

Superintendent Emily Parks
220 Nahatan Street
Westwood, MA 02090

Dear Superintendent Emily Parks:

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA DESE) and local education agencies (LEAs) across the Commonwealth have made it their priority to increase educational access and equity for our most marginalized students, especially students with disabilities. This priority necessitates that we identify inequities in special education and respond to them. As part of this work, MA DESE implements multiple initiatives.

The purpose of this email is to notify your LEA of its status across these initiatives and indicators for the 2022-2023 school year. It is recommended all district staff carefully read all information in this email as if flagged or identified there will be required actions of the LEA.

Information about your LEA's status for each initiative and indicator are included in the table below.

Westwood's Status for Initiatives and Indicators

<u>Initiatives and Indicators</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Area of Identification/Flag</u>
Indicator 4A	Not Identified	
Indicator 4B	Not Identified	
Indicator 9	Not Flagged	
Indicator 10	Not Flagged	
Significant Disproportionality	Not Identified or At-Risk	

More information on Significant Disproportionality and other equity in special education initiatives and indicators is available here:

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/indicators-4-9-10.docx>.

MA DESE is working to create a system of technical assistance, professional development, and other supports that is customized for each LEA. This will include district level supports, professional learning communities (PLCs), and online trainings.

For LEAs identified or at-risk of significant disproportionality in special education and LEAs flagged or identified for indicators 4, 9 and 10, you will receive an email with more information about requirements, upcoming technical assistance opportunities and PLC groups.

More Information on Indicators and Initiatives

Significant Disproportionality in Special Education: IDEA requires states to measure whether students from certain racial and ethnic groups are disproportionately receiving special education services in specific disability categories, whether they are disproportionately placed in certain settings, and whether they are disproportionately receiving certain kinds of disciplinary removals. IDEA requires different calculations for this measurement than it requires for Indicators 9, 10, 4A, and 4B.

LEAs identified with significant disproportionality are required to complete the following:

1. Review and, if appropriate, revise policies, practices, and procedures (PPPs)
2. Publicly report revisions of PPPs
3. Reserve 15% of IDEA funds for comprehensive coordinated early intervening services (CCEIS) to address factors contributing to the significant disproportionality. Funds must be used for students ages 3 through grade 12 and for students with or without disabilities.
4. Identify and address factors that may be contributing to significant disproportionality
5. **Submit action plans to DESE for approval in spring 2023.** More information on these action plans will be included in follow-up email.

Though at-risk LEAs are not required to take specific action right now, they may wish to assess their policies, practices, and procedures for reasons that may have contributed to the LEA's high risk ratios or take additional steps to examine the data that suggest disproportionality.

Any LEA at-risk for future identification with or identified with significant disproportionality is invited to participate in the MA DESE provided technical assistance and professional development.

Data for Significant Disproportionality in Special Education is made available to all LEAs, no matter their status for this initiative, in an Edwin report: SP301 Significant Disproportionality in Special Education. This report can be found in Edwin Analytics in the Security Portal: <https://gateway.edu.state.ma.us/>.

More information on Significant Disproportionality is available here:

- [What is Significant Disproportionality Quick Reference Guide](#)
- [Significant Disproportionality Fiscal Implications Reference Guide](#)
- [MA DESE Significant Disproportionality Website](#)

Indicators 4A and 4B are required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and, through data analysis, measure whether students with IEPs, overall and from certain racial and ethnic groups, are suspended or expelled in LEAs more than students with IEPs statewide. Through this data analysis LEAs are identified for indicators 4A and 4B.

All LEAs identified by way of this data analysis are required to identify and address factors that may be contributing to disproportionality. LEAs found to have policies, practices, and procedures (PPPs) that lead to this discrepancy are required to write a corrective action plan which must be completed by the next reporting year.

Any LEA identified under indicators 4A and 4B are invited to participate in MA DESE provided technical assistance and professional development

More information on Indicator 4 is available here:

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/indicators-4-9-10.docx>.

Indicators 9 and 10 are required by IDEA and, through data analysis, measure whether students from certain racial and ethnic groups are disproportionately receiving special education services in LEAs, both in general and in specific disability categories, because they were inappropriately determined eligible for special education services. Through this data analysis LEAs are flagged for indicators 9 and 10.

All LEAs flagged by way of this data analysis are required to send PPPs to MA DESE. IDEA requires MA DESE to determine whether the disproportionate representation is due to inappropriate identification of students for special education services by reviewing the LEA's PPPs regarding disability determination and eligibility determination. If it is determined that PPPs are inappropriate and are contributing to the disproportionate representation, corrective action procedures are required.

Any LEA flagged under indicators 9 or 10 are invited to participate in MA DESE provided technical assistance and professional development.

More information on Indicators 9 and 10 is available here:

<https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/discipline/indicators-4-9-10.docx>.

Please contact Brian Coonley of the MA DESE's Special Education Planning & Policy Office at 781-338-3374 or brian.coonley@mass.gov with questions. He will be your primary point of contact on this matter.

Thank you, in advance, for your shared attention to this important work. We look forward to our continued partnership.

Best Regards,

Russell D. Johnston, PhD
Senior Associate Commissioner

CC: Abigail C Hanscom, Special Education Director
Lemma Jn-baptiste, District Business Leader
Allison F Borchers, Curriculum Director
Brian Coonley, Special Education Equity and Inclusion Specialist
Jamie Camacho, Director, Office of Special Education Planning and Policy