

State Performance Plan

Indicator 6: Least Restrictive Environment Preschool



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 6, 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 6: Least Restrictive Environment – Preschool 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 6 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.

[Disaggregate Data in New York State 6A](#)

[Disaggregate Data in New York State 6B](#)

[Disaggregate Data in New York State 6C](#)

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.

[Inclusive Indicator Targets for Children Ages 3, 4, and 5](#)

Presentation of NYSED's recommendation to continue inclusive targets for Indicator 6.

[Target Setting 6A](#)

[Target Setting 6B](#)

[Target Setting 6C](#)

Presentation of NYSED's proposed Indicator 6 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 6. Meetings occurred both during the day and in the evening to accommodate different schedules. A total of 83 stakeholders participated in the meeting, including 11 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 preschool least restrictive environment (LRE) outcomes, whether the proposed SPP targets for the Indicator 6 sub-indicators were rigorous but attainable and any other feedback participants had regarding Indicator 6.

Online Survey

Between October to November 2021, a total of 65 stakeholders completed the online survey for Indicator 6. The Indicator 6 online survey sought stakeholder feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of existing improvement activities in making progress toward preschool LRE outcomes, whether participants supported potential new improvement activities, and whether the proposed SPP targets for the Indicator 6 sub-indicators were rigorous but attainable.

Themes of the stakeholder feedback received in the virtual meetings and online surveys on Indicator 6 included:

- The importance of preschool inclusion to both children with and without disabilities.
- The existing challenges in New York State regarding the need for more targeted funding investments to create new opportunities for inclusive preschool programs equipped with the resources necessary to serve the continuum of student needs.
- The recruitment and retention of a qualified workforce continues to be a critical need and challenge in early childhood education.
- There are significant regional differences in Indicator 6 performance and concerning disparities in the data by student race and ethnicity which required further local evaluation and attention.

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 6 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 6

Nov. 8th 1:00 – 3:30 PM

Nov. 8th 6:00 – 8:30 PM

Nov. 10th 1:00 – 3:30 PM

Nov. 16th 6:00 – 8:30 PM

Nov. 19th 9:00 – 11:30 AM

A total of 83 stakeholders participated in the meetings, including 11 parents.

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

A total of 65 stakeholders completed an online survey, including 14 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 6 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 preschool 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 6.

Improvement Strategies Presented:

Existing Improvement Activities to Improve Indicator 6 Outcomes: the OSE presentation included a summary of the “Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities” with inclusive programs as a priority area; description of preschool LRE guidance on individualized education program (IEP) development and promoting preschool inclusion in school district prekindergarten (PreK) programs; NYSED collaboration with the New York State Birth – Five Renewal Grant and the Early Childhood Advisory Council; targeted efforts of the New York City Department of Education to expand inclusive preschool options; and the OSE Educational Partnership targeted professional development resources to improve preschool LRE outcomes in New York State.

Potential New Improvement Strategies to Improve Indicator 6 Outcomes: the OSE presented nine potential new improvement activities for stakeholder consideration. This includes amending law to expand school district program approval, a preschool inclusion self-assessment, a targeted preschool LRE monitoring activity, flexibility in the regional need application process, moratorium on special class expansions, additional guidance on blending and braiding early childhood funding, expanding the preschool continuum, and creating a parent resource on their preschool child’s right to a free appropriate public education 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 increase Indicator 6 outcomes. When asked to rate effectiveness on a scale of 1-5, the existing improvement activities rated “3” most frequently for moderate effectiveness except that early childhood cross-system collaboration (Birth-Five Renewal Grant) and the OSE Partnership received a rating of “5” for most effective.

Both online survey participants and virtual meeting participants were asked whether they support the OSE potential new improvement activities for preschool LRE and to rank them in order of importance. Stakeholders supported all but one potential new improvement activity with the greatest support from stakeholders for:

1. Amending regulation to expand the preschool continuum for more flexible delivery models;
2. Streamlining regional need for Special Education Itinerant Services and Special Class in an Integrated Setting programs; and
3. Supplementing existing guidance for blending and braiding district PreK and county preschool special education funding.

Stakeholders did not support issuing a moratorium on preschool special class program expansions.

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

- Additional funding is needed for inclusive preschool programs.
- Meet with districts to determine root causes for regional/local variations in preschool LRE performance.
- Offer additional options for teacher certification to expand the pool of qualified individuals.
- Expand training for educators in regular early childhood settings on a variety of student learning needs.
- Enhance the training provided to Committees on Preschool Special Education on LRE decision-making.

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 preschool inclusion and meet performance objectives for Indicator 6 in the 2020-2025 SPP/APR.

Responses on Indicator 6 Targets:

Target Setting Inclusive Targets: NYSED proposed to continue Indicator 6 targets inclusive of children ages 3, 4, and 5 rather than establishing individual targets for each age due to the small size of the age 5 student cohort. Most stakeholders (69.33% of received responses) agreed with this recommendation. **The New York State 2020-2025 SPP/APR will reflect inclusive targets for Indicator 6.**

Indicator 6A Target Setting: NYSED proposed the following targets for Indicator 6A:

Baseline FFY 2020	FFY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
39.50%	Target >=	39.50%	41.50%	43.50%	45.50%	48.00%	50.00%

Half of received responses (50%) felt the proposed Indicator 6A targets were too high with the other half (50%) responding that the targets were either too low or just right. Given the divided feedback received and the absence of a majority agreement among the options, NYSED will not revise the SPP 2025 Indicator 6A target of 50% but will instead incorporate stakeholder feedback by changing the phase-in to this target by amending the 2020-2023 proposed targets given concerns that improvement may continue to be impacted by COVID-19.

NYSED proposed Indicator 6A targets are revised with the following reflecting the final targets:

Baseline FFY 2020	FFY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
39.50%	Target >=	39.50%	39.50%	40.00%	45.00%	48.00%	50.00%

Indicator 6B Target Setting: NYSED proposed the following targets for Indicator 6B:

Baseline FFY 2020	FFY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
29.80%	Target <=	29.80%	28.00%	24.00%	23.00%	22.00%	20.00%

Half of received responses (50%) felt the proposed Indicator 6B targets were too high with the other half (50%) responding that the targets were either too low or just right. Given the divided feedback received and the absence of a majority agreement among the options, NYSED will not revise the SPP 2025 Indicator 6B target of 20% but will instead incorporate stakeholder feedback by changing the phase-in to this target by amending the 2020-2023 proposed targets given concerns that improvement may continue to be impacted by COVID-19.

NYSED proposed Indicator 6B targets are revised with the following reflecting the final targets:

Baseline FFY 2020	FFY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
29.80%	Target <=	29.80%	29.80%	29.00%	25.00%	22.00%	20.00%

Indicator 6C Target Setting: NYSED proposed the following targets for Indicator 6C:

Baseline FFY 2020	FFY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
11.30%	Target <=	11.30%	11.00%	10.50%	10.00%	9.50%	9.00%

A majority of stakeholders (54.41% of received responses) agreed that the Indicator 6C proposed recommended targets were “just right.” **The New York State 2020-2025 SPP/APR will reflect the proposed Indicator 6C targets as the final targets.**