



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Education**

September 26, 2014

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: Results-Driven Accountability in Special Education**

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is required to monitor the implementation of Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), (34 CFR 300.600(b)). The IDEA establishes requirements for state monitoring, enforcement, and annual reporting, and requires that the primary focus of monitoring be on:

1. Improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities; and
2. Ensuring that public agencies 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.

Consistent with the requirements, the VDOE has revised its monitoring of special education to a system of "results-driven accountability" (RDA) that provides greater supports to local education agencies in improving results for children and youth with disabilities, and their families. Over the years, state education agencies, as well as the U.S. Department of Education's (USED) Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), have placed heavy emphasis on procedural compliance with limited consideration for how the requirements impact improved outcomes for students with disabilities. Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, the VDOE will no longer conduct its monitoring visits based on a cyclical process. The revised monitoring system will be based upon targeted need as determined by data analyses of the state's Special Education Annual Performance Report (APR), which incorporates both results data and compliance data generated from several different sources, including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; Virginia's Standards of Learning; Discipline, Crime, and Violence Annual Report; Special Education Child Count; and other quantitative and qualitative data sources. The RDA brings a more balanced approach to determining program effectiveness—focusing on how well students are performing while continuing to protect their rights. Information about RDA can be found on the OSEP Web site at: <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/rda/index.html>.

A primary focus of the VDOE's RDA for the 2014-2015 school year is "eligibility determination," the process for determining whether or not a child qualifies for special education services and the most appropriate disability category to receive educational services. The RDA requires variant levels of intervention; therefore, monitoring activities may require that a school division attend and participate in staff development activities related to the eligibility process, participate in a review of data, complete a self-assessment, and/or be involved in on-site reviews. The RDA activities will also be coordinated with "priority schools" under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in our Office of School Improvement. Additionally, the VDOE's monitoring of special education for the 2014-2015 school year will continue on-site reviews of special education regional programs. School divisions identified for participation in the VDOE's monitoring will receive written notification at least three to six weeks before the date of scheduled activity.

For more information about the Department's monitoring of special education, contact the Division of Special Education and Student Services: Dr. Sandra E. Ruffin, director of federal program monitoring, at [Sandra.Ruffin@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Sandra.Ruffin@doe.virginia.gov); telephone (804) 225-2768, or Dr. Samantha Hollins, director of special education program improvement, at [Samantha.Hollins@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Samantha.Hollins@doe.virginia.gov); telephone (804) 786-2900; or Jeffrey Phenicie, specialist for state performance plan/annual performance report, at [Jeff.Phenicie@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Jeff.Phenicie@doe.virginia.gov); telephone (804) 786-0308.

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