

Why is this important?
Children who are having a hard time in school need extra help. Schools should provide help, but sometimes that is not enough. Free tutoring for struggling students in underperforming schools is one way NCLB focuses extra attention on the students who are not yet proficient in reading and math.

What can I do?
Be very careful in choosing a program for your child. Here are the kinds of questions you should ask before deciding:

- How long has this tutoring program been in business? Has the company or tutoring service been successful with students who are behind in school?
- How are the services linked to the school curriculum?
- Is the tutoring focused on strengthening basic skills in math and/or reading?
- What does the provider do to coordinate their efforts with the students’ teachers and schools? Is there a plan to share information throughout the tutoring?
- How will the provider explain to you what your child’s problems are? It is not helpful to say that a student is having trouble reading—that is already known. They should tell you why your child is having trouble reading and share possible strategies that could be used to address your child’s needs. (See Did You Know Fact Sheets #22 and #24.)
- What does the provider do that is different from how the student was taught in school?
- What feedback/progress reports will you receive? How often?
- What can you do if you are not satisfied? Who can you talk to?
Section 2
Accountability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
Special Education

Indicators for Success in Special Education
State Performance Plan (SPP)
Annual Performance Report (APR)
Special Education Determinations
Who Are the Stakeholders?

Special education services through IDEA are student centered and implemented through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student with disabilities. The student’s IEP team members, including his/her parents, are the stakeholders in this process. There is more to this process than meets the eye. The stakeholder group goes beyond the team gathered at the table. School and district administrators, special education and general teachers, service providers, and others must communicate and involve families to insure fidelity in the IEP process. Their efforts must be focused on working together to implement the student’s IEP in the way it was intended. When communications break down or differences of opinion hinder the IEP process, IDEA set in place an individualized system to resolve disputes.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Section 1118, lays the foundation for parent and other stakeholder involvement in our schools. The New Mexico Legislature through House Bill 212 has mandated school advisory councils, including families as members. Provisions of NCLB are supported through the NM PED requirement that families and other stakeholders participate in the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) at the school and district levels. The NM PED expanded requirements for the EPSS to ensure the indicators in the State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators are addressed in the EPSS. There is no Special Education EPSS—the EPSS is designed as a school plan within a district plan that includes all students.

Schools and districts are provided with Working Together: School, Family, and Community Partnerships—A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities by the NM Public Education Department. The bottom line is open lines of communication, public reporting, and inclusive networks that bring all stakeholders together to identify targets, set goals, and achieve results.

Truthfully, we will never see the results for children with disabilities until everyone takes ownership of students with disabilities and their programs. Using the processes provided under NCLB, we should be able to address the SPP indicators and APR questions through the EPSS, School Advisory Councils, and School Action Teams. These are the vehicles for changes that will improve results for our children. We are all stakeholders!

As you learn how the SPP indicators are used to measure the monitoring priorities for Special Education, remember that even though a student with disabilities may have an Individualized Education Program, these students are a part of the word ALL in No Child Left Behind. We encourage you to think about your school community and ask these questions:

Why is this important?

What can I do?

How can we address these issues through the EPSS?

ALL students do better in an environment where ALL students’ needs are met.

C.M. Cole and M. Majd, Indiana University, Nancy Waldron, Florida University (2002)
Accountability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004)

Special Education

Special education means specifically designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability provided at no cost to the parents. Special education is not a place; special education is a service brought to the child through the Individualized Education Program (IEP). Special education provides supports, services, modifications, and accommodations to help the child benefit from their education in the least restrictive environment.

In many cases, special education is only a tool for a short time. A few children with disabilities may need long-term services. The goal for services is always that children be educated in the least restrictive environment. This means that the beginning point for every child is the regular classroom with typically developing peers. The focus should be aimed at services, accommodations, and modifications that can be brought to the child in the regular education classroom. The goal of special education is not a separate education that creates dependency. The goal is inclusive education for each child that provides opportunities for independence, responsibility, and productivity during their school years and beyond.

When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized in 2004, this law followed the path set by NCLB requiring accountability for improved student outcomes. IDEA 2004 placed greater accountability on State Education Agencies (SEAs) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) for compliance with the law and improved performance of students with disabilities in addition to the timely, accurate, and reliable reporting of data. Each year, States are now required to complete the following accountability requirements:

- State Performance Plans (SPP)
- Annual Performance Report (APR)
- Determinations

To understand accountability under IDEA 2004, it is important to cover the basic requirements of this law and the assurances it provides for children with disabilities and their families.

What is required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)?

IDEA requires that a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) be made available to all children with disabilities regardless of the type or severity of the disability. No child may be excluded from the public schools on the grounds that the child is too severely disabled to benefit from an education. Every child is able to learn, and IDEA requires that educational opportunities be provided for all. IDEA assurs specific rights and safeguards to children with disabilities and their parents. In New Mexico, these rights are also assured to students who are gifted.

Six Principles of IDEA provide the framework for special education services for students with disabilities. These principles include Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Appropriate Evaluation, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Parent and Student Participation in Decision Making, and Procedural Safeguards. Brief descriptions are included on the following page. The Handbook of Parental Rights and Special Education Procedures helps families and educators understand the principles and processes required by IDEA. To get your copy, contact Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176) or download this publication from our web site: www.parentsreachingout.org.
Six Principles of IDEA

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE):** IDEA requires that agencies provide special education and related services at no cost to the parent. It requires that an Individualized Education Program (IEP) be developed for each child with a disability. The IEP is based on the child’s needs and specifies the child’s present levels of educational performance (PLEP), program goals, objectives or benchmarks, and specific services to be delivered to the child.

**Appropriate Evaluation:** Evaluation is a process that involves obtaining and compiling as much information as possible from a variety of sources. These sources include parent and teacher information, classroom observation, and a formal assessment of your child’s educational abilities. The objective of evaluation is to provide a picture of your child that can be used to determine what programs, supports, services, modifications, and accommodations are needed. *Always remember:* no single person, no single test makes the decision for your child. All decisions are team decisions.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP):** The IEP is both a meeting at which parents and school personnel jointly make decisions about an educational program and a document that serves as a written record of the issues discussed and the decisions reached at these meetings. The IEP meeting serves as a communication vehicle between parents and school personnel. It enables them, as equal participants, to decide jointly what the student needs, to determine what services will be provided to meet those needs, and to anticipate the outcomes for success. An IEP is a work in progress, a product in need of continuous revision. It is created, implemented, monitored, assessed, and modified until students have reached all of their goals. *Creating IEPs is an art, not a science.*

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE):** LRE is the presumption that children with disabilities are most appropriately educated with their non-disabled peers. LRE means that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the disability of a child is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

**Parent and Student Participation in Decision Making:** IDEA, from its earliest days, has required schools to involve each child’s parents in developing the child’s IEP. Parents must be notified, parents must give consent, and parent input must be solicited and considered. Parents must be given the opportunity to participate in all meetings concerning their child. Parents must be allowed to make informed decisions, which means that they understand all decisions and options as well as why proposals were accepted or rejected.

**Procedural Safeguards:** Procedural safeguards are guidelines that schools are required to follow. Schools are required to give parents a statement of parental rights and safeguards at various times and at any time parents request a copy. These safeguards are in place to ensure that 1) the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected, 2) students with disabilities and their parents are provided with the information they need to make decisions about the provision of FAPE, and 3) procedures and mechanisms are in place to resolve disagreements between parties.
Under IDEA, schools and districts must follow certain processes to ensure positive outcomes for students with disabilities. The State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators and the monitoring priorities are based on requirements that include Child Find, identification, and the Individual Education Program (IEP).

**Child Find:** Public schools are required to identify all children who may have disabilities. These can include regular screenings of young children, children’s health fairs that include early identification activities, or training opportunities for teachers on basic skills for identifying early warning signs of disabilities (ages 3-21).

**Identification:** In order for a student to receive special education services, the student must be evaluated and identified as a student with a disability in one or more of the following categories and require specialized instruction to benefit from his or her education. Once a child (ages 3 through 21) is identified as a student with a disability in any category, they are eligible for any service they need. Categories are as follows:

- Autism
- Deaf-Blindness
- Deafness
- Developmental Delay
- Emotional Disturbance
- Gifted (in NM)
- Hearing Impairment
- Mental Retardation
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impaired
- Specific Learning Disability
- Speech Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

**The Individual Educational Program (IEP):** The heart of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is the Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP is developed at a meeting with school personnel, parents and when appropriate, the student. The IEP is a map to the future for children receiving special education services. Parents are equal members of the team and have an important role to play in the IEP process.

Every child who receives special education services must have an IEP that includes specific information, including present levels of educational and functional performance (PLEP), goals, methods for measuring progress toward these goals, and how progress will be reported to the parents. The written IEP must document special education and related services. amount of specialized instruction, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), reasons for special education setting, accommodations, a start date, and the person(s) responsible for implementing each goal of the IEP. Each of the following areas must also be considered by the IEP team and, if needed, included in your child's IEP:

- Assistive Technology
- Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)
- Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)
- Discipline Plan
- Extended School Year (ESY)
- Extra-curricular Activities and Non-Academics
- Gifted Services
- Graduation Planning
- Transition Services
- Transportation
- Vocational Education

**Think about the Big Picture for Accountability and School Improvement!**

Students with disabilities are members of the school community!

How can an IEP for a student with disabilities be met without school and district systems in place to provide the needed supports and services?
Improving Outcomes for Our Students

Each state has the responsibility to oversee school districts to ensure accountability and compliance with IDEA to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. This oversight responsibility is called **General Supervision**. The eight components listed below must make up a state’s General Supervision system for Special Education. These oversight responsibilities extend to programs that directly provide the necessary services and supports to fulfill the requirements of law and achieve the expected results.

These components are not separate parts. They must connect, interact, and communicate to form a comprehensive system. Even though a state has individual components in place, the education system will not be effective if the parts do not connect together as a whole.

- **State Performance Plan:** The SPP is the accountability mechanism for performance. It shows where we are now, where we want to be by a specified date, and how we will get there. This document will review the SPP in the areas of most impact at local levels.

- **Policies, Procedures, and Effective Implementation:** Without policies and procedures we lack guidance for what is expected. The result is chaos. Clearly written policies and procedures provide the compass that will guide us to implement programs with fidelity.

- **Integrated Monitoring Activities:** If we do not routinely check up on how things are going, there is no accountability for results. Without a system of continuous monitoring, we do not have opportunities to correct our actions to improve our results.

- **Fiscal Management:** Schools have limited resources. Just like families trying to stay on a budget, without good fiscal management, we will continue to struggle and may find ourselves in some type of trouble. We must use every dollar wisely.

- **Data Processes and Results:** Without quality data and results, how do we know that our plans are effective? Successful businesses don’t play guessing games. Schools are big business. **What counts, gets counted!**

- **Improvement, Correction, Incentives, and Sanctions:** As a people, we always need to be rewarded when we do something right. Schools are no different. We also need to know there are consequences for our actions to take steps to improve.

- **Effective Dispute Resolution:** Without an effective system for problem solving, people become frustrated and angry with the system. Partnerships for improvement stop dead in their tracks and our children suffer the consequences.

- **Targeted Technical Assistance and Professional Development:** Improving results for our students requires carefully planned professional growth in areas identified as needs. The days of **drive-by in-service** are history. We can learn to do things differently to improve outcomes for children.

*The requirements of No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be linked to improve outcomes for ALL students.* To achieve great schools in New Mexico, systems must connect with one another to sustain a process focused on continuous improvement. The NMPED requires that all schools and districts develop and implement an Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS). **In Section 3, you will learn more about this plan and how families and other stakeholders are involved in this process.**
State Performance Plans (The State and District IEP)

IDEA 2004 extended accountability at the State and school district levels. There is an important new requirement for State Education Agencies called the State Performance Plan (SPP). This plan provides a strategic framework for the state to improve certain areas of special education that should improve services to students with disabilities. The SPP for school-age children (IDEA Part B) is made up of 20 performance indicators on which states need to collect data to determine their level of performance, set targets for improvement, and develop improvement strategies to improve state performance for students with disabilities. There are varying levels of progress for each of the indicators. For more information about New Mexico districts, go to: http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/district_data/district_0506data.htm.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) is the latest revision to federal special education law. There were several new additions to the law that enhance meaningful parent involvement in their child’s special education program. When families and educators have clear information about the accountability standards set by IDEA 2004, they can work together as a professional learning community to investigate the issues, plan strategies for data-based decisions improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

Think of the SPP as the State’s IEP and the APR as the annual review of the SPP. The SPP is a six-year IEP for the State that improves accountability in special education and improves outcomes for students with disabilities. It is critical to have the parent’s perspective and experiences reflected in the SPP.

In New Mexico, all districts are required to develop an Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) focused on success for all students. The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) expects schools and districts to use the EPSS as the blueprint to meet multiple requirements (No Child Left Behind, Section 504, IDEA 2004 and others). Data-driven goals and strategies to meet the State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicators 1-13 must be included in the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) that is required for all schools and districts in New Mexico.

Note: There are 14 indicators to improve IDEA Part C services to infants, toddlers, and children with disabilities while preparing them for school. For Part C information, please visit the NM Department of Health Family Infant Toddler (FIT) program web site: http://www.health.state.nm.us/ddsd//fit/index.html.

SPP Ensures Continuous Improvement in Special Education

After years of data collection, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) identified three areas that truly made a difference in producing better outcomes for children with disabilities. These three areas have become monitoring priorities. Performance for each Monitoring Priority is assessed by specific SPP indicators. The Special Education Monitoring Priorities are as follows:

1. **Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment**
2. **Disproportionality by Race/Ethnicity**
3. **Effective General Supervision**
The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires States to collect data on 20 indicators to determine present levels of performance, set targets for improvement, and develop strategies to improve performance for students with disabilities. Each year, the State submits an Annual Performance Report (APR) to the U.S. Department of Education on each indicator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 1</td>
<td>Improving graduation rates for students with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 2</td>
<td>Decreasing dropout rates for students with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 3</td>
<td>Ensuring all students with disabilities participate in statewide or alternate assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 4</td>
<td>Reducing suspension and expulsion rates for students with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 5</td>
<td>Providing services for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 6</td>
<td>Providing preschool children with disabilities services in the least restrictive environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 7</td>
<td>Improving cognitive and social outcomes for preschool children with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 8</td>
<td>Improving parent involvement in their child’s special education program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 9</td>
<td>Reducing disproportionality of cultural groups in special education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indicator 10</td>
<td>Reducing the number of students from other cultures in certain disability categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 11</td>
<td>Improving efforts to locate and serve students, with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 12</td>
<td>Ensuring a smoother transition from preschool programs to school-based programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 13</td>
<td>Improving transition services for students with disabilities at the secondary level, i.e., 16+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 14</td>
<td>Improving the outcomes for students moving from secondary to postsecondary activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 15</td>
<td>Making sure school districts correct noncompliance areas in their special education program within one year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 16</td>
<td>Ensuring complaints filed by parents and other agencies are completed in a 60 day period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 17</td>
<td>Ensuring due process hearings are completed in a 45-day period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 18</td>
<td>Increasing the use of resolution sessions to resolve due process hearings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 19</td>
<td>Increasing the use of mediation to resolve differences with the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator 20</td>
<td>Making sure the data used by the State is timely and accurate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Monitoring Priority: FAPE in the LRE (8 Indicators)

Free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) describes the specific services provided by special education and related services staff that a child with disabilities requires to meet his or her individual needs. These services are provided in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This means children with disabilities are educated to the greatest extent appropriate in the same settings that are offered to all students. Services appropriate for children with disabilities to achieve educational success through the public education system are offered without extra fees to the parent. This is Free Appropriate Public Education, otherwise known as FAPE.

Monitoring for FAPE in the LRE allows the NM PED, school districts, and parents to ensure that, as appropriate, children with disabilities are educated in the general education setting while receiving the services necessary for positive educational results. SPP Indicators 1 through 8 monitor FAPE in the LRE and require accountability for improvement from school districts in the area of LRE just like the AYP signaling system under NCLB. This section will review the importance of each indicator and provide steps to encourage families and educators to become informed and involved partners to achieve successful outcomes for children with disabilities. The indicators for FAPE in the Least Restrictive Environment include

1. Increasing the graduation rate with a regular diploma,
2. Reducing the dropout rate,
3. Mastery of state grade-level content standards in mathematics and reading,
4. Suspension and expulsion rates being comparable to rates for children without disabilities,
5. The percentage of students with disabilities who are educated in various settings outside the general classroom,
6. Placement of preschool children,
7. Positive early childhood outcomes, and
8. Percentage of parents who report their school facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for students with disabilities.

Inclusive settings benefit all students.

The charts below compare student progress as measured by the Basic Academic Skills Samples (BASS is a group-administered instrument designed to assess student achievement in math and reading.) Both students with disabilities and their non-disabled peers made more progress in reading and math when instruction was provided in an inclusive setting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students with Disabilities</th>
<th>Inclusive Settings</th>
<th>Segregated Settings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students without Disabilities</th>
<th>Inclusive Settings</th>
<th>Segregated Settings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>53.69%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% measures amount of students who improved in a one year sample.

Authors: C.M. Cole and M. Majd, Indiana University, Nancy Waldron, Florida University (2002)
Indicator 1: Percent of youth with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) graduating from high school with a regular diploma compared to percent of all youth in the State graduating with a regular diploma

Why is this important?
A high school diploma is one of the keys to life after high school. When a student receives a diploma they are better prepared for their future. Well-prepared students leaving high school have greater opportunities for gainful employment and higher education.

New Mexico is the only state that provides graduation options for students with disabilities to earn a regular high school diploma. These graduation options, or pathways, enable the IEP team to develop a program of study that is most conducive to preparing a student to achieve his or her post-school goals while maintaining the integrity of the high school diploma. For the purpose of accountability and reporting to the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs, New Mexico reports only those students who graduate on the Standard Pathway or regular diploma. According to the NMAC, beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, 80 – 100 percent of seniors with disabilities must graduate on the Standard Pathway with a regular diploma.

The Standard Pathway or regular diploma is a program of study based upon meeting or surpassing all requirements for graduation as identified in the New Mexico Standards of Excellence, with or without reasonable modification of delivery and assessment methods. The IEP team selects required courses and electives based on the student’s post-school goals, interests, and needs. If the IEP team chooses a option other than the Standard Pathway, the team must provide documentation to support its selection of the Career Readiness or Ability options.

Subparagraph (J)(9) 6.30.2.10 of the NMAC requires districts to document changes from the Standard Pathway on the prior written notice (PWN). IEP teams must identify the reasons for changing the student’s pathway, provide parents with clear and concise definitions of the Career Readiness or Ability options, and notify parents and students of the potential consequences that may limit the student’s post-secondary options. In addition, districts are required to maintain an accurate accounting of graduation pathways for students with disabilities.

What can I do?
- Review the data collected for your school district. Visit the Special Education page of the NMPED web site by using this link to district data: http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/district_data/district_0506data.htm.
- If you are a parent of a child with disabilities receiving Special Education services, take an active part in your child’s IEP. Ask questions so that you fully understand the diploma options that are considered by the IEP team.
- Learn about diploma options in New Mexico. Contact Parents Reaching Out and ask to speak to a member our NMPTI staff (1-800-524-5176) or by download the NMPED document, Pathways to the Diploma from our web site: www.parentsreachingout.org.
- Get involved with the school action team and ask “How can we address the diploma issue for students with disabilities?”
- Find out about your school and district Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS). Get involved with the EPSS process. Find out how input from families is included in the school improvement process through the EPSS.
Indicator 2: Percent of youth with IEPS dropping out of high school compared to the percent of all youth in the State dropping out of high school

Why is this important?
The drop-out rate affects every New Mexican. Today’s young people, including those with disabilities, need to stay in school and get a high school diploma to become successful, contributing members of the community. If our goal is to provide education that prepares students for successful experiences beyond high school, then we all should be concerned about the drop-out rates in our state.

Youth who drop out generally experience negative outcomes—unemployment, underemployment, and incarceration. School dropouts report unemployment rates as much as 40% higher than youth who have completed school. Arrest rates are alarming for youth with disabilities who drop out of school—73% for students with emotional/behavioral disabilities and 62% for students with learning disabilities. More than 80% of individuals incarcerated are high school dropouts (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1995). When taxpayers spend approximately $51,000 per year to incarcerate one person, compared to approximately $11,500 to educate one child with a disability, the cost effectiveness of high school graduation is obvious.

Source: Examining Current Challenges in Secondary Education and Transition, National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET)

According to the FFY 2005 -2010 State Performance Plan For Special Education revised April 2008 published by the NM Public Education Department Special Education Bureau, during the 2004 – 2005 school-year, there were 99,182 students enrolled in grades nine through twelve. A total of 4,809 students were reported as drop outs according the above definition. Six hundred seventy six (676) of the students were youth with IEPs. Though results may have changed some over the past several years in some schools and communities,

What can I do?
- Follow this link to district data on the NM Public Education Department web site: http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/district_data/district_0506data.htm.
- You may find the district data information confusing. Take part in the school action team and EPSS activities to request that public reports are made in an easy-to-understand format. Ask for cohort data (number of students leaving the 8th grade compared to the number of students who graduate from the 12th grade)! Ask “How can we address the drop out rate?”
- If you are a parent of a student with disabilities, take an active part in your child’s IEP to make sure that the IEP includes course with progress monitoring to insure that he or she is on track for graduation with a transition plan for post-secondary goals.
- If you are an educator, administrator or community member, advocate for supports and services that help reduce the drop-out rate in your community.

70% of students with disabilities are unemployed, underemployed or stay home after their school experience. Robert Pasternack, Assistant Secretary of Education, USDE, January 2003
 Indicator 3: Participation and performance of children with disabilities on statewide assessments

Why is this important?
How do we know if students with disabilities are receiving a quality education if they are not evaluated? Research shows that 90% of students who are classified as students with disabilities have normal intelligence, meaning that they are capable of learning the same things as everyone else. As a rule, school districts have all students participate in state testing to comply with the mandate for AYP that 95% of all students participate in testing. There are proven methods to teach students that learn differently. To learn more, visit these web sites: http://www.rrfcnetwork.org/ and http://www.aed.org/.

What can I do?
Prepare your children for school. Send them to school ready to learn each school day!

- Communicate regularly with your child’s teachers. If your child receives special education services, work with your IEP team to ensure that the goals and services provided to your child are aligned with the state standards.

- Know when the state-mandated tests are scheduled. Ask your child’s school about activities that are planned to inform them about these tests and provide families with at home activities that will help prepare their children for testing.

- One of the best ways to reduce test anxiety is to make sure students are well prepared with the concepts, skills, and knowledge on which they will be tested. Our children cannot prepare for tests magically overnight. Schools must continually prepare children to do well on all tests. Connect with school staff. Ask questions. Get answers.
  - Are the tests given on a daily basis aligned with state standards? Do they test the concepts, skills, and knowledge contained in the state standards?
  - Does the district have a curriculum that is aligned with the concepts, skills, and knowledge required to do well on the standardized tests?
  - Do teachers receive test results on student performance in a timely fashion so they can be used to improve instruction?
  - Are test results reported to the students, parents and community in a timely fashion so they can monitor student progress toward meeting standards? Are test results reported to parents and students in a way that is easy to understand?

All students with disabilities will participate in the statewide assessment program in one of three ways. The IEP team is responsible for determining which option is most appropriate for each student. Parents are key members of the IEP team.

1. Standard administration of the general assessment in the exact same manner as their non-disabled peers (without accommodations)

2. Administration of the general assessment with appropriate accommodations

3. Students with significant disabilities who are unable to participate in the general assessment, even with accommodations, may participate in the New Mexico Alternate Assessment provided they meet the participation criteria.
Indicator 4: Rates of suspension and expulsion

Why is this important?
It has become commonplace in New Mexico that students with disabilities are suspended and expelled at a greater rate than their non-disabled peers. Students learn whether they are in school or out of school. The question is, “Are they learning to be productive citizens?”

When the IEP process for a student with disabilities is not followed properly to ensure that all factors are considered to meet individual needs, appropriate services and/or supports may be left out of the plan. If Functional Behavior Assessments, Positive Behavior Intervention Plans, discipline plans, and scientific programs are not considered in the IEP process, the result will be that students with disabilities are suspended or expelled at higher rates than nondisabled peers. If these strategies are included in the IEP but not implemented with fidelity, the child will face the risks of suspension or expulsion. Fidelity is the unfailing fulfillment of one’s duties and obligations—following through on vows or promises. Fidelity means to implement a program as it was intended to ensure that all services are delivered correctly.

SPP Indicator 4 requires schools to examine their data and take appropriate steps to decrease the number of suspensions and expulsions of students with disabilities while providing a safe learning environment and improving learning. Schoolwide systems of Positive Behavior Supports is a process that many schools have implemented to keep students in school and reduce the suspension and expulsion rates of all students, including students with disabilities, while improving academic success for all students. The cost benefit of PBS is shown in this example:

Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) Cost Benefit Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office Referrals</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>1847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-1,150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the year 2002-03, this school implemented School Wide PBS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Administrative time spent per referral: 15 min x 1847 = 27705 min (461.75 hrs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Instructional Time per referral: 45 min x 1847 = 83115 min (1385.25 hrs)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Administrative time spent per referral: 15 min x 697 = 10455 min (174.25 hrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student Instructional Time per referral: 45 min x 697 = 31365 min (522.75 hrs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60% Reduction in office referrals after PBS was implemented

How much time is regained when School Wide PBS is implemented with fidelity?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrator Time</th>
<th>15 minutes per referral</th>
<th>287.5 hours per year (48 days)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Instructional Time</td>
<td>45 minutes lost per referral</td>
<td>862.5 hours regained (143.75 days)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What can I do?

Call Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176) or visit www.parentsreachingout.org to get our book, Positive Directions for Student Behavior. Learn about school-wide Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), Functional Behavior Assessments and Positive Behavior Intervention Plans, Navigating the Discipline System, and other topics.

Research effective programs. Share the information with your school.

- Beach Center on Families and Disability  www./si.ukans.edu/beach/beachhp.htm
- Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice  http://cecp.air.org/
- Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBS)  www.pbis.org
Indicator 5: Percent of children with IEPs aged 6 through 21:
A. Removed from regular class less than 21% of the day;
B. Removed from regular class greater than 60% of the day; or
C. Served in public or private separate schools, residential placements, or homebound or hospital placements

Why is this important?
*Special education is a service—not a place!* Children receive their education within a community of learners in a place called school! Children with disabilities and their non-disabled peers should have every opportunity to learn from one another in a variety of instructional settings. The Individualized Education Program identifies supports and services to help the child succeed.

Following the step-by-step process of the IEP should lead to an appropriate program for the child in the Least Restrictive Environment. Supports and services come to the child in a setting that meets the child’s needs in this learning community. Given the research data on page 37, when all students are included, student outcomes are better. Where a student is educated is just as important as by whom the student is educated.

What can I do?

- Have high expectation for your child and share those expectations with the school.
- If your child receives Special Education services, participate in every IEP meeting as part of the team.
- Request training for the school on inclusive practices.
- Be involved with the budget process to advocate for supports for students and teachers.
- Advocate for supports for teachers and students to be successful in the LRE.
- Do your research. Visit this web site: iris@vanderbilt.edu.
- Contact Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176) or visit our Resource Center to learn more about the benefits of inclusive practices. Download *Practical Inclusive Education and The Handbook of Parents Rights and Special Education Procedures and other information* by visiting our web site: www.parentsreachingout.org.

If children grow through their childhood and school-age years excluded in special classes, pulled out of programs, or denied the supports that they need to learn and interact successfully in general education classrooms, then rich opportunities for learning and priceless experiences of friendship and belonging will pass them by. These particular kinds of opportunities never come again in a person's lifetime.

(Thousand, Villa, and Nevin, 2002, *Creativity and Collaborative Learning*)
Indicator 6: Percent of preschool children with IEPs who received special education and related services in settings with typically developing peers (i.e., early childhood settings, home, and part-time early childhood/part-time early childhood special education settings)

Why is this important?
Too often as families of children with disabilities prepare for their child to enter preschool, we think that the more specialized things our children receive, the better. Truthfully, research has shown this is not necessarily so. Our children basically need service 24 hours a day 7 days a week. How does this work? Schools cannot do this alone. Families and school partnerships will help ensure that our young children are supported by inclusive practices throughout each day. We, as families, need to integrate all activities into our daily routine and the routine of our children. The role of families, schools, and those who provide services to our children needs to be one that teaches others how to integrate our children’s needs into all of our daily routines.

As families, we need to develop a vision of high expectations for our children. Though it is sometimes difficult to do, looking down the road a few years, we can envision our children will be fully included in all activities. Having our children included in our daily routines is the first step towards including our children when they are older. Planting seeds of high expectations now will develop roots that will last a life time.

Start Early, End Well
In a 1994 review of effective environments for educating students with special needs, Baker et al., “concluded that regardless of the type of disability or grade level of the student, special needs students educated in regular classes do better academically and socially than comparable students in non-inclusive settings.”

What can I do?
Remember that Early Intervention agencies and schools have an obligation to work as partners to ensure a smooth transition for our young children. To learn more about early intervention and the transition process, contact Parents Reaching Out to get a copy of Next Steps to Success or our First Steps fact sheets (1-800-524-5176 or www.parentsreachingout.org). Parents are members of the IFSP and/or IEP team. It is important that families understand the options provided under IDEA and ask questions about how services are delivered for three and four year olds. In addition, family learning opportunities should be identified in the school Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) that promote learning at home.

As children transition from early intervention services to school-age programs, families may want to consider these questions:

⇒ What does a typical day look like for our family? Where do we go? What do we do?
⇒ Are there activities that we don’t do now, that we may need help with in order to provide opportunities for our child?
⇒ How can services be provided that make the most sense for our family? What activities does my pre-school age child enjoy? What places or activities may upset my child?
⇒ Are there other people (Grandma, baby sitter, child care worker, etc.) who need to know about how to promote our child’s development?
Indicator 7: Percent of preschool children with IEPs who demonstrate improved positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships), acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy), and use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs

Why is this important?
It important to remember that the role of schools is to prepare our children for participation in society. This is also the role of the family. We share this responsibility. Teaching our children starts early. Teaching them social emotional skills and appropriate behavior helps them prepare for their future. Early language, communication, and literacy skills are all perquisite to school success and support greater levels of independence and productivity as adults. The trick is for families to find ways that support and integrate these important skills into daily routines at home.

What can I do?
⇒ If your young child receives special education services, participate as a full team member in IEP meetings.
⇒ Develop your vision for your child and his or her future.
⇒ As part of the school council bring the issues facing young families to the forefront.
⇒ Find out how services are being delivered and the expected outcomes for children.
⇒ Attend school board meetings and participate in budget committees or budget hearings to advocate for training for educators and families.

Indicator 8: Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities

Why is this important?
Conventional wisdom tells us that when families are involved in their children’s education, the outcomes for students are better. The research has shown that not only are parents important to student achievement and outcomes, their insight about their child’s interactions in the school is accurate as well. Each year, schools are required to survey families to determine how effective the school has been in getting families involved in their children’s education. The Quality of Education Survey gives a picture of what is happening in the school. The survey results will show the strengths in your school and where there are disconnects. Schools use this information as a part of a continuous effort to improve services and outcomes for students. It is important for families to participate in these surveys and review the results carefully.

In addition to school and district surveys, the New Mexico Public Education Department Special Education Bureau conducts the IDEA Part B Parent Survey of parents of children with IEPs each spring. The sampling includes a cross section of families of students with disabilities (age, ethnicity, disability, and geographic area) who are receiving Special Education services. The results of this survey are included in the Annual Performance Report (APR) for this indicator.
What Can I do?

⁽¹⁾ Take time to complete the Quality of Education parent survey for your school/district each year in the spring. Parents can now complete this survey on some of the district web sites or use this link to the NM PED web site: http://164.64.166.19/studentsurvey/surveyframe.asp. Links to survey results are also available on this page.

⁽²⁾ Ask that your school council disaggregate parent survey results and share this information with staff and families. (Disaggregate means to separate something into its component parts.) Take part in council activities that use the information to suggest strategies to improve services to families and students.

⁽³⁾ If your child receives Special Education services, contact Parents Reaching Out or the NM PED Special Education Bureau if you’re interested in participating in the annual IDEA Part B Parent Survey sampling for our state. This survey is in addition to the Quality of Education survey and focuses on parent involvement in the IEP process. Part B Parent Survey for Special Education questions are included on pages 46-47.

⁽⁴⁾ Always remember that families and children are a part of the school community. Learn about the school council in your school and participate in these activities. Provide your ideas and suggestions in the development of the EPSS plan for your school.

⁽⁵⁾ Advocate for training for families and research resources to help schools improve.

⁽⁶⁾ Find out how tests and other assessments are used to evaluate and improve instructional practices in your school.

⁽⁷⁾ Monitor your child’s homework to see if it’s on grade level. Get to know your child’s teachers. Communicate on a regular basis.

⁽⁸⁾ Go to meetings. Talk with other parents and learn about school issues. Study school report cards when they are released.

⁽⁹⁾ Attend district school board meetings. Talk to your child’s teacher. You don’t have to wait until “Back to School Night” or parent conferences. Your children will benefit if their teachers know that you are behind them every step of the way.

IDEA Advisory Panel: If you are a person with disabilities or you have a child with disabilities, consider applying to become a member of the state’s IDEA Advisory Panel. As required by law, this group is appointed by the Governor and includes stakeholders from throughout our state. Members include parents of children with disabilities (ages 3 through 21), individuals with disabilities, teachers, administrators, agency representatives, and others. The IDEA Advisory panel provides policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the state. For more information, visit the NM PED Special Education Bureau’s web site: http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/index.htm.
**IDEA Part B Parent Survey - Special Education**

Family involvement is vital part of improving results for all students, including students with disabilities. SPP Indicator 8 calls for *improving parent involvement in their child’s special education program*. The results of annual Part B Parent Survey for Special Education are used to measure this indicator. Even though these results are not published on line by the NM PED, every school district receives the result of this statewide survey. Ask your district’s information office for these results. Use these results to promote family involvement and improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The school facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services for my child(ren)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Questions referring to School’s Efforts to Partner with Parents:</strong></td>
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<td>2. I am considered an equal partner with teachers and other professional in planning my child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP).</td>
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<td>3. All of my concerns and recommendations were documented on the IEP.</td>
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<td>4. At the IEP meeting, we discussed accommodations and modifications that my child would need.</td>
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<td>5. At the IEP meeting, we discussed how my child would participate in statewide assessments.</td>
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<td>6. I have been asked for my opinion about how well special education services are meeting my child’s needs.</td>
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<td>7. Teachers are available to speak with me.</td>
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<td>8. Teachers treat me as a team member.</td>
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<td>9. I was given information about organizations that offer support for parents of students with disabilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Questions referring to Teachers and Administrators:</strong></td>
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<td>10. Ensure that I have fully understood the Procedural Safeguards [the rules in federal law that protect the rights of parents].</td>
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<td>11. Encourage me to participate in the decision-making process.</td>
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<td>12. Show sensitivity to the needs of students with disabilities and their families.</td>
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<td><strong>Questions referring to the School:</strong></td>
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<td>13. Communicates regularly with me regarding my child’s progress on IEP goals.</td>
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<td>14. Provides information on agencies that can assist my child in the transition from school.</td>
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<td>15. Explains what options parents have if they disagree with a decision of the school.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Question referring to Quality of Service:</strong></td>
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<td>16. My child is taught in regular classes, with supports, to the maximum extent appropriate.</td>
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</table>
### Parent Survey—Special Education (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Very Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Very Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question referring to Teachers:</strong></td>
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<td>17. Expect my child to succeed.</td>
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<td>18. General education and special education teachers work together to assure that my child’s IEP is being implemented</td>
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<td><strong>Question regarding Administrators:</strong></td>
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<td>19. The principal does everything possible to support appropriate special education services in the school.</td>
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<td><strong>Question referring to the School:</strong></td>
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<td>20. Provides my child with all the services documented on my child’s IEP.</td>
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<td><strong>Questions referring to Impact of Special Education Services on Your Family:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>21. Make changes in family routines that will benefit my child with special needs</td>
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<td><strong>Questions referring to Parent Participation:</strong></td>
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<td>22. I engage in learning activities with my child at home.</td>
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<td>23. I communicate to my child that it is important to do well in school.</td>
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<td>24. I communicate with my child’s teacher(s) to discuss my child’s needs or progress</td>
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<td>25. I let school staff know right away if I have a concern about my child.</td>
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</table>

Source: FFY 2005 -2010 State Performance Plan For Special Education revised April 2008

### Stay Informed and Be Involved

View your school district data and performance on the SPP indicators using this link: [http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/district_data/index.htm](http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/district_data/index.htm).

Results of the statewide Part B Parent Survey for Special Education are not available on this site. These results are provided to each district. Ask your district for these results. School Councils, Action Teams and other groups can use these results to make a difference! Put your minds together to develop a hypothesis and come up with a plan for action!

2007-08 Part B Parent Survey results show that only 46% of parents taking the survey strongly agreed or agreed in their response to question #9

I was given information about organizations that offer support for parents of students with disabilities.

**Hypothesis:** Parents of students with disabilities want access to resources to help their child succeed. **Question:** How can we improve access to resources for families?

**Investigate the possibilities!** What about developing a Family Resource Book? What about placing links for parents, including families students with disabilities) on our school and district web site? What about planning a Resource Fair? Contact Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176) or visit our web site: www.parentsreachingout.org for great resources to meet your needs!

Review your school and district EPPS. Ask how the SPP indicators and Part B Parent Survey results are addressed in goals to improve outcomes for all students, including those with disabilities!
Monitoring Priority: Disproportionality by Race/ Ethnicity

Disproportionality refers to comparisons made between groups of students by race or ethnicity or language who are identified for special education services. When students from particular ethnic or linguistic groups are identified either at a greater or lesser rate than all other students, then that group may be said to be disproportionately represented in special education. Indicators 9 and 10 monitor disproportionality in New Mexico schools.

**Indicator 9: Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification**

**Why is this important?**
On a national average, students with disabilities make up about 10% of a school’s population. In New Mexico, over 15% of students are identified as students with disabilities. Though New Mexico does well with not over-identifying students who are from minority backgrounds as students with disabilities, the fact remains that New Mexico schools have overidentified students as having disabilities. This begs the question, “Do New Mexico’s families produce more students with disabilities?” The answer is NO although New Mexico does have other factors, such as poverty, that may contribute to overidentification. The general problem is some students have not had an opportunity to learn from highly qualified teachers with a curriculum that is based on the New Mexico standards.

**What can I do?**
- Work with the district to ensure teachers are highly qualified and *all students* benefit from high quality instruction.
- As part of the school council, request ongoing training for teachers using research proven programs.
- As part of the EPSS team, ensure these issues are addressed

**Indicator 10: Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic groups in specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification**

**Why is this important?**
We have discovered that some disability categories, such as the category of Specific Learning Disability (LD), lend themselves to overidentification. In the past, if a student was struggling in school for a variety of reasons, it was fairly easy to refer the student for a special education evaluation and have them qualify for special services. New regulations are now in place that require schools to rule out factors such as culture or language, lack of instruction by a qualified teacher, or lack of opportunity to benefit from a quality curriculum that may be contributing to the poor academic performance. Now we must ensure that a student has had an opportunity to benefit from interventions that take into consideration curriculum and teacher qualifications. This process is known as **Response to Intervention (RTI)**.
The **Response to Intervention (RTI)** model is a planned support system that promotes student learning, skills for social competence, and effective teaching for all students. The RTI model guides Student Assistance Teams (SATs) in New Mexico schools to successfully meet the needs of all students. NMAC 6.31.2.10 (C)(1)-(3). Targeted interventions are planned and documented in the SAT process. If there continues to be a lack of progress and more intense interventions are needed, the student may be referred for a multidisciplinary evaluation for Special Education services. Parents are a part of this process and must give written consent for the evaluation.

**What can I do?**

- Contact Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176) to request your copy of Response to Intervention (RTI) to learn about this process and the role of the Student Assistance Team. You may also download this publication from www.parentsreachingout.org.

- Monitor your child’s progress and the interventions that have been used. Review and keep progress reports. If your child has an IEP and continues to struggle, request an IEP meeting to address your concern.

- Ask your child’s teacher or the principal to tell you how the Student Assistance Team (SAT) process works in your school.
Monitoring Priority: Effective General Supervision

States have a responsibility, under federal law, to have a system of general supervision that monitors the implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by local education agencies (LEAs). The system should be accountable for enforcing the requirements and for ensuring continuous improvement. Section 616 of the 2004 amendments to the IDEA states that “The primary focus of Federal and State monitoring activities described in paragraph (1) shall be on—(A) improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities; and (B) ensuring that States meet the program requirements under this part, with a particular emphasis on those requirements that are most closely related to improving educational results for children with disabilities.”

Today’s schools are BIG BUSINESS. Just like any successful corporation, there must be effective general supervision to achieve goals and hold the system accountable for results. Under IDEA 2004, goals are focused on improving outcomes for children with disabilities. States must have a well defined plan to effectively supervise districts to ensure that IDEA requirements are met. It is no longer acceptable for a state just to say that they are monitoring progress to improve results for children and young adults with disabilities.

To meet the requirements of IDEA and monitoring priorities, New Mexico has moved from a Focused Monitoring System to an Accountability System. New Mexico’s Special Education Accountability System (SEAS) monitors and reviews all Local Education Agencies (LEAs/School Districts) and their compliance and performance data annually using processes that are similar to the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measures under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). As schools and districts address areas for improvement through their Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) improvement plan process, they are also required to address target areas based on the SPP indicators. Similar to No Child Left Behind, IDEA requires that this process involve stakeholders, including families and the state IDEA Advisory Panel.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires 100% compliance for indicators 11 through 20. With the exception of indicators 14 and 20, these indicators are tied to specific timelines. Indicator 14 is a survey. Indicator 20 requires that all data be accurate and reported in a timely manner. There is very little public involvement in these indicators other than providing public comment during the comment period.
**Indicator 11: Percent of children with parental consent to evaluate, who were evaluated within 60 days**

A local educational agency (LEA) must determine if a child is a child with a disability within 60 days after the local educational agency receives parental consent for administering tests or other evaluation materials. If the IEP team determines no tests or other evaluation materials need to be administered, the LEA must complete the evaluation within 60 days of providing the parents a notice that no tests or evaluation materials will be administered.

**Indicator 12: Percent of children referred by Part C prior to age 3, who are found eligible for Part B, and who have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthdays**

We do know that adequate planning prior to starting something new does have a positive impact on what ultimately happens during and after the transition. We also know that sudden and unplanned transitions can result in negative consequences. Sudden changes in routine may cause stress and/or result in undesirable behaviors. We understand that when children start a new early childhood program, we need to prepare them, their families, and the program staff for the changes that will occur so that transition is successful for all involved. Timely transition is the key to a good start. Extensive communication and collaboration is required between the Part C programs (under the Department of Health Family Infant Toddler program) and Part B programs (under the Public Education Department) in order to provide families and children with a timely, seamless transition from Early Intervention to public schools.

**Transition planning is key to the IEP process for youth with disabilities.**

When you look at the whole picture, youth with disabilities are still struggling and we don't see good outcomes for people with disabilities. SPP Indicators 13 and 14 calls on states and districts to examine current practices and develop strategies (including family and student involvement in the IEP process) to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) defines transition services as a coordinated set of activities for a child with a disability that—

1. Is designed to be within a results oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability to facilitate the child's movement from school to post-school activities, including postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation;

2. Is based on the individual child's needs, taking into account the child's strengths, preferences, and interests; and includes—instruction; related services; community experiences; the development of employment and other post school adult living objectives; and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and provision of a functional vocational evaluation.

Transition services for children with disabilities may be special education, if provided as specially designed instruction, or a related service, if required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. 34 CFR 300.43 (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1401(34))
Indicator 13  Percent of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet the post-secondary goals

A few key strategies have proven to help create positive outcomes for youth with disabilities. One key to a path for success is a thoughtful plan for the future that is developed early and is followed by all. The second key to positive outcomes is highly involved parents, and a third is inclusive schools. When youth with disabilities are educated with their non-disabled peers, good things happen. Self-esteem is greatly improved, and expectations are much higher for all students. When there are high expectations, the outcomes are better and the skills learned become useful tools for the future.

Indicator 14  Percent of youth who had IEPs, are no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in some type of postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving high school

To improve outcomes for our youth with disabilities, we can learn from the past. By surveying students who are no longer in school, we can find out more about the outcomes of the services provided to them while they were in school. We can also find out about the challenges students face once they leave high school. A statewide survey is used to collect this information from students one year after exiting school.

The information collected from youth who are no longer in secondary school and/or their families or guardians is based on these definitions:

"Competitively employed" means employment in an integrated community employment setting, working 35 hours per week or more and earning minimum wage or greater. This term includes military service and supported employment.

"Postsecondary school" means a 2-year college or community college, 4-year college or university, public technical college, high school completion degree, vocational school, apprenticeship, short-term training program, on-the-job training program, or other.

If your child has a disability and is exiting school this year, please update your contact information at your school. To collect data for this indicator, districts and the NMPED will make connections with families of youth who have exited New Mexico schools to invite you to participate in the Post-School Follow-up Survey.
Indicators 15 through 20 relate to the Dispute Resolution System.
Ensuring the timelines are followed in a fair and balanced Dispute Resolution System the a key to having an honorable education system that is in compliance with the requirements set by IDEA 2004. You will notice that timelines are stressed throughout the SPP Indicators that hold states and school districts accountable for improving outcomes for students with disabilities

Contact Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176 or www.parentsrachingout.org) to get your copy of The Handbook of Parental Rights and Special Education Procedures. The Handbook provides step by step information to assist families and schools in resolving conflicts using procedures defined by IDEA. You may also visit the Special Education Bureau of the NM Public Education Department on this web site: http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/index.htm.

Indicator 15 General supervision system (including monitoring, complaints, hearings, etc.) identifies and corrects noncompliance as soon as possible but in no case later than one year from identification

Indicator 16 Percent of signed written complaints with reports issued that were resolved within 60-day timeline or a timeline extended for exceptional circumstances with respect to a particular complaint

Indicator 17 Percent of fully adjudicated due process hearing requests that were fully adjudicated within the 45-day timeline or a timeline that is properly extended by the hearing officer at the request of either party

Indicator 18 Percent of hearing requests that went to resolution sessions that were resolved through resolution session settlement agreements

Indicator 19 Percent of mediations held that resulted in mediation agreements

Effective accountability systems demand quality data!

Indicator 20 State reported data (618 and State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report) are timely and accurate.

Through the state’s improvement activities in the SPP and from the examination of LEA performance, data are used for program improvement as well as progress measurement. States should coordinate NCLB school improvement activities with SPP improvement activities. Technical assistance activities designed to address the needs of each individual LEA, need to be based on data that are collected.

Source: Developing and Implementing an Effective System of General Supervision: Part B
National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring NCSEAM, January 2007
Annual Performance Report (APR)

Public Law 108-446, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 2004, required the New Mexico Public Education Department to develop and submit a six year State Performance Plan (SPP) to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) at the U.S. Education Department (USDE), spanning the years 2005-2010. OSEP identified three monitoring priorities and 20 indicators relating to the priority areas that must be tracked and reported to the USDE. The Annual Performance Report (APR) is required to be submitted as the State’s report to the Secretary of Education and to the public on the State’s performance under the SPP, describing overall progress and slippage in meeting the targets found in the SPP.

Why is this important?
The APR is our state’s report card for special education. The state is required to report what they are doing to the public. As citizens of New Mexico, we all need to know what is going in our schools for all children.

What can I do?
We all need to review the report so we know how our state is performing and just as importantly how the New Mexico Public Education Department is doing in regards to improving outcomes for our children.

- Review your school districts data:
  http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/district_data/district_0506data.htm.
- Become involved at the school and district level in the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS).
- Get involved with the school council,

The 20 indicators of the State Performance Plan (SPP) used to monitor state and district activities in Special Education send a strong message that students with disabilities must reach their potential and everyone must do their part. The Annual Performance Report (APR) lets the public know our state has fulfilled its obligation to improving outcomes for students with disabilities. The information in the APR also becomes a planning tool for the future. It identifies our strengths and shows our areas for future growth.

The U.S. Department of Education through the Office of Special Education Programs uses this information to rate each state on their performance. Each state, in turn, uses the information collected from districts to rate their performance using the SPP indicators. These ratings are called Determinations. This process is very similar to the AYP designations for schools and districts required through No Child Left Behind. The focus for both laws, NCLB and IDEA, is to improve outcomes for our children and hold schools accountable for results.

We will review Special Education Determinations in the next few pages.
Special Education Determinations for States

Finally, IDEA 2004 requires the U.S. Department of Education to rate States according to their performance. IDEA 616(a)(1)(c)(i) and CFR 300.600(a) address the requirement for the U.S. Department of Education to place each State in one of four levels of determination based on information provided in the SPP through monitoring visits and other public information, including the State’s APR. Each State and school district will be placed in one of the following categories called determinations. Each level except Level 1 has enforcement consequences.

**Level 1—Meets Requirements:** At this level, the state and/or school district demonstrates the following:
- Substantial compliance on all compliance indicators
- Data is timely, valid, and reliable.
- Timely corrects noncompliance.

**Level 2—Needs Assistance:** At this level, if for two consecutive years, the state/school district program does not demonstrate substantial compliance on one or more of the compliance indicators.
- One or more indicators does not have reliable data.
- Does not demonstrate timely correction of noncompliance.

*Possible Enforcement Activities*
- Advise the state/school district program of sources of technical assistance.
- Direct use of state level/school district program level funds to correct problem.
- Identify state/school district early childhood program as high risk.

**Level 3—Needs Intervention:** The state/school district program has not demonstrated the following for three consecutive years:
- Substantial compliance on one or more of the compliance indicators
- Reliable data results on one or more indicators
- Correction of noncompliance

*Possible Enforcement Activities*
- Any from Needs Assistance level
- Prepare corrective action plan.
- Compliance agreement
- Withhold a percentage of federal funds.

**Level 4—Needs Substantial Intervention:** The state/school district program has failed to substantially comply, and those actions affect the core requirements of the program and services to children with disabilities. The state/school district program has informed the Department it is unwilling to comply. Enforcement Activities at Level 4 include
- Any mentioned in levels 2–3,
- Recovery of funds,
- Withholding further payments, and/or
- Referral to Inspector General or enforcement action.

Stakeholder Involvement
It is important for the state to include stakeholder involvement in the levels of determination process. In New Mexico, the IDEA Advisory Panel represents stakeholders including families of children with disabilities, educators, and agency representatives. The IDEA Advisory Panel advocates for a high quality education for students with disabilities. To learn more about the work of this stakeholder group, contact the NM Public Education Department Special Education Bureau at 1-505-827-1457 or visit their web site: http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/index.htm.

States are required to make determinations annually for their school districts and early education programs. Most states make these determinations based upon the following criteria:

- Performance on certain SPP indicators
- Nature and length of time regarding any noncompliance
- Data—timely, reliable, and valid

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not require states to report Determination decisions regarding school districts to the U.S. Department of Education or to the public. States, of course, must inform each LEA of the state’s Determination. Each school district is assessed annually by the New Mexico Public Education Department and placed in one of the four levels shown in the diagram below. (Note: As school districts move up the pyramid, the attention paid becomes more intense.)
Making Determinations for NM School Districts

Special Education Determinations are much like the NCLB classifications for schools in need of improvement 1 and 2 (S1 and S2) and Restructuring 1 and 2 (R1 and R2). Just like the requirements under NCLB, the Special Education determinations required under IDEA are based on the plan the state made and the reports that follow. Districts have to make plans and reports to the state. The state then holds them accountable for doing what they said they would do. Determinations are a required part of the law and are part of the ongoing efforts to improve results for children and youth with disabilities. Although there is no specific timeline in statute or regulations when determinations must be made, States should consider making determinations:

- As soon as possible after issuing their annual report to the public,
- In a timely manner so that districts can take actions necessary for improvement, and
- Before sub-grants are issued to districts.

The IDEA identifies specific technical assistance or enforcement actions aligned with each of the determinations, with the exception of "Meets Requirements" that the department must take under specific circumstances. These actions are consistent with the level of concern signaled by the determination for the individual school district. Districts found to have the greatest number of compliance issues with the greatest number of SPP Indicators not met receive the most intense monitoring, technical assistance, and supervision.

To make the determination for each district, the NMPED Special Education Bureau considers the district’s plan that is made during their application for funding, performance progress during the previous year and information obtained through monitoring visits, and any other public information. The following factors are considered for each district’s determination:

- Demonstrated compliance or evidence that it corrected noncompliance in a timely manner
- If it did not demonstrate compliance, it must have made progress in ensuring compliance over prior performance in that area.
- Provision of valid and reliable FFY data.
- Whether the district had other IDEA compliance issues that had been identified in the department's monitoring, audit, or other activities and the state's progress in resolving those problems

Once determinations and made and districts notified, the process used in New Mexico for working with schools at each level of Determination beyond Meets Requirements is as follows:

**Needs Assistance (Level 2)**
- NM PED monitors through EPSS.
- District /Regional Education Cooperative/State-supported Educational Program provides oversight.

**Needs Intervention (Level 3)**
- SEA provides oversight through EPSS.
- Mandatory Participation in state technical assistance activities

**Needs Substantial Intervention (Level 4)**
- SEA provides oversight through Corrective Action Plan (CAP).
- Special Education Technical Assistance Team (SETAT) is assigned.
Why are Determinations Important?
In the distant past when monitoring occurred, school districts were told they needed to come into compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. An agreement was made with the school district, and that was that. The state assumed the district made the adjustments as agreed. There was no follow-up to ensure the agreement was followed. There was no technical assistance provided, and districts were left to their own devices to figure it out. Then we moved to a focused monitoring system that was very open and transparent and provided technical assistance to the school districts on the items found out of compliance. Though this system was much better and certainly transparent to the public, the USDE noted that the state was not monitoring school districts for compliance with all the regulations. Though not required, the NM PED choose to scrap the focused monitoring system in favor of a desk audit system (desk audits are less intense) in order to monitor all IDEA requirements.

The current system monitors school districts for compliance with all requirements under the IDEA. The oversight responsibilities in the current system bring other advantages that are designed to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The current system

- Provides a determination of the level of compliance,
- Provides technical assistance to school districts, and
- Provides sanctions/directed technical assistance.

There are also certain disadvantages in the current system.
- The system is not transparent. Public reporting of district determinations is not required by IDEA.
- Lack of information does not build public trust in the system or build supportive partnerships with the community that could help improve outcomes for all children in the school community.

What can I do?
- Review the school district report card and the special education reports available on school districts
- Get involved with the schools EPSS team to ensure your district and school address areas of need with scientific methods
- Ask the school district for their state determination classification and how they plan to address the areas of noncompliance. (How can you help?)
- Educate policy makers about the importance of transparency in the education system.
- Work with the district and school to help them see the benefits of open, public reporting and how they can build partnerships for school improvement.

Building the Public Trust Provides Opportunities for All Children
Neither the IDEA nor NCLB require states to report their district special education determinations to the public. The New Mexico Public Education Department has chosen to do the minimum required by the law and not make determinations public because there is no requirement in the law. Is there common sense in doing the minimum? How can the public be a part of the solution if we don't have the facts? Quality schools for our children should be based on an accountability system that is transparent and open to stakeholders!
Section 3
Weaving the Strands Together to Improve Results

New Mexico School Improvement Framework
School Advisory Councils
Action Teams for Partnerships
The Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS)
New Mexico’s Guiding Principles on Family & Parent Involvement

A Shared Responsibility

WHEREAS, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) recognizes that parents and families are a young child’s first teachers, are essential to school readiness, and that when children enter school the responsibility for their education is then shared with the school and the entire community; and

WHEREAS, the NMPED recognizes that creating positive home, school, health, and community partnerships is essential to carrying out this shared responsibility successfully; and

WHEREAS, the NMPED recognizes a clear connection between parent involvement and increased student achievement; and

WHEREAS, the NMPED recognizes that the education of children begins at birth. A birth through twenty-one continuum of services requires an alignment of practices and building relationships between families, schools, and communities; and

WHEREAS, the NMPED recognizes that in this changing world our children’s success will require schools, families, and communities to reinvent how they work together.

NOW THEREFORE, the NMPED adopts these principles for key stakeholders in ensuring quality education for all students. NMPED, all local school districts, schools, school personnel and policymakers are encouraged to:

- Value families as equal partners/joint decision makers in the education of our children;
- Listen carefully to the family perspective;
- Make collaborative communication (talking, thinking and planning together) a priority;
- Include social interaction and learning to be respectful of families, language and culture;
- Respect each child and family’s individuality and personal circumstances;
- Create high expectations for student academic and social outcomes among all staff and policymakers;
- Engage families and community-based programs as valued partners in the design of efforts to promote school success for all children;
- Acknowledge ALL partners’ strengths, capabilities, contributions, and interests;
- Provide ongoing growth and training opportunities necessary for adults responsible for the care and education of children; and
- Design and practice smooth transitions aligning services around each child’s needs.

The New Mexico Public Education Department will take steps to foster wider and more substantive family and community involvement by identifying and sharing information with parents and families about effective educational programs. It also will provide information on funding sources for the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs. Further, it will encourage professional development programs on family/school/community involvement for school staff and families. Efforts will be made to connect with families who did not have a positive school experience or for whom English is not their native language.

The New Mexico Public Education Department will continue to support and assist schools and local school systems in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies and programs that involve all parents and families at all grade levels. It will seek to collaborate with community agencies serving children and families to encourage parent and family involvement in the lives of children. These principles complement legislative initiatives regarding family and parent involvement.

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department, Family Parent Memo, April 2008
New Mexico School Improvement Framework

“Standards of Effectiveness”

Standard 1: Effective Leadership
- Dynamic and Distributed Leadership
- Focus on Student Learning
- Sustained Improvement Efforts

Standard 2: Quality Teaching and Learning
- Quality Classroom Instruction
- Coordinated and Embedded Professional Development Focused on Classroom Instruction
- Coordinated and Aligned Curriculum and Assessments
- High Expectations for Teachers and Students

Standard 3: Collaborative Relationships
- Family and Community Involvement
- Professional Culture and Collaborative Relationships

Standard 4: Support for System-wide Improvement
- Effective Use of Data
- Strategic Allocation of Resources


School Improvement is the single most important business of the school. It is the process that schools use to ensure all students are achieving at high levels. The combination of three concepts constitutes the foundation for positive improvement results:
- meaningful teamwork;
- clear, measurable goals; and
- regular collection and analysis of performance data.

Mike Schmoker
New Mexico Advisory School Councils

According to section 27 of the New Mexico House Bill 212, each public school shall create an advisory “school council” to assist the school principal with school-based decision-making and to involve parents in their children’s education. The school council members shall be elected in accordance with local school board rule and reflect an equitable balance between school employees and parents and at least one community member to represent the business community, if such a person is available. The school principal shall be an active member of the school council. Specific guidelines for the NM Advisory School Council are described in the 2006-07 School Improvement Framework by the New Mexico Public Education Department. Guidelines include:

1. All New Mexico schools are required to have participatory Advisory School Councils that include parents and community members. NM Statutes Annotated (NMSA) 22-5-16; (HB 212, Section 27).
2. An Advisory School Council must be created in every public school to assist the school principal with school-based decision making.
3. The purpose of the Advisory School Council is to address issues of budget, student assessment, data, policy relating to instructional issues and curricula, parent and community involvement, and business partnerships (NMSA 22-5-16, HB 212).
4. The Council shall give advice, consistent with state and school district rules and policies, on policies relating to instructional issues and curricula and on proposed and actual budgets.
5. The Council shall have membership equitably balanced among school employees, parents, and community members, including the business community.
6. The Council shall be created and elected in accordance with local governing board rule.
7. The Council shall develop and implement creative ways to involve parents in schools.
8. The Council shall coordinate, where appropriate, existing work force development boards or career technical education advisory councils to connect students and academic programs to business.
9. The Council shall serve as champion for students in building support for schools and encouraging greater community participation in public schools.
10. The district administration shall monitor the participation of the Advisory School Council at each school site and be able to provide evidence and schedules of those periodic meetings.
11. Along with the submission of the EPSS, the district shall include documentation of the previously held public meetings for each site including a sign-in sheet of those in attendance, an agenda, and a list of suggestions from parents and the public on how to improve the school.
Look at the BIG Picture for New Mexico Schools!

In addition to the requirements for a School Advisory Council, schools in New Mexico are required to develop and implement an Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS). Families are key partners in this process. The EPSS requires your district/school to evaluate current practices in terms of where students are performing according to state standards and benchmarks. This information is the baseline for developing goals and defining areas for shared decision making to improve outcomes for students. The design of the Advisory School Council and Epstein’s Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) framework provides the foundation for shared decisions focused on the EPSS goals for continuous school improvement.

**School Council**
This group includes the school principal and an equal balance of school staff, parents with at least one community member (NMHB212 (2003) Section 2) *Work smarter not harder*. This council can lead the way to improving results for student with a membership that meets the requirements for the EPSS, NCLB and IDEA with sub-groups that include using a well organized Action Team for Partnership.

**Action Team for Partnerships (ATP)**
ATP is sub-group of the School Council (minimum of 18 members) including the principal, teachers, parents and community members with at least one teacher and two family members per committee.

**Parenting**
Build on strengths. Help families improve parenting skills, understanding child development, and setting home conditions to support children as students at each age and grade level. Build support systems for families. Help schools understand families.

**Communicating**
Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications.

**Volunteering**
Improve efforts to recruit, train and schedule ways that involve families as leaders and to support students and school programs. Value the time and talents of each volunteer.

**Decision Making**
Equip parents and other community members with the tools they need to function as advocates, advisors, and decision-makers. Include families and community members as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through school councils, committees and other parent organizations.

**Learning at Home**
Provide information and ideas to families about how to help their children in learning activities at home or in the community, including homework decisions, and planning that connects schoolwork to real life.

**Community Collaboration**
Tap resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices and student learning and development. Build partnerships with the community organizations.
Our children thrive academically and socially when schools, families, and communities, agree that they are stronger together than apart. Family involvement is an accountability requirement for all public schools. Our schools are expected to give families access to information and skills to support their children's education and recognize the rights of parents and their competence to share in decisions. To make family involvement a natural part of the way schools work to build student success, we all need to think:

**This is our school.**

**What can we do, together, to make sure our children succeed?**

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) is the “action arm” for the School Council that focuses on educational goals. Recreational or social activities are valuable for children as well but are better suited to be organized by other organizations within the school. The purpose the ATP is to engage more families and community members to work as partners alongside administrators and school staff to increase parental involvement and other components of NCLB and the SPP Indicators required by IDEA. We share responsibility! The Action Team works with the School Council to assess present practices, organize options for new partnerships, implement selected activities, and evaluate next steps. The Action Team is a vehicle for continuing to improve and coordinate practices for all six keys of family involvement from year to year.

It does take a community to raise a child. Schools, families, and others need to form strong alliances! The Action Teams for Partnerships process can provide a vehicle for positive change. A well-organized ATP following the guidelines of the Epstein Model can actually foster more transparency in the accountability process by involving families in the process for continuous improvement. The ATP can get the word out to the community and work with the school, district, and state on plans to make public reports more understandable and useful to the school improvement process.

To support the work of school councils and Action Teams for Partnerships, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) and the Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP) provide all schools with an extensive resource: *Working Together: School, Family and Community Partnerships—A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities*. These materials include Teacher Tools, Family Tools, and Staff Development Tools to support partnerships to help children and youth succeed in school and in life. We invite you to visit www.cesdp.nmhu.edu for a web-based version of the toolkit that includes resources in English and Spanish.

Parents Reaching Out has developed a book series called *Family Connections* based on the Epstein Model for Family Involvement. Titles in this series include *Parenting, Communicating, Volunteering, Learning at Home, Decision Making: Action Teams for Partnerships, and Collaborating with the Community*. Workshops and materials in this series are available in English and Spanish. Please call Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176) to receive copies of these books or download these materials from our web site: parentsreachingout.org.
The Educational Plan for Student Success

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) holds schools accountable for improved student achievement. In addition, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires schools and districts to improve outcomes for students with disabilities that are measured by the 20 indicators in the State Performance Plan (SPP). The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) has statewide standards of excellence that establish expectations for all New Mexico public school students. Every school district in New Mexico is required to develop an Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS). Districts are required to include the SPP indicators in their EPSS.

The EPSS is the driving force of the school improvement framework in New Mexico. Districts/schools are required to include parents in the EPSS process. EPSS unlocks doors and gives families the opportunity to be involved in school district improvement activities at a systemic level. This process is the key to positive changes that will help all students succeed.

What is EPSS?
The Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS) is a long-range strategic plan to promote student success and continuous school improvement. EPSS is a written guide for the district and schools. It gives a clear picture of where the district is today, sets targets or milestones for the future, and documents progress toward district/school goals.

Your school district/school EPSS is developed each year based on the identified needs of every student. Progress is assessed regularly throughout the year and the results are submitted to the NMPED Priority Schools Bureau at the end of each school year. In addition, the NMPED Special Education Bureau (SEB) has a responsibility for continuous monitoring of the SPP indicators through the EPSS process.

The Educational Plan for School Success includes these components:

- An annual set of measurable goals and strategies to drive academic achievement for all students (AYP target areas and targets identified from the SPP indicators)
- New initiatives and existing quality programs and services for the school year that are student focused and aligned with the New Mexico Standards for Excellence
- Evidence of support for each EPSS goal that aligns human and financial resources, community partnerships, and staff development activities to achieve these goals
- Results of mid-year and annual reviews of assessment information, learner outcomes, and other information to show progress toward each goal

To complete their Educational Plan for Student Success, schools and districts follow a Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) improvement cycle. EPSS teams that include parent representatives and school staff collect and analyze specific data to determine improvement priorities. They use this information to make decisions about what goals they want to achieve and continuously measure progress toward achievement of those goals. New Mexico schools and districts receive training and resources including: Working Together: School, Family and Community Partnerships—A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities was developed by The Center for Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP) and supported by the NM Public Education Department.
The processes used in the Epstein Model of Six Keys to Family Involvement and the Action Team for Partnerships are grounded in Plan, Do, Study, Act used in the EPSS!

Who develops the EPSS for my school district/school?
All stakeholders, including parents, are involved in the development and implementation of the plan. Yes, parents are an important part of every EPSS! Our children have more opportunities for success and improve their levels of achievement when everyone in the community is a part of the plan. Parent and community involvement is essential as the school district/school identifies the diverse needs of students and develops strategies for continual improvement.

Every district/school is responsible for establishing their EPSS steering committee. This group is responsible for initiating, planning, and coordinating improvement efforts. The EPSS steering committee must include representative stakeholders from district/school, parents in the community, and business partnerships.

NMAC 6.30.2.9 A (2) The committee membership must be representative of the diversity of the community and of the district’s partners in education. The EPSS committee comprising students, parents, community members, and school personnel oversees the development, implementation, and evaluation of the district-level EPSS and reports back to the community at large. Note: The New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) is the official compilation of current rules filed by state agencies.

How is EPSS different from school improvement plans used in the past?

- EPSS is not a plan that is developed by one person. Many voices, ideas, and research come together to build the Educational Plan for Student Success in each school district. The NMPED requires that representatives from each stakeholder group be involved with the plan.

- The EPSS process requires your district/school to evaluate their current practices in terms of where students are performing according to state standards and benchmarks. As they gather this information, the results will show which strategies are working for students and show areas needing improvement. This information is the base line for developing goals.

- The annual EPSS goals and strategies must be measurable. EPSS is not a list of what districts/schools are doing or would like to do. EPSS includes specific student learning goals that are consistent with the mission, beliefs, and core values of the District. These goals must meet identified student needs and must be aligned with state and federal mandates.

- District/schools must review and use their current data (test results, records, parent surveys, etc.) to design research-based strategies to improve the academic achievement of all students. Data drives the plan. EPSS is not based on a textbook publisher or commercial curriculum.

- Information is continuously collected so that the district/school will be able to interpret the outcomes of the strategies they are using in meaningful ways. The EPSS is evaluated on an ongoing basis so that adjustments can be made throughout the year.

- Professional development is designed to prepare all staff to meet the EPSS goals.
What does EPSS include?

- Student-centered, measurable goals based on analyzed data that shows current level of performance and expected outcomes

  *Example:* The number of students scoring proficient in reading will increase by at least 3% from 47% to 50%, as measured by the results on the NMSBA.

- Research-based strategies and activities to reach the goal

- Results of mid-year and annual reviews that show the stages of the strategy or activity. Stages include: planning, progressing, or completed. The name of district/school administrator responsible is also included for each goal area.

- Documentation of systems alignment (including person(s) responsible) that identifies resources (available and needed), implementation timeline, evaluation timeline, professional development, parent / community involvement, and evidence of completion

Why is the EPSS important?

The EPSS takes everything we have discussed and ties it up in a package that is meant to improve results for our children. It is a written plan for accountability. The EPSS is perhaps the most important piece in the education system that involves families and the community. Using the Epstein Model and Action Teams for Partnerships as a part of the EPSS process makes common sense and effective use of our time and resources. You should be able to see concrete plans and for family involvement in the EPSS. The results should also be evident.

How can I help?

- Get involved with the decision-making process. Find out about the school council.
- Review the school and district data both AYP reports and Special Education indicators.
- Ensure that areas of concern regarding special education are addressed in the EPSS
- Contact your school principal and district administrators to learn more about the EPSS.

Yes, EPSS is a complex process, and it is important for families and all stakeholders in our educational system to understand each part of the process. Sample District school EPPS forms on the following pages show the components required by the NM Public Education Department.

The best way to be informed about the EPSS for your school and district is to request a copy of the EPSS. Ask that EPPS plans be included on your district and school web sites. To be informed and involved with the school improvement process, you need to get the facts and you need to understand them. As taxpayers, consumers of school services, and advocates for our children, we need to get involved and stay involved with our schools!
New Mexico Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS)
(District EPSS from the NMPED Priority Schools website: http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/psb/epss.html)

Use the mouse to move from field to field.

This is a □ District □ School
[ ] Combined EPSS

District: School: na Date: 5/07 School Year: 2007-2008

Prior Year Status: Current Year Status:

Overall Goal: (1.1, 1.4, 2.2, 3.4, 4.1, Leadership/Strategic Planning)
All students will increase the number of students scoring proficient on the 2007-2008 reading NMSBA as follows:
Elementary grades 3-5 from % to % ;
Middle school grades 6-8 from % to %
High School grades 9-11 from % to %

Target Goal/Measure: (1.1, 1.5, 2.10, 3.6, 4.2, Leadership Strategic Planning) [Selection of a school wide goal must be based upon instructional need and must be supported by data. State clearly how this goal will provide for accelerated learning for students at risk of not meeting standards or making AYP. Any school missing AYP as a result of Special Education, ELL or FRL[FARM] populations must have a goal representing these groups]

Special Education—Students with disabilities (not gifted) have individualized learning goals (and objectives, as appropriate) identified within their Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Students with IEP’s may participate in all regular education activities that do not conflict with special education services being provided. (Example: Reading Program) accommodations, modifications, goals (and objectives, as appropriate) stated in their IEP.

Insert (or attach) data table (4.2, results) to support above target

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>06</th>
<th>07</th>
<th>2008 AMO*</th>
<th>His</th>
<th>Ntv Am</th>
<th>ELL</th>
<th>SPED</th>
<th>Econ Dis</th>
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<td>gr.3-5</td>
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</table>

*based on grade configuration AMO numbers (district should substitute local grade configuration)

(add information from any short cycle assessment)

8/6/2008 PED-PSB baj 3/07
Rev 4/5/07 BAJ/lb (page 1 of 2)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Semester 1</th>
<th>Semester 2</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis: (4.3,4.4, Leadership, School Strategic Planning, Student/Stakeholder Focus) Use information to identify target groups (Who) Provide the source of the data (i.e. NMSBA, Short Cycle Assessment, Literacy Assessment)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify Strategy to be used with Target group to remedy AYP (1.8,2.3,2.8,2.9, Process Management) (What)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Person(s) Responsible for carrying out Plan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources Available (4.5,4.6,4.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resources Needed</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development (provide date, content and trainer scheduled for this strategy or associated activities) (1.6.1,10,2.1,2.4,2.5,2.6,2.7, Faculty/Staff Stakeholder Focus)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent and Community Involvement (3.1,3.2,3.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify the teaching sequence or activity to implement strategy (1.9,2.1,2.8,2.12, Process Management) (How)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>State and Compare the results with the target goal (4.3, Measurement, Analysis and knowledge management) (How much)</td>
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<tr>
<td>If target met, change target and chose another benchmark; if not revise lesson plans and reteach (1.7,2.11,3.5,4.3,4.4, Process Management)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

8/6/2008PED-PSB baj 3/07
Rev 4/5/07 BAJ/lb (page 2)
School EPSS (Sample form resized to fit format for this book.)
(School EPSS from the NMPED Priority Schools website: http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/psb/epss.html)

Use the mouse to move from field to field.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This is a □ District X School □ Combined EPSS</th>
<th>District:</th>
<th>School:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>School Year: 2008-09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior Year Status:</td>
<td>Current Year Status:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Overall Goal: (1.1, 1.4, 2.2, 3.4, 4.1, Leadership/Strategic Planning)

Choose an Overall Goal with a percent measure increase to be inserted in fall from NMSBA based on 2009 AMOs.

Target Goal/Measure: (1.1, 1.5, 2.10, 3.6, 4.2, Leadership Strategic Planning) [Selection of a school wide goal must be based upon instructional need and must be supported by data. State clearly how this goal will provide for accelerated learning for students at risk of not meeting standards or making AYP. Any school missing AYP as a result of Special Education, ELL or FRL(FARM) populations must have a goal representing these groups]

Using Spring short cycle assessment data and current NMSBA data when it becomes available. Choose target goals from the gap analysis of sub-populations not meeting AYP.
- Choose a Target Goal/Measure for math EPSS.
- Choose a Target Goal/Measure for reading EPSS.
- Write a statement about why you chose target goals and measures based on the data analysis.

**Plan**

Insert (or attach) data table (4.2, results) to support above target goals/measures. (Selection of a school wide goal must be based upon instructional need and must be supported by data. State clearly how this goal will provide for accelerated learning for students at risk of not meeting standards or making AYP. Any school missing AYP as a result of Special Education, ELL or FRL(FARM) populations must have a goal representing these groups)

**Study**

- Insert assessment data to inform target goals/measures (Fall NMSBA when it becomes available, Spring 2008 Short-cycle Assessment Data, identified Curriculum Based Measures (CBM), Any other relevant data measures - attendance, discipline...)

- Update assessment data based on Short cycle assessment schedule (quarterly/trimester) to track and trend progress toward target goals/measures and to inform STUDY/ACT components of EPSS (The last two boxes of each quarterly/trimester EPSS reflection).
### School EPSS continued. ACTION PLAN (complete 1 quarter at a time)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Quarter 1</th>
<th>Quarter 2</th>
<th>Quarter 3</th>
<th>Quarter 4</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data analysis: (4.3,4.4, Leadership, School Strategic Planning, Student/Stakeholder Focus) Use information to identify target groups (Who) Provide the source of the data (i.e. NMSBA, Short Cycle Assessment, Literacy Assessment)</td>
<td>What does the data tell us? Not Tell us? Celebrations? Opportunities for Improvement?</td>
<td>Analyze the updated data from the previous quarterly/trimester Short Cycle Assessments plus any additional data relevant to Key Strategies.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify Strategy to be used with Target group to remedy AYP (1.8,2.3,2.8,2.9, Process Management) (What)</td>
<td>Next Steps? Identify key strategy(s) or approaches to be used with each target group based on data analysis.</td>
<td>Based on analysis from previous quarter/trimester adjust strategy and implementation plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person(s) Responsible for carrying out Plan</td>
<td>Identify the person(s) responsible ensuring strategy(s) is deployed during current quarter/trimester.</td>
<td>Identify the person(s) responsible ensuring strategy(s) is deployed during current quarter/trimester.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources Available (4.5,4.6,4.7)</td>
<td>Identify resources available during the current quarter/trimester. <em>(Include funding source and $ encumbered.)</em></td>
<td>Identify resources available during the current quarter/trimester. <em>(Include funding source and $ encumbered.)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources Needed</td>
<td>Identify resources needed during current quarter/trimester.</td>
<td>Identify resources needed during current quarter/trimester.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Professional Development (provide date, content and trainer scheduled for this strategy or associated activities) (1.6,1.10,2.1, 2.4,2.5,2.6,2.7, Faculty/Staff Stakeholder Focus)</td>
<td>Identify the Professional Development relevant to Key EPSS strategies during the quarter/trimester. Indicate the following for each PD: • Title • Date • Audience</td>
<td>Identify the Professional Development relevant to Key EPSS strategies during the quarter/trimester. Indicate the following for each PD: • Title • Date • Audience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parent and Community Involvement (3.1,3.2,3.3)</td>
<td>Identify Stakeholder and Community involvement opportunities during the quarter/trimester.</td>
<td>Identify Stakeholder and Community involvement opportunities during the quarter/trimester.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Identify the teaching sequence or activity to implement strategy (1.9, 2.1, 2.8, 2.12, Process Management) (How)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create the teaching sequence and deployment plan for each of the key strategies identified in the PLAN section of the EPSS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not to be completed until after your first quarterly/trimester Short cycle assessment and review of student data.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What does the data tell you about the effectiveness of each key strategy(s)?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What’s working?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What’s not?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>State and Compare the results with the target goal (4.3, Measurement, Analysis and knowledge management) (How much)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on Results outlined in STUDY above</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) If Target goal met, change target goal to further impact overall goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) If Target goal not met,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Continue current strategy and update deployment for next quarter/trimester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Continue current strategy, but make improvements to deployment plan for next quarter/trimester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Abandon current strategy and identify new strategy for next quarter/trimester.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Act/Plan</th>
<th>If target met, change target and chose another benchmark; if not revise target goal, strategy and teaching sequence to reflect changes. (1.7, 2.11, 3.5, 4.3, 4.4, Process Management)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on Results outlined in STUDY above</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Abandon current strategy and identify new strategy for next quarter/trimester.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NM Public Education Department Guidance on EPSS

Source: NM Public Education Department April 2007

DEFINITIONS

Data analysis: The process where all available data (NMSBA results, short cycle assessment results, teacher made assessments, demographic data, etc.) are reviewed to determine the target group of students and the specific needs of those target students that demonstrate less than proficient academic skills and knowledge.

Instructional Strategy: The plan of action designed to intentionally teach students the necessary skills and knowledge they need to be academically proficient.

Intensive Intervention: The program, practice or activity that is chosen as the tool to provide the actual standards based content or skill needed by the students to be successful academically. This program, practice or activity is beyond what is already provided to all students in the regular core curriculum.

Target Goal: A target goal that identifies the specific group of students who must demonstrate academic gain.

STRATEGIC PLANNING CRITERIA

1. The school’s EPSS planning process focuses on continually improving school performance to enhance learning for all students.

2. The district/school has specific student learning goals that are consistent with the mission, beliefs, and core values. Goals are appropriate in terms of rigor and equity; meet student needs; and are aligned with state and federal mandates and standards where applicable.

3. The district/school EPSS planning process
   - Involves representative stakeholders from the district/school;
   - Includes an analysis of student and stakeholder needs, demographics, and current performance levels;
   - Identifies a challenging set of goals and measures that focus on enhanced learning for all students;
   - Develops a continuous improvement approach that identifies the changes that will be made so that growth in student performance can be documented and replicated;
   - Facilitates alignment of department level and classroom level improvement plans, including transitions across grade levels;
   - Provides systematic assessment designed to document student performance and growth toward district/school goals;
   - Identifies strategies, interventions, and action plans; and
   - Provides internal analysis of the system.

4. There is a designated district/school level EPSS steering committee that is responsible for initiating, planning, and coordinating improvement efforts.

5. Budget priorities are based upon an assessment of human and fiscal resources needed to accomplish the mission, goals, and EPSS plan.
6. Leaders use the analysis of student performance results: short cycle assessments, standardized tests, CRT, etc.

7. Leaders consider the strength and weakness of faculty and staff, competitive environment, educational reform, and technological innovations when establishing the priorities for the school.

8. The district/school conducts staff development activities to support the district/school’s EPSS.

REQUIREMENTS FOR DISTRICT EPSS

1. The district EPSS must be revised to emphasize priorities that address student learning needs. The desired result of the revision is to develop a single, comprehensive EPSS that synthesizes information from the several existing plans reflective of the district’s instructional priorities (the current EPSS, the corrective action plan, the five year action plan, district wide Title I plan, etc.) and includes the major goals and/or references to the documents that deal with non-instructional district priorities (such as the safety plan, parent and community involvement plan and others). Alignment, clarity and simplicity should be the aims of this complex undertaking. Input from stakeholders is a necessary aspect of the revision process. The district’s EPSS goals must align, but are not limited to, the district’s EPSS target areas.

2. The district must provide professional development activities designed to initiate/expand the utilization of a systems approach to continuous district improvement as evidenced in the EPSS. In addition, professional development should reflect an emphasis on the use of data to inform instruction.

3. The district is required to fully implement the use of short cycle assessments in order to assess student progress toward EPSS academic goals and provide the basis for adjusting instruction/programs prior to receiving the results of the end-of-the-year New Mexico criterion references test (NMSBA).

4. The district must maintain and analyze all basic and comparative data to drive district performance, with an emphasis on selection, management, analysis, and the use of information as the basis for decisions and improvement.

5. The district plan is an overall view of district initiated actions that affect the district as a whole (district wide adoption of a strategy as tutoring, summer school, etc.).

6. The district’s EPSS must articulate new initiatives for the district year and align across the systems to support the strategy and the goals that comply with the following criteria:
   - student centered,
   - supports student academic progress,
   - measurable using a data baseline,
   - data evidences by a standardized assessment,
   - assessed regularly for progress of implementation,
   - supported by an articulated strategy/activity, and
   - a collaborative effort with stakeholders participating in the development.
Creating a Culture of Accountability in Our Schools

Consider Webster’s definition of accountability: “subject to having to report, explain or justify: being answerable, responsible.” Notice how the definition begins with the words “subject to,” implying little choice in the matter. This confession-oriented and powerless definition suggests what we all have observed. Accountability is viewed as a consequence for poor performance; it’s a principle you should fear because it can only end up hurting you.

Because most people experience accountability this way, it’s no wonder they spend so much time shunning it and explaining and justifying poor results. A more positive and powerful definition of accountability can do more to achieve outstanding results than all the finger pointing and blaming in the world.

Consider the following new definition of accountability: “A personal choice to rise above one’s circumstances and demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving desired results; to see it, own it, solve it, and do it.”

This definition includes a mindset or attitude of continually asking, “What else can I do to rise above my circumstances and achieve the results I desire?”

It requires a level of ownership that includes making, keeping, and answering for personal commitments. Such a perspective embraces both current and future efforts rather than reactive and historical explanations. Armed with this new definition of accountability, you can help yourself and others do everything possible to overcome difficult circumstances and achieve desired results.

Source: R. Connors, T. Smith, “Create a culture of accountability” MRO Today

Every child in New Mexico deserves a quality education that will prepare them to succeed as adults in their communities. Federal and state laws have mandated changes in schools to improve learning opportunities and achievement levels for all children and youth. Although these laws set expectations with guidance and timeframes, they are all based on a strong belief in local control. That means that schools, districts, and states have the opportunity to work as partners with families and communities in the school improvement process.

Together, we can make a difference if we truly focus our efforts on all children, including those with disabilities, those in economically depressed areas, English language learners, those who are gifted and talented, those being raised by grandparents or foster parents—every child regardless of their culture ethnicity or economic status. We can achieve results just by changing our attitude about accountability. Instead of thinking that accountability does something to us—we need to be thinking that accountability will help us get something accomplished. Reporting results in formats that are useful and understandable brings families, schools and communities on board to achieve results in school improvement. *We can see it, own it, solve it, and do it!*
Notes and Reflections
Section 4

Resources
Public Records Requests

The NMPED follows procedures contained in the New Mexico Inspection of Public Record Act (NMSA 1978, Chapter 14, Article 2) and the New Mexico Attorney General’s published compliance guide.


Upon receipt of a request, the NMPED Custodian of Record will respond in writing within three calendar days to acknowledge receipt of that request. Then, after determining if the requested records exist, records cleared for release will be mailed, using certified mail.

To Submit a Request: Requestors must state their name and provide a mailing address where to send requested documents. Requests should be directed to:

Beverly Friedman, Public Information Officer
NMPED Custodian of Record
300 Don Gaspar
Santa Fe, NM 87501
Ph: 505-827-6661
Fx: 505-827-6588

(Effective September 7, 2007)
Web Site Connections

Academy for Educational Development
http://www.aed.org/Projects/resourcecenter.cfm
The Federal Resource Center strives to improve the educational outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities. FRC works with regional centers in supporting State Directors of Special Education and also assists the Office of Special Education Programs in communicating and implementing their initiatives and in meeting their objectives.

Appleseed Network http://www.appleseednetwork.org/
Appleseed is a non-profit network dedicated to building a society where opportunities are genuine, access to the law is universal and equal, and government advances the public interest. This site offers resources on parental involvement and accountability under the law. The NM center participates in activities of the Family, Parent Involvement Advisory Council (FPIAC) sponsored by the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED).

Center for the Education and Study of Diverse Populations (CESDP) www.cesdp.nmhu.edu
The Center for Education and Study of Diverse Populations provides assistance to communities for improving the quality of education for all learners. Working Together: School, Family and Community Partnerships—A Toolkit for New Mexico School Communities was developed by CESDP and supported by the NM Public Education Department.

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support www.pbis.org
This center is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to build capacity and provide technical support about behavioral systems to assist states and districts in the design of effective schools.

This new site was created to provide a one-stop shop for resources related to IDEA and its implementing regulations (includes information for Part B and Part C).

Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (MPRRC) http://www.rrfcnetwork.org/mprrc
MPRRC is funded by the U.S Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs to build the capacity of State Education Agencies and Lead Agencies in improving programs and services for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities.

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) http://www.nectac.org/
Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, NECTAC provides resources to improve service systems and outcomes for infants, toddlers, and preschool aged children with special needs and their families.

New Mexico Foundation for Open Government (NM FOG) http://nmfog.org/
An educational and charitable organization that help the general public understand, obtain and exercise their first amendment rights; their rights and responsibilities under the New Mexico Open Meetings, Inspection of Public Records and Arrest Record Information Acts; and their rights under the federal Freedom of Information Act. If denied access to a public record or meeting, call the New Mexico Foundation for Open Government hotline: 1-888-843-9121 or, in Albuquerque, 843-9121 or e-mail: NewMexicoFOG@aol.com
New Mexico Public Education Department  http://www.ped.state.nm.us
New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) provides leadership, technical assistance and quality assurance to improve student performance and close the achievement gap for all public schools in New Mexico. Direct links to bureaus in the PED are included below.
   Quality Assurance Bureau:  http://www.ped.state.nm.us/qab/index.html
   Priority Schools Bureau:  http://www.ped.state.nm.us/div/psb/index.html
   Special Education Bureau:  http://www.ped.state.nm.us/seo/index.htm

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)
http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html
The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is dedicated to improving results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities ages birth through 21 by providing leadership and financial support to assist states and local districts.

Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network (TA&D)
http://www.rrfcnetwork.org/content/view/137/192/
Technical assistance to Regional Resource Centers and the Federal Resource Center funded by the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to assist state education agencies in the systemic improvement of education programs, practices, and policies that affect children and youth with disabilities.

The Education Trust  http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust
The Education Trust works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, pre-kindergarten through college, and forever closing the achievement gaps that separate low-income students and students of color from other youth. Information on advocacy, policy making, research, data and more.

Everything you need to know about No Child Left Behind, including fact sheets, success stories, policy information and much more. Links to resources and other networks focused on improving results for all children in every school.

Acknowledgements

Parents Reaching Out used of information from sites listed in our Web Site Connections list to develop this book. We wish to specifically acknowledge the groups and or agencies below for the valuable information produced by their organization.

   National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC)
   New Mexico Public Education Department
   Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network (TA&D)
   The Education Trust
   United States Department of Education
Resources from Parents Reaching Out

The follow publications are available in hard copy and on CD. Please contact Parents Reaching Out (1-800-524-5176) to request workshops, publications or our PRO CD of all publications. You may download our publications from our website: www.parentsreachingout.org

* Indicates Spanish version is available

**Acronyms, Abbreviations and Definitions**

**A Bridge to the Future** * (Ability Pathway to Diploma)

**Book of Ideas** * (Learning Styles, Instructional Strategies and more)

**DD Waiver Application & DD Waiver Allocation Handbooks** * (Health Care Access)

**Did You Know Fact Sheets** * (NCLB, Literacy, Parent Involvement, Early Childhood)

**Early Intervention and Natural Environments** * (Birth to three)

**Extended School Year** * (Special Education Related Service)

**Family Health Care Tips** * (Fact Sheets on Health Care Access)

**Family Connections Series** * (Six books based on Epstein’s Model)

**Family Involvement: Building Community Partnerships** * (NCLB, IDEA and more)

**First Steps Fact Sheets** * (Early Intervention)

**How Can I Help This Child?** * (Sensory Integration)

**Let’s Begin the Journey** * (Overview of Special Education)

**Mission Transition** * (Head Start to Elementary)

**Next Steps to Success** * (Early Intervention to Early Childhood)

**Open Line and More** * (Communication Skills)

**Positive Directions for Student Behavior** (Intervention Strategies & Tools)

**Practical Inclusive Education in New Mexico** * (Differentiated learning at its best!)

**Response to Intervention (RTI)** * (Planned support system for NM schools)

**Telling Your Story** * (Communication Skills--Sharing Your Perspective)

**The Journey Continues** * (Standard and Career Readiness Paths to Diploma)

**The Handbook: Parental Rights and Special Education Procedures** * (IEP Process)

We also distribute New Mexico Public Education Department-Technical Assistance Documents and publications from other federal, state and local agencies serving children and their families.
Glossary of Terms

It doesn’t matter whether you are trying to navigate the early intervention, education or special education system, you are entering a world that has a language all of its own. This language is often referred to as “acronyms”. It may seem like a foreign language, but it is really just a language of initials. We hope that this glossary of terms will provide the information you need to better understand the acronyms or terms that are used in this book.

• **Accountability** – Subject to having to report, explain or justify; being answerable, responsible; an obligation or willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one's actions. Beyond the dictionary definition, accountability can become a personal choice to rise above one’s circumstances and demonstrate the ownership necessary for achieving desired results; to see it, own it, solve it, and do it.

• **Action Team for Partnership (ATP)** – This action arm or work group of an Advisory School Council writes and implements plans for partnerships to produce desired results for students, families, and for the school as a whole. It includes teachers, administrators, family members, business and community partners and students (at the high school level). Their primary goal is to involve families and the community in productive ways so that more students reach important educational goals for learning and success.

• **Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** – No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires that each state measure yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards. “Adequate Yearly Progress” is the minimum level improvement that states, school districts and schools must achieve each year. AYP Reports for all schools and districts are issued annually.

• **Advisory School Council** – This council is the umbrella for all school activities and can be a school administrator’s right hand. It includes the school administrator, family leaders, educators and community representatives. It is the connecting link to the work of other groups within the school. Topics addressed by this council include: Parental Involvement policies, Student Handbook policies, Parent Compact, instructional issues and curriculum planning for the Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS), school improvement initiatives from the Action Team for Partnership (ATP), Next Step Planning for post-school transitions and the school’s proposed and actual budgets. This council is mandated and described in section 27 of New Mexico House Bill 212..

• **Advocate** - An individual who represents or speaks out on behalf of another person’s interests. A parent speaking out on behalf of his/her child is an advocate.

• **Child Find** - A federal program which requires states to actively locate children, birth to age 21, with developmental disabilities or who are at risk for developmental disabilities. Child Find particularly focuses on children not enrolled in school programs.

• **Compliance** – The act or process of conforming to a demand or request to complete or perform what is due; obey; to conform to another’s wishes or to a rule. Laws governing schools such as NCLB, IDEA, and others set requirements that must be followed by states, districts and schools. When legal requirements are not met, an agency or group is found to be “out of compliance”.

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• **Comprehensive Educational Evaluation** – Tests and/or observations by public school staff to determine whether a child has a disability and requires special education and related services. The school district's multi-disciplinary team is required to do this evaluation and hold a meeting with the parent to discuss the results.

• **Continuous Improvements and Monitoring Process (CIMP)** - Each state is required to show how they will monitor and improve education in a continually improving process.

• **Developmental Disability (DD)** - Any physical or mental condition that begins before the age of 18 years, causes the child to acquire skills at a slower rate than her peers, is expected to continue indefinitely and impairs the child’s ability to function in society.

• **Disability** - A substantially limiting physical or mental impairment, which affects basic life activities, such as: hearing, seeing, speaking, walking, caring for oneself, learning or working. The IDEA guides how states define who is eligible for a free appropriate public education under special education law.

• **Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)** – The NM Special Education Bureau oversees programs that assist three to five year old children who have developmental delays, funded by the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B, 619, and the State of NM.

• **Early Intervention (EI)** - Specialized services provided to families of infants and toddlers ages birth to three, who are at-risk for or are showing signs of developmental delay provided by the NM Department of Health Family Infant Toddler Program (FIT).

• **Educational Plan for Student Success (EPSS)** - The NM Public Education Department requires every school district to develop a long range strategic plan to promote student success and continuous school improvement. EPSS is a written guide for the district and schools based on measurable goals and strategies. Resources, community partnerships and staff development activities must be aligned to these goals. All stakeholders, including parents, are involved in the development and implementation of the EPSS.

• **Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) (PL 89010)** - A federal law designed to strengthen and improve educational quality and opportunity for the nation’s elementary and secondary students, particularly for economically underprivileged children. This act paved the way for direct federal support for the education of children with disabilities and was the statutory basis for addressing special education. The *No Child Left Behind Act* is the reauthorization of the ESEA.

• **English as a Secondary Language (ESL)** - Instruction in language arts for LEP students, it explicitly teaches listening comprehension, oral expression, pronunciation, reading and writing while supporting the skills and concepts presented in the regular English curriculum.

• **Extended School Year (ESY)** - Delivery of special education and related services during the summer vacation when the child needs those services in order to prevent significant loss of previously learned skills. The IEP team must consider the need for Extended School Year at each meeting and must describe those services specifically with goals.
• **Fidelity** – The unfailing fulfillment of one's duties and obligations and strict adherence to vows or promises. Fidelity means to implement a program as it was intended; to insure that all services are delivered correctly.

• **Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** – IDEA 2004 requires that agencies provide special education and related services at no cost to the parent in order that a child with disabilities may benefit from public education. It requires that an Individualized Education Program (IEP) be developed for each child with a disability with measurable goals based on the child’s needs and present levels of educational performance.

• **Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)** - The written document which defines the early intervention services provided to the child and family. The program is designed to meet the needs of the child and the family, and is based on family-identified priorities.

• **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** - A written statement of a child’s current level of development and an individualized plan of instruction, including the goals, specific services to be received, the people who will carry out the services, the standards and time lines for evaluating progress, and the amount and degree to which the child will participate with typically developing peers (Inclusion / Least Restrictive Environment). The IEP is developed by the child’s parents and the professionals who evaluated the child and/ or are providing the services. IDEA requires an IEP for all children in special education, ages three years through twenty-one.

• **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** - The federal law that provides the legal authority for early intervention and special educational services for children birth to age 21. Part B outlines services for children ages 3-21. Part C outlines services for children birth to 3.

• **Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)** – This term means that the placement that is as close as possible to the regular education environment under IDEA. This is the educational setting that permits a child to receive the most educational benefit while participating in a regular educational environment to the maximum extent appropriate.

• **Limited English Proficiency (LEP)** - When a student’s first language is other than English then the education system must recognize that the student although may sound like they are good at English may not actually understand what is said therefore the answers may appear inappropriate.

• **No Child Left Behind (NCLB)** - The latest amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). NCLB is the name for the strict accountability changes made to the law in January 2002. NCLB calls for improved student achievement. It helps schools improve instruction and offers important opportunities for parents to be involved with the schools.

• **Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)** – Federal agency dedicated to improving results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities ages birth through 21, by providing leadership and financial support to assist states and local districts. OSEP administers the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
• **Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC)** - Programs that are grant funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. PIRCs are funded in order to help implement successful and effective parental involvement policies, programs, and activities that address the education needs of all children and lead to improvements in student academic achievement. Parents Reaching Out serves families as the PIRC for New Mexico.

• **Parental Involvement Policy (Parent Compact)** - With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), No Child Left Behind requires that all schools receiving Title I dollars in every school district in America have a written parent involvement policy which is developed jointly with and agreed upon with parents and educators. It must be distributed to parents and educators of children participating in Title I programs. It must ensure that successful strategies that encourage and sustain active parent involvement are in place in every school.

• **Parent Training and Information Center (PTI)** – Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the U.S Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funds Parent Training and Information Centers in each state. Each PTI provides training and information to parents of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and to professionals who work with them. This assistance helps parents to participate more effectively with professionals in meeting their children’s educational needs. Their work improves outcomes for children ages birth-26 years with all disabilities (emotional, learning, cognitive, and physical). Parents Reaching Out serves families as the PTI for New Mexico.

• **Public Education Department (PED)** – State agency that oversees all aspects of education in New Mexico.

• **Response to Intervention (RTI)** - The RTI process is a multi-step approach to providing services and interventions to students who struggle with learning at increasing levels of intensity. The goal is to provide *early intervening* supports and services to prevent failure in school. The progress students make at each stage of intervention is closely monitored. Monitoring results are used to make decisions about the need for further research-based instruction and/or intervention in general education, in special education or both.

• **Special Education (SPED)** - Specialized instruction tailor-made to fit the unique learning strengths and needs of the individual student with disabilities, from age three through high school (to age 22). Programs focus on academics, social competence and also include therapy or other related services to help the child overcome difficulties in all areas of development. These services are required by IDEA to be delivered in the least restrictive environment.

• **State Performance Plan (SPP)** – The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires States to develop a six-year performance plan. This plan (SPP) evaluates the efforts to implement IDEA and describes measurable plans for continuous improvement. OSEP has identified indicators to be included in the SPP and requires States to report progress on targets set by Federal and State law to determine compliance.
• **Student Assistance Team (SAT)** – A school-based group of people whose purpose is to provide additional Tier II (classroom level) support to students who are experiencing difficulties that are preventing them from benefiting from general education, because they are either performing below or above expectations.

• **Supplemental Educational Services (SES)** - One of the provisions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is called Supplemental Educational Services. This is extra, outside help for students who attend Title I schools. Supplemental educational services must be offered to parents at the district's expense in the second year after a school has been determined to be "in need of improvement". All eligible families are offered these services. Priority for this additional help is given to low-income parents. The district provides money for parents to choose the provider of these extra services from a list approved by the NM Public Education Department. SES provides extra help in reading, language arts or math and must not take place during school hours. Services may include tutoring, extra classes or special programs offered by providers in the community.

• **Title I** – This law is Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The intent of Title I is to narrow the education gap that exists between middle and low income children by providing extra resources to help improve instruction in high-poverty schools. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) was reauthorized in 2001 as The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The law requires States to develop standards in reading and math, and assessments linked to those standards for all students in grades 3-8. Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and schools must use Title I funds for activities that scientifically based research suggests will be most effective in helping all students meet these State standards.

• **Transition** - The movement from one service, location, or program to another. Young children with disabilities transition at age three from early intervention to preschool special education services or to other community settings and services (early intervention and special education). Adolescents transition from school to adult services.

• **United States Department of Education (USDOE)** - Supplements and complements the efforts of states, the local school systems and other instrumentalities of the states, the private sector, public and private nonprofit educational research institutions, community-based organizations, parents, and students to improve the quality of education.

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School leaders who want positive change and believe that all students can achieve at high levels of academic performance need to put into place those partnerships and processes that will move the school from "good to great". Great schools believe that every student can learn at high levels and that every teacher can help all students achieve at high levels. Great schools also believe that forging a positive, healthy and meaningful relationship with families and communities will bring about expectations and learning that benefits each and every student.

_Engaging All Families: Creating a Positive School Culture by Putting Research into Practice._

(Constantino, 2003)
Parents Reaching Out

Your One Stop Resource for a Stronger Family

As a statewide non-profit organization, we connect with parents, caregivers, educators and other professionals to promote healthy, positive and caring experiences for New Mexico families and children. We have served New Mexico families for over twenty five years. Our staff and Family Leadership Action Network volunteers reflect the unique diversity of the communities throughout our state.

Children do not come with instructions on how to deal with the difficult circumstances that many families experience. Parents Reaching Out believes that families’ needs go beyond the bounds of formal services. What we can offer to each other is uniquely ours. We have all been there.

Our Mission
The mission of Parents Reaching Out is to enhance positive outcomes for families and children in New Mexico through informed decision making, advocacy, education, and resources. Parents Reaching Out provides the networking opportunities for families to connect with and support each other. This mission supports all families including those who have children with disabilities, and others who are disenfranchised. Parents Reaching Out achieves this by:

- Developing family leadership
- Connecting families to each other
- Building collaborative partnerships
- Providing families knowledge and tools to enhance their power

Our Beliefs
- Families need support where ever they are in their journey.
- All families care deeply about their children.
- Families may need tools and support to accomplish their dreams.
- All families are capable of making informed decisions that are right for their family.
- Families in the state benefit from our organization having the staff and materials that meet their diversity.
- Systems that listen carefully to the family perspective improve outcomes for our children.

We invite all families and those serving families and children in New Mexico to make Parents Reaching Out your one stop resource for a stronger family. Our publications, workshops, and Resource Center offer tools for informed decision-making and building partnerships in communities. Our trained staff and network of volunteers are here to serve you.

Parents Reaching Out is the home of:
- NM Parent Information and Resource Center (NMPIRC)
- NM Parent Training and Information Center (NMPTIC)
- NM Family to Family Health Information Center (NMF2FHIC)

Parents Reaching Out
1920 B Columbia Drive, SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106
1-505-247-0192 • 1-800-524-5176
www.parentsreachingout.org

From I-25—take the Gibson Blvd Exit 222 and go East on Gibson. Turn left at the third stop light (Girard). Turn left on Vail. Go one block to Columbia. Turn left on Columbia. Parents Reaching Out is on the east side of the street. Welcome!
The accountability process helps schools and families look at the facts to make informed decisions to improve outcomes for children. Access to the same facts builds foundations for trust and shared ownership to plan for positive results.

Families are an asset to the school improvement process. They are partners in decision making. It is important to involve families in ways that give them a sense of belonging and value their competence and usefulness.

**Sense of belonging:** Everyone wants to feel that they belong and families are no different. Families who feel included and respected will work toward the greater goal of helping others. *Welcome them!*

**Competence:** Families just may have the solution you’ve been seeking. Recognize their competence as a partner in the teaching-learning cycle. Families learn a lot about their children’s needs as they navigate complex systems. They want to learn more. *Offer opportunities for shared learning.*

**Usefulness:** Families have learned a variety of ways they can assist others to find paths leading to success and independence for their children. *Invite them to share!*