

# State Performance Plan

## Indicator 5: School-Age Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)



### Description of Stakeholder Engagement Activities & Results:

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) is currently developing the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) for the new six-year cycle for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2020-2025. NYSED obtained stakeholder input using two central approaches:

- Broad public engagement and input through online surveys between October and November 2021; and
- Virtual meetings with stakeholder groups in November 2021.

The Office of Special Education (OSE) created a [Stakeholder Involvement](#) webpage with SPP/APR resources to promote feedback and engagement. This included a message from New York State Board of Regent member, Regent Cea, about the [SPP Stakeholder Meetings](#), an [SPP Stakeholder Invitation Letter](#), [At-a-Glance State Performance Plan Summary of Indicators 1-17](#), [Getting to Know New York's SPP/APR Handout](#), and SPP/APR FFY 2020-2025: [General Overview Presentation](#).

For Indicator 5, the OSE created the following resources designed to engage stakeholders and build capacity in data analysis, evaluating progress in meeting New York State targets, the consideration of existing improvement activities, and the development of potential new improvement activities:

#### Resource Links

##### [Indicator 5: Least Restrictive Environment – School Age Handout](#)

*A summary of the data used to measure this Indicator and existing improvement activities.*

##### [Introduction and Measurement Description](#)

*An overview of frequently used terms and explanation of the Indicator 5 measurement.*

##### [Statewide Data Trends and Comparisons](#)

*Past trend data of reported performance from New York State, comparable states, and national mean to evaluate New York State's progress in this Indicator.*

##### [Statewide Data Trends Old vs. New Measurement](#)

*Past trend data of reported performance from New York State, comparable states, and national mean to evaluate New York State's progress in this Indicator.*

##### [Disaggregate Data in New York State 5A](#)

##### [Disaggregate Data in New York State 5B](#)

##### [Disaggregate Data in New York State 5C](#)

*Reported performance data presented by student's race and ethnicity, school district need/resource capacity, and regional county level to evaluate progress using different approaches.*

##### [Improvement Strategies](#)

*An explanation of existing improvement activities and presentation of potential new activities to promote outcomes in this Indicator.*

##### [Target Setting 5A](#)

##### [Target Setting 5B](#)

##### [Target Setting 5C](#)

*Presentation of NYSED's proposed Indicator 5 targets and methodology used to establish targets.*

##### [Closing](#)

*Additional resources to provide feedback and to evaluate school district performance on this Indicator.*

# Soliciting Public Input

## *Virtual Stakeholder Meetings*

Five virtual stakeholder meetings were held for Indicator 5. Meetings occurred both during the day and in the evening to accommodate different schedules. A total of 79 stakeholders participated in the meeting, including 23 parents. The meetings included an overview of the SPP/APR and viewing of the pre-recorded webinar modules. Each session sought stakeholder feedback on what stood out to them about the trend data and how to use this data to evaluate New York State's progress with consideration of target-setting and improvement activities, what activities could be installed, maintained, or strengthened to address improvements in school-age least restrictive environment (LRE) outcomes, whether the proposed SPP targets for the Indicator 5 sub-indicators were rigorous but attainable and any other feedback participants had regarding Indicator 5.

## *Online Survey*

Between October to November 2021, a total of 65 stakeholders completed the online survey for Indicator 5. The Indicator 5 online survey sought stakeholder feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of existing improvement activities in making progress toward school-age LRE outcomes, whether participants supported potential new improvement activities, and whether the proposed SPP targets for the Indicator 5 sub-indicators were rigorous but attainable.

Themes of the stakeholder feedback on Indicator 5 included:

- LRE should not solely be considered a special education issue but should instead be addressed as a comprehensive district-wide priority of school and district leadership.
- School leadership should conduct root analysis of LRE data.
- To ensure access to the general education curriculum and promote inclusion to the greatest extent possible, schools must provide appropriate supports and accommodations to students with disabilities, including English language learners.
- Train general and special education teachers in research-based intervention strategies to support integration and access to the general education curriculum.
- Provide CSE training focused on pre-referral, modifications and accommodations, anti-bias training, co-teaching models, and the LRE decision making process.
- Increase family supports and training in the LRE.

Following the collection of stakeholder feedback from the online survey and virtual meetings, internal workgroups comprised of NYSED OSE and Information and Reporting Services reviewed stakeholder responses to identify where recommendations for target-setting and/or improvement strategies could be amended to better align with the input received from parents, school administrators, educators, advocacy organizations, community members and other interested parties. The results of the OSE's incorporation of stakeholder feedback and evaluation of Indicator 5 progress with stakeholders is reflected in NYSED's 2020-2025 SPP/APR targets and OSE's development of improvement strategies as summarized further in this report.

## Stakeholder Meetings & Online Survey

Five virtual stakeholder meetings were held to discuss Indicator 5

Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> 9:00 - 11:30 AM

Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> 9:00 - 11:30 AM

Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> 6:00 - 8:30 PM

Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> 1:00 - 3:30 PM

Nov. 18<sup>th</sup> 6:00 - 8:30 PM

A total of 79 stakeholders participated in the meetings, including 23 parents.

An online survey was published to collect stakeholder feedback over a six-week period.

A total of 58 stakeholders completed an online survey, including 28 parents.

NYSED values its partnership with parents and other key stakeholders in our ongoing efforts to improve outcomes for students with disabilities throughout New York State. Thank you to all who participated in a meeting or survey.

# Feedback on Improvement Strategies

Following the evaluation of Indicator 5 trend data (past targets and performance), stakeholder presentations included a description of improvement strategies with requested feedback on what activities should be considered, maintained, or strengthened to address improvements in school-age LRE. The presented information and solicited feedback from a variety of stakeholders, including parents and educators, is intended to increase capacity to support activities around improving student outcomes and meeting the objectives of Indicator 5.

## Improvement Strategies Presented:

*Existing Improvement Activities to Improve Indicator 5 Outcomes:* the OSE presentation included a summary of the Focused Intervention LRE Monitoring Review; school district significant disproportionality designations; special education space requirements; school district placement certification process for private excess cost aid; application process for placement in out-of-state residential schools; and the OSE Educational Partnership targeted professional development resources to improve school-age LRE outcomes in New York State.

*Potential New Improvement Strategies to Improve Indicator 5 Outcomes:* the OSE presented two potential new improvement activities for stakeholder consideration. This included requiring school districts to develop and implement a five-year plan for high-quality inclusive programs for students with disabilities, and developing a Committee on Special Education training module for Indicator 5 and placement in the LRE.

## Stakeholder Feedback on Improvement Strategies:

Participants of the online survey were asked to rate the effectiveness of the existing improvement activities to improve Indicator 5 outcomes. When asked to rate effectiveness on a scale of 1-5, all of the existing improvement activities were most frequently rated “5” for most effective with the exception of the Focused Intervention LRE Monitoring Review which received a rating of “3” for moderate effectiveness.

Both online survey participants and virtual meeting participants were asked whether they support the OSE potential new improvement activities for school-age LRE and to rank them in order of importance. Stakeholders supported both of the potential new improvement activities (five-year high quality inclusion plan and LRE training) with the greatest support from stakeholders for school district inclusion plans to provide a five-year projection to increase the number of students with disabilities in inclusive settings and describe the steps the district will take to improve the availability and quality of inclusive programs in the district.

In addition to the improvement activities presented, stakeholders provided the following for consideration:

- Require Higher Education general education teacher preparation programs to have a greater number of special education course credits and a special education practicum experience prior to students graduating.
- School and district leadership should conduct root analysis of LRE data and be accountable for developing and implementing plans to improve Indicator 5 outcomes. Improvement strategies will be most successful if based on comprehensive district-wide or school-wide commitments and investments.
- Share best practices for high quality inclusive programming.
- Require CSE training and engage stakeholders in the development of training modules.
- Provide additional funding to support students with disabilities in district programs.

**Stakeholder responses will be used by the OSE to identify priority areas for improvement and assist in the development of the strategies that will be implemented to promote school-age inclusion and meet performance objectives for Indicator 5 in the 2020-2025 SPP/APR.**

# Responses on Indicator Targets:

**Indicator 5A Target Setting:** NYSED proposed the following targets for Indicator 5A:

Baseline FFY 2020	FFY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
58.28%	Target >=	58.28%	58.25%	58.75%	59.00%	59.50%	60.00%

There was not a majority consensus (more than 50% of responses) for any of the three response options for the proposed Indicator 5A targets (too high, too low, or just right). While the response of “too low” was most frequently reported (at 41.18%), this did not reflect a majority of the responses which were divided among “just right” (34.12%) and “too high” (24.71%). As a result of the divided feedback, with no majority consensus for one of the response options, NYSED will not revise the proposed targets. **The New York State 2020-2025 SPP/APR will reflect the proposed Indicator 5A targets as the final targets.**

**Indicator 5B Target Setting:** NYSED proposed the following targets for Indicator 5B:

Baseline FFY 2020	FFY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
18.16%	Target <=	18.16%	18.00%	17.80%	17.50%	17.25%	17.00%

There was not a majority consensus (more than 50% of responses) for any of the three response options for the proposed Indicator 5B targets (too high, too low, or just right). The response of “just right” was most frequently reported (at 47.62%) but did not reflect a majority of the responses which were divided among “too low” (27.38%) and “too high” (25.00%). **The New York State 2020-2025 SPP/APR will reflect the proposed Indicator 5B targets as the final targets.**

**Indicator 5C Target Setting:** NYSED proposed the following targets for Indicator 5C:

Baseline FFY 2020	FFY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
5.14%	Target <=	5.14%	5.10%	5.00%	4.90%	4.80%	4.75%

Most stakeholders (54.88% of received responses) agreed that the Indicator 5C proposed recommended targets were “just right.” **The New York State 2020-2025 SPP/APR will reflect the proposed Indicator 5C targets as the final targets.**