

Session 2D: Monitoring AA-AAAS Participation Rates

Panelists: Andrew Hinkle, Sheryl Lazarus, Cary Rogers, Wendy Stoica, Robin Stripling, Kathy Strunk

Mr. Hinkle began this session with a discussion on state approaches to monitoring. This discussion highlighted a survey completed by the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) (Slide 6). NCEO sent out the 14-question survey in 2021. Thirty-four states responded. According to the survey, 10 states did not monitor. Two states did monitor but did not complete the survey.

The survey findings showed that special education monitoring primarily reviews IEPs for participation decisions (Slide 11). Assessment specialists and special education specialists also review IEPs for participation decisions. The final category was “other.” Regarding the students targeted for participation monitoring, some states did all students who were part of the monitoring process (Slide 12). Some states focused only on Tier 3 districts or any district over 1.0 percent. A few were “other.” The remaining categories were all AA-AAAS or all state IEPs.

The survey also looked at sampling approaches for monitoring (Slide 14). Most used specific factors. Some used all IEPs. The remaining approaches were percentages and numbers. Survey participants reported that the location of the IEP review was primarily a desk review (Slide 14). Some went to the LEA. The final category was “other.” Most states conduct reviews on an ongoing basis, said Mr. Hinkle (Slide 15). Those in the “other” category might review on an ongoing basis but also target Tier 3. Some states review before the spring test. Only a few conduct reviews after the spring test.

The format of the IEPs under review: Some were paper; some were online (Slide 16). Most respondents followed the state guidelines to review the IEPs (Slide 17). Some used a checklist or a different questionnaire. A rubric was also an option. The final category was “other.” Half of the states used IEP monitoring as an internal tool (Slide 18). The other half of the respondents made the IEP monitoring public. A few made the IEP monitoring available to the LEAs.

Other findings addressed the evidence states look for when reviewing IEPs (Slide 19), documentation states examine in addition to the IEP (Slide 20), and actions taken when there is insufficient evidence (Slide 21). Overall, the survey showed there is no single right way to monitor. States emphasized that monitoring is an evolving process. States wanted to share additional information about their monitoring practices. States also reported on tiered systems of technical assistance (Slide 22).

State Examples

Ms. Rogers began with a look at the Kansas 1.0 percent participation rate from 2017–18 until 2021–22. (Slide 24). Preliminary data for this year remain consistent with what the state saw last year, Ms. Rogers added. In 2017–18, the state participation rates were above 1.0 percent for reading and math.

In June 2019, ED found Kansas to be out of compliance. The state submitted a waiver in 2019 and began tiered monitoring in August 2020. In 2022, Kansas was under the 1.0 percent threshold, but it continues to work on its plan and make monitoring adjustments as needed. The state monitors through the DLM justification process (Slide 26). Ms. Rogers highlighted the data provided to the districts and the district requirements. Slide 27 highlighted the three-year data displays and the disability categories. Slide 28 presented the disproportionality based on risk ratio data.

Turning to 1.0 percent monitoring, Ms. Rogers reiterated the importance of looking at such red flags as:

- Primary disability;
- Reading level with comprehension;
- Computation skills; and
- Writing skills.

Kansas also provides the DLM Red Flag Fact Sheet, which includes probing questions for IEP teams. Kansas began developing its tiered system of technical support in 2020 after Ms. Rogers attended a webinar and heard from five states that had lowered the 1.0 percent cap. All those states had tiered systems of technical support, said Ms. Rogers. This year, Kansas did not assign targeted technical assistance to any district. Ms. Rogers said Kansas is testing student correctly, but the state will contact seven or eight districts about individual students.

The Kansas student information sheet looks similar to what Arkansas uses, said Ms. Rogers (Slide 31). The state created this form to get more information from the IEP to conduct deep data dives. Districts that had large numbers of students taking the alternate assessment were able to submit the form for just the students that had red flags. The state has since gone on to create a rubric and request supporting evidence. States can submit that information instead of the student information sheet. Ms. Rogers also presented an example of the updated participation guidelines (Slide 32).

Kansas also developed documents for IEP file reviews (slides 33–34). Ms. Rogers uses these forms to go out and work with districts that have intensive support. The documents look for evidence of significant cognitive disabilities and significant deficits in adaptive behavior. Criterion 3 notes whether the student is primarily instructed using the DLM essential elements as content standards. Kansas also looks for evidence of extensive direct individual instruction and substantial supports to achieve measurable gains in all grade- and age-appropriate curricula. The IEP file review concludes with a look at the 14 reasons that are not acceptable considerations for determining participation in the alternate assessment (Slide 35). The file review also includes general questions, such as evidence that the district has notified a particular student's parents. The scoring determines whether the file has complete, partial, or little evidence present in the file.

The final document from Kansas provided information on DLM test observation (Slide 36). Ms. Rogers discussed plans to visit districts to observe classrooms where students complete testlets in a short amount of time.

As Ohio developed its monitoring process, the state spent time talking to special education about how to ensure the districts assess the right students with the right test (Slide 37). Special education profiles go out to the school districts in December. The state also developed an alternate assessment participation indicator and provides special education program monitoring.

Monitoring activities for Tier 3 schools (participation rate of 3.5 percent) include a self-review summary report (slides 38–39). This effort begins with a data review to ensure clean data. Districts must then provide an improvement plan that will lead to evidence. The improvement plan (Slide 40) documents goals, resources, timelines, and completion.

This year, Ohio identified 13 districts in Tier 3 status (participation rate of 3.5 percent) out of 2,200 districts. Ms. Stoica remains concerned about Tier 2 districts that have grown complacent. This may be the time to lower the indicator or impose more support in Tier 2, said Ms. Stoica. All of the Arkansas monitoring tiers start with evidence of training, said Ms. Stripling (Slide 41). A review of the training materials showed that districts often were training on how to administer the alternate assessment rather than on which students should be participating. For Tier 2 districts, the state requests the date of the comprehensive evaluation when the data were collected (Slide 42). Districts must complete these evaluations every three years, but some IEP teams were using old data, said Ms. Stripling.

Monitoring for Tier 3 districts includes an on-site review (Slide 43). Monitoring may also include DLM monitoring of test administration. For this process, one person from the Arkansas Department of Education will review the IEP file while another will do a few DLM observations, said Ms. Stripling.

Questions and Comments

After the presentations, participants discussed the DLM alternate assessment, federal guidelines, and disproportionality. Kansas has been using the DLM alternate assessment since around 2014. Ohio is not a DLM state. In response to a participant's question, panelists discussed why an IEP team should look at alternate assessment results and supporting data to determine whether the test is still appropriate and challenging for a student and how to go forward with classroom instruction if a student has displayed mastery. A participant from Arizona reported that some students who are eligible for the alternate assessment take the general assessment instead because of rumors that students who take the alternate assessment will not graduate with a diploma.