October 6, 2015

TO THE ADMINISTRATOR ADDRESSED:

SUBJECT: Important Changes to Special Education Monitoring for the 2015-2016 School Year

The purpose of this correspondence is to notify districts and charter schools of important changes to special education monitoring for the 2015-2016 school year.

Senate Bill 1, General Appropriations Act, Rider 70 83rd Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, required the Texas Education Agency (TEA or agency) to ensure all accountability, monitoring, and compliance systems related to special education are non-duplicative and unified and focus on positive results for students in order to ease the administrative and fiscal burden on districts. The agency was required to submit a report to the 84th Texas Legislature regarding the agency’s efforts in implementing the provisions of the rider, which includes recommendations from stakeholders concerning this effort.

One recommendation from stakeholders was to combine the three separate special education systems—(1) the State Performance Plan (SPP) that includes the assignment of annual determination statuses to districts; (2) the Performance-Based Monitoring Analysis System (PBMAS); and (3) the residential facilities (RF) monitoring system—into a single, integrated, non-duplicative monitoring system. Another recommendation addressed the continuation and improvement of the monitoring of districts that serve students with disabilities who reside in RFs. These recommendations will be implemented by the agency in the 2015-2016 school year.

INTEGRATED INTERVENTION STAGE/DETERMINATION STATUS

TEA is integrating federally-required district determinations into the overall Performance-Based Monitoring (PBM) system. The four federal indicators that determine a district’s special education determination status (2015 SPP compliance indicators 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13; data integrity; uncorrected noncompliance; and audit findings) have been assigned performance levels and are being evaluated along with the 2015 PBMAS indicators to determine a district’s integrated stage of intervention/determination status for special education. For the 2015-2016 school year, districts will receive one of the following special education intervention stages/determination statuses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Stage</th>
<th>Determination Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Staged or Stage 1</td>
<td>Meets Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Needs Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Needs Intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Needs Substantial Intervention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REPORTING CHANGE TO THE TEXAS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE REPORT (TAPR)

As required by Texas Education Code (TEC) §39.306(a)(3), each district’s current special education compliance status with the agency is to be reported in an annual performance report (currently implemented as the TAPR). Beginning with the 2015-2016 school year, districts’ special education integrated intervention stage/determination status will be reported in the TAPR. The 2014-15 TAPR that will be released in November 2015 will provide the 2015-16 intervention stage/determination status for each district on the cover page of the report.

MONITORING OF DISTRICTS THAT SERVE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO RESIDE IN RFs

Districts that serve students with disabilities who reside in RFs will no longer be assigned a separate intervention stage. Serving students with disabilities who reside in RFs is a function of a district’s overall special education program. Therefore, a district’s integrated intervention stage/determination status will include intervention activities specific to RF monitoring, as applicable.

RF TRACKER POLICY

Districts will continue to be responsible for entering data into the RF Tracker to identify special education students residing in RFs and the facilities where these students live. TEA staff is currently working to determine if data elements can be added to the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) to be able to identify these students and facilities throughout the state. However, until it is determined whether this can be accomplished, districts continue to have the ongoing obligation to enter data into the RF Tracker.

RF Tracker is now open for districts to begin entering 2015-2016 data. Districts that are required to complete the data collection can request access to the RF Tracker application through the Texas Education Agency Secure Environment (TEASE) by completing an on-line request form. Instructions for establishing access are available on the TEA website. District users who work within a shared services arrangement (SSA) and need access to the application on behalf of more than one district must submit a paper application in addition to completing the on-line request form. The SSA application can be downloaded from the TEA website link referenced above. Once access has been established, the RF Tracker application can be accessed at the following link: https://sequin.tea.state.tx.us/apps/logon.asp.

Districts that entered data into the RF Tracker data collection system during the 2014-2015 program year will see their data rolled forward into the 2015-2016 application. The purpose of this rollover is to decrease data entry obligations for districts. However, it is important that districts review all of the data that has been rolled forward into the 2015-2016 program year and revise it as necessary to reflect accurate and current information.

For districts with RFs within their boundaries or jurisdiction, a due date of November 20, 2015, has been established for updating the RF Tracker data to reflect the current status of each RF student and residential facility. After November 20, 2015, the RF Tracker system will remain open for data entry, and districts will be responsible for maintaining current and accurate records in the system.

We appreciate your ongoing dedication to continuous improvement for your district’s special education program and ensuring students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public
education. Should you have questions about this correspondence, please contact Judy Struve in the Division of Program Monitoring and Interventions at (512) 463-5226 or by email at Judy.Struve@tea.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

Michael Greenwalt, Ed.D.
Director, Program Monitoring and Interventions

MG:js:kl

cc: ESC Executive Directors
    ESC Special Education Contacts
    Special Education Directors