

Special Education Workgroup Pre-Reading: Secondary Transition

Guiding Questions: How can predictors of post-school success be embedded in the IEP/transition process? How can Maryland ensure that all students with disabilities upon exit from school are connected to a post-school pathway? How can the programs and policies of the College and Career Readiness Pillar of the Blueprint explicitly include all students with disabilities?

Introduction to Secondary Transition Planning:**Why Does Secondary Transition Planning Matter?**

Secondary transition planning has profound and wide-reaching effects on both individuals and their communities. For individuals, it provides the tools and confidence necessary to achieve independence, secure meaningful employment, and improve their overall quality of life. For communities, it fosters economic growth, promotes inclusivity, and strengthens social cohesion, all while reducing the need for reliance on public resources.

According to the 2024 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium for individuals with disabilities, in 2022 22.4% of people with disabilities ages 18 to 64 live in poverty in the State of Maryland, versus 7.6% of those without a disability ages 18 to 64. According to that same source, 48.9% of people with disabilities ages 18 to 64 in Maryland are employed, versus 81.4% of people without disabilities ages 18 to 64.¹ For students with disabilities, meaningful secondary transition planning can be a lifeline to a fulfilling and independent adult life.

What is Secondary Transition?

Secondary Transition is the process of preparing students with disabilities for life after high school. Its foundations are laid early in a child's life when they first learn about their environment, likes, dislikes, and interests, and continues throughout the school years as students participate in experiences to support the development of a vision for the future and prepare for the transition to adult life. Secondary transition planning is a collaborative effort that involves students, families, school staff, and other important community members. Students with disabilities who receive special education services are entitled under federal and state laws to receive appropriate transition services that support their movement from high school to adult life.²

Transition services are defined in the regulations for implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 300.43) and in the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 13a.05.01.03.80) as: "A coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability, designed within a results-oriented process, that is focused on improving the academic and functional

¹ Center for Disability Research , *Section 6: Poverty* 2024

² MSDE Family Guide – Link Reference [Parent Information Series Secondary Transition](#)

achievement of a student with a disability to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities, depending on students' strengths, interests and needs, including:

- Postsecondary education
- Career and Technical education
- Integrated employment, including supported employment
- Continuing and adult education
- Adult services
- Independent living
- Community participation

Which of the above areas are targeted will be individualized and depend on the student's post-school goals, preferences, skills, interests, and other factors. Transition services also mean activities based on the student's needs, considering the student's strengths, preferences, and interests, and include:

- Needed activities in the areas of instruction, related services, community experiences, development of employment, or other post-school adult living objectives
- Acquisition of daily living skills
- Functional evaluation, if appropriate (IDEA 300.43)

Because transition activities must be based on the student's strengths, interests, and preferences, the development of self-determination and other skills leading to increased participation in community settings is critical.

In Maryland, all students who receive IEP services are connected to post-school services and prepared for post-school outcomes through the secondary transition planning process. Beginning at age 14, student interests and preferences are identified and considered when developing their postsecondary goals and identifying a Course of Study (courses and secondary transition activities). Students are encouraged to explore their interests and preferences through specially designed secondary transition activities and opportunities that expose them to post-school outcomes of employment, education/training, and independent living. Student coursework and participation in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and all other post-secondary offerings in the state of Maryland should be meaningful and support progress towards postsecondary goals. Students may be connected to the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) as early as 14 to be able to access Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and, if eligible, Student Employment Services.

In Maryland, formal transition planning begins when the student will be 14 and continues over the life of the IEP (earlier than the federal requirement in IDEA that transition planning begins by age 16). This approach allows students time to explore their postsecondary goals and change them based on transition experiences and acquired knowledge. It also provides time to apply for postsecondary services and supports, such as pre-employment or employment services, personal

care assistance, or other adult services if appropriate. IEP teams support the process of connecting potentially eligible students to the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) and Maryland Department of Labor (MDL). In addition, IEP teams work with families to identify additional individual supports and resources necessary for the transition to postsecondary education.³

The IEP and the transition plan are not the responsibility of only one or two special education staff. Rather, all staff working with the student, including general and special educators, administrators, school counselors, and related service providers, are expected to work together to provide the student with the instruction and experiences that will result in the achievement of positive post-school outcomes.

Predictors of Post-School Success

There are 23 research-based predictors of post-school success linked to better outcomes for students with disabilities after they leave high school.⁴ These predictors are embedded in the practices of secondary transition planning in Maryland. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) emphasizes the critical importance of robust post-secondary transition planning for students with disabilities. These predictors include:

1. **Career and Work Experience:** Participation in work-based learning experiences while in high school is one of the strongest predictors of post-school employment success. Embedding this into the IEP can involve:
 - a. Creating specific goals related to **job training** and work experience.
 - b. Connecting students with **school-based work programs** or community-based internships.
2. **Student Involvement in the IEP Process:** Teaching students to actively participate in their own IEP meetings and decisions (self-advocacy) correlates with greater post-school success. IEP teams can:
 - a. Set goals around **self-advocacy** and encourage students to lead discussions about their preferences and goals.
 - b. Incorporate **self-determination training** to help students express their needs and preferences.
 - c. Foster opportunities for students to make informed choices about their career or education goals.
3. **Inclusion in General Education:** Research suggests that students with disabilities who participate in general education settings have better post-school outcomes. IEP teams can support this by:

³ [MSDE Secondary Transition Planning Guide for Individuals with Disabilities](#)

⁴ [NTATC Predictors of Post School Success Level of Evidence Chart 2021](#)

- a. Ensuring students have access to **inclusive academic courses** aligned with their abilities.
 - b. Embedding **social and collaborative skills** goals into the IEP to promote inclusion and peer interaction.
4. **Transition Program Participation:** Early and ongoing participation in **transition programs** can improve post-school outcomes. Embedding these programs into the IEP process can involve:
- a. Establishing partnerships with **adult service agencies** (DORS or DDA) as part of the student’s transition plan.
 - b. Coordinating **work readiness programs** or specialized transition services through the school or local community.
 - c. Regularly reviewing transition progress and adjusting IEP goals accordingly.
5. **Parental Involvement and Support:** Parental support is another strong predictor of success. This can be integrated into the IEP by:
- a. Including **parental training** in transition planning so that families can understand the available supports and resources.
 - b. Encouraging families to collaborate with schools and agencies to ensure a smooth transition for their child.⁵

Embedding Predictors into the IEP:

By incorporating these predictors directly into the transition goals and services section of the IEP, teams can:

- **Develop measurable postsecondary goals** in education, employment, and independent living.
- Align transition services (such as job coaching, life skills training, and vocational support) with these predictors.
- Use **age-appropriate transition assessments** to gather data on the student’s strengths and preferences, guiding the selection of services.
- Ensure **regular reviews** of progress towards these goals, allowing the IEP team to adapt as necessary.

Embedding these predictors into the IEP and transition process will ensure that Maryland schools can help students with disabilities achieve better post-school outcomes in terms of employment, education, and independent living.

⁵ Secondary Transition Predictors of Post-school Success: An Update to the Research Base [Predictors of Post-school Success 2020](#)

The Maryland State Department of Education Secondary Transition Team supports Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Public Agencies (PAs) by incorporating predictors of post-school success into the secondary transition process in the following ways:

- Provide technical assistance
- Conduct professional learning with follow-up coaching
- Monitor compliance
- Oversee all secondary transition grants
- Collaborate with agencies and departments (within MSDE and outside) such as the Office of College and Career Pathways (OCCP), Technology First, Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD), the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA), the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA), the Maryland Department of Labor (MDL), and the State Agency Transition Collaborative (SATC).
- Involvement with national experts on current trends in secondary transition – National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTATC)
- Continue to expand our knowledge base of secondary transition through the review of current research and attendance at conferences and trainings
- LEA Self-Assessment Tool for Secondary Transition Practices (Maryland Indicators of Effective Transition Practices: A Self-Assessment Tool for Local School Systems)

Federal Indicator 14

In Maryland, federal indicators 1 (Graduation), 2 (Dropout), 13 (Secondary Transition Compliance), and 14 (Post School Outcomes) are monitored and addressed by the MSDE Secondary Transition Team. Highlighted below is data specific to indicator 14, post-school outcomes, which indicates that while Maryland is meeting federal targets there is still significant progress to be made to ensure access to appropriate post-school pathways for students with disabilities.

Year	A Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school.		B Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school.		C Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.	
	State Target	State Results	State Target	State Results	State Target	State Results
2022	≥ 25.5%	25.4%	≥ 58.0%	61.0%	≥ 58.0%	62.6%
2021	≥ 25.0%	26.8%	≥ 57.0%	63.6%	≥ 58.0%	65.1%

2020 ⁶	≥ 24.87%	24.9%	≥ 56.32%	56.3%	≥ 56.63%	56.6%
2019	≥ 28.0%	26.5%	≥ 60.0%	61.9%	≥ 74.0%	64.7%

7

Post School Outcomes by LEA (Exit Year 2022)

Year	A Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school.	B Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school.	C Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.
Allegany	12.07%	41.38%	44.83%
Anne Arundel	21.10%	64.49%	65.69%
Baltimore City	11.99%	56.61%	57.75%
Baltimore County	23.24%	52.01%	52.01%
Calvert	26.14%	67.05%	69.32%
Caroline	*	64.71%	67.65%
Carroll	20.81%	61.42%	66.50%
Cecil	14.77%	57.72%	59.06%
Charles	23.65%	55.17%	58.13%
Dorchester	*	41.03%	41.03%
Frederick	29.08%	72.88%	75.16%
Garrett	*	52.17%	52.17%
Harford	21.56%	70.94%	72.50%
Howard	45.00%	69.44%	71.67%
Kent	26.32%	52.63%	52.63%
Montgomery	44.41%	68.88%	71.15%
Prince George's	22.75%	55.86%	57.42%
Queen Anne's	*	68.97%	72.41%
Saint Mary's	18.47%	61.78%	62.42%
Somerset	14.29%	42.86%	47.62%
Talbot	23.33%	73.33%	73.33%
Washington	17.33%	57.33%	59.33%
Wicomico	8.04%	56.25%	56.25%
Worcester	26.98%	71.43%	79.37%

⁶ All states were required to reset Annual Performance Report (APR) targets and baselines in FFY 2020. The new APR period lasts from FFY 2020-FFY 2025.

⁷ Maryland State SPP/APR 2023

Transition Practices in Early Grades:

Though formal transition planning in Maryland begins at age 14, the goal of education is to prepare students for life. For this reason, transition planning should be the fundamental basis of education for all students of all ages. Research has demonstrated five primary practice categories with services and supports embedded starting at birth through adulthood. The research categorizes transition stages—Early Intervention (birth to 2 years), Preschool (ages 3-5), K-12, and Post-School (adult) and outlines critical areas for success, including:

- **Student-Focused Planning:** Highlights the importance of individualized plans such as Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) with student involvement.
- **Student Development:** Emphasizes skills in academics, social competence, self-awareness, self-advocacy, and self-determination.
- **Family Engagement:** Focuses on family partnerships, competence, and empowerment as vital for supporting the individual’s development.
- **Interagency Collaboration:** Encourages collaboration among various service providers for a seamless transition at each stage.
- **Program Structures:** Stresses the need for highly qualified personnel, culturally relevant practices, and data-driven decision-making.

Targeting transition services for younger students and leveraging existing interagency infrastructure are included in the purpose of the Maryland Pathways to Partnership Initiative (MPPI). The Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) received grant funding for a Rehabilitation Services Administration Disability Innovation Grant, called the “Maryland Pathways to Partnership Initiative” (MPPI). This is a five-year grant, involving four LEAs (Allegany, Caroline, Charles, and Washington), as well as the Maryland Dept of Disabilities, Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Independence Now, The Parents Place of MD, Abt Associates Inc., the Center for Transition and Career Innovation (CTCI), and MSDE. The purpose of this innovation grant is to enhance transition services for youth (ages 10-13) and young adults (ages 14-21) with disabilities, with a targeted outreach to unserved and underserved youth and young adults. This creates a longer “Transition Runway” for youth and families through early intervention and engagement of supports and services. This grant supports projects that go beyond conventional approaches and encourages new strategies and interventions with a focus on career development and integrated employment. The long-term intention of MPPI is to grow beyond its five-year funding and integrate full-scale innovative practices into Maryland’s system of secondary transition planning.

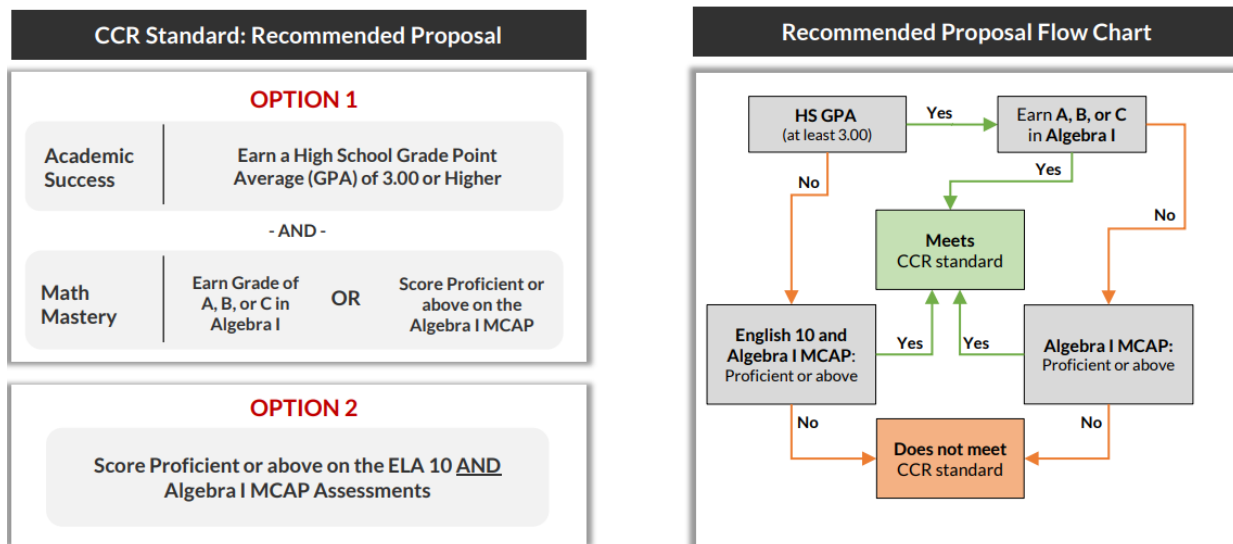
Blueprint Pillar Three: College and Career Readiness:

Blueprint Pillar Three, College and Career Readiness, focuses on major initiatives related to college and career readiness for all students. Pillar 3 is focused on ensuring that students are

college and career ready by the end of 10th grade and sets an empirically based College and Career Readiness standard to reflect that readiness. Pillar 3 also focuses on access and opportunities for post-CCR pathways including dual enrollment, apprenticeships, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

College and Career Readiness Standard:

In January of 2024, the Maryland State Board of Education formally adopted a revised College and Career Readiness Standard:



The revised standard established a pathway for students to attain College and Career Readiness (CCR) by earning a high school GPA of 3.0 or high **and** earning a grade of A, B, and C in Algebra 1 **or** scoring proficient or above on the Algebra 1 MCAP. Alternatively, students may earn the CCR standard by scoring proficient or above on both the ELA 10 and Algebra 1 MCAP assessments. Students who take the alternate assessment cannot reach the CCR Standard as currently defined.

CCR attainment comes with funding incentives for LEAs. Maryland will implement phased-in per-pupil funding, eventually reaching \$660 per student who has met the CCR standard. As outlined in the [Blueprint for Maryland’s Future: College and Career Readiness Roadmap to Implementation](#) (73), “Each year, the per-pupil amount will increase according to the Blueprint Formula’s inflation measure.” The CCR funding is intended to allow LEAs to facilitate appropriate post-secondary pathways for all students. There is no additional funding for CCR support pathways to provide additional support to students who have not yet met the CCR standard.

Advanced Academic Pathways:

It is essential that in transition planning students and families are made aware of all available options. This includes options for post-CCR pathways, as well as any Advanced Diploma

Pathways offered in a student's LEA. The Maryland State Department of Education recognizes five Advanced Academic Diploma Pathways. These pathways include the Cambridge AICE diploma, the International Baccalaureate Diploma, the Advanced Placement International Diploma, the Advance Placement (AP) Capstone, and the Maryland Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone.

As outlined in the [Blueprint for Maryland's Future](#), the long-term expectation is that students in any Maryland high school will have the ability to earn at least one of the five Advanced academic diploma pathways. Currently, the expectation is that each LEA offers at least one pathway.

Career Counselors:

The Blueprint sets the expectation that career counseling should start in fifth grade. Currently, the staffing and responsibilities of a dedicated career counselor are established locally. While LEAs are required to have career counselors, some LEAs staff these positions through contracts with vendors such as Collegebound, while others hire career counselors directly.

Transition Coordinators:

Transition Coordinators are responsible for the oversight of IEP-based secondary transition planning and dissemination of information and resources at the LEA central office level. These coordinators have a dedicated regional ST liaison within DEI/SES, attend monthly meetings and trainings, and attend dedicated office hours from MSDE staff. The day-to-day roles and responsibilities of a transition coordinator look different depending on their LEA; in smaller LEAs, a transition coordinator might wear multiple hats within their special education office, while larger LEAs are often able to dedicate one or more special education central office positions to this role.

Blueprint and Secondary Transition Overlap and Accountability Metrics:

When evaluating ways to increase equitable access to post-secondary transition outcomes for students with disabilities, it is important to understand a few of the accountability measures already in place within Maryland to measure Industry Recognized Credential (IRC) attainment and Blueprint implementation.

Industry Recognized Credentials and CTE Perkins Reserve Grant:

One goal of the Blueprint is that 45% of students earn an Industry Recognized Credential (IRC); this goal of 45% was inspired in part by Career and Technical Education's Perkins Reserve Grant, a longstanding grant to distribute secondary transition Perkins funding among eligible LEAs, Public Agencies, and Community Colleges. The CTE Perkins Reserve Grant is an essential lever to achieve 45% IRC attainment, as well as a monitoring tool to ensure

accountability for equitable access to IRC programs. A grant condition includes using Perkins funding to address disproportionate outcomes for federally identified “special populations,” including students with disabilities. Part of the Perkins application includes a Community Learning Needs Assessment or CLNA; this CLNA informs targets identified in the grant. These targets are monitored through shared site visits between members of the Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) Secondary Transition (ST) Team and the Office of College and Career Pathways (OCCP).

Blueprint Implementation Plans:

An LEA’s [Blueprint Implementation Plan](#) outlines its implementation of all five pillars of Blueprint in a given school year. These plans are one of the primary accountability metrics of Blueprint implementation and are reviewed before approval by a cross-departmental cohort of MSDE and AIB staff, including members of DEI/SES. Questions 14 and 15 of the 2024 Implementation Plan Template (pages 23-25) ask about overall progress in implementation. While students with disabilities are not explicitly referenced in these questions, LEAs often reference students with disabilities in their responses to questions 14 and 15. Questions 18 and 19, under Blueprint Pillar 4, (pages 29-31) ask specifically about improving education for students with disabilities and reducing disproportionality. The text of all four questions can be found in the Appendix of this paper.

The Blueprint Implementation Plan template is updated annually, and future edits could be made for a more explicit connection between CCR readiness and students with disabilities.

CTE Participation Data:

CTE participation data includes two categories:

1. CTE “concentrator” is a student who has finished two consecutive courses in the CTE program and is enrolled in a third. These students are “on track” to graduate from a CTE program.
2. CTE “completer” is a student who has completed all course requirements in their program and will graduate from a CTE program.

In 2022, the data for students with disabilities (SWD) in CTE was as follows:

1. Concentrators: SWD = 3,733 / Total Students = 39,648 (9.4% SWD)
2. Completers: SWD = 1,508 / Total Students = 14,146 (10.6% SWD)

The majority of CTE programs result in an Industry Recognized Credential (IRC); however, some programs do not. “Career Research and Development,” or “CRD” programs typically focus on skills like developing a resume, appropriate work habits, and exploring various career interests. The enrollment data for CRD programs is as follows:

- Career Research and Development (CRD): SWD = 1,059 / Total Concentrators = 3,207 (33% SWD)

Currently, 12.7% of students in Maryland have a disability; this means that enrollment in CTE programs needs to grow by 2-3 percent to reflect an authentic participation rate for students with disabilities. 33% enrollment in CRD programs does not reflect an authentic ratio when it comes to students with disabilities having appropriate access to their non-disabled peers in a CTE program. Additionally, this data also indicates an overrepresentation of students with disabilities in programs that do not ultimately lead to an IRC.

There is no data metric, such as a staff or stakeholder survey, that explains the overrepresentation of students with disabilities in CRD programs. Informal data sources, such as feedback from transition coordinators, indicate that factors such as higher and varied local prerequisites for CTE program enrollment compared to more attainable prerequisites for CRD program enrollment may be leading to an overrepresentation of students with disabilities in CRD enrollment.

Proposed discussion questions:

1. How can predictors of post-school success be embedded in the IEP/transition process and the broader secondary transition process? What steps can be taken to ensure that indicators are embedded earlier in a student's academic career?
2. What recommendations should the SEW make to ensure that students with disabilities have the supports and services to achieve the legislative intent of college/career readiness for all students in support of improving their post-school outcomes?
3. What standards and guidance can MSDE set to ensure that all students with disabilities upon exit from school are connected to a post-school pathway?
4. The legislative intent of the Blueprint is for all students to be college and career ready. How can the programs and policies of the College and Career Readiness Pillar of the Blueprint (e.g., CCR standard, post-CCR pathways including CTE programs, apprenticeships, advanced academic pathways, and support pathways) advance this goal and explicitly include all students with disabilities, maintaining high standards and expectations while including those students with the highest support needs?
5. What other recommendations do you have to improve the post-secondary transition planning process?

References

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Appendix

“14. Based on the implementation of the LEA’s plans over the last year, discuss the district’s progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.
- Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the blueprint outcome of providing support to students identified as not on track to graduate in 9th grade and/or not demonstrating college and career readiness (CCR) by the end of 10th grade.”

“15. Based on the implementation of the LEA’s plans over the last year, discuss the district’s progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.”

“18. Based on the implementation of the LEA’s plans over the last year, discuss the district’s progress in transforming its systems and practices and achieving the intended outcomes of the Blueprint. Responses must address the following questions.

- What progress has been made in implementation related to both planned activities and anticipated outcomes? If progress has been limited, what challenges has the LEA encountered? Consider, identify, and refer to available data as needed to demonstrate progress.
- How is the LEA adapting its plans to mitigate challenges and/or ensure continued progress and future success? Which strategies are not working that the LEA will no longer implement, and which new strategies does the LEA intend to implement? Include the rationale for adjustments.
- Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome of improving education for students with disabilities.”

“19. Required Data Analysis: Through an analysis of data, discuss progress towards meeting the Blueprint outcome to mitigate disproportionate identification and disciplinary practices.

- Criteria for Success:
- Provides an analysis of data disaggregated by student groups to identify disproportionalities in identification and disciplinary practices to determine their root causes and identify systemic changes that address the root causes.
- Provides a plan for professional learning and support for general education teachers to build knowledge and skills to provide high-quality instruction and interventions that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students.
- Includes a detailed description of the pre-referral process and its relationship to the LEA’s system of multi-tiered supports for students.”