

**OFFICE OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER**  
**Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items**  
**January 15-16, 2015**

**OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

07. Report of the Mississippi Special Education Task Force

The Special Education Task Force was convened in July 2014 for the purpose of providing the State Superintendent and the Mississippi Department of Education with recommendations designed to improve educational opportunities for students with disabilities. The Task Force created a summary report that identifies recommendations in three priority areas.

- Accessing the general education curriculum
- Increasing graduation rates and decreasing dropout rates
- Improving post-secondary enrollment and workforce readiness

No Action: Discussion Only

Back-up material attached



# **Special Education Task Force Summary Report**

**Office of Special Education**

**December 2014**

---



## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	3
Special Education Task Force Members.....	6
Priority A: Access to the General Education Curriculum in the General Education Environment .....	8
Strategy 1: Increase awareness of “Inclusion” and “Access” by providing a common definition.....	9
Strategy 2: Increase the supports provided to students with disabilities in the general education setting.....	11
Strategy 3: Increase supports to all students through a multi-tiered support system (MTSS).....	12
Strategy 4: Increase transparency of special education accountability.....	13
Strategy 5: Increase the capacity of all educators and administrators.....	14
Priority B: Increase the High School Graduation Rate and Decrease the Drop-out Rate.....	17
Strategy 1: Increase awareness of requirements for graduation, graduation options, and how to raise test scores .....	18
Strategy 2: Increase awareness of outcomes for students with disabilities to inform IEP team decisions.....	19
Strategy 3: Increase student access to kindergarten and high quality pre-kindergarten programs.....	20
Priority C: Improve the Post-Secondary Enrollment Rate.....	21
Strategy 1: Improve the Mississippi Occupational Diploma (MOD).....	22
Strategy 2: Increase the number of transition specialists available to provide services to students with disabilities.....	23
Strategy 3 : Increase the awareness for students with disabilities to develop post-secondary goals.....	24
Strategy 4 Improve communication to IHLs regarding State initiatives, trainings, and webinars .....	25



## Executive Summary

### **Purpose**

The State Superintendent formed the Special Education Task Force as a diverse group of stakeholders with the purpose of engaging them in collaborative dialogue for the purpose of improving Mississippi’s educational system and to offer quality learning and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. The State Superintendent developed the following goals for the Special Education Task Force:

- Act as a forum to strengthen coordination across the various stakeholder groups on the task force;
- Provide a forum to inform the Mississippi Department of Education with information and concerns regarding special education issues;
- Create a professional learning community in which we can share what is working and identify and replicate “best practice” in special education programs;
- Provide the State Superintendent and the Mississippi Department of Education team recommendations to improve quality education opportunities for students with disabilities; and
- To identify areas that may require policy or legislative action.

The Special Education Task Force consists of 44 members and is comprised of legislators, district administrators, principals, parents, special education teachers, general education teachers, parent advocate groups, nonpublic agencies and post-secondary representatives. The Task Force conducted its first meeting on July 1, 2014. A complete list of the Task Force members is included in this report.

### **Activities**

Prior to the initial meeting, the members of the Task Force were invited to complete an online survey to assist the MDE with prioritizing issues and determining which issues are most likely to improve results for students with disabilities. On July 1, 2014, the stakeholder survey rankings were examined in order to explore the priority issues in more depth. In addition, the Task Force examined the State’s disaggregated data for students with disabilities and focused attention on the priorities that were identified as likely to improve results. Each month the Task Force conducted meetings and webinars as they developed “big insights” for each of the three priority areas. The “big insights” were overarching ideas for improvement of outcomes for students with disabilities based on the disaggregated data. The Task

Force developed a problem statement for each priority area, as well as, strategies and action steps to improve results for students. An overview of the recommendations are below:

**Priority A. Access the general education curriculum in the general education environment**

*Problem Statement: While many students with disabilities have physical access to general education classrooms, the achievement gap suggests they are not accessing the general education curriculum at an acceptable level.*

**Strategy 1:** Increase awareness of “Inclusion” and “Access” by providing a common definition

**Strategy 2:** Increase the supports provided to students with disabilities in the general education setting

**Strategy 3:** Increase supports to all students through a multi-tiered support system (MTSS)

**Strategy 4:** Increase transparency of special education accountability

**Strategy 5:** Increase the capacity of all educators and administrators

**Priority B. Increase graduation rates and decrease dropout rates**

*Problem Statement: When comparing the graduation data of students with disabilities to nondisabled peers, there is a discrepancy between students with disabilities that graduate with a standard high school diploma and nondisabled peers.*

**Strategy 1:** Increase awareness of requirements for graduation, graduation options, and how to raise test scores

**Strategy 2:** Increase awareness of outcomes for students with disabilities to inform IEP team decisions

**Strategy 3:** Increase student access to kindergarten and high quality pre-kindergarten programs

**Priority C. Improve post-secondary enrollment and workforce readiness skills**

*Problem Statement: Based on post-secondary data, students with disabilities are not exiting school with the skills necessary to be college and career ready.*

**Strategy 1:** Improve the Mississippi Occupational Diploma (MOD)

**Strategy 2:** Increase the number of transition specialists available to provide services to students with disabilities

**Strategy 3:** Increase the awareness for students with disabilities to develop post-secondary goals

**Strategy 4:** Improve communication to IHLs regarding State initiatives, trainings, and webinars

Participants from the Task Force volunteered to form a Core Group (13 members) to serve as a leadership group. The Core Group prioritized the strategies and action steps that were developed by the Task Force. In addition, participants from the Task Force volunteered to form

subcommittees. The subcommittees conducted the research and gathered background information needed to provide evidence-based recommendations provided to the State Superintendent on December 16, 2014.

### **Recommendations**

This document provides the complete list of recommendations developed by the Task Force for each priority area. Each priority area provides a summary of the data reviewed, the “big insights”, and strategies used to create the action steps. In addition, the Task Force provided measures of implementation (outputs) and impact (effect of the goal on students with disabilities) for each action step. While many of the recommendations could be implemented immediately, some recommendations will require ongoing efforts, such as the formation of committees to change current policy and propose legislative action. For example, the Task Force provided recommendations that committees are formed to revise State Board Policy 4300 to provide a comprehensive multi-tiered support system (MTSS) to all students and revise the current exit option for students with disabilities, the Mississippi Occupational Diploma (MOD). The Task Force will continue to work in both large group and subcommittees to assist the Mississippi Department of Education in implementation of the recommendations contained within this report.



### **Special Education Task Force Members**

- Ms. Shannon Anderson, Special Education Director, Petal School District
- Ms. LaTrina Baker-Smith, Special Education Director, Oakley Training School
- Mr. Jeff Blackmon, Principal, Sunflower Consolidated School District
- Ms. Nicole Boyd, Parent
- Mr. Roger Bullock, Independent Living Specialist, Living Independence for Everyone, Inc.
- Ms. Wendy Rogers, Special Education Director, Stone County School District
- Ms. Octavia Carson, Individual with a Disability
- Ms. Nan Christian, Director of Education, Hudspeth Regional Center
- Senator Nancy Collins, Legislator, Senate
- Ms. Yvonne Cox, Special Education Director, West Point School District
- Representative Carolyn Crawford, Legislator, House of Representatives
- Ms. Nancy Davis, Language Disorders Director, Magnolia Speech School
- Ms. Pam Dollar, Executive Director, Mississippi Parent Training and Information Center
- Ms. Janice Dukes, Coordinator, Pearl School District
- Dr. Hollie Filce, Director, REACH MS, University of Southern Mississippi
- Mr. Donny Frazier, Transition Coordinator, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services
- Ms. Deborah Giles, Parent
- Ms. Tonya Green, Special Education Director, Jackson Public School District
- Dr. Joan Haynes, Director of Academic Affairs, Community College Board
- Ms. Laurie Heiden, Director of Education, Mississippi Children’s Home Services
- Ms. Joy Hogge, Executive Director, Mississippi Families as Allies for Children’s Mental Health
- Dr. Lisa Karmarychra, Executive Director, Mississippi Association of School Administrators
- Ms. Genna McAlpin, Special Education Director, Tupelo School District
- Mr. Johnny McGinn, Director, Mississippi Society for Disabilities
- Ms. Debbie Meibaum, Program Associate, Southwest Education Development Laboratory (SEDL)
- Dr. Cindy Melton, Chair, Department of Teacher Education, Mississippi College

- Dr. Mario Miller, Special Education Director, Holmes County School District
- Representative John Moore, Education Chair, House of Representative
- Dr. Timothy Morse, Director, University of Southern Mississippi Autism Demonstration School
- Mr. Mike Mulvihill, Director, Office of Career and Technical Education, Mississippi Department of Education
- Ms. Antrice Norwood, General Education Teacher, Pearl Public School District
- Ms. Jeannie Pigg, Special Education Director, Simpson County School District
- Dr. Bradley Porche, Principal, Mississippi School for the Deaf
- Ms. Tyler Porche, Professional Development Coordinator, Mississippi Department of Education
- Ms. Julie Propst, Education Liaison, Mississippi Department of Human Services
- Dr. Flavol Rester, Special Education Director, Lawrence County School District
- Ms. Mandy Rogers, Parent, Parents United Together
- Dr. Rick Saucier, Career Technical Director, Hancock County Career Technical Center
- Dr. Laurie Smith, Education Policy Advisor, Governor's Office
- Dr. Denise Soares, Assistant Professor, University of Mississippi
- Ms. Cindy Taylor, Special Education Director, Sunflower County Consolidated School District
- Ms. Hollia Thompson, Education Specialist, Arc of Mississippi
- Ms. Stacey Todd, Professional Development Coordinator, Mississippi Department of Education
- Senator Gray Tollison, Education Chair, Senate
- Ms. Jacqueline Washington, Parent



## Priority A: Access to the General Education Curriculum in the General Education Environment

### Priority A: Access to the General Education Curriculum in the General Education Environment

#### **Problem Statement**

The Special Education Task Force reviewed the State’s data for IEP Students ages 6-21 by Least Restrictive Environment and Proficiency rates on MCT2. The data revealed a large number of students with disabilities in MS are in the general education setting 80% or more of the day; however, the placement in the general education setting is not translating into outcomes in Reading and Math. Based on the review of the data, the Special Education Task Force developed the following *problem statement*:

***“While many students with disabilities have physical access to general education classrooms, the achievement gap suggests they are not accessing the general education curriculum at an acceptable level.”***

#### **Big Insights**

The Task Force then discussed and prioritized “Big Insights” for Priority A, and developed recommendations for each area. The “Big Insights” for Priority A are:

- Research Current Status of Inclusion Policies and Practices As Well As Recommended Practices
- Expansion of Inclusion/Scaling up Inclusion in General Education through RtI Approach
- Improve Professional Development: Pre-service and In-service

#### **Action Plan**

Once recommendations were developed for the “Big Insights” for Priority A, subcommittees were formed to develop an action plan. The following strategies were created to guide the action steps:

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Strategy 1 | Increase awareness of “Inclusion” and “Access” by providing a common definition, as well as steps for implementation across all grade levels.  |
| Strategy 2 | Increase the supports provided to students with disabilities in the general education setting.   |
| Strategy 3 | Increase supports to all students through a multi-tiered support system (MTSS), which would include behavior.  |
| Strategy 4 | Increase transparency of special education accountability through reporting structures for compliance and funding.   |
| Strategy 5 | Increase the capacity of all educators and administrators through revisions to the pre-service preparation programs (traditional and alternate route) and ongoing professional development for in-service educators. |

**Priority Area A: Access to the General Education Curriculum in the General Education Environment**

**Strategy 1: Increase awareness of “Inclusion” and “Access” by providing a definition, as well as steps for implementation.**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<p><b>Develop a common definition of “Inclusion” and “Access”, as well as steps for implementation across all grade levels.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A common definition of “Inclusion” and “Access” should be developed and provided to districts and parents via MDE website, social media, and in MDE supported trainings.</li> <li>• An online resource should be developed similar to the Florida Inclusion Network at <a href="http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/whats-new/">http://www.floridainclusionnetwork.com/whats-new/</a> on the MDE website to include strategies, and webinars parents, para-professionals, general education teachers, special education teachers, and school and district administrators.</li> <li>• A self-assessment similar to the <i>Best Practice for Inclusive Education</i> should be developed that will be completed with the district’s project application and utilized in monitoring visits. This self-assessment tool and process is used to identify and prioritize areas of need for inclusive practices that enable all students with disabilities to achieve their highest potential. The purpose of the self-assessment is to lead the development of district improvement goals that increase effective inclusive practices in all schools.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase access to the general education curriculum which will lessen or close the achievement gap and increase graduation rates for students with disabilities.</p>

Action Steps	Measures of Implementation (Outputs)	Impact
<p><b>Revise the Exemplary Inclusion Award to be more reflective of high quality inclusive practices.</b> The Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) has identified weaknesses in the system which are required legislatively. The SEAP must be empowered to revise this process based on evidence-based quality indicators.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The requirements of the Exemplary Inclusion Award should be revised to reflect evidence-based activities.</li> <li>• Modifications to the Exemplary Inclusion Award should be presented to the legislature for approval.</li> <li>• MDE should provide awareness of the benefits of access to general education for all students by disseminating empirical data supporting education in inclusive settings through the use of MDE website, social medial, content at conferences, and public service announcements (PSAs) on television and radio.</li> <li>• Content relating to the need and value of access to the general education curriculum and setting by students with disabilities should be delivered to all districts and parents.</li> </ul>	<p>Attain a shared value system for quality inclusive practices among administrators, general educators, special educators, and parents.</p>

**Priority Area A: Access to the General Education Curriculum in the General Education Environment**

**Strategy 2: Increase the supports provided to students with disabilities in the general education setting.**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<p><b>Revise State Board Policy 7210 to lower the number of students with disabilities allocated to special education teachers served in general education settings from 18 to 10.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower student to teacher ratio for students with disabilities in the inclusion setting to increase the amount of support provided to general education teachers and students with disabilities to access the general education curriculum.</li> <li>• Increase the amount of time a special education teacher is in the general education classroom co-teaching. Currently an inclusion teacher provides services to 18 students across multiple grade levels and teachers.</li> <li>• The MAEP calculation for teacher units should be revised to reflect the lower teacher-student ratio.</li> <li>• The MDE should review the MAEP “Lump Sum” teacher unit funding stream to prevent the money from being expended before all teacher units are used.</li> </ul>	<p>Special education teachers provide co-teaching services to students with disabilities in the general education classroom to increase access to the general education curriculum.</p>

**Priority Area A: Access to the General Education Curriculum in the General Education Environment**

**Strategy 3: Increase supports to all students through a multi-tiered support system (MTSS), which would include behavior.**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<p><b>Develop a Task Force to revise the Response to Intervention (RtI) process to a multi-tiered support system (MTSS), which would include behavior, with various stakeholders (including representation from special education).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The MDE should revise State Board Policy 4300 to provide comprehensive supports, including instructional strategies (Universal Design for Learning) and behavioral interventions, to <b>ALL</b> students through MTSS.</li> <li>• Administrator and teacher training should be provided on MTSS to provide a coherent continuum of evidence based system-wide practices to support a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs, with frequent data-based monitoring for instructional decision-making to empower each student to achieve high standards.</li> <li>• An accountability structure should be developed and monitored to ensure fidelity for implementation of MTSS for all students.</li> </ul>	<p>Early identification of students that require interventions and behavior supports in a prevention-oriented system as early as possible each year.</p> <p>Implementation of evidence-based interventions for all student and tailored interventions based on each student’s needs.</p> <p>Use of progress monitoring data to determine when to make a change in instruction and behavior intervention.</p>

**Priority Area A: Access to the General Education Curriculum in the General Education Environment**

**Strategy 4: Increase transparency of special education accountability through reporting structures for compliance and funding.**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<b>Provide a hotline for school employees to report IDEA violations.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A hotline should be available for teachers to report possible IDEA violations to MDE to ensure students with disabilities are provided a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in accordance with IDEA.</li> <li>• The availability of the hotline should be advertised on MDE website and promoted state-wide as a “safe” method to report IDEA violations.</li> </ul>	Ensure students with disabilities are provided with the services as determined by the IEP Committee.
<b>Develop an online system on MDE’s website to access approved district project applications.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An online system should be developed on MDE website to access MDE-approved project applications.</li> <li>• Transparency of the use of IDEA and State funds through the use of online system.</li> </ul>	Provide transparency in the use of IDEA and State funds for students with disabilities.
<b>Redesign the project application to require districts to specify the training provided to parents.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability for the use of IDEA funds to provide training to parents.</li> <li>• Each year districts allocate funds for parent trainings on their project application. MDE should be able to compare the funds allocated through the approved project application to the expenditure report to ensure the districts provide parent training.</li> </ul>	Provide transparency in the use of IDEA and State funds.

**Priority Area A: Access to the General Education Curriculum in the General Education Environment**

**Strategy 5: Increase the capacity of all educators and administrators through revisions to the pre-service preparation programs.**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<p><b>Add disability-related requirements to administrator preparation programs (traditional and alternate route) for all administrators.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requirements for licensure should be revised to reflect additional disability-related content in administrator preparation programs. This content should include specific content and experiences related to the needs of students with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p>School administrators are effective leaders and advocates for students with disabilities by ensuring that there is a shared vision at the local level; appropriate structures and supports are provided for teachers, parents, and students; and resources are allotted appropriately.</p>
<p><b>Require those serving as special education administrators to hold current licensure in special education.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requirements for special education director positions should be revised to include licensure in a disability-related area.</li> </ul>	<p>Special education administrators that have specific content and experience in relating to the needs of students with disabilities.</p>
<p><b>Add disability-related requirements for renewal of educator and administrator licensure (% to be determined).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requirements for renewal of educator and administrative licensure, both CEU and SEMI, should be revised to require disability-related content.</li> </ul>	<p>Special educators and general educators are better prepared to plan and deliver high quality, evidence-based, universally designed lessons which meet the educational needs of students at-risk and students with disabilities.</p> <p>School administrators are effective leaders and advocates</p>

Action Steps	Measures of Implementation (Outputs)	Impact
		for students with disabilities, ensuring a shared vision at the local level; appropriate structures and supports are provided for teachers, parents, and students; and resources are allotted appropriately.
<p><b>Increase the disability-related content, including universal design for learning (UDL) for those preparing to be elementary and secondary educators (traditional and alternate route).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The requirements in the Process and Performance Review for licensure in elementary and secondary education should be increased with additional disability-related content, including universal design for learning. Currently only one 3 hour course is required for traditional route preparation and none are required for alternate route.</li> </ul>	<p>General educators are better prepared to plan and deliver high quality, evidence-based, universally designed lessons which meet the educational needs of students at-risk and students with disabilities.</p> <p>The achievement gap between students with and without disabilities is reduced or closed.</p>
<p><b>Add required practicum hours specifically dedicated to ensuring skills in UDL and quality inclusive practices for those preparing to be elementary and secondary educators (traditional and alternate route).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The requirements in the Process and Performance Review for licensure in elementary and secondary education should be revised to reflect practicum requirements focusing on UDL and inclusive practices.</li> </ul>	<p>Special educators and general educators are better prepared to plan and deliver high quality, evidence-based, universally designed lessons which meet the educational needs of students at-risk and students with disabilities.</p> <p>The achievement gap between students with and without disabilities will be reduced or closed.</p>
<p><b>Provide specific requirements relating</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The requirements in the Process and Performance Review for licensure in special education should be revised to reflect content</li> </ul>	<p>Special educators and general educators are better prepared to</p>



Action Steps	Measures of Implementation (Outputs)	Impact
<p><b>to academic instruction for special educators, particularly in reading and mathematics in the Process and Performance Standards. There are currently no articulated standards for special education preparation in the Process and Performance Review. This must apply to traditional and alternate routes.</b></p>	<p>related to reading and mathematics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand the requirements for alternate route programs to include disability specific content.</li> <li>Specific, documented content related to providing high quality instruction for students with disabilities should be included in all teacher preparation programs for general education teachers (particularly reading and mathematics). This content should be designed and delivered by faculty with expertise in special education in accordance with SACS guidelines.</li> <li>The License Guidelines should be revised to require a percentage of CEU credits specifically related to the needs of students with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p>plan and deliver high quality, evidence-based, universally designed lessons which meet the educational needs of students at-risk and students with disabilities.</p>
<p><b>Add reading and mathematics-specific requirements for CEUs to maintain educator licensure (at least 50%).</b></p>	<p>Requirements for maintaining licensure should be revised to reflect additional academic content.</p>	<p>Special educators and general educators are better prepared to plan and deliver high quality, evidence-based, universally designed lessons which meet the educational needs of students at-risk and students with disabilities.</p>

## Priority B: Increase the High School Graduation Rate and Decrease the Drop-Out Rate

### Priority B: Increase the High School Graduation Rate and Decrease the Drop-Out Rate

#### **Problem Statement**

The Special Education Task Force reviewed the State’s graduation data for IEP Students. Based on the graduation data from the 2005-2006 school year through the 2011-2012 school year data, students with disabilities graduate with a standard high school diploma at approximately 32% compared to nondisabled students at approximately 75.5%. Although there is a slight improvement in graduation rates for students with disabilities since 2009, the majority of students with disabilities exit high school with a certificate of completion, GED, or Mississippi Occupational Diploma (MOD). Based on the review of the data, the Special Education Task Force developed the following problem statement:

***“When comparing the graduation data of students with disabilities to nondisabled peers, there is a discrepancy between students with disabilities that graduate with a standard high-school diploma and nondisabled peers”***

#### **Big Insights**

The Task Force then prioritized “Big Insights” for Priority B, and developed recommendations for each area. The “Big Insights” for Priority B are:

- Graduation Expectations for All Students
- Intervene early
- Start preparing students for graduation in kindergarten and 1st grade
- Address instructional capacity (e.g. co-teaching) to reach the vision set forth by the State Superintendent

#### **Action Plan**

Once recommendations were developed for the “Big Insights” for Priority B, subcommittees were formed to develop an action plan. The following strategies were created to guide the action steps:

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Strategy 1 | Increase awareness of requirements for graduation, graduation options, and how to raise test scores. |
| Strategy 2 | Increase awareness of outcomes for students with disabilities to inform IEP team decisions.          |
| Strategy 3 | Increase student access to kindergarten and high quality pre-kindergarten programs.                  |

**Priority Area B: Increase the High School Graduation Rate and Decrease the Drop-out Rate**

**Strategy 1: Increase awareness of requirements for graduation, graduation options, and how to raise test scores.**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<p><b>Develop a public service announcement (PSA) to define requirements for graduation, graduation options, and how to raise test scores.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PSA should be developed defining requirements for graduation and graduation options.</li> <li>• Special education teachers across the State should be provided with accurate information regarding graduation requirements and options to provide to parents at IEP meetings.</li> <li>• Parents should be provided consistent information regarding graduation requirements to make informed decisions concerning graduation options.</li> </ul>	<p>Increase graduation rates for students with disabilities by informing parents of graduation requirements.</p> <p>By informing parents and IEP Committees of graduation requirements at a young age, the team is able to make decisions to plan for graduation.</p>

**Priority Area B: Increase the High School Graduation Rate and Decrease the Drop-out Rate**

**Strategy 2: Increase awareness of outcomes for students with disabilities to inform Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team Decisions**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<p><i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i></p>	<p><i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i></p>	<p><i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i></p>
<p><b>Develop a central page on the MDE website to provide all data, as well as disaggregated data concerning outcomes for students with disabilities.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disaggregated data should be located in one central location on MDE’s website to ensure user-friendly access for districts and parents to review achievement gaps in reading and math among different groups of students.</li> <li>• Transparency should be provided to district data to include outcomes for students with disabilities, including gaps in graduation rates and dropout rates.</li> </ul>	<p>Disaggregated data allows districts to determine patterns, trends and other important information regarding students with disabilities.</p> <p>District will utilize disaggregated data to develop professional development allocate funds appropriately.</p>

**Priority Area B: Increase the High School Graduation Rate and Decrease the Drop-out Rate**

**Strategy 3: Increase student access to kindergarten and high quality pre-kindergarten programs.**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<p><b>Provide high-quality pre-kindergarten and mandatory kindergarten.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legislation should be passed for mandatory kindergarten.</li> <li>• The number of high-quality pre-kindergarten programs for students with disabilities should be increased.</li> <li>• Funding should be provided to support an initiative that would hold special education pre-kindergarten programs to the same level of accountability as those programs in the pre-kindergarten collaboration.</li> </ul>	<p>Research confirms the impact of quality kindergarten and pre-kindergarten programs on later success in school.</p>

**Priority C: Improve the Post-Secondary Enrollment Rate and Work-Force Readiness Skills**

**Problem Statement**

The Special Education Task Force reviewed the State’s post-secondary outcomes data for IEP Students exiting during the 2011-2012 school year. Based on the data for the 2011-2012 school year 21% of students with disabilities graduate were “not engaged”. Based on the disaggregated data, the Special Education Task Force examined by disability categories the percentage of students that were “not engaged”. Based on the review of the data, the Special Education Task Force developed the following problem statement:

***“Based on post-secondary data, students with disabilities are not exiting school with the skills necessary to be college and career ready.”***

**Big Insights**

The Task Force then prioritized “Big Insights” for Priority C, and developed recommendations for each area. The “Big Insights” for Priority C are:

- Research improvements to the Mississippi Occupational Diploma (MOD)
- Expand the use of Transition Specialists
- Utilization of the iCAP for IEP development

**Action Plan**

Once recommendations were developed for the “Big Insights” for Priority C, subcommittees were formed to develop an action plan. The following strategies were created to guide the action steps:

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| Strategy 1 | Improve the Mississippi Occupational Diploma (MOD) by forming a Committee to redesign the exit option.                |
| Strategy 2 | Increase the number of transition specialists available to provide services to students with disabilities.            |
| Strategy 3 | Increase the awareness for students with disabilities to develop post-secondary goals.                                |
| Strategy 4 | Improve communication with IHLs regarding State initiatives, trainings, and resources for students with disabilities. |

**Priority Area C: Improve the Post-Secondary Enrollment Rate and Work-force Readiness Skills**

**Strategy 1: Improve the Mississippi Occupational Diploma (MOD) by forming a Committee to redesign the exit option.**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<p><b>Form a Committee to redesign the Mississippi Occupational Diploma (MOD).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MDE should provide a newly revised exit option with collaboration from a stakeholder group (including parents, district personnel, Career and Technical Education (CTE), and community college personnel).</li> <li>• Districts and parent should receive training regarding the exit option and requirements.</li> <li>• The number of students with disabilities that are able to obtain jobs or attend post-secondary training should increase.</li> </ul>	<p>Develop an exit option that prepares students with disabilities who are unable to graduate with a standard high school diploma to exit with the skills necessary to obtain a job and independent living.</p>

**Priority Area C: Improve the Post-Secondary Enrollment Rate and Work-force Readiness Skills**

**Strategy 2: Increase the number of transition specialists available to provide services to students with disabilities.**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<p><b>Establish a co-funded position for Transition Specialists in coordination with the MS Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS).</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A transition specialist should be provided to each district to provide job coaching, transition planning, and IEP development.</li> <li>• MDE should establish a co-funded position with MDRS to provide each district with a transition specialist.</li> </ul>	<p>Provide each district with a transition specialist to provide transition services to students with disabilities who are 14 and older.</p> <p>To increase the skills for students with disabilities to obtain post-secondary goals.</p>



**Priority Area C: Improve the Post-Secondary Enrollment Rate and Work-force Readiness Skills**

**Strategy 3: Increase the awareness for students with disabilities to develop post-secondary goals.**

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<p><b>Increase the awareness for students with disabilities to develop post-secondary goals.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training should be provided to districts on the implementation of the Individual Career and Academic Plan (iCAP).</li> <li>• Districts should be held accountable for the use of the iCAP in the planning for students’ academic and career goals.</li> <li>• Enhancement of the Statewide plan to address student attendance and parent involvement in development of post-secondary goals.</li> </ul>	<p>Students, parents, and IEP Committees will utilize the iCAP as a tool to assist students with disabilities in development of transition goals for post-secondary opportunities.</p> <p>Strategies will be implemented by districts to increase student attendance and parent involvement in the development of post-secondary goals.</p>

Priority Area C: Improve the Post-Secondary Enrollment Rate and Work-force Readiness Skills

Strategy 4: Improve communication to IHLs regarding State initiatives, trainings, and webinars.

<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Implementation (Outputs)</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<i>What steps must be taken to implement the strategy?</i>	<i>How will readers of the plan know the action step or strategy is fully realized or carried out?</i>	<i>What will be the effect of this goal on students with disabilities?</i>
<b>Develop regular communication with Institutes of Higher Learning (IHL) to communicate State initiatives, trainings, and webinars.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An MDE liaison should be assigned to inform IHL of State initiatives (new Individualized Education Program (IEP), Standards-Based IEPs).</li><li>• A listserv should be developed to provide IHLs with regular communication and training opportunities.</li><li>• Professional development (PD) modules should be available to IHLs on the MDE website that can be utilized by pre-service teachers.</li></ul>	When IHL personnel are aware of State initiatives (Standards-Based IEPs, new IEP form, etc.), they are better able to prepare pre-service teachers.