

Tracking special education programs and recovery funds

Highlight

U.S. departments of education need to measure and monitor student achievement under the IDEA program. Now they must also track recovery funds made available for special education programs. They can do both with an IBM Cognos solution developed jointly with education leaders.

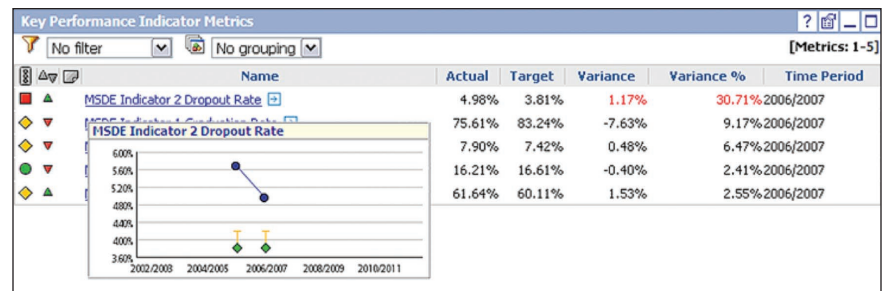
Stimulus funding is assuring the viability of special education programs and even making improvements possible. But the need to report on progress quickly and accurately is testing the ability of U.S. state departments of education to maintain visibility into every dollar spent.

IBM has developed a solution, in partnership with the Center for Technology in Education at John Hopkins University and the Maryland State Department of Education, to track progress in special education. Because federal reporting requirements are identical for all states, this solution can be replicated in any state education department with minimal customization.

The IBM solution tracks metrics for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) programs at the state, district, school and student level. It is the product of consultations with hundreds of people, including superintendents, board members, teachers, parents and principals to determine the data most critical to making good decisions and improving education for children with disabilities.

Special education reporting

With \$13 billion in the stimulus package directed at IDEA programs, education overseers and parents alike are expecting measurable results in such critical metrics as dropout rates for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), proficiency



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against standards, and the number of ex-IEP students employed or in post-secondary schooling.

Through performance monitoring, reporting and scorecarding, the IBM Cognos solution lets education departments:

- **Report progress against state targets.** Consolidate all relevant data and report against 20 federal State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators regularly via the web.
- **Monitor leading indicators.** Track critical metrics at a state, county and school level to spot developments as they occur. Intervene or tweak programs early enough to make a difference to students and ensure targets are not missed.
- **Test strategy and plans.** Monitor the effects of interventions, professional development or instructional strategies. Follow leading indicators and identify trends and patterns that point to future directions.
- **Monitor teacher and student performance.** Input key teacher, student or intervention data and drill into a failing SPP to determine the origins of a problem.
- **Involve many kinds of users.** Allow profile-based access to the system with varying levels of permission through flexible security.

Changes for the better

The combination of additional stimulus funding and improved program tracking is promising for children with disabilities and their families: better decisions to guide better education. With this, officials and teachers can go beyond compliance to help departments root out problems, improve offerings and provide a solid educational foundation for individual students.

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