

Bureau of Special Education Report

Patricia Hozella, Director

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

National Updates	1
Upcoming Conferences and Statewide Training	7

National Updates

U.S. Department of Education Releases Guidance Encouraging Well-Rounded Education

The U.S. Department of Education released non-regulatory guidance to help states, districts and schools provide students with a more well-rounded education under Title IV, Part A, Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants (SSAE). The new grant program in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) focuses on safe and healthy students, and how technology can be integrated into schools to improve teaching and learning in addition to emphasizing access to a well-rounded education that includes a wide variety of disciplines – such as music, the arts, social studies, environmental education, computer science and civics.

The guidance – which serves as a resource to help support effective implementation of the new grant program – provides examples of allowable uses of funds, discusses the role of state education agencies, details fiscal responsibilities, and identifies local application requirements.

Under the new program, states, districts and schools have the flexibility to tailor investments based on the needs of their unique student populations.

Too often, students from low-income families and students of color do not have access to arts, science, social studies or advanced coursework. Likewise, gender gaps persist in many disciplines. Science achievement gaps can show up as early as kindergarten. Further, there is evidence that students get better at math when they take classes that make the connection between STEM and the arts. Students can also grow in self-confidence, in linguistic skills, and in creativity when they have certain courses in the arts.

Through this guidance, the Department provides resources, tools and examples of innovative strategies to support the effective implementation of the SSAE grant program.

Importantly, the guidance highlights that SSAE funds may not be sufficient to independently fund many of these innovative activities. This guidance discusses leveraging other state and local resources in combination with the SSAE grant funds to achieve the goals of SSAE programs and activities.

<http://tinyurl.com/hfurjtz>

USDOE Press Office 10/21/2016

National Updates

U.S. Department of Education Releases Final Teacher Preparation Regulations

The U.S. Department of Education published regulations today to help ensure that new teachers are ready to succeed in the classroom and that every student is taught by a great educator. The regulations build on progress happening across the country and take into account the extensive and valuable feedback shared with the Department since draft rules were first released. The regulations aim to bring transparency to the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs, provide programs with ongoing feedback to help them improve continuously, and respond to educators across the country who do not feel ready to enter the classroom after graduation.

"As an educator, I know that one of the strongest in-school influences on students is the teacher in front of the classroom," said U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. "As a nation, there is so much more we can do to help prepare our teachers and create a diverse educator workforce. Prospective teachers need good information to select the right program; school districts need access to the best trained professionals for every opening in every school; and preparation programs need feedback about their graduates' experiences in schools to refine their programs. These regulations will help strengthen teacher preparation so that prospective teachers get off to the best start they can, and preparation programs can meet the needs of students and schools for great educators."

Roughly 460,000 individuals were enrolled in traditional and alternative route to certification teacher preparation programs in 2013-14. Before, these prospective teachers did not have basic information about whether their programs had a track record of success with respect to employment outcomes, whether program completers felt well-prepared for the rigors of the classroom, or whether the program completers demonstrated success in improving student learning outcomes. Far too many teachers say they feel unprepared for the classroom after completing teacher preparation programs, yet we know that there is no more important in-school factor for student learning than having a great teacher, particularly in our highest-need communities. That's why it is essential that we encourage strong and diverse preparation programs that can generate pipelines of new teachers with the right mix of knowledge and skills to meet the full range of needs in classrooms across the country.

The rules released focus on promoting stronger outcomes for all programs, including traditional, those providing alternative routes to certification, and those provided through distance education, while giving states significant flexibility in how they measure program performance to reflect local needs and priorities. More specifically, the rules require new reporting by states—beyond the basic measures they are

required to report annually under the Higher Education Act—about program effectiveness to drive continuous improvement by facilitating ongoing feedback amongst programs, prospective teachers, schools and districts, states and the public. The regulations also aim to provide better information to address the mismatch between the available teaching jobs and fields in which programs are preparing educators, and to enable districts and schools to deploy their best teachers where they are needed the most.

The final regulations released incorporate extensive stakeholder and public feedback obtained throughout four years of negotiated rulemaking, public hearings, and public comment processes. The Department received nearly 5,000 comments on the draft rules proposed in 2014, and those thoughtful questions and suggestions resulted in a better, stronger, and clearer rule.

The full text of the final regulation is available [here](#). To provide additional support and clarity, the Department will soon release non-regulatory guidance for states and districts on teacher preparation.

<http://tinyurl.com/z8lbbwm>

*U.S. Department of Education
Press Office, 10/12/2016*

National Updates continued

Evidence-Based Programs: New Guidance Details What ESSA Means for Research

New federal guidance on using research to improve schools suggests that it's not enough to find a study that supports a program—district leaders and researchers alike have to think more about who really benefits from an intervention and how.

If states and districts take up the guidance, it could deeply change how researchers and educators work together for education studies and could significantly broaden the array of students and schools who get studied. Experts also warn that without significant supports and training, it could be a high bar for most districts to reach.

For example, to show **strong evidence**, the guidance calls for at

least one randomized controlled trial that meets the standards of the federal What Works Clearinghouse or is of otherwise equal quality. That study has to show statistically significant benefits for the students on a relevant outcome, without being overshadowed by negative findings on other high-quality studies, and it has to be performed using a large, multisite sample that includes similar children and settings where leaders hope to use the interventions.

Moderate evidence calls for the same standards, but for quasi-experimental studies. The guidance does not call for large or multisite studies for **promising evidence**, but it does tell education leaders to avoid

programs with very mixed results on studies and make sure the results are relevant to what the school wants to improve.

The guidance also calls for states, districts, and schools to use research as part of an ongoing cycle of improving their own practice. As the chart below shows, the Education Department suggests an **improvement science** approach, in which districts build evaluation into planning and implementing interventions, and then use their results to improve the programs or change them going forward.

Education Week 10/26/16

Science Scores Rise for 4th and 8th Grades

Students in the 4th and 8th grades are showing more mastery of science, but high school seniors' scores on the assessment known as "the nation's report card" stayed flat from 2009.

The results released from the 2015 National Assessment of Education Progress also found that while large gaps remain between black and Hispanic students and their white peers in science, those gaps are narrowing, as is the gender gap in 8th grade.

The tests measure students' knowledge in the areas of physical science, life science, and Earth and space science in grades 4, 8, and 12. States' participation in the assessment is voluntary. It's offered to public and private school students as well as U.S. Department of Defense school system students. In 2015, more than 237,000 students from 46 states and Defense Department schools took the exam.

The average scores for students in both the 4th and 8th grades went up 4 points, to 154, compared with 2009. That's on a scale of 1 to 300.

During a conference call with reporters, U.S. Secretary of Education, John B. King Jr., called the results encouraging.

"All of this means that more students are developing skills like thinking critically, making sense of information, and evaluating evidence," said King. "More are learning how to become the problem solvers who can tackle our most pressing challenges."

Education Week 10/28/16

National Updates continued

Graduation Rates: One Litmus Test Among Several that Matter for Students with Disabilities

The nation's high school graduation rate is one important data point that we use in the U.S. to help determine the overall success of students attending our schools. States started using a comparable calculation and reporting method called the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR) in 2010-2011. President Obama announced that the U.S. has reached a new all-time high in graduating high school seniors at 82.3%. For students with disabilities, the graduation rate is 64.6%, which is an increase of 5.6% since 2011. Both are excellent developments.

For all students, including the 2.7 million enrolled in public charter schools, the upward trend in graduation is a sign that more students are being taught to state standards and meeting state graduation requirements. By all rights, if states will require schools to teach students to high standards and teachers will hold students to high expectations, the momentum and growth will continue. Yet, as the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools (NCSECS) shares in the celebratory moment and continues to promote and highlight best practices occurring in charter schools all over the country, we also know that within the charter sector and specifically for students with disabilities, several challenges remain. These

challenges, while not unique to public charter schools, are clear indicators that real barriers exist to assure the equitable participation in and completion of a quality education for students with disabilities in charter schools.

The nation's new general education law—the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—includes a requirement that high schools failing to graduate two-thirds or more of their students (or fewer than 67%) must be identified in the [new] state accountability system as a school in need of comprehensive support and intervention. NCSECS supported the new accountability requirements as well as improvements to key charter provisions including: expanding opportunities for traditionally underserved students (e.g., students with disabilities); and, the requirement that any charter entity receiving federal grants must commit to recruit, enroll, retain and foster achievement for students with disabilities. The combination of these requirements can help support and expand the growth of graduation rates.

While we're optimistic about the graduation rate, our findings in Fall 2015—as part of a secondary analysis of the Civil Rights Data Collection 2011-12—showed that while the enrollment of students

with disabilities may be going up in charter schools, disciplinary actions such as suspension and expulsion continue to disproportionately impact these students. We know such actions exacerbate the graduation gap, especially as research and practice show that disciplinary actions result in inequities that potentially cannot be made up for during a child's school career such as: a significant loss of instructional time; increased likelihood of contact with juvenile justice and later [their contact] with prison. Districts, including charters that operate as districts, interested in closing the gap should examine their programs, identify the schools or programs that need support, and take advantage of the training and other research-based activities allowed under ESSA. The new graduation data confirm that meaningful improvement is possible and while it is valuable to pause and celebrate gains, we strive to promote the progress and ensure all students are the beneficiaries of high expectations in whatever school they choose to attend.

For the full article by the National Center for Education in Charter Schools, go to:
<http://tinyurl.com/hbwf2gu>

Education Week October 20, 2016

National Updates continued

U.S. Education Department Awards \$4.4 Million to Improve Literacy and Education Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

The U.S. Department of Education announced more than \$4.4 million in grants to improve literacy skills, outcomes and results for children with disabilities.

“When we improve literacy skills for children with disabilities, including those with dyslexia, we are not just teaching them how to read, we are opening doors to a lifetime of more positive opportunities, such as improved academic skills, reduction in behavioral incidences, increased school completion, and lifelong learning,” said U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. “These awards will continue to address inclusion, equity and opportunity for all children, including those with disabilities.”

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) awarded the following:

- **A national center to focus on improving literacy skills of students at risk of not attaining full literacy skills due to a disability, including dyslexia (University of Oregon, \$1.5 million grant).** The center will assist states, local education agencies, schools, and instructional personnel in identifying students and using evidence-based interventions and assessments to improve students’ literacy skills. The center will also provide

information to families and collaborate with parent training and information and community parent resource centers funded by the Department.

- **A national center on intensive intervention (American Institutes for Research, \$2.1 million grant).** It will assist state and local educational agencies in their efforts to support schools and educators to implement intensive intervention to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities who have persistent learning and behavior difficulties. The center will provide technical assistance and disseminate resources to state and local educational agencies and schools to refine and coordinate their system of instruction and intervention for students who need intensive intervention to succeed in school and be prepared for postsecondary opportunities.
- **Three grants for the development of model demonstration projects aimed at improving literacy outcomes for English learners with disabilities in grades 3-5 (recipients listed below).** The purpose of this

effort is to establish and operate model demonstration projects that will assess how models can improve literacy outcomes for English Learners with disabilities within a culturally responsive multi-tier system of supports (MTSS) framework in both general and special education settings.

These grants align with the My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative, a coordinated federal effort to address persistent opportunity gaps and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential.

To ensure that all youth have opportunities to improve their life outcomes and overcome barriers to success, MBK is focused on six milestones, the second of which is literacy, **Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade**, ensuring that all children read at grade level by age 8 – the age at which reading to learn becomes essential.

The grants announced today will bolster the efforts of MBK Milestone 2 by supporting early literacy and positively impacting reading outcomes for students through the third grade.

*U.S. Department of Education
Press Office, 10/3/2016*

National Updates continued

\$2 Million Grant Awarded to University of Minnesota to Improve Academic Assessments of Children with Disabilities

The U.S. Department of Education today announced a \$2 million grant to the University of Minnesota's National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) to support states and local school districts in increasing participation and improving results for children with disabilities in state and districtwide academic assessments.

The funds will also be used to help states meet data collection and reporting requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

"States are working to adopt ambitious state-designed goals to measure academic achievement and to develop useful, inclusive assessments for students with disabilities," said U.S. Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. "This award will help educators meet those challenges in order to improve instruction and school accountability for all children, especially those with disabilities."

The award is being made under two programs authorized by IDEA. They include the Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities program, which promotes academic achievement and improves results for children with disabilities by providing technical assistance (TA), supporting model demonstration projects, disseminating useful information, and implementing activities that are supported by scientifically-based research. And, the Technical Assistance on State Data Collection program, which improves the capacity of states to meet the IDEA data collection and reporting requirements.

Under the grant, NCEO will partner with Applied Engineering Management Corporation, the Council of Chief State School Officers, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, and WestED.

Together, they will support states and local school districts in implementing appropriate, high-quality assessments for children with disabilities, and will increase the capacity of state and school district personnel to use formative and summative assessment results in instructional decision-making to improve teaching and learning for children with disabilities.

The grant is being funded under the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For more information on the National Center on Educational Outcomes in Minneapolis and this grant, contact Martha Thurlow at thurl001@umn.edu.

*U.S. Department of Education
Press Office, 10/3/2016*

Upcoming Conferences and Statewide Training

Functional Behavioral Assessment: Addressing the Behavioral Needs of Individual Students

Attendees in this series will learn how to conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment and the requisite behavioral decision making process to successfully connect interventions to a technically adequate Positive Behavior Support Plan. Explicit areas of focus will include the process of making data informed decisions and fidelity based progress monitoring at both the targeted and tertiary levels of student support.

November 11, 2016 – Multiple Locations

Prevention and Treatment of Reading and Writing Disabilities within MTSS

This training will examine assessment and design features recommended for adoption and implementation by MTSS teams to effectively meet the needs of students who are presenting with a continuum of reading and writing difficulties. A case study approach will be used to facilitate group analysis and synthesis of reading and writing screening, progress-monitoring and diagnostic data to inform response to reading and writing instruction and intervention planning across the tiers.

November 11, 2016 – Multiple Locations

2016 Educational Interpreter Weekend with the Expert

This 2-day workshop will guide educational interpreters to understand how to incorporate these idiomatic expressions into your everyday use of ASL. Participants will view examples and practice how to translate idiomatic expressions within ASL and English. This workshop provides a unique learning experience necessary for the appropriate use and understanding of ASL.

November 12-13, 2016 - PaTTAN Harrisburg

Concrete-Representational-Abstract (CRA) Day

This professional development opportunity will support teachers' learning and implementation of the Concrete-Representational-Abstract (CRA) sequence of instruction, a research-based instructional practice, to teach fractions. Teachers will experience CRA as both a teacher and a learner.

November 14, 2016 – PaTTAN Harrisburg

November 15, 2016 – PaTTAN Pittsburgh

November 17, 2016 – PaTTAN East

Youth Mental Health First Aid

Youth mental health first aid is an 8-hour training course designed to teach people methods of assisting a young person who may be in the early stages of developing a mental health problem or in a mental crisis. This training event is being offered to school and/or agency teams to ensure ample support is available to students.

November 15, 2016 – PaTTAN East

Special Education Plan Training for Administrators

This training is designed for Phase 3 school districts whose Special Education Plans are due to be developed and approved during the current school year. The Bureau of Special Education will conduct a two-part training at each of the PaTTAN offices. The training will review the Plan's content and requirements based on Federal law. Content will focus on information from compliance monitoring, professional development activities, teacher caseloads and classes, contracted services, methods of identification, behavioral supports, out of district placements, etc.

November 15, 2016 – PaTTAN East

November 16, 2016 – PaTTAN Harrisburg

Upcoming Conferences and Statewide Training continued

MTSS Math: Content and Instruction K-12

Schools must be able to determine the needs of students and respond to those needs in effective and efficient ways. Building a multi-tiered system of supports for mathematics helps schools to systematize assessment and instructional practices to support students. This series provides an overview of effective practices within a multi-tiered system of supports focused on mathematics. Each session will enhance the current knowledge of participants across all tiers of support, from K-12.

November 16, 2016 – PaTTAN Harrisburg

December 6, 2016 – PaTTAN Pittsburgh

December 15, 2016 – PaTTAN East

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)/ Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) Bootcamp

Interdisciplinary core teams who are in the initial stages of MTSS/RtII adoption and implementation are encouraged to attend this 2-day boot camp to revisit conceptual and practical underpinnings of comprehensive school improvement and use of RtII for SLD Determination. Teams will be provided with opportunities for discussion and networking. A continuum of tools and resources to facilitate staff buy-in and a sustainable model will be reviewed.

November 17-18, 2016 – PaTTAN East

November 21-22, 2016 – PaTTAN Pittsburgh

Formative Assessment: Effective Questioning and Discussion at the Middle and High School Levels

This session will assist educators to implement highly effective questioning and discussion techniques that are some of the most powerful tools that we have to elicit and explore student thinking. This training is aligned to PA Core Standards and Pennsylvania's Educator Effectiveness System.

November 18, 2016 – PaTTAN Pittsburgh

December 8, 2016 – PaTTAN Harrisburg

December 9, 2016 – PaTTAN East

MTSS Math: Assessment Practices K-12

Schools must be able to determine the needs of students and respond to those needs in effective and efficient ways. Building a multi-tiered system of supports for mathematics helps schools to systematize assessment and instructional practices to support students. This series provides an overview of effective practices within a multi-tiered system of supports focused on mathematics. Each session will enhance the current knowledge of participants across all tiers of support, from K-12.

December 7, 2016 – PaTTAN Pittsburgh

December 8, 2016 – PaTTAN Harrisburg

December 14, 2016 – PaTTAN East

Intermediate and Advanced Verbal Programs for Students with Autism

Extending instructional protocols to teach complex tact, intraverbal and listener responding repertoires for students with autism, this training will review protocols for teaching tacts of actions, two or multiple word component tacts, tacts and listener responding by feature, function and class, tacts of adverbs, adjectives, and prepositions, intraverbal webbing, responding to yes/no questions,

January 4-5, 2017 – PaTTAN Harrisburg

February 1-2, 2017 – PaTTAN Pittsburgh

February 1-2, 2017 – PaTTAN East

Upcoming Conferences and Statewide Training continued

Establishing Basic Skill Sets for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders

To address the needs of students with autism who present with limited or absent tact (labeling) and mand (requesting) repertoires, this training will cover conceptual skills and protocols necessary to establish basic skills sets for such students. Methods to teach the value of the earliest social interactions will be reviewed. Content will include specific teaching strategies relevant to an initial mand repertoire, initial imitation skills, basic listener responding skills, and early tact responses. A significant focus will be on the process of establishing early instructional control through shaping and pairing instruction with improving conditions for the student.

January 11-12, 2017 – PaTTAN Harrisburg

January 30-31, 2017 – PaTTAN Pittsburgh

January 30-31, 2017 – PaTTAN East
