



Guidance for Leading Inclusive Special Education Programs:

**Leveraging Data to Align
Budgets and Spending to Priorities**

JANUARY 2022

Guidance for Leading Inclusive Special Education Programs

All students deserve equitable access to high quality instruction. Yet, school systems often face unique and complex challenges in improving outcomes for students with disabilities. Addressing these challenges is multifaceted and requires strong leaders who can effectively coordinate programming within and across departments and schools to increase equitable access to inclusive learning opportunities for students with disabilities.

To support the increased effectiveness of special education programming through effective and inclusive system-wide planning, the department will release seven guidance documents to school systems in 2022. The guidance will cover the highest impact areas of special education programming to most effectively improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Each guidance document will be accompanied by an hour long webinar to support implementation.

In partnership with and alongside school and school system leaders, special education leaders are encouraged to review the guidance documents and attend webinars. Please note: release dates and topics are subject to change.

| TOPICS FOR 2021-2022 GUIDANCE FOR LEADING INCLUSIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS | |
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| Month | Topic |
| January | Leveraging Data to Align Budgets and Spending to Priorities |
| February | Creating Compliant Systems for Student Success |
| March | Cultivating a Student-Centered Vision of Teaching and Learning Aligned to Louisiana's Academic Priorities |
| April | Self awareness and Trauma Informed Supports |
| May | Positive Behavior Intervention and Functional Behavior Assessment |
| June | Identifying, Engaging, and Managing Key Stakeholders |
| June | Inclusive and Accessible Learning |

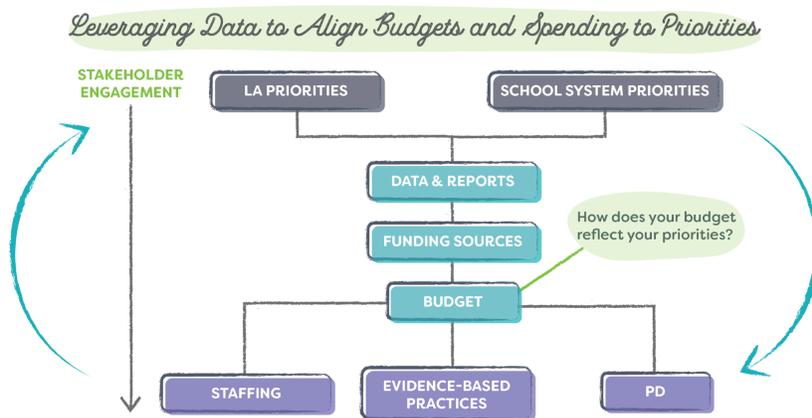


Leveraging Data to Align Budgets and Spending to Priorities

How do school systems create a spending plan to support the programming needs of students with disabilities?

Purpose

Our challenge is to eliminate the barriers to student success by building a seamless support system. Achieving this vision will require all educators – from school system leaders and principals to classroom teachers – to embrace policies and practices that guarantee high-quality educational experiences for the most vulnerable learners. Analyzing data to align budgets and spending to priorities is an important process for school systems to strategically improve outcomes for students with disabilities. This document will support school systems to review both Louisiana's priorities and school system priorities, analyze key state and local data to provide a comprehensive understanding of student specific needs, and support school systems in aligning their budgets and spending to priorities. At each step in the process, school systems should identify diverse stakeholder groups to be engaged in the process to effectively assess the scope of need and appropriately allocate funding to meet those needs. Key stakeholders should include, but are not limited to: Superintendent, Chief Academic Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Special Education Supervisor, Grants/Budget/Finance Director, principals, teachers, parents, and students. The following chart provides a snapshot of the process that school systems can use to leverage data to align budgets and spending with priorities.



Self Assessment: Before reading on, take the [self-assessment](#). This self-assessment will support school system leaders in identifying areas to strengthen planning structures and processes when aligning budgets and spending to priorities.



Review Priorities

To ensure that funds are used as efficiently and effectively as possible, it's important to have a clear understanding of state and school system priorities before planning the school system's budget. Review [Louisiana's priorities](#) alongside the priorities of your school system to guide your budget planning process. As you plan with the stakeholders named above, be intentional about



identifying the ways in which students with disabilities are impacted by these priorities and how outcomes would be affected according to the allotment of funds directed toward those priorities.

Data Analysis and Guiding Questions

As the needs of our students continue to grow and evolve, the responsibility of education leaders becomes increasingly focused on strategically leveraging available resources to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Analyzing state and local data across stakeholders and in conjunction with identified priorities and best practices helps to ensure that school systems are strategic and intentional in their approach to budgeting.

Data Reports

The following reports can be utilized by school systems to analyze the needs of specific subgroups:

- **Performance Profiles:** The [Performance Profile](#) is Louisiana’s way of disseminating information to the public about the performance of local education agencies using indicators in the state’s performance plan. The SPP sets annual targets for improvement in indicator areas determined to directly influence successful student outcomes. Further, the plan describes activities to achieve its targets, with annual reporting of the state’s progress. By effectively analyzing Performance Profiles, school systems can identify areas of need for students with disabilities and leverage funding to meet those needs.
- **Significant Disproportionality:** Significant disproportionality describes the “widespread trend of students of certain racial and ethnic groups being identified for special education, placed in more restrictive educational settings, and disciplined at markedly higher rates than their peers” ([NCLD.org, 2020](#)). If a school system is [identified as significantly disproportionate](#), they must set aside 15 percent of their IDEA Part B funding for coordinated early intervening services (CEIS). These services can reduce disproportionality over time by creating equitable outcomes for all students with disabilities and those students who simply need additional academic and behavior support to succeed.
- **School system-specific reports:** School systems should review local assessment data which may include the following: curriculum-embedded assessments, literacy screeners, LEAP 2025 and LEAP Connect assessments, universal screening results, etc. These reports will support school systems in understanding how students with disabilities perform relative to their non-disabled peers. However, it is essential that school systems also review the performance of students with disabilities to the benchmark for all students to maintain high expectations.

Guiding Questions

Review data for each indicator or priority and reflect on the following:

- How does the performance of students with disabilities compare to their non-disabled peers in the school system/state and the general education benchmark?
- What trends or discrepancies do you notice based on grade/course, race, disability category, etc.?
- To what extent are the needs of students with disabilities addressed through school system priorities?
- What story does the data tell about each indicator or priority?

Once a diverse group of stakeholders complete a data analysis and consider the above guiding questions, school systems should align budgets to priorities to ensure student need is effectively met through allocation of resources.



Aligning Budgets to Priorities

To ensure that resources are adequately utilized to meet the needs of the school system’s most vulnerable students, review a sampling of high leverage funding sources by considering the questions below with a group of diverse stakeholders.

- How much of your budget is already committed?
- Does the budget commitment reflect the school system’s priorities and needs identified in the data analysis? If not, how much of the budget can be redirected to address the school system priority and needs identified in the data analysis?
- What funding sources can be leveraged to meet the needs of students with disabilities?
- What are the specific allowable activities under the identified funding source? What makes the expense allowable? What would make it unallowable?

| Area | Funding | Funding Description | Funding Guidance for SWD |
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| Evidence Based Practices | Accelerate Timeline: December 2021 | As a part of Achieve! round 2, this funding source has no cap and requires a match of local funds. | School systems can leverage this funding stream to support all teachers (special education, general education) in having the tools to meet the needs of SWD and/or align to school system priorities. To effectively address and prevent unfinished learning, students must be provided with extra time to learn through equal-access tutoring. Accelerate is a just-in-time tutoring model that is focused on identifying, celebrating, and building upon the assets students bring to the learning experience. An acceleration approach addresses unfinished learning in an equitable way. Acceleration means connecting unfinished learning in the context of new learning, integrating new information and the needed prior knowledge. |
| | Literacy Foundation Timeline: October 2021 | Funding for the equivalent of one year of training is available through the Achieve! application. Learn more | School systems can leverage this funding stream to support all students in accessing core content. Literacy Foundations supports school systems to improve outcomes for students with disabilities through early intervention and prevention strategies for students with reading struggles. The Simple View of Reading allows school systems to recognize patterns of reading skills in both word recognition/decoding and language comprehension. |
| Professional Development | Specialized Support Professional Development Timeline: | Up to a total of \$12,000 at each CIR/UIR-Academics site | To increase the access that students with disabilities have to high quality tier I curriculum, the Department has developed the Partnerships for Success Guide. The Partnerships for Success Guide provides school systems with a list of high quality vendors that can provide professional development to increase the capacity of educators to deliver specialized supports (communication, assistive |



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| | February 4, 2022 | | technology, functional skills, sensory/environment, executive functioning) to students with disabilities. Additionally, the guide provides school systems with a vetted list of direct service providers who can meet the direct service needs outlined on a student's IEP. |
| | Professional Development Timeline: February 4, 2022 | Amounts vary by school system. | Providing professional development to all teachers (both special and general education teachers) supports educators in effectively increasing the access that students with disabilities have to high quality core instruction. |
| | Instructional Leadership Teams and Teacher Collaboration Timeline: February 4, 2022 | Up to a total of \$11,000 at each CIR/UIR-Academics site | School System Improvement Best Practices provides professional development for Instructional Leadership Teams and Teacher Collaboration Support. The inclusion of special educators in this development opportunity will increase the effectiveness of all teachers and leaders. |
| Staffing | Mentor Teacher Timeline: February 4, 2022 | School Systems may request: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2200 per mentor teacher trainee • \$1000 per mentor teacher supporting post BA candidate | Teacher mentorship programs have proven to increase training and decrease teacher attrition. Certifying special education mentor teachers and providing mentor teachers to new special educators can improve teacher retention in an area that is historically understaffed. |
| Other Special Education Specific Funding | | | |
| High Cost Services *Timeline: Round 1-End of October Round 2-End of February *Timelines are subject to change. | LEAs may apply for reimbursement of allowable costs that exceed the eligibility threshold of \$37,536 and are associated with educating a specific student with a | This High Cost Services grant is intended to provide additional funding for high-cost special education services for students with disabilities. This fund is made up of money from the state's IDEA allocation and Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula. Funds from High Cost Services are student specific and cannot be used to support other students. | |



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| | disability as identified in the student's IEP. | |
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Continue this analysis more broadly by reviewing the [2022-2023 School System Planning Guide](#) for additional funding sources and utilizing the [Strategic Planning Workbook](#).

Measuring Effectiveness

Once the school system budget is built out to align with priorities, create measurable goals to ensure that budget implementation is effective in meeting the needs of students with disabilities.

Feedback: In order to continually improve the effectiveness of these guidance documents, please complete the [Leveraging Align Budgets and Spending with Priorities Feedback](#).

Implementation Webinar

A webinar that will support school systems implementation will be held on [January 18 at 1 pm](#).