



 Office of the  
 State Superintendent of Education

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February 9, 2012

Dear Local Education Agency Leaders,

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME), the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB), would like to share with you an exciting new educational initiative in the District of Columbia.

In January 2012, OSSE contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct a study of special education program quality in District of Columbia public schools and non-public schools that serve D.C. students. The goal of this study is to identify best practices for serving students with disabilities and to identify replicable models for special education service delivery that can be brought to scale in the District. AIR will also assess challenges to special education service delivery in the District and provide recommendations for system and school-level reform to support improved service delivery for students with disabilities. By identifying these strategies and approaches, it is our hope that this work will create a common understanding of program quality among District stakeholders and a road-map for expanding high quality special education options for students. It is important to note that OSSE is undertaking this work separate and apart from its compliance and monitoring activities.

To that end, in the coming months we anticipate AIR seeking input from an array of stakeholders (including, but not limited to local education agencies, related service providers, parents and students) in order to formulate quality performance indicators and a self-assessment tool. The indicators will be developed using qualitative and quantitative methods and will be piloted in a representative sample of schools including the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), public charter schools and non-public schools. The self-assessment tool, once finalized, will be available for local education agencies to use as a mechanism to identify challenges and successes in their education service delivery systems. OSSE will also use the quality indicators to help inform the community of promising practices and programs.

In order to make this project a success, your input will be vital. The document attached provides more information on the study and its impact. We welcome your participation in this historic undertaking and hope that you will consider participating in the study.

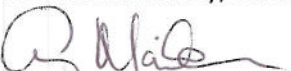
Sincerely,



De'Shawn Wright, Deputy Mayor for Education



Hosanna Mahaley, State Superintendent of Education



Amy Maisterra, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education



Scott Pearson, Public Charter School Board Director



Office of the



State Superintendent of Education

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***OSSE AIR Special Education Quality Review Project:***

***Ensuring Innovation in Special Education***

***Stakeholder Fact Sheet***

*Project Overview*

- The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) has recently entered a partnership with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to review special education program quality in the District of Columbia and identify innovative practices that support the success of students with disabilities.
- The quality review project will develop a set of program quality indicators in conjunction with special education stakeholders (including, but not limited to, parents, students, school leaders and staff, related service providers, and staff from OSSE, DCPS, and the Public Charter School Board (PCSB)).
- These indicators will be developed using qualitative and quantitative methods and will be applied across a stratified representative sample of all DC schools.
- These program indicators will form the basis of an assessment tool that will support ongoing improvement to special education services in DC at the classroom, school and District levels.
- The goal of this approach is to identify successful strategies and approaches that are used in high performing schools which can then inform schools that are not meeting performance goals for students with disabilities.
- In addition, by identifying effective strategies and approaches, OSSE expects this work to inform best practices in all educational settings.



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Key Project Activities and Milestones:

- Phase I: Literature review of effective practices (local, national, and international)  
(February) Stakeholder focus groups across the District
- Phase II: Identification of draft quality performance indicators  
(March) Field testing of quality performance indicators in sample schools
- Phase III: Publication of Quality Review Report, summarizing barriers and best  
(May-July) practices  
Refinement of quality indicators and development of online web-based assessment tool for LEAs
- Phase IV: Training for LEA staff on web-based tool  
(August-September) Pilot of web-based tool with LEAs
- Phase V: Finalization of tool  
(September-December) Utilization of quality indicators to inform stakeholder planning, technical assistance

Stakeholder Focus Group Schedule:<sup>1</sup>

Focus Groups	Date	Time	Location
Parents and Caregivers	2/13/2012	7:00-8:00pm	Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc. 1012 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE
Educators (i.e. general/special education teachers, coordinators, directors) (all LEAs)	2/14/2012	3:00-4:30pm	OSSE- 5 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 5014
School Principals/Heads of School	2/15/2012	5:00-7:00pm	OSSE- 9 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 9014
Parents and Caregivers/ State Advisory Panel	2/16/2012	5:30-7:30pm	OSSE- 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, Grand Hall
DCPS Educators (i.e. general/sped teachers, coordinators, directors)	2/21/2012	10:00-11:00am	Webinar
Charter Educators (i.e. general/sped teachers, coordinators, directors)	2/21/2012	11:30-12:30pm	Webinar
Nonpublic Educators/District of Columbia Association for Special Education (DCASE)	2/21/2012	3:00-4:30pm	OSSE- 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, Grand Hall

<sup>1</sup> Please note that stakeholder groups will be conducted solely by AIR project staff and input will be anonymous. Groups will be limited to 10 participants to ensure rich conversation. Individuals will be registered on a first come, first serve basis. To register, please contact Desiree Brown, Special Assistant, at [desiree.brown@dc.gov](mailto:desiree.brown@dc.gov) or 202-741-0271.