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Michael DiMaggio
Editor

This month's edition of *Gaining Ground* can help states and districts lend support to high poverty schools on multiple levels.

States are recognizing the importance of data-based decision making to improve instructional practice and the need to develop data systems upon which districts and schools can rely to make informed decisions. Oona Cheung and Jinhee Lee address how data improvement activities can improve the capacity of states to support high poverty schools. They discuss the collaborative efforts by CCSSO and offices of the U.S. Department of Education to assist states in evaluating their data systems in their piece, *Data Improvement Activities*. Their article describes CCSSO activities that have coordinated data at the federal level, led to standardized data terms and definitions, provided guidelines for inter-agency sharing of information, and implemented procedures to protect student privacy. It concludes with a description of current project activities to help states meet the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA).

Under the NCLBA, children must start school ready to learn. This poses a challenge for states, as they are responsible for every child's proficiency. Jana Martella's article, *Ready or Not*, identifies five dimensions of school readiness which contribute to a child's success in school. Since systems indicators for these dimensions vary among states, CCSSO and a cadre of states have undertaken the task to develop a comprehensive set of school readiness indicators. The indicators developed by the School Readiness Indicators Initiative can help states and districts ensure that children in high poverty schools arrive at school ready to learn.

GAINING GROUND

Achieving Excellence in High Poverty Schools

Division of State Services and Technical Assistance

NCLBA demands that all student groups meet annual yearly progress in achieving academic outcomes, including students with disabilities. Federal law also requires that students with disabilities disciplined for challenging behaviors retain access to educational services in the long-term. In *Separating Myth from Fact*, Elaine Bonner-Tompkins and Phillip Reynolds tackle the misconceptions often associated with disciplining students with disabilities. Their article describes key discipline provisions within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA). Citing IDEA, it provides a description of short and long-term disciplinary measures for serving special education eligible children. Acquiring an appropriate understanding of the law can help states and districts increase academic opportunities for students with disabilities in high poverty schools.

Finally, Gitanjali Pande presents evidence in *Disproportionate Representation* that indicates considerable state variation in special education eligibility rates among ethnically diverse groups of students. Focusing on patterns of learning disability and speech impairment classification, she cites statistical data demonstrating state levels of overrepresentation by ethnicity. Misrepresenting or misclassifying children in special education may impair a student's learning experience through stigmatization, diminished access to the general curriculum, inappropriate placement, and reduced self-perception. Since many high poverty schools contain diverse student populations, many of these students may not be receiving appropriate educational services to meet their needs. Her article raises awareness that states and districts need to properly assess all students, particularly students of color, in determining special education eligibility.

Data Improvement Activities at CCSSO

Oona Cheung, CCSSO Consultant & Jinhee Lee, Senior Project Associate
Administrative Records Development

Background

Improvement of data quality and comparability at the national level has been a focus of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education (USED). The Administrative Records Development (ARD) and Establishing Quality Education Data (EQED) Projects at CCSSO have served as a broker between the federal and state education agencies (SEAs) toward improving data quality. With federal funding, CCSSO has worked with SEAs to enhance the development, maintenance, and use of data systems. Council

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staff has collaborated with the USED to improve data quality and comparability at the national level and to reduce data burden on SEAs.

Strategies

The comprehensive approach to improving data systems at all governance levels can be described in two ways. The first component addresses the bits and pieces of a big puzzle. Because these pieces represent different issues facing data managers at the local, state, and federal levels, it becomes crucial to simultaneously address the “what,” “why,” and “when” of data collection, reporting, and usage. Although identifying the most important information used in policy-making decisions (e.g., indicators and data elements) is essential, information needs to be collected without placing too great a burden on the data reporting entities.

Second, one needs to begin from commonly defined data elements, the “building blocks” of a data system. Once data are collected at the local level, data reported to the state and national levels should be comparable from district to district, and from state to state.

Activities

Through its contracted activities with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Office of the Chief Information Officers (OCIO), both within the USED, CCSSO functions as a team leader to bring “best practices” to the states and to build consensus in data standardization activities.

The ARD project, funded by NCES, continues a tradition of data improvement activities as a collaborative effort among federal, state, and local education agencies. Focused around common issues facing data improvements, Council staff worked with NCES and members of the National Forum on Education Statistics (Forum). The Forum, mandated by the Congress in 1989, encompasses a cooperative system of federal, state, and local repre-

sentatives. ARD and its predecessor projects have worked closely with Forum members in shaping data improvement efforts. In the past, ARD staff has been involved in the following:

— **Standardization of data terms and definitions.** In the early 1990s, CCSSO staff worked with NCES and state representatives to revise the Staff and Student Data Handbooks. These handbooks were “adopted” by USED in the mid-1990s as the source of data definitions for the agency. Currently, CCSSO is developing the Education Systems Data Handbook, a new handbook to standardize the terms and definitions used to describe school systems. The handbooks consist of comprehensive lists of data terms and definitions collected at the school level. CCSSO has monitored new federal laws, such as NCLB, and integrated all data requirements and definitions into the data handbooks. Once every school system collects data using a common definition, states can compare all data reported and aggregated to state and federal levels. Also in development is a guidebook for building an education facility data system. This document, currently completing its peer review, comprises a list of policy questions and indicators that SEAs may use to evaluate the condition of their school facilities.

— **Data Confidentiality, Interagency Data Sharing, and Unique Student Identifiers.** In 1997, CCSSO developed a document entitled *Protecting the Privacy of Student Education Records: Guidelines for State and Local Education Agencies*. This document explained the federal Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and provided guidelines for implementing procedures in data systems to protect the privacy of education records in accordance with the law. A companion document was published in 1998 called the *Protecting the Privacy of Staff Education Records*.

Interagency data sharing, another issue closely related to data privacy, has gained currency because many state and local education agencies have begun sharing individual student records for coordination of services. As a result, the Council has developed a draft docu-

ment on this issue, based on case studies of several states. Although the document was not published, Forum members have been in contact with the USED Family Policy Compliance Office to clarify issues so that the publication can proceed.

Finally, the publication, *Protecting the Privacy of Student Education Records*, addresses the legal issue of using individual student identifiers. ARD project’s subcontractor, Evaluation Software Publishing, has published a paper which confronts the technical issue of assigning unique student identifiers. Forum members have shared this paper with SEA staff to address a major challenge facing student information system at the state level.

— **Data Coordination at the Federal Level.** In the early 1990s, ARD (at that time known as the Education Data Improvement Project or EDIP) produced a report, examining the federal data requirements of SEAs. The paper found numerous duplications of data collection by different offices within USED. Though the data collected every year was similar, it varied in its definition. CCSSO’s Education Information Advisory Committee raised the issue to the then-Secretary of Education which resulted in a strong commitment within USED to promote data coordination within the department, including relieving the SEAs of reporting the same data to multiple inquiries.

The OCIO now spearheads the effort, leading an Information Management Working Group consisting of senior officials from each program office that collects data. Under the new EQED contract, CCSSO staff supports this group by relating the concerns and issues facing the SEAs. Through the support of subcontractors, CCSSO assesses and certifies the quality of USED databases so that department officials will maintain certain levels of confidence on the quality and usefulness of their existing data.

— **Outreach Activities to Educators, Administrators, and Vendors.** OCIO also outreaches to other key players of education data systems including SEAs, local educational agencies (LEAs), school administrators, teachers, and technology vendors. These meetings connect SEA staff with other stakeholders, bringing awareness to one another’s data improvement activities. Vendors found these activities helpful in understanding the data needs of states and districts, while learning

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Disproportional Representation in Special Education: An Analysis of State Data

Gitanjali Pande,
Project Assistant, Special Education

This article examines state-level data on overrepresentation among ethnically diverse students with disabilities, specifically focusing on two particular classifications: learning disabilities and speech or language impairments.

When children are misidentified and misclassified, it poses major challenges to their educational experience. These challenges include being:

- Denied access to the general education curriculum;
- Inappropriately labeled as belonging to a particular disability category and being placed in separate programs and settings for increasing lengths of time;
- Placed in a more limited curriculum that may impact the student's access to post secondary education and employment opportunities.

Additional consequences of inappropriate classification include: being stigmatized or discriminated against; having a negative self-perception of one's abilities, and receiving services that do not meet a student's specific needs.

In general, overrepresentation (or disproportionate representation) occurs when the percent of racial/ethnic minority students in the special education program is *larger* than the percent of that group in the resident population. A recent study by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education reports that twenty-nine states have developed specific criteria for determining disproportionality, based on state and district data. Though states use different criterion, the most common criteria involve percentage point discrepancies. To apply this criterion, states calculate the percentage of each racial/ethnic group in the total student population, and the percentage of each racial/ethnic group in each disability category. The percentage point discrepancy represents the number of percentage points more or less than the expected percentage for each disability group. The *expected percentage* ex-

presses the percentage of the racial/ethnic group in the total student population.

Similarly, the findings discussed below are based on disaggregated state-level data on students eligible for IDEA, Part B in 2000-2001, which was cross-tabulated with U.S. Census data on the racial and ethnic composition of the age 6-21 population. This state-level data is located on the CCSSO website (see references at the end of this article).

Those accessing this data can compare and contrast the representation of minority groups in special education across states to garner a sense of which states face the greatest challenge of addressing overrepresentation among specific minority groups. It is important to keep in mind that special education classification lacks uniformity across states. For example, students identified as having mental retardation in one state may be classified as having a specific learning disability in another. Variability exists across district lines as well.

On the whole, state patterns of representation vary across racial and ethnic groups. In particular, overrepresentation tends to occur among the largest minority group in a state. For example, Native Americans tend to be overrepresented among students with disabilities in states like Alaska and Montana where they represent the largest minority populations. Overall, African Americans tend to have the highest and most consistent levels of overrepresentation in special education across states. State patterns of disproportionate representation by ethnic group follow:

White, Non-Hispanics/Anglos:

Among white, Non-Hispanics, no state had more than a 5.0 percent level of disproportionate representation, overall, in the all disabilities category. States with the lowest levels of over-

representation overall for whites ranged from 1.0 percent to 3.0 percent in Arkansas, Illinois, Maine, New Hampshire, and New Jersey. The highest overrepresentation with white/non-Hispanics in the learning disabilities category at 8.3 percent occurred in Georgia. It exceeds the lowest levels ranging from 1.0 percent to 3.0 percent in Illinois, Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio and Oregon. Six states had relatively high levels of overrepresentation in the speech or language impairments category—Illinois (13.3 percent), New Jersey (11.0 percent), Rhode Island (8.6 percent), California (6.1 percent), and Delaware and Indiana (at 6.0 percent, respectively). States with lowest levels in this category ranging from 1.0 percent to 2.0 percent, occurred in Florida, Iowa, Nebraska, New Hampshire, and West Virginia.

Blacks/African Americans:

Across all disabilities, Black students are overrepresented in special education. Blacks were overrepresented by more than 10 percent in 5 states: the District of Columbia (23.7 percent), Delaware (16.1 percent), Louisiana (13.6 percent), New York (13.7 percent), and South Carolina (12.0 percent). The lowest levels of overrepresentation overall, ranging from 1.0 percent to 5.0 percent, occurred in Alaska, Michigan, Montana, New Mexico, and Oregon. In the learning disabilities category, Washington, DC (22.2 percent), Delaware (18.7 percent), and Louisiana (16.6 percent) demonstrated the highest levels of overrepresentation. The lowest levels in this category, ranging from 1.0 percent to 2.5 percent, were found in the states of Arizona, Michigan, Montana, New Mexico and Rhode Island. In the category of speech or language impairments, Washington, DC (19.5 percent) and New York (9.8 percent) had the highest levels of overrepresentation, followed by South Carolina (5.9 percent) and Florida (5.4 percent). States with lowest levels in this category, at around 1.0 percent, were Connecticut, Minnesota, Montana, Oregon, and Wisconsin.

Latinos/Hispanics:

Among Latinos/Hispanics in the all disabilities category, New York experienced the highest level of overrepresentation (7.7

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Discipline and Students with Disabilities: Separating Myth From Fact

Phillip Reynolds, Intern & Elaine Bonner-Tompkins, Co-Director, High Poverty Schools Initiatives

A common myth in special education suggests that students with disabilities can misbehave and break the rules with little consequence, compared to students without disabilities who may be suspended or expelled for similar infractions. Yet, the General Accounting Office (GAO-01-210) found little difference in how regular education students and students with disabilities who engage in serious misconduct are disciplined. For example, 10 percent of students with disabilities received in-school suspensions for misconduct compared to eight percent of students without disabilities according to principal surveys (GAO, 2001).

Much of today's confusion regarding discipline and students with disabilities results from an incomplete understanding of the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This article describes the key discipline provisions within IDEA to minimize this confusion.

IDEA provides safeguards that ensure that students with disabilities who engage in misconduct are not unfairly deprived of educational services. Ideally, IDEA resolves the conflict between the need to maintain safe schools and the rights of students with disabilities. A September 19, 1997, memorandum issued by the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education, stated four fundamental beliefs to be consistently applied within IDEA in regard to discipline (Heumann and Hehir, 1997):

1. All children, including children with disabilities, deserve safe, well-disciplined schools and orderly learning environments;
2. Teachers and school administrators should have the tools they need to assist children in preventing misconduct and discipline problems

and to address these problems, if they arise;

3. There must be a balanced approach to the issue of disciplining children with disabilities that reflects the need for orderly and safe schools and the need to protect the right of children with disabilities to a free appropriate public education (FAPE); and
4. Students have the right to an appropriately developed Individualized Education Program (IEP) with well-designed behavior intervention strategies.

Short-Term Disciplinary Measures

According to IDEA, 300.520 (a)(1), school administrators may remove a student with disabilities from school in the short term by using the same procedures used for students without disabilities. When implementing short-term measures (10 days or less cumulatively within a school year) there is:

- No need to conduct a functional behavior assessment;
- No need to conduct a manifestation determination; and
- No requirement to provide educational services during this period.

However, if the short-term removal does not constitute a change in placement, but exceeds 10 days cumulatively, then educational services must be provided starting on the 11th school day (IDEA, § 300.520 (1)(ii)).

Long-Term Disciplinary Measures (Expulsion)

An expulsion in excess of 10 days requires a change in placement. Prior to expulsion certain due process protections must be given to the student. These procedures, include a written notice:

- Of the expulsion hearing sent in advance to the student and the parents/guardian of the student, if the student is a minor;
- Of the reason for consideration of expulsion, and the possibility that the

hearing may result in the students expulsion;

- That the student has a right to legal counsel; and
- Explaining the right to appeal the school's decision to a state educational agency and/or review by a state.

Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES)

The IAES is a suggested method under IDEA to meet the obligation of providing FAPE during a 45-day removal. Hartwig and Ruesch (1997) report that an IAES may be used if a student is removed:

- For 10 school days or less;
- For 45 calendar days when a student carries a weapon, possesses, uses, or sells illegal drugs;
- Through a safety-dangerous process; or
- An IEP team decision.

For additional information on Alternative Educational Settings, see the following IDEA regulations: IDEA §300.520 (a)(1), (2), 300-521, d, 300.522, (b)(2), 300-525 (b)(2) and 300.526 (a), (b), (c).

Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA), Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), The Manifestation Determination

An FBA is a behavioral assessment approach to investigate variables that can contribute to misconduct. The FBA attempts to identify the relationship between past history, current behaviors, and subsequent events. The results of the FBA inform the development of the BIP, which addresses the source of the misconduct. The Manifestation Determination analyzes the relationship between a student's disability and the behavior, for which they are being disciplined, to determine whether there is a causal relationship between a student's disability and their misconduct. These strategies, as indicated by Hartwig & Ruesch (1997), are required by IDEA when:

- Removals exceed 10 days cumulatively in a year

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Ready Or Not, Here They Come: The School Readiness Indicators Initiative

Jana Martella,
Project Director, Early Childhood and
Family Education

As state education agency personnel are keenly aware, by the time the generation of children born in 2002 reach kindergarten, the historic “No Child Left Behind” Act (NCLBA) will require states to make remarkable assurances about those children’s prospects for succeeding in school. As they reach third grade, each child will be assessed in reading, and states must guarantee their proficiency. Though most states have already clearly defined what being “proficient” in reading means for third graders, many still struggle with defining what being “ready for school” actually means for that same cadre of children.

Differing definitions of “school readiness” have proliferated since 1990, when the President and nation’s governors set as the first National Education Goal that: by the year 2000, all children will start school ready to learn—a simply stated and worthy objective. In fact, most states determine a child to be “eligible” to start school based on age alone, despite remarkable and broad differences among children surpassing the standard kindergarten entry age of five.

The National Education Goals Panel laid the starting line for the education agenda with Goal One. It also established five dimensions in which young children vary widely that contribute significantly to a child’s success in school. These five dimensions of readiness are:

- Health and physical development
- Emotional well-being and social competence
- Approaches to learning
- Communicative skills
- Cognition and general knowledge

Today, most experts agree that these five dimensions represent the most essential domains of school readiness, but some variation exists in the development of child outcome and systems indicators within each. In response to this variance, a promising initiative among states to arrive at consensus on just such indicators was initiated last year under the auspices of the David and Lucille Packard, Ewing Marion Kauffman, and Ford Foundations.

With

a grant from the Packard Foundation, CCSSO’s work in early childhood and family education is linked to the new School Readiness Indicators Initiative (“Initiative”) in working with 16 states (AZ, AK, CA, CO, CT, KS, KY, ME, MA, MO, NH, NJ, RI, VT, VA and WI) to develop a comprehensive set of school readiness indicators. The Initiative hopes to use the indicators to influence state policy on children’s issues and to communicate data meaningfully across the states and around the country.

The School Readiness Indicators Initiative begun its work by actually defining its subject, “An indicator is a measure that describes a condition. They are numbers, percents, fractions, or rates used to paint a picture of a specific outcome or situation.” Examples of child well-being indicators include: the number of children in single parent families; percent of children living in poverty; high school graduation rate; and infant mortality rate. School readiness indicators measure outcomes based on the various dimensions and factors of school readiness.

The Initiative stresses indicators focused on young children from birth to the beginning of fourth grade. The 16 state teams, comprised of senior interagency leaders—including representatives of the state education agencies, convene through the Initiative and within their states to develop a set of child outcome and systems indicators for children from birth through the fourth-grade reading test. The project emphasizes that reading ability at the end of third grade is a particularly important marker of the success of programs that support children in the early years and as children make the transition into school.

The project delineates between objectives to be held for children and for the systems serving them. The project emphasizes that child outcomes should include indicators that monitor the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of children ages birth to age ten. It also stresses that systems outcomes should include indicators to monitor the

services and supports available to young children and their families.

The Initiative convenes the state teams twice yearly for its national meetings where members and experts provide peer-to-peer support on indicator development and conceptual issues, data and technology issues, and communications strategies. In the interim, it provides residency roundtables two to four times a year to tackle tough conceptual issues in a focused way. During these roundtables, state leaders and field experts work together to make accelerated progress in priority areas such as on the social and emotional development of young children. This Fall, Initiative participants will lend their energy to indicator development in the cognitive domain, with a roundtable on language and literacy.

In addition to the national meetings and residency roundtables, the Initiative also offers the states customized technical assistance through expert consultants as needed to support their work. The consultants provide assistance to the network of states as a whole or to groups of states with common issues, and in a variety of formats, including commissioned papers on priority issues and participation at national meetings and residency roundtables. On a selective basis, expert consultants can provide on-site consultation to individual states in order to advance their indicator agendas.

The School Readiness Indicators Initiative is coordinated by the staff of Rhode Island Kids Count. If you would like more information about the project, or would like to view links to the national meetings or residency roundtable proceedings and accompanying papers, see <http://www.gettingready.org>. In addition to all the meeting materials, you will find important web resources and new reports and articles relevant to the work of the initiative.

For further information on CCSSO’s involvement in the project, contact Jana Martella, at (202) 336-7057, or janam@ccsso.org.

Discipline and Students with Disabilities: Separating Myth From Fact

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- Removals extend over 10 consecutive days or its cumulative equivalent amount to a change in placement; and
- Removals are made for a 45-day placement by the IEP team (required for weapons or illegal drugs) or by an impartial hearing officer (required for dangerous students).

For additional information, see IDEA § 300.520 (b) and § 300.523.

In short, IDEA demands accountability for behavior among students with disabilities. The only differences for students with disabilities is the IDEA requirement that punishment not interfere with a student's right to educational services in the long-term. This by no means suggests that students with disabilities should go unpunished for misconduct. When punished, however, it must be within the context of the 1997 IDEA amendments.

For further information about this topic please contact Elaine Bonner-Tompkins, (202) 336-7035 or elainebt@ccsso.org.

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Overrepresentation in Special Education: An Analysis of State Data

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percent). States with the lowest levels of overrepresentation overall, were Massachusetts, Connecticut and New Mexico, at 1.0, 1.4, and 2.3 percent, respectively. In the category of learning disabilities, New York exhibits the highest levels at 8.0 percent. The lowest levels in this category, ranging from 1.0 percent to 3.8 percent, occurred in Colorado, Idaho, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Washington and Virginia. For the speech or language impairments category, New York also emerged as the state with highest level of overrepresentation for this group at 14.7 percent.

Asians/Pacific Islanders:

Hawaii was the only state with an overrepresentation of the Asian/Pacific Islander group in the all disabilities category, at a level of 12.7 percent. This level was consistent across the speech impairment and learning disabilities categories. Most states had an under representation of Asian/Pacific Islanders in special education ranging from 0.1 to 5.7 overall, from -0.1 to -7.3 in learning disabilities, and from -0.1 to -3.2 in speech or language impairment category.

Native Americans/Alaskans:

For Native American/Alaskans, the highest levels of over representation in the all disabilities category occurred in the states of Alaska (10.3 percent) and Montana (6.2 percent). Lowest levels of over representation overall, ranging from 1.0 percent to 2.0 percent, occurred in the states of Arizona, Nebraska, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. The highest levels of over representation in the learning disability category were again, found in the states of Alaska (9.2 percent) and Montana (9.2 percent). Lowest levels in this category, ranging from 1.0 percent to 2.0 percent, occurred in Idaho, Minnesota, Nevada, Oregon and Utah. In the speech or language impairments category, Alaska had the highest level of over representation at 12.8 percent. Low levels in this category, ranging from 1.0 percent to 4.0 percent, occurred in the states of Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota,

Oklahoma, and Washington.

In sum, the greatest levels of over representation overall in special education, and among students with learning disabilities and speech or language impairments, occurred amongst Blacks/African Americans. Regionally, overrepresentation among Blacks is highest in the southern states. The highest levels of Latino/Hispanic overrepresentation overall, and for both classifications, occurred in New York. White, Non-Hispanics were over represented at very low levels overall, and among both classifications. No regional pattern in disproportionate representation among white, non-Hispanic exists. Only the state of Hawaii demonstrated an over representation for Asians/Pacific Islanders overall and among both classifications. Over representation among Native Americans occurred overall, and in both classifications, for only two states: Alaska and Montana.

Next month's article will discuss state strategies for addressing disproportionate representation in special education and overrepresentation in the categories of mental retardation and emotional disturbance.

For more information on this topic, please contact Gitanjali Pande, at (202) 326-8695 or gitanjalip@ccsso.org, or Elaine Bonner-Tompkins, at (202) 336-7035 or elainebt@ccsso.org.

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SSTA Division STAFF NEWS

Elaine Bonner-Tompkins recently returned to CCSSO as a full-time staffer in July 2002 and has been named Co-Director of the High Poverty Schools Initiative. In this capacity, Elaine will continue to manage the special education projects of the Initiative. They include the Students with Disabilities in High Poverty Schools research project, the Title I and IDEA Collaboration Network via the Policymakers Partnership at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, and partnerships with the American Institutes for Research to link research to practice in special education. Elaine will also coordinate the new SSTA Low Performing Schools Work Group, the High Poverty Schools Initiative's annual meetings, and the Community Based Organizations (CBO) High Schools Project.

Katie Simons joins the Council in her new role as Project Associate to both the ARD (NCES) and EQED (OCIO) projects. A North Carolina native, Katie recently received her B.A. degree in Political Science from Elon University, with minors in Human Services and Public Administration. In addition to other awards and internships, she served in the North Carolina Governor's Policy Office in the summer of 2001. She also served in many volunteering activities including Head Start.

Andra Williams joined CCSSO's State Educational Indicators project in July 2002 as a Senior Project Associate. Most recently employed as a Senior Program Manager with the National Alliance of Business, Andra spent more than three years working with the business community on national- and state-level educational issues. Prior to that, she worked in a variety of private and public sector positions, including as a substitute teacher, an experience that solidified her commitment to public education. Andra received her master's degree in education policy from The George Washington University and her bachelor's degree in human and organizational development from Vande r-bilt University.

Data Improvement Activities at CCSSO

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that national data standardization will have an impact on their product designs. Thus, CCSSO created an Education Software and Technology Information Registry for companies providing technology services to SEAs and LEAs. The registry describes vendor services and products, giving states and local clients a place to identify potential service providers and initiate contacts.

— **Support to SEAs in the Context of NCLBA.** Recently SEA data and assessment staff have focused mainly on the data requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) with many projects within CCSSO concentrated in this area. Current activities of the ARD and EQED projects include:

- Supporting a consortium of states to discuss the needs and technical issues in developing an individual-level student information system at the states. In a June 2002 meeting, states that have such systems shared their experience with states that are interested in building one. The consortium, led by SEA staff from Illinois and Pennsylvania, plans to expand their scope and involvement of other states.
- Providing technical support to the Working Group on Education Performance Indicators formed by Forum members. The purpose of the activity is to develop a resource for states, districts, and schools that provides guidance, standards and measurements for a uniform set of performance indicators that are statistically valid and comparable across states. These resources will enable education systems to create access to school and student performance data that, while retaining individual local identity, can be comparable at the state and national levels. A significant driving force for these demands is that NCLBA requires states to set high standards for achievement and create accountability systems to measure the results.

New activities may be developed within the general framework of the two projects as we proceed. Although these projects

are governed by federal contracts, our federal clients have been quite flexible and eager to work with CCSSO in adjusting project activities and reallocating resources to benefit their state customers.

For more information about the Evaluation Software Publishing, see www.evalsoft.com. For information on meeting notes and lessons learned from the OCIO activities, see www.EducationAdvisor.info. If you have any questions about the documents, publications or programs discussed in this article, please contact Jinhee Lee at (202) 336-7051 or at jinheel@ccsso.org.

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Gaining Ground Index Announcement:

"In an effort to disseminate relevant, readily accessible information on education policies and programs that address issues ranging from low performing schools, to school health, to school data improvement activities, the High Poverty Schools Initiative within the Division of State Services and Technical Assistance has developed a Subject Index of all the articles in Gaining Ground from February 1999 to July 2002. This will be available on the CCSSO website by the middle of September 2002. The index has twenty subject headings, which have been cross-referenced to the best extent possible. We will be updating this Index periodically."

Support Lights On Afterschool!

**Mark Emery,
Project Director, Extended Learning**

Lights On Afterschool! is a nationwide event to recognize the critical importance of quality afterschool programs in the lives of children, families, and communities. On October 10, 2002, Lights On Afterschool! will rally community support for afterschool programs by shining the spotlight on innovative, high-quality afterschool programs at over 2,000 sites across the nation. We encourage you to invite parents, community and business leaders, elected officials, and the media to your Afterschool Program so they will have the opportunity to see first hand how afterschool programs help our children succeed.

Lights On Afterschool! is a project of the Afterschool Alliance and is sponsored by JCPenney Afterschool. To register as a Lights On Afterschool! event site, to learn more about how you can participate, or to request a Lights On Afterschool! Action Kit, please call 1-877-759-9733, e-mail lightsonafterschool@metrooffice.com or visit <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org>.