



Parent Centers at Work! Addressing Disproportionality in Special Education

Presentation

By

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at

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5 things to know about racial and ethnic disparities in special education

Each year, roughly 6 million students with disabilities, ages 6 to 21, receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Although special education is a source of critical services and supports for these students, students of color with disabilities still face a number of obstacles impeding their ability to succeed in school. In 2015, only 3 percent of black and Hispanic 12th -grade students with disabilities achieved proficiency in reading, while practically none achieved proficiency in math.

In late December 2016, the U.S. Department of Education issued final rules to prompt states to proactively address racial and ethnic disparities in the identification, placement, and discipline of children with disabilities. That same month, they released comprehensive legal guidance describing schools' obligations under federal civil rights and disabilities studies not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin in the administration of special education. To help educators, school communities, and education officials understand the challenges prompting these initiatives, here are five critical facts about racial and ethnic disparities in special education:

1. **There are wide disparities in disability identification by race and ethnicity.** In general, students of color are disproportionately overrepresented among children with disabilities: black students are 40 percent more likely, and American Indian students are 70 percent more likely, to be identified as having disabilities than are their peers. The overrepresentation of particular demographics varies depending on the type of disability, and disparities are particularly prevalent for so-called high-incidence disabilities, including specific learning disabilities and intellectual disabilities. Black students are twice as likely to be identified as having emotional disturbance and intellectual disability as their peers. American Indian students are twice as likely to be identified as having specific learning disabilities, and four times as likely to be identified as having developmental delays. Research does not support the conclusion that race and ethnic disproportionality in special education is due to differences in socioeconomic status between groups. Efforts to reduce disparity, then, should support more widespread screening for developmental delays among young children, and should assist educators in identifying disabilities early and appropriately to address student needs. One study found that 4-year-old black children were also disproportionately underrepresented in early childhood special education and early intervention programs.
2. **Many children of color with disabilities experience a segregated education system.** While children with disabilities have been placed in more inclusive education settings since the early 1990s, progress toward inclusion has not improved over the last decade, specifically. To ensure greatest access to rigorous academic content, IDEA statute requires that children with disabilities receive their education in the least restrictive environment, alongside children without disabilities to the maximum extent

From: Child Trends 5: 5 things to know about racial and ethnic disparities in special education

Author: Kristen Harper, January 12, 2017

appropriate. However, in 2014, children of color with disabilities—including 17 percent of black students, and 21 percent of Asian students—were placed in the regular classroom, on average, less than 40 percent of the school day. By comparison, 11 percent of white and American Indian or Alaskan Native children with disabilities were similarly placed

3. **In a single year, 1 in 5 black, American Indian, and multiracial boys with disabilities were suspended from school.** According to the U.S. Department of Education's 2013 to 2014 Civil Rights Data Collection, students with disabilities (12 percent) are twice as likely as their peers without disabilities (5 percent) to receive at least one out-of-school suspension. Suspension from school is associated with an increased risk of dropout, grade retention, and contact with the juvenile justice system. To ensure students' access to a free and appropriate public education, as promised by IDEA, schools should take care to address both academic and behavioral needs in the development of students' individualized education programs (IEPs).
4. **IDEA provisions intended to address racial and ethnic disparities are underused.** For example, Section 618(d) of IDEA requires states to identify school districts with significant disproportionality, by race or ethnicity, in the identification, placement, or discipline of children with disabilities. Such school districts must reserve 15 percent of federal funds provided under IDEA, Part B to implement comprehensive, coordinated early intervening services to address the disparity. However, according to the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Government Accountability Office, each year, 3 percent or less of all school districts are identified as having significant disproportionality. In 2013, 75 percent of the identified school districts were located in seven states. That same year, 22 states did not identify any districts with significant disproportionality. While there is no consensus definition of significant disproportionality – as the term refers to an IDEA legal standard, to be decided on by states, the U.S. Department of Education published preliminary data identifying extensive racial and ethnic disparities in every state in the union. Under the new final rule from the U.S. Department of Education, all states will be required to follow a standard approach to define and identify significant disproportionality in school districts.
5. **Greater flexibility to implement comprehensive, coordinated early intervening services (CEIS) may help school districts address special education disparities, and improve academic outcomes for children of color with disabilities.** Historically, school districts with significant disproportionality were prohibited from using comprehensive CEIS to address the needs of preschool children or children with disabilities. Such restrictions would have prevented schools from using comprehensive CEIS for training IEP teams to build better behavioral supports into students' IEPs, even to address placement or discipline disparities. Such restrictions would also have prevented efforts to identify and serve preschool children in order to prevent future disparities in disability identification. Under the new final rule, school districts may implement comprehensive CEIS in a manner that addresses identified racial and ethnic disparities, which may include activities that support students with disabilities and preschool children.

Handout 2

Congressional Findings: Excerpts from IDEA 2004's Statute



When Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004), it began with “findings”—many of which express concerns over disproportionality in special education. This handout shares excerpts from those findings.

“(c) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following...

“(10)(A) The Federal Government must be responsive to the growing needs of an increasingly diverse society.

“(B) America’s ethnic profile is rapidly changing. In 2000, 1 of every 3 persons in the United States was a member of a minority group or was limited English proficient.

“(C) Minority children comprise an increasing percentage of public school students.

“(D) With such changing demographics, recruitment efforts for special education personnel should focus on increasing the participation of minorities in the teaching profession in order to provide appropriate role models with sufficient knowledge to address the special education needs of these students.

“(11)(A) The limited English proficient population is the fastest growing in our Nation, and the growth is occurring in many parts of our Nation.

“(B) Studies have documented apparent discrepancies in the levels of referral and placement of limited English proficient children in special education.

“(C) Such discrepancies pose a special challenge for special education in the referral of, assessment of, and provision of services for, our Nation’s students from non-English language backgrounds.

“(12)(A) Greater efforts are needed to prevent the intensification of problems connected with mislabeling and high dropout rates among minority children with disabilities.

“(B) More minority children continue to be served in special education than would be expected from the percentage of minority students in the general school population.

“(C) African-American children are identified as having mental retardation and emotional disturbance at rates greater than their White counterparts.

“(D) In the 1998–1999 school year, African-American children represented just 14.8 percent of the population aged 6 through 21, but comprised 20.2 percent of all children with disabilities.

“(E) Studies have found that schools with predominately White students and teachers have placed disproportionately high numbers of their minority students into special education.”

Understanding Data as Information

Tool for Using Data

Page 1

Directions: This tool can be used individually or as a decision-making group to help in using data effectively.

STAGE 1: PLANNING & PREPARING TO USE DATA (page 38)

What is the question you start out with?

STAGE 2: COLLECTING DATA (page 39)

	Describe the data you used. (Example: reading scores)	Where did you find the data?	Data as numbers (quantitative) X	Data as story or opinion (qualitative) X
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

Do you have reliable and valid data? YES NO NOT SURE

Do you have all the data you need to answer your question? YES NO NOT SURE

What other types of data would be helpful? (Examples: grades, surveys, assessments)

STAGE 3: ORGANIZING DATA (pages 40-44)

How is the data organized?

Snapshot in Time Trend Comparison
 Pie Chart Bar Graph Table Line Graph
 Aggregate Disaggregate Triangulated

Comments: _____

STAGE 4: ANALYZING DATA (pages 45-47)

Are there patterns in the data? YES NO NOT SURE

What information is unclear or needs more clarification? _____

Understanding Data

Tool for Using Data

Page 2

STAGE 5: DEVELOPING HYPOTHESES & MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS (page 48)

What conclusions are you making based on the data?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

What other questions do you have now? _____

What will be included as recommendations for your action plan? _____

STAGE 6: CREATING AN ACTION PLAN (pages 49)

What are your goals? _____

How do you plan on achieving the goals? _____

STAGE 7: DISPLAYING & SHARING RESULTS (page 50-51)

What story does the data tell? _____

Who are you sharing the data with? (Examples: school staff, students, community members)

What is the response to the data? _____

STAGE 8: CONTINUOUS MONITORING FOR PROGRESS & IMPROVEMENT (page 52)

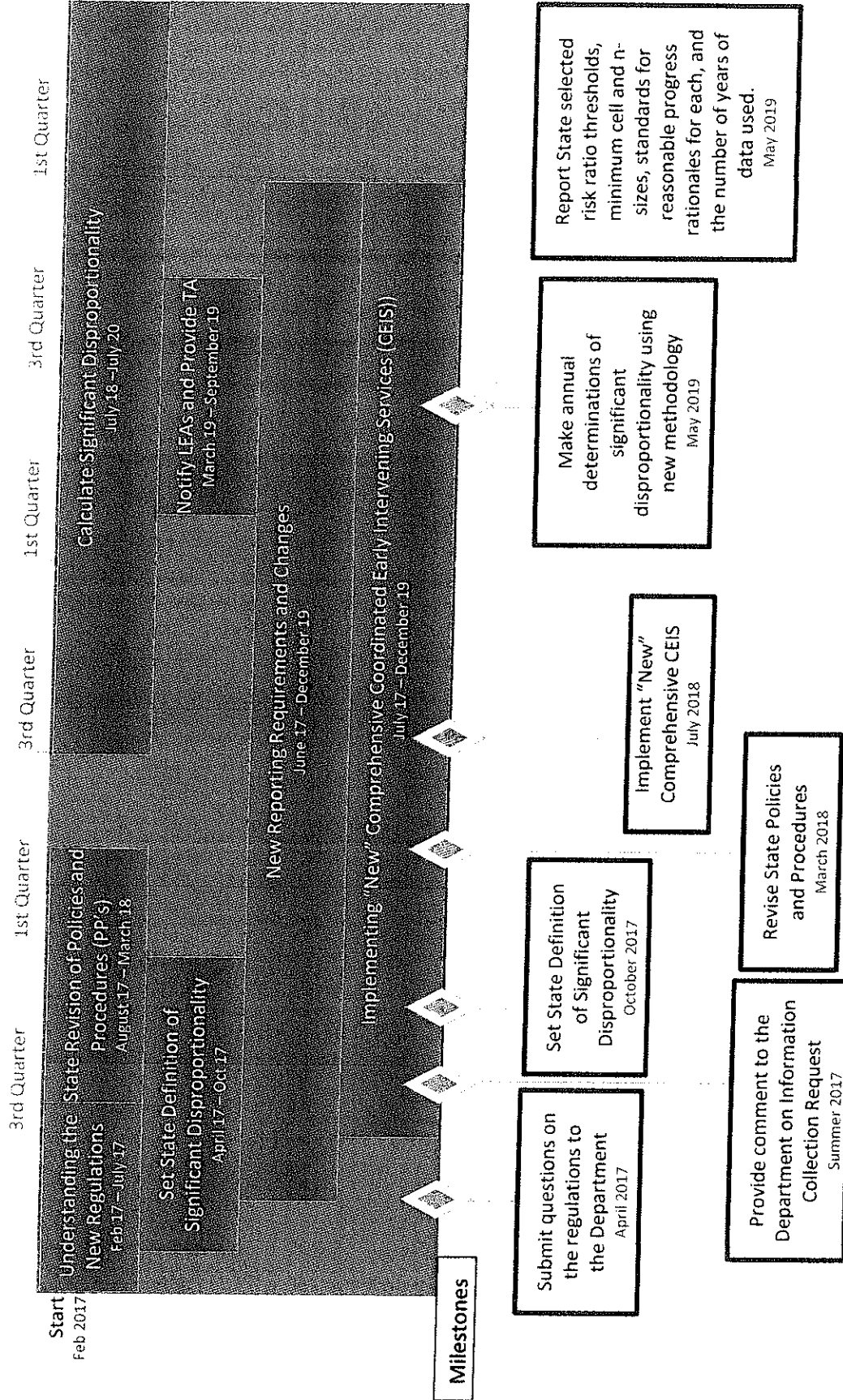
How do you plan to check how you're doing? (Example: Annually Report to Stakeholders)

How often will you monitor your progress and improvement? (Examples: monthly, quarterly, annually)

MODEL STATE TIMELINE

Full Timeline Snapshot with Key Milestones

Note: The image below visually depicts the tasks and dates included in the table on pages 1-4.



MODEL STATE TIMELINE

February 2017 through June 2018

Note: The Gantt chart below visually depicts the dates from February 2017 through June 2018 that are included in the table on pages 1-4.

	Feb-17	Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17	Sep-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	
Understanding the New Regulations																		
Review new regulations and guidance																		
Submit questions on the regulations to the Department																		
Inform LEAs of relevant changes related to these new regulations																		
Set State Definition of Significant Disproportionality																		
Review and analyze state significant disproportionality data to inform stakeholder discussions																		
Meet with stakeholders, including State Advisory Panels (SAPs), to develop risk ratio thresholds, minimum cell and n-sizes, standards for reasonable progress and the rationales for each. In addition, determine the number of years of data to be used.																		
State Revision of Policies and Procedures (PPs)																		
Review and draft revisions of State PP's necessary to comply with the new regulations.																		
If State PP's are amended to comply with the new regulations, conduct public hearings, provide adequate notice of the hearings, and afford an opportunity for comment from the general public, including individuals with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities																		
Implementing "New" Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS)																		
Build a function into financial systems to track use of IDEA Part B funds for "new" comprehensive CEIS for LEAs identified with significant disproportionality in SY 2018-2019.																		
Build or modify data systems to track children ages 3-21 receiving "new" comprehensive CEIS																		
Beginning July 1, 2018, ensure LEAs identified with significant disproportionality prior to SY 2018-2019 track the use of IDEA Part B funds for "new" comprehensive CEIS.																		
Work with LEAs to plan how to implement "new" comprehensive CEIS																		
Ensure LEAs are appropriately implementing "new" comprehensive CEIS																		
New Reporting Requirements and Changes																		
Provide comment to the Department on Information Collection Request																		
Begin to prepare to report data based on new final Information Collection Request																		
Report State selected risk ratio thresholds, minimum cell and n-sizes, standards for reasonable progress and rationales for each.																		
LEAs publicly report revisions of policies, procedures, and practices																		

MODEL STATE TIMELINE

July 2018 through July 2020

Note: The Gantt chart below visually depicts the dates from July 2018 through July 2020 that are included in the table on pages 1-4.

	Jul-18	Aug-18	Sep-18	Oct-18	Nov-18	Dec-18	Jan-19	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	May-19	Jun-19	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb - June 2020	Jul-20	
Calculate Significant Disproportionality																						
Gather necessary data and develop and implement tool to calculate risk ratios.																						
Calculate risk ratios for alternate risk ratios, if applicable for LEAs																						
Make annual determinations of significant disproportionality using new methodology.																						
Include 3 to 5 year olds in the identification analyses.																						
Notify LEAs and Provide TA																						
Notify LEAs of a determination of significant disproportionality																						
Provide for the review and, if appropriate, revision of policies, procedures, and practices																						
Provide technical assistance on identifying and addressing factors contributing to significant disproportionality																						
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Provide comment to the Department on Information Collection Request																						
Begin to prepare to report data based on new final Information Collection Request																						
Report State selected risk ratio thresholds, minimum cell and row-wise standards for reasonable progress and rationale for each.																						
LEAs publicly report revisions of policies, procedures, and practices																						

Four Simple Questions (continued)

3. What shared work could unite us?

Relationship building takes time! Shared activities make a start and lead to bigger opportunities.

Activities that Might Have Value [Select from below and/or add others.]	For All Groups?	If Not for All Groups, List Specific Groups
<i>Defining a Shared Problem</i>		
<i>Information Exchanges</i>		
<i>Productive Inquiries</i>		
<i>Joint Events</i>		
<i>Mapping Resources</i>		
<i>Developing Shared Messages</i>		
<i>Other (Specify)</i>		

Continued

Four Simple Questions (continued)

1. Who cares about this issue and why?

Answering this question permits leaders to think beyond their personal and/or professional role to develop a big picture of the issue in practice.

Who cares? [List by role, organization, position, name, etc.]	Why do they care? [Note their connection to the issue.]

Continued

Four Simple Questions (continued)

2. What work is already underway separately?

Recognizing the work of others is critical to developing allies. Respecting the history that others have on an issue is critical to engagement.

Organization or Group [Note name of organization or group.]	Initiative, Location, Document or Tool [Note title of initiative, location, document or tool.]	Unique Vocabulary or Difference in Perspective [Note any unique identifiers relative to this group.]	Value to Our Common Interest [Note value this group brings to the table.]

Continued

Four Simple Questions (continued)

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<i>Developing Shared Messages</i>		
<i>Other (Specify)</i>		

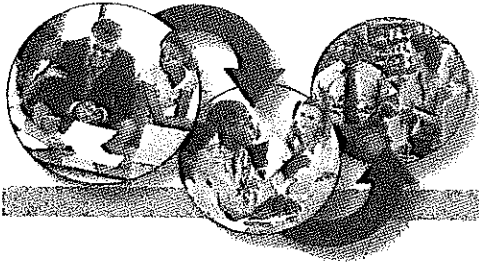
Continued

Four Simple Questions (continued)

4. How can we deepen our connections?

A single outreach won't yield much when we want to change practice; interactions must be ongoing. *Remember.* If a group is important to our outcomes it isn't any less important because it doesn't accept our invitations. Keep inviting!

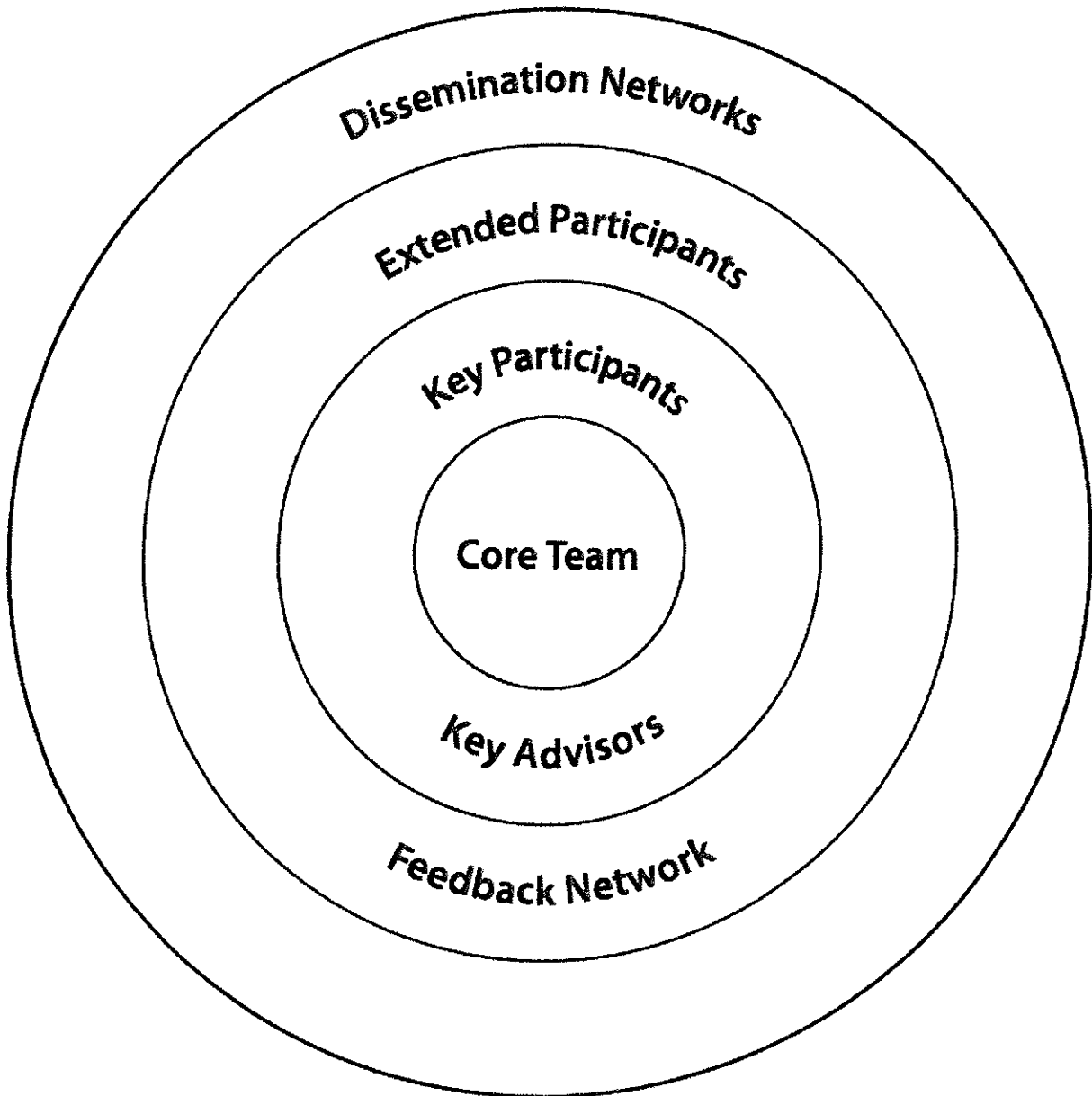
Group [List identified groups.]	How can we support and connect to this group's work on this issue? [Note activity(ies) most likely to be effective.]	How can this group support and connect to our work on this issue? [Note activity(ies) most likely to be effective.]



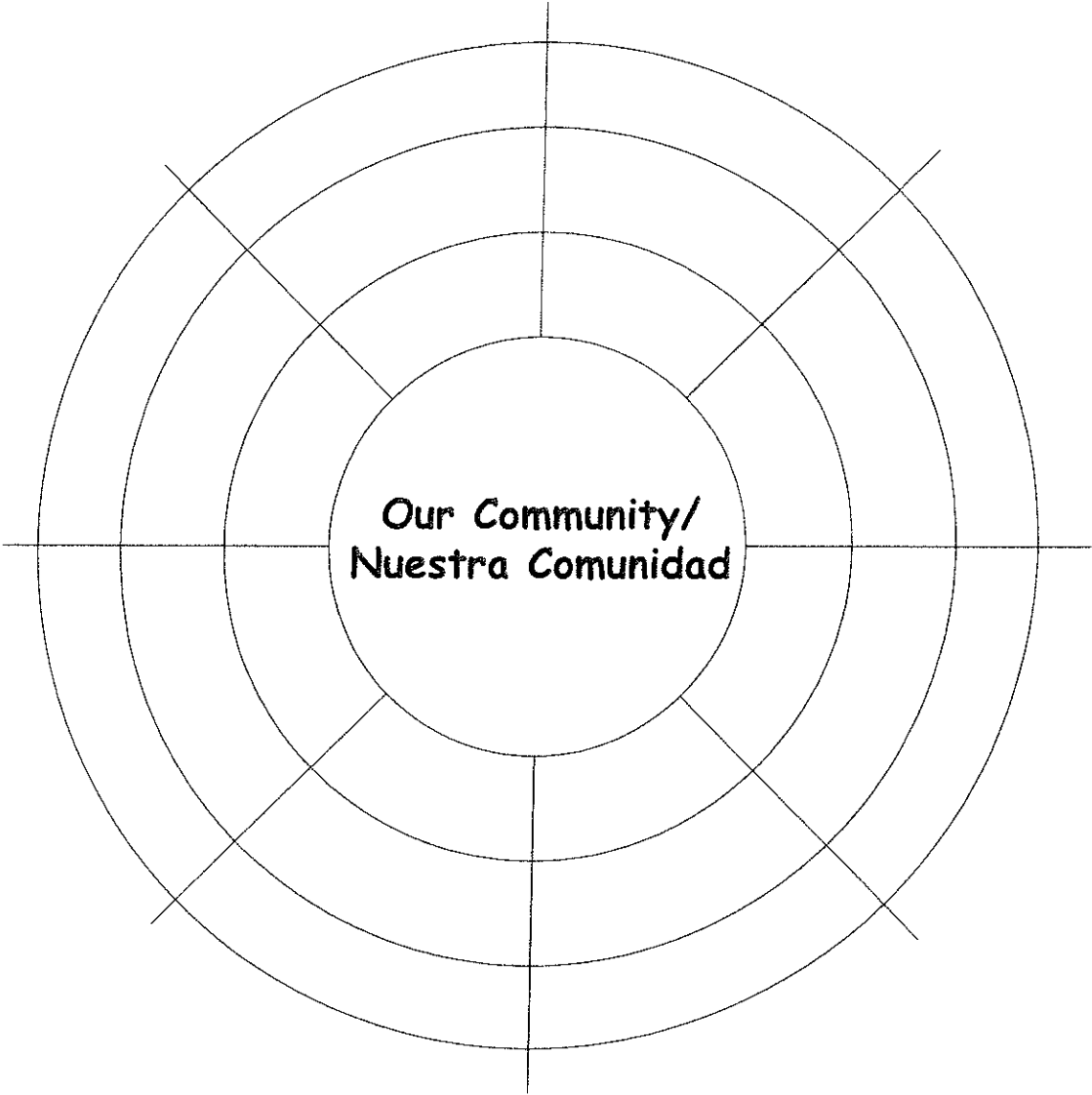
Leading by Convening

Ensuring Relevant Participation

Engaging Everybody



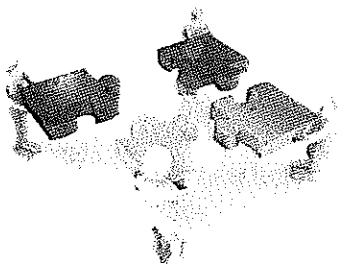
Community Web of Support/ Red de Apoyo de la Comunidad



Our Community Vision & Goal/Nuestra Vision de Comunidad & Meta:

Handout 4

Action Steps for Parents of Children with Disabilities



Disproportionality in special education based on race or ethnicity is of obvious concern to anyone who cares about education. We are all stakeholders in what our children learn, how they are treated at school, and what they achieve now and in the future. Yet, far too often, children with disabilities experience different treatment in school and achieve disproportionately lower outcomes. This is especially for those from racial or ethnic minority groups.

What can stakeholders—especially minority parents of children with disabilities—do to help address, reduce, and (best case!) eliminate this decades-old problem? Here are numerous suggestions and possible action steps that stakeholders can take.

First Steps: What Parents of Children with Disabilities Can Do

If you are new to the world of special education, you first will need to learn about that world, its special vocabulary and processes, how it supports educating students with disabilities, and how it can support your own child's education.

- **Learn about special education.** It helps in all regards to be informed about the process used in your state (and school) to identify children as having a disability. Learn, too, how decisions are made about *where* students with disabilities will receive their special education and related services (called *placement*). What about how students with disabilities are disciplined at school? What does your state permit? What does federal law permit? Not permit?



Where can you learn this? The two best resources to consult are: (1) your state's Parent Center, funded expressly to support and inform parents of children with disabilities; and (2) your state's department of special education, where you can likely find guidelines for parents about state policies and practices for special education. Find your Parent Center at: <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/>

- **Learn about IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.** This federal law is often a critical ally for parents of children with disabilities. It lays out your rights as a parent. It spells out what schools must do when they identify, evaluate, place, educate, and discipline students with disabilities. It also includes what schools are *not* permitted to do.

Where can you learn this? The Parent Center serving your state or area is your best resource, now and throughout your child's education. You can also visit the website of the Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR), where you'll find easy-to-read descriptions in English and in Spanish of IDEA's requirements for IEPs, placements, and permissible discipline of students with disabilities. Start with this page at CPIR: <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/idea/>

- **Be involved in your child's special education.** Attend IEP meetings. Be an active participant there, asking questions, offering suggestions, informing the team about your child, especially his or her strengths and needs. You are an equal member of the IEP team, and you have invaluable insights to share about your son or daughter.

Where can you learn more about this? Your Parent Center, of course! It offers web-based and in-person training to parents on how to be an active participant in all things IEP. Also at CPIR, starting here: <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep/>

- **Learn about what's needed to support your child's education in the regular classroom.** Learn about the accommodations and modifications appropriate for students with your child's disability. Advocate for these to be included in your child's IEP and provided in the classroom. Know the law's LRE provisions, which strongly support your child's placement in the regular education classroom.

Where can you learn this? Your Parent Center is an excellent place to start. You'll also want to visit the websites of disability organizations specializing in your child's disability. And, for basic information, try these two resources at CPIR:

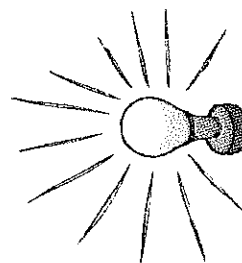
—Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students
<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/accommodations/>

—Considering LRE in Placement Decisions
<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/placement-lre/>

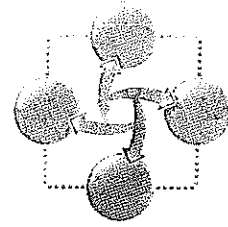
Step 2: Take Action about Disproportionality in Special Education

Now that you have the basics of special education process under your belt, you're prepared to participate *meaningfully* in how your state, district, and school address disproportionality. Try the suggestions below as stepping stones to become involved in addressing disproportionality in your state.

- **Learn about disproportionality issues in your area.** Is disproportionality going on in your school, community, district, state? Find out what your school system's policies and practices are for preventing, detecting, and addressing disproportionality. Does the school system monitor its data to identify disproportionality that involves students with disabilities from specific racial or ethnic minority groups? Has your school system or state ever been identified as having a significant amount of disproportionality in special education? These questions must be individually answered. It's difficult to suggest resources of where to identify such specific information, save perhaps your state/local Parent Center or the reporting to the public that your state department of education is required to do.



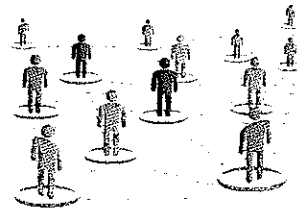
- **Become active in committees and advisory councils in special education.** There are many advisory groups and school committees with which parents, parent leadership groups, and community organizations can become involved, locally and in the state. Examples include the PTO or PTA (parent-teacher associations), PACs (Parent Advisory Committees), CACs (Citizens Advisory Councils), and disability-specific groups (such as local or state chapters of national-level organizations that specialize in a specific disability such as learning disabilities or autism).



The Parent Center serving your area is likely to have a list they can share with you. Attend school board meetings. Attend public meetings that deal with disproportionality, special education, or the interests of minority groups. Listen. Take notes. Jot down names of potential contacts. Speak up, too! And share what you've learned with the networks you're building with others.

- **Don't be shy about bringing up disproportionality to school leaders and administrators.** Meet with your school administrators or staff who may be able to answer your questions. Talk with them about the effects of disproportionality and ways to address the problem. Ask what you and others can do that would be helpful to the school or its staff. Take notes. Share what you learn with other stakeholders.

- **Offer to organize/host/be involved in school cultural events.** As communities, it's important for all of us to learn about and embrace different cultures, especially those within our immediate community and school environment. Whatever you can do in this regard is helpful.



- **Connect with advocacy groups.** Your Parent Center can help you identify local and state advocacy groups associated with disproportionality's key issues. Visit their websites. Sign up for their newsletters and announcements of upcoming meetings. Inform them of any relevant news you have to offer.

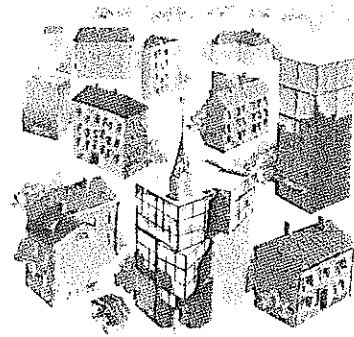
- **Contact, and meet with, local officials, state-level administrators, and state legislators.** Decisions about how your state and its school districts will address disproportionality are being made right now at the state and local levels. Meet with decision makers to discuss issues related to inequity in schools, disproportionality in special education, and the post-school consequences for our children with disabilities of not addressing these issues with vigor and determination.

Don't give up! Stand up and speak out!

Handout 5

Action Steps for Parent Leadership Groups and Community Organizations

Disproportionality in special education based on race or ethnicity is of obvious concern to anyone who cares about education. We are all stakeholders in what our children learn, how they are treated at school, and what they achieve now and in the future. Yet, far too often, children with disabilities experience different treatment in school and achieve disproportionately lower outcomes. This is especially for those from racial or ethnic minority groups.



What can stakeholders in the community do to help address, reduce, and (best case!) eliminate this decades-old problem? Here are numerous suggestions and possible action steps that stakeholders can take.

Take Action about Disproportionality in Special Education: For Parents, Parent Leadership Groups, and Community Organizations

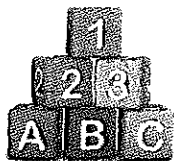
To be prepared to participate *meaningfully* in how your state, district, and school address disproportionality, you must first be well informed about the special education process. The Parent Center serving your area is an EXCELLENT source of information to consult. Parent Centers are funded by the U.S. Department of Education to provide support and training to parents of children with disabilities. They offer in-person and online workshops, webinars, newsletters, one-on-one support, and much more.

Find your Parent Center at:

<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/find-your-center/>

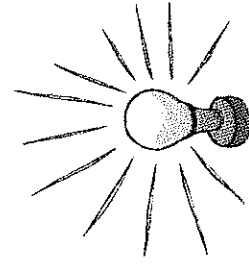
After you have the basics of special education under your belt, try the suggestions below as stepping stones to becoming involved in addressing disproportionality in your state.

- **Become informed about disproportionality in general.** For a crash-course intro to the subject, read *5 Things to Know about Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Special Education*, on line at: <https://www.childtrends.org/child-trends-5/5-things-know-racial-ethnic-disparities-special-education/>



Another good opening read (longer, more in-depth) is *Truth in Labeling: Disproportionality in Special Education*, from the National Education Association. In addition to describing the basics, the guide offers recommendations on addressing disproportionality at the classroom, school, and community levels. <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/truthlabeling.pdf>

- Learn about disproportionality issues in your area.** Is disproportionality going on in your school, community, district, state? Find out what your school system’s policies and practices are for preventing, detecting, and addressing disproportionality. Does the school system monitor its data to identify disproportionality that involves students with disabilities from specific racial or ethnic minority groups? Has your school system or state ever been identified as having a significant amount of disproportionality in special education? These questions must be individually answered. It’s difficult to suggest resources of where to identify such specific information, save perhaps your state/local Parent Center or the reporting to the public that your state department of education is required to do.

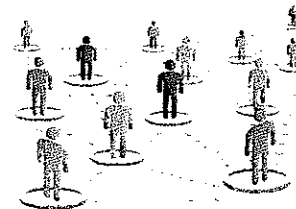


- Become active in committees and advisory councils in special education.** There are many advisory groups and school committees with which parents, parent leadership groups, and community organizations can become involved, locally and in the state. Examples include the PTO or PTA (parent-teacher associations), PACs (Parent Advisory Committees), CACs (Citizens Advisory Councils), and disability-specific groups (such as local or state chapters of national-level organizations that specialize in a specific disability such as learning disabilities or autism).

The **Parent Center** serving your area is likely to have a list they can share with you. Attend school board meetings. Attend public meetings that deal with disproportionality, special education, or the interests of minority groups. Listen. Take notes. Jot down names of potential contacts. Speak up, too! And share what you’ve learned with the networks you’re building with others.

- Don’t be shy about bringing up disproportionality to school leaders and administrators.** Meet with your school administrators or staff who may be able to answer your questions. Talk with them about the effects of disproportionality and ways to address the problem. Ask what you and others can do that would be helpful to the school or its staff. Take notes. Share what you learn with other stakeholders.

- Offer to organize/host/be involved in school cultural events.** As communities, it’s important for all of us to learn about and embrace different cultures, especially those within our immediate community and school environment. Whatever you can do in this regard is helpful.

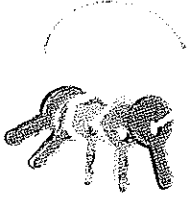


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- Contact, and meet with, local officials, state-level administrators, and state legislators.** Decisions about how your state and its school districts will address disproportionality are being made right now at the state and local levels. Meet with decision makers to discuss issues related to inequity in schools, disproportionality in special education, and the post-school consequences for our children with disabilities of not addressing these issues with vigor and determination.

Handout 6

Action Steps for Educators and School Administrators



Disproportionality in special education based on race or ethnicity is of obvious concern to anyone who cares about education. We are all stakeholders in what our children learn, how they behave at school and how they are treated there, and what they achieve now and in the future. Yet, far too often, children with disabilities experience different treatment in school and achieve disproportionately lower outcomes. This is especially for those from racial or ethnic minority groups.

What can educators and school administrators, as stakeholders, do to help address, reduce, and (best case!) eliminate this decades-old problem? Here are numerous suggestions and possible action steps to consider.

1—Become Informed about Disproportionality, in General

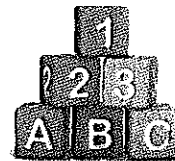
For a crash-course intro to the subject, read *5 Things to Know about Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Special Education*, on line at: <https://www.childtrends.org/child-trends-5/5-things-know-racial-ethnic-disparities-special-education/>

Another good opening read (longer, more in-depth) is *Truth in Labeling: Disproportionality in Special Education*, from the National Education Association. In addition to describing the basics, the guide offers recommendations on addressing disproportionality at the classroom, school, and community levels. <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/truthlabeling.pdf>

2—Learn about Disproportionality in Your State, District, or School

Is it present? To what degree? Which students with disabilities are primarily affected? What data exist to shed light on specific dimensions of the problem?

Answers to these questions can usually be found in the annual public reporting that your state or district is required to do, as well as in the information that states must report annually to the U.S. Department of Education. Search online by entering a phrase such as “disproportionality in (name of your state) special education” and see what resources pop up.



3—Raise Your Own Cultural Awareness and Responsiveness

Attend a racial equity workshop and other trainings designed to raise trainees’ cultural competence. Take a cultural self-assessment; engage others in your school system to do the same as a group. Many such self-assessments exist. Explore what may already be in use in your system, or take advantage of the *Diversity Toolkit: Cultural Competence for Educators*, available online at the National Education Association, at: <http://www.nea.org/tools/30402.htm>

4—Be Culturally Aware and Responsive When Engaging with Students and Parents
Recognize diversity across student ethnicity, language, and socio-economic status.

5—Actively Seek Out Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Parents

Encourage them to become active in the school community. Facilitate their involvement as needed—for example, providing an interpreter, providing child care during meetings, offering stipends for travel to and from meetings.

6—Develop School Staff’s Knowledge of UDL

Universal Design for Learning—or UDL, for short—can help educators address the needs and learning styles of all students. Find tools at:

<http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl>



7—Form District or School Teams to Address Disproportionality

Include all stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, advocacy groups, your state’s Parent Center). The *Success Gaps Toolkit* can provide a useful structured approach to this undertaking. Make sure you share the 2½-minute video called *What are Success Gaps?*

Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkWzVp4pldk&feature=youtu.be>

Check out the toolkit: <https://toolkits.ideadata.org/>

8—Infuse Your School System with Learner-Centered Supports

Learner-centered supports include approaches such as personalized learning or differentiated instruction. Multi-tiered systems of support are, too. Don’t forget about the benefits of providing non-academic supports such as social-emotional training for educators and students. And definitely, definitely, definitely learn everything you can about how to provide schoolwide positive behavioral supports.



9—Build Strategic Partnerships

Think “family-school-community.” You may find the IDEA Partnership’s *Dialogue Guides* especially helping in starting and continuing the process of working together to address sensitive issues.

<http://www.ideapartnership.org/using-tools/dialogue-guides/topical-guides.html?id=1693:family-school-and-community-collaboration>