Envisioning Local Special Education Administrators as Agents of Change: Leadership Outcomes for an Evolving Role

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Abstract

This paper adds to the literature on local special education administration by proposing a framework for understanding, supporting, and researching the leadership practices and outcomes through which local special education administrators (LSEAs) succeed in an era of heightened attention to student outcomes. As efforts to improve outcomes have intensified, special education leaders are being called on to emphasize different leadership practices than in earlier eras. Recent literature has focused on support for inclusive school-level services, but current practice by successful local administrators suggests that a much broader array of leadership practices is needed. To delineate these broader practices, the paper draws on both the existing base for special education administration and research on top functional leadership and middle-level management in other organizations. The resulting framework—the LSEA Model—consists of a set of broad responsibilities, leadership outcomes, and influence pathways through which LSEAs support student outcomes. Intended uses of the model include supporting current leader's practice, aiding the design of preparation programs, deepening understanding of the LSEA role by other school and district leaders, and stimulating research that investigates the links between LSEA leadership outcomes and the outcomes experienced by students with disabilities.

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An Urgency for Change

Today, almost fifty years after P. L. 94-142 opened schoolhouse doors to all students with disabilities, the educational and life outcomes experienced by these individuals continue to lag far behind their age peers. State and national assessments consistently identify students with disabilities among the least academically proficient (Gilmour, Fuchs, & Wehby, 2019; Wagner, Newman, Cameto, & Levine, 2006). In schools, these students are more likely to experience suspension and are more often chronically absent from school (Cortiella & Boundy, 2018) and in the community individuals with disabilities more frequently enter the juvenile justice system than their peers (Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, & Poirier, 2005). After leaving high school, individuals with disabilities are less likely than their age peers to participate in either higher education or employment (Newman, Wagner, Cameto, & Knokey, 2009).

These troubling national outcomes persist despite research and model programs that clearly demonstrate how much more people with disabilities can achieve in school, work, higher education, and adult living. Strategic federal investments in special education research have produced a strong collection of effective practices and validated programs that can improve student outcomes (McLeskey et al., 2017; Schwartz, Bryant, & Stiefel, 2019; What Works Clearinghouse, 2020). Many reports of exemplary programs show how these practices can be used effectively to support local success in services for individuals with disabilities (Huberman, Novo, & Parrish, 2012). Organizing frameworks like MTSS have

evolved to support integration of diverse programs and practices and to ensure that students receive the support they need quickly and with an appropriate level of intensity (McIntosh & Goodman, 2016). To support implementation of these research-informed practices—what Dr. Mark Schneider, the Director of the Institute for Educational Research, terms the "last mile" challenge in research utilization (Schneider, 2018)—strategic federal investments include professional development and coaching procedures (Lemons & Toste, 2019), research implementation models (Fixsen, Blase & VanDyke, 2019), resources and tools for teachers (McLesky et al., 2017), and a strong collection of federally funded special education technical assistance centers (Office of Special Education Programs, 2022).

As national outcomes for individuals have continued to disappoint, federal policies and court decisions have elaborated what it means to provide a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment, progressively strengthening formal requirements related to student achievement (McLaughlin & Burho, 2019). The 1997 reauthorization of federal special education legislation (IDEA, PL 105-17) placed increased emphasis on students with disabilities participating in the general education curriculum, and these expectations were developed further in the 2004 reauthorization, which stressed demonstrable improvements in educational attainment of student with disabilities as an investment in full participation, independent living, economic self-sufficiency of individual with disabilities. The policy emphasis on academic outcomes was further sharpened in the reauthorizations of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2001 and 2015. The 2001 revisions emphasized instruction in the general education curriculum for all students, required subject area preparation for special education teachers, and established an assessment and accountability system that required separate

attention to students receiving special education (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002). The expectation for academic outcomes was strengthened again in the 2015 amendments (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015), which required that no more than one percent of a district's student population could be given an alternative to state proficiency assessments. This progression of increasing requirements related to student outcomes was reinforced by a policy letter from the Office of Special Education Programs (2014) that added a set of outcomes to federal monitoring of state IDEA compliance. It was strengthened yet again in the Supreme Court's decision in Endrew v. Douglas County School District (*Endrew F.* 137 S. Ct. at 990) that set a new standard for IEP adequacy, that each IEP must be "reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances."

Yet, despite sustained investment in research and despite progressively demanding policies, national data on student outcomes continue to show that what a typical student with a disability can expect to achieve today remains well below same-age peers and far less than we know is possible. While progress in building the profession's knowledge has been substantial, and while policy requirements have stimulated greater inclusion in regular academic experiences, the last mile's finish line seems as distant as ever. Additional approaches are urgently needed to complement familiar knowledge development and policy implementation approaches.

Local Special Education Administrators as Leaders of Change

This paper explores one strategy to address the needed changes. Our premise is that local special education administrators (LSEAs) are uniquely positioned to provide pivotal leadership for the use of research-informed practices that can improve student outcomes. But doing so will require new thinking about the LSEA role and a renewed focus on what connects LSEA

leadership to student outcomes. Our focus on LSEAs is not an argument against either the importance of principals in supporting school-level change (Bryk et al., 2010) or the contributions that top district executives make toward student learning (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Instead, we supplement understandings of these leaders' contributions with a focus on how LSEAs can work effectively from their particular role in the school district structure to promote improvements in student learning.

By local special education administrator (LSEA) we mean the individual who has overall responsibility for special education in a school district. We focus on administrative leadership—the local organization and management of special education—rather than direct service delivery by teachers and principals. We also distinguish the leadership provided by LSEAs from the important leadership for the special education profession that is provided by university faculty, researchers, advocates, policy leaders, and others whose leadership contributes to special education's success without direct responsibility for a district's special education program.

LSEAs have always filled a critical role. They have long had primary responsibility for ensuring district compliance with special education policies, including those addressing student outcomes. They also have knowledge of and can influence local conditions that affect whether and how well research-based practices are used, and they often supervise the coaches and consultants who provide direct support for program implementation. In the following sections we identify additional assets that LSEAs bring to their leadership for student outcomes and propose a way of understanding LSEA work that connects their leadership outcomes more explicitly to student outcomes.

An Evolving Role

The leadership practices needed to support local special education services have evolved significantly over the almost fifty years since federal legislation established a right to education for all students with disabilities, creating confusion about exactly what LSEA do (Pazey and Yates, 2019). These changing leadership expectations combine with an enduring set of core professional values to provide the foundation for continuing evolution in the LSEA role.

Core Values Underlying Special Education Leadership

A challenging set of five core values emerged from early special education services, has guided leadership practice through each of the earlier phases of administrative work, and is reflected in central requirements of special education law, policy and professional ethics. These include:

a) *Equal access to learning*--Every individual, regardless of ability or disability, has an equal right to public education and the opportunities for learning that schooling provides. The right to a free appropriate public education exists regardless of local priorities and resources, and it challenges the field to continue removing barriers to learning for any student.

b) *Individualization*. Meaningful access to education for students with disabilities depends on individualized consideration of each student's capabilities, support needs, and learning goals and can involve adaptations in curriculum content, instructional methods, and other support services.

c) *Collaborative planning*. Deciding how to provide individually appropriate services to each student is a matter for collaborative decision making among the families, professionals, school officials, and the affected individual. Unlike practices in other

parts of public education, none of these participants has authority to plan independently for the public education of any student.

d) *Accountable and effective services*. Realizing the benefits of access to education for each individual requires development and use of effective, research-based procedures from which individuals derive measurable and meaningful benefits.

e) *Typical settings*. Special services needed by an individual to achieve educational benefits will be offered as close as possible to the mainstream of school and community life, so that services are provided in the least restrictive environment.

The intersections and tensions among these five values has propelled the special education profession toward greater sensitivity to student and family aspirations, more ambitious educational goals, more effective procedures, and less restrictive settings. Advances in each domain encourage work to improve others, and failure to progress in any area ultimately undercuts progress toward others. The current focus on student outcomes creates new tensions among these core values, and challenges LSEAs to achieve continuing local progress by finding positive balances as these sometimes-conflicting values are pursued.

Evolution of the LSEA Leadership Role

During the early years of implementing the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA, 1976), LSEAs' responsibilities emphasized development and direct oversight of an array of special programs as eligible children were identified for services. It's an oversimplification, but from an organizational perspective one could compare this early LSEA role to that of a school principal, an individual with delegated responsibility to manage operations of a special school or set of special programs.

Later, as programs became more established, the LSEA's role shifted to a functional area management role in the school district. This change meant that LSEAs' work involved less involvement in direct supervision of instruction, while much more attention was needed to ensure district-wide compliance with federal and state policies. Because many of these policy requirements reflected long-standing special education values, working toward improved compliance provided important opportunities to advance service quality and student outcomes.

Yet another change occurred as general education policies emphasized school-level accountability for all students' learning. This shift, combined with school districts' efforts to educate more students in regular schools expanded the responsibility of principals and other school-level leaders to support students with disabilities (Hehir & Katzman, 2012). This focus on school-level leadership for special education services has been propelled by a very productive line of research on the impact that principals have on student outcomes (Favero, Meier, & O'Toole, 2016; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). That research identified a range of leadership practices that contribute to outcomes for all students (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Robinson, 2011).

Much of the recent scholarship on leadership for special education reflects the concepts and findings of this research on the principalship by emphasizing the general role of leadership in supporting learning (DeMatthews, Billingsley, McLeskey, & Sharma, 2020), or by using the broad concepts identified in principalship research to frame an understanding of the LSEA role (Crockett, 2011). LSEA responsibilities have shifted in response to these developments toward greater emphasis on supporting school-level leaders as they worked toward effective and

inclusive services in their buildings (Bateman & Cline, 2019; Kukic & Rude, 2012; Sage & Burrello, 1994).

These stages in the evolution of the LSEA position represent shifts in areas of emphasis, not replacement of one role with another (Pazey & Yates, 2019). The evolution might best be described as a continued accretion of duties with shifting areas of emphasis over time. Each stage has contributed significantly to special education's progress: Direct management of services created the context for developing a wide range of research-based interventions that still provide the foundation for many effective services. Ensuring compliance with policies helped to create a coherent national system for delivering special education services that reflected the profession's core values. And, LSEA support for school-level leadership has helped to frame systems of support for more inclusive school-level communities.

And yet, despite important leadership achievements during these evolutionary stages in the LSEA role, outcomes for students with disabilities continue to disappoint, and public expectations for improvements continue to escalate. Responding to these pressures is stimulating yet another rethinking of how LSEA leadership can best support student learning.

Toward a New Understanding of LSEA Leadership

As is often the case, practical solutions developed by particularly effective LSEAs already point the way toward new understandings of LSEA leadership. As LSEAs have worked to support implementation of tiered prevention systems across their districts, develop coherent service arrangements that transcend program boundaries, and address disability as one of many factors that result in disproportionality in student outcomes, their roles have become increasingly

multifaceted, involving cross-boundary and cross-function leadership. Boscardin and Lashley (2019) provide a succinct description of the emerging LSEA role:

> Becoming an effective special education leader for the twenty-first century requires that administrators work collaboratively with teachers, parents, other school administrators, and policy makers to bring resources, personnel, programs, and expertise together to solve problems of practice for all students. (p. 43)

Newly adopted standards for administrative leaders (Council for Exceptional Children, 2022), reinforce and elaborate this expanded view of LSEA leadership. While continuing to highlight LSEA responsibilities for management of the special education program and ensuring compliance, the standards also emphasize a range of responsibilities that require broad collaboration across the school district, including working toward equity and democratic values for all students and families, nurturing a vision that supports all services received by students with disabilities, and collaborating in the design and oversight of systems of support for all students' learning. LSEA responsibilities have long included such broader responsibilities, but the current emphasis on student outcomes redirects LSEA leadership increasingly to district-wide influence and community engagement. Simply put, continued progress in special education administrative leadership depends on the ability to influence district-wide systems that support learning and prevent failure for all students in addition to supporting delivery of special education services by school-level professionals and leaders.

Leading for student outcomes thus requires a new understanding of how LSEA leadership succeeds by working and promoting change across a school district's entire organization. Although research during the last twenty years has clarified many links between school

leadership practices and student learning, the contexts and practices studied focus primarily on leadership at the school level. Many findings from this research may well apply to LSEAs, but much remains to be learned about how LSEAs can best influence student outcomes from their particular position in the school district organization. Consequently, our premise, that LSEAs are positioned for influential leadership for improved student outcomes, is only partially informed by existing educational research linking leadership practices to student learning.

As we elaborate below, broader research on organizational leadership does supplement knowledge from education with useful guidance on how leaders like LSEAs can influence results from their position in the organization. Although education is different in important ways from other organizations, in situations like this, when little guidance is available in the education literature, research and theory from other sectors can provide useful insights. As we describe below, research on organization design and management highlights several opportunities for those in leadership in positions similar to LSEAs to influence organizational priorities and lead boundary-crossing innovations.

Leading Change from within the School District Organization

With district-wide responsibility for special education services, LSEAs are similar to other top function leaders across a variety of specialty areas, including other special programs and support services like budget and human resources. Classical organization theory distinguishes these functional leaders, who provide organization-wide oversight for a specialized function, from line managers who have direct responsibility for supervising the organization's core work (Mintzberg, 1979; Thompson, 1967). Thus, in public education, while principals and principal supervisors are "line managers," LSEAs are responsible for support services that

increase the organization's capacity and effectiveness in the specialty area. To lead these support services effectively, LSEAs have different delegated responsibilities and rely on different leadership strategies than their colleagues in line-management roles. Of course, LSEAs do provide direct supervision of staff assigned to the special education program in order to support the school-level work.

In the school district organization, LSEAs typically work somewhere between teachers and principals on the one hand and the superintendent and board on the other. Many LSEAs work as members of the superintendent's cabinet, where they can be directly involved in executive-level decisions about priorities, strategies, and responses to new developments. Many other LSEAs, while still working as the top functional leader for special education, work closer to the center of the organization, as middle-level leaders whose influence on district decisions can be more indirect.

To some extent, the leadership strategies through which LSEAs can promote the initiatives that are needed to sustain and improve district programs vary depending on their position in the district structure. But whatever their exact position in the hierarchy, LSEAs are positioned for significant influence on district priorities and initiatives. This influence results, first, from their mediating position between classroom-level work and executive decision-making. LSEAs and their staff work close enough to teachers to understand daily operational details and also close enough to top decision-makers to connect practices and strategies to district priorities.

Second, LSEAs are positioned to communicate the profession's accumulated knowledge as district executives set priorities and as direct service staff encounter new challenges. And

third, because they work regularly with families, advocacy groups, and policy makers concerned with special education, LSEAs are able to represent and interpret emerging external expectations in district decision-making. Thus, whatever their position in the district structure, LSEAs occupy a mediating position between daily practice, specialty area knowledge, external expectations, and executive-level decision-making.

The core message of research on top functional leaders and middle-level managers is that their position in the organization creates many opportunities to influence district-wide priorities and programs and to lead both top-down and bottom-up innovations (Ren & Guo, 2011; Kuratko, 2017; Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008). Their boundary-crossing responsibilities enable significant influence on organizational priorities while also framing arenas in which practical leadership problems can be engaged. Thus, like other top functional leaders, LSEAs can influence district priorities through both the specialty expertise they contribute to district planning and the connections that their position enable with teachers, district executives, and external constituents.

Four potential outcomes of leadership from the organizational center have particular relevance for LSEAs: (a) influencing broad organizational goals, (b) implementing new district initiatives, (c) leading a stream of program improvements, and (d) building professional capacity.

Influence organizational goals and priorities. LSEAs, like other top functional leaders, frequently participate as cabinet or team members in development of formal district goals, priorities, and programs. While this creates opportunities for LSEAs to influence the districts formal goals and strategic plans, the goals toward which a school district actually works——what Mintzberg and Waters (1985) describe as the "pattern in a stream of decisions" across an

organization—can be quite different from formal goal statements. This difference between formal and informal goals creates additional opportunities for LSEAs who work in the center of the district organization. Their mediating position allows LSEAs to influence actual organizational goals by day-to-day participation in the pattern of decisions that shape the goals that are actually pursued in the school district (Wooldridge, Schmid, & Floyd, 2008). Illustrative leadership practices and outcomes include:

- *Supplying specialty-area expertise.* Functional leaders influence both formal and informal decision making by providing information about the state of the art in their professions, the state of the practice in similar organizations, and the emerging expectations of external constituents for specialty area services (Menz, 2012). For example, LSEAs can influence district decisions about program selection, operating procedures, and priority areas for improvement by sharing current knowledge of developments in research, law, policy and advocacy related to special education.

- *Selling issues and initiatives.* Since organizational leaders can only pay attention to a limited number of potentially important issues, a marketplace of ideas exists within school districts as issues and initiatives are promoted to the district's superintendent and board. LSEAs, for example, often find it important to advocate for executive attention to prevention of academic failure as a priority in their school district and to champion priority funding for initiatives that support a multi-tiered system that responds to learning difficulties. Issue selling encompasses such leadership practices as framing persuasive messages that are

tailored to different audiences in the organization (Rouleau, 2005), packaging and bundling issues so that proposals address a variety of needs in the organization (Huy & Guo, 2017), and framing challenges in ways that link to formal organizational goals while offering practical strategies for moving forward (Ashford & Detert, 2014; Dutton & Ashford, 1993).

- *Conversational advocacy*. Much of a functional leader's influence over organizational priorities and initiatives comes through day-to-day interactions. Conversational advocacy involves sensemaking—understanding and interpreting emerging conditions and their relevance to organizational goals. Effective conversations build cross-district understandings through interactions with other program leaders and shape others' interpretations through comments, stories, humor, and ongoing interpersonal interactions (Balogun & Rouleau, 2017; Maitlis & Laurence, 2007).

- *Constituent engagement*. LSEAs also support district priorities by helping families and special education organizations engage effectively in both formal and informal goal-setting processes. Related leadership practices include serving as a source of current professional information for advocacy groups, nominating external participants for district committees, and maximizing invaluable family advocacy for effective services through groups like Special Education Advisory Councils (Goldman, 2020).

Lead implementation of district initiatives. Perhaps the most familiar leadership practices and outcomes that are available to LSEAs are associated with their responsibility to

oversee implementation of new initiatives that have been adopted by the school district. For

example, Burch and Spillane (2004) identified four brokering roles through which middle level

leaders influence implementation. Associated leadership outcomes include (a) *tools* such as

handbooks, materials, and other guides that communicate district policies to school-level staff;

(b) *data* that are organized to assist program improvement and monitor compliance; (c)

professional learning opportunities that support implementation of new initiatives, and (d) *social*

networks that facilitate sharing of information that supports improvement efforts. Work toward

each of these outcomes creates opportunities for LSEAs to influence how initiatives are

implemented and integrated with other aspects of daily work. Related research on the adoption

of research-based practices in schools outlines additional opportunities for district-level leaders

to influence the implementation process, including providing oversight for district-level

leadership teams that support new initiatives, organizing data on implementation of critical

elements of the initiative, and generating adequate resources for implementation. (Fixsen, Blasé,

& Van Dyke, 2019; McIntosh & Goodman, 2016).

   Support a stream of program improvements. As top functional managers, LSEAs have

further opportunities to influence district priorities because of their organization-wide

responsibility for the quality of special education services. Since LSEAs achieve the goals of the

special education program only indirectly, through the actions of schools, teachers, and other

departments, their success depends on an ability to provide a range of resources, including

programs, processes, tools, structures and information that influence how services are provided.

By continually improving the quality of these resources, LSEAs can have impact the pattern of

decisions across the district that, in turn, shapes both formal and informal organizational goals. Related leadership practices include:

- *Support for bottom-up innovation.* Bottom-up innovation involves fostering a climate that encourages innovation among teachers by supporting action research projects, continuous monitoring of student progress, and teacher collaboration as procedural or student-learning difficulties arise (Knackendoffel, Dettermer, & Thurston, 2018: Manfra, 2019).

- *Seeking opportunities for improvement.* To identify promising priorities and initiatives, LSEAs can use their mediating position to understand and integrate ideas from emerging local innovations, professional research, community interests, and priorities of other district programs. They are then able to use this information to develop proposals for improved procedures and new programs (Rouleau, 2005; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1992). For example, LSEA success depends on district-wide progress on issues such as managing multi-tiered systems of support, promoting equity in school discipline, and making inclusive school environments effective contests for learning.

- *Initiative development.* As promising opportunities are identified, LSEAs can use their boundary-crossing relationships to negotiate changes that contextualize proposed initiatives within multiple priorities, address cross-department interests, build coalitions of support, and align proposals with the goals, strategies, politics, resources, and capacities of the district (Kuratko, 2017).

- *Routines and processes that allow the LSEA to work across boundaries in the district's formal structure to provide support to teachers and other special education staff as they implement new programs*. This could include, for example, cross-school implementation teams that highlight successes and continuing problems, cross-school visitation and coaching to support initial implementation, and personal relationships that build resilience for the emotional side of change (Knight, 2007; Wellman, & Lipton, 2017)

Cultivate professional capacity. A significant part of professional learning and leadership development occurs on the job (Temperley, 2011; Yip & Wilson, 2010). Although principals and other first-level managers are well positioned to support learning within their units, top and middle-level functional leaders can make very important contributions because of their boundary-crossing responsibilities. LSEAs, for example, can support on-the-job learning by:

- Creating opportunities for teachers and related services professionals to develop professional networks across boundaries in the school district in order to enhance individual and collective leadership (Cullen-Lester, Maupin, & Carter, 2017).

- Designing special assignments that give teachers and other staff experience with unfamiliar responsibilities in order to broaden skills and build leadership capabilities (DeRue & Wellman, 2009; McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994)

- Encouraging and supporting teacher inquiry that addresses practical problems in instruction and delivery of related services (Lai & Schildkamp, 2016; Putman, & Rock, 2018) .

- Collaborating with other program leaders to contextualize and interpret events, priorities, and initiatives in ways that both explain current circumstances and shape interpretations of future ones (Balogun & Rouleau, 2017).

As these examples show, the practices and outcomes that top functional leaders use to promote organizational improvements, while similar in broad purpose, are different from the strategies needed by either principals or district superintendents. Thus, the challenge confronting LSEAs is how to use the leadership opportunities afforded by their particular position in the school district structure to achieve dramatically improved student outcomes. Addressing this challenge will require grounding in the knowledge bases associated with CEC's administrative leadership standards as well as skills that support successful work from the center of the district's organization. It will require an ability to lead school-wide and district-wide changes without direct authority, to build new capacities in staff who are supervised by others, and to shape supportive district and school cultures. To lead effectively for improved student outcomes, LSEAs need to use leadership practices that influence the work of other school administrators, principals, teachers and other professionals in ways that ultimately affect student outcomes.

The LSEA Model

The LSEA Model is an effort to define what the emerging LSEA leadership position involves and how it can contribute to improved student outcomes by drawing on both established knowledge of special education leadership and understandings from the study of top functional leaders and middle-level managers in other organizations. The model (see Figure 1) outlines the work of leading a local special education program by naming and organizing the critical *leadership outcomes* of the LSEA role, organizing these into a set of broad position

responsibilities, and highlighting the *organizational domains* in which LSEAs can exert influence on student outcomes. The model has two broad goals: (a) to provide a comprehensive list of major leadership outcomes that support achievement of student outcomes, and (b) to identify the various leadership domains, or influence pathways, that support and mediate the connections between leadership outcomes and student outcomes. We address these goals, not in an attempt to identify new LSEA practices, but rather to name and organize leadership strategies currently used by successful LSEAs.

Leadership Outcomes

We focus on leadership outcomes in order to be as specific as possible about how LSEA leadership can affect student outcomes. Our approach follows observations by Robinson and Gray (2019) that leadership practices enable more detailed support and study of effective leadership than do the broad leadership styles that are frequently reported in studies of educational leaders (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Hallinger, 2005) Our focus on leadership outcomes takes the recommendations of Robinson and Gray one step further, drawing on performance frameworks developed by Gilbert (1976). Important leadership practices typically consist of clusters of skills and behaviors that are used strategically to achieve a desired result, or

Figure 1. The LSEA Outcomes Model
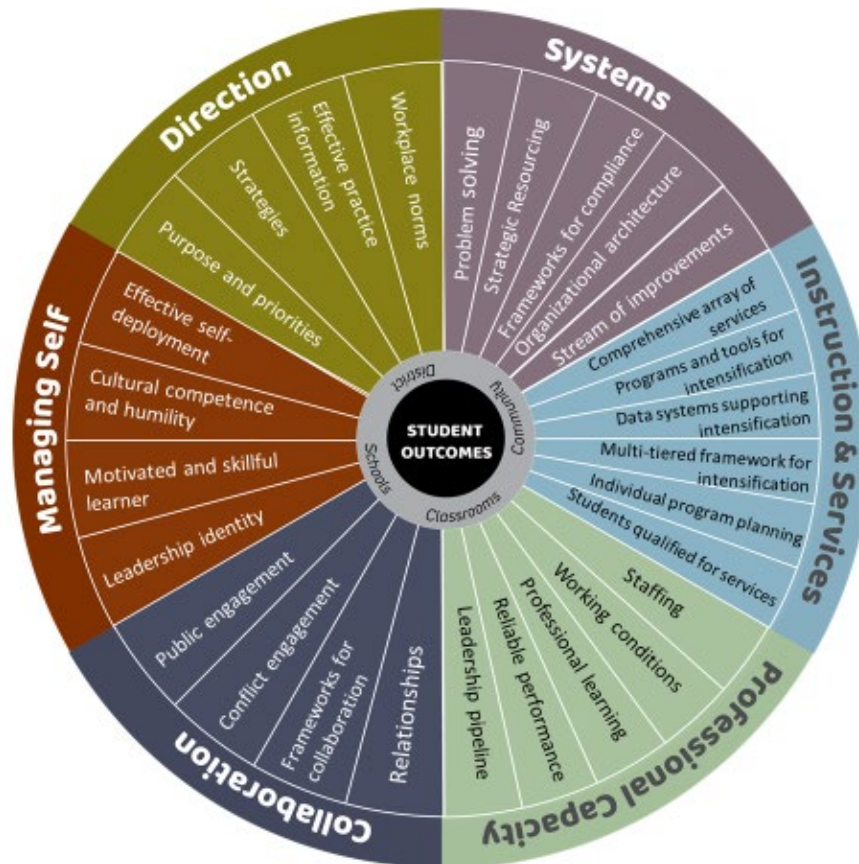
proximal outcome, across varied situations. By focusing on these outcomes, we offer a results-oriented approach for defining the repertoire of practices that LSEAs need.

The 28 leadership outcomes listed in Figure 1 are the proximal results of an LSEA's work. These leadership outcomes are not outcomes for students, which of course constitute the LSEA's ultimate goal. Instead they are the more immediate results that are produced by leaders' actions. Leadership outcomes include tools, structures, policies, and working conditions over which special education leaders have some measure of control and which are expected to support the ultimate achievement of student outcomes. For example, one leadership outcome identified in Figure 1, is an "organizational architecture." This leadership outcome—which includes a set of structures, job responsibilities, and lines of communication—can contribute to the overall goal of

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student learning by aligning and coordinating the work of staff who, in turn, support teaching and learning.

Figure 1 clusters these outcomes in six broad responsibility areas, listed on the outer rim of the figure. At this broad level, responsibilities in the model are similar to many taxonomies of the ways that school leaders support student learning (Hitt &Tucker, 2016; Leithwood, & Reihl, 2005). Responsibilities include, for example, setting direction for special education, systems leadership, and building professional capacity and commitment.

Critical features of LSEA outcomes. Each of the twenty-eight leadership outcomes is intended to describe a tangible result of local leadership. By focusing on leadership outcomes, rather than capabilities needed for the position or leadership practices needed for daily work, the model points toward three important facets of LSEA work that are key to interpreting the figure.

First, leadership outcomes provide meaningful connections between LSEA work with student outcomes only after quality features of these outcomes are defined. For example, the outcome, "professional learning opportunities" becomes meaningful as knowledge about what makes such opportunities effective are enumerated. Quality features for professional learning opportunities could include the timeliness and accessibility of needed information, the opportunity to practice new learning with support, and access to timely feedback. When opportunities for professional learning reflect these quality dimensions, they are more likely to impact teacher leaning, teacher practice, and ultimately, student learning.

While research helps to define many of these quality features, as is the case with professional learning opportunities, defining quality in LSEA leadership also depends on knowledge from ethics (what outcomes respond to the ethical dilemmas inherent in each

particular situation), law (what outcomes support compliance with special education policy), practice knowledge (what practices have special education leaders found useful in similar contexts), and a variety of other knowledge domains, including leadership and organizational theory, organizational culture, and political decision making. Defining these quality dimensions in any given situation requires practicing leaders and scholars to integrate information from many disciplines to inform leadership activities. The quality dimensions thus provide a critical and practical link between professional knowledge and ethics on the one hand and daily practice on the other. Appendix A defines the leadership outcomes in the LSEA Model and suggests initial quality dimensions for each outcome.

Second, each leadership outcome is always a work in progress. LSEAs lead in situations that are constantly changing, with evolving community expectations, new student needs, varying levels of expertise among staff, and shifting district priorities. Practices that work well at one time often become ineffective as conditions shift. Thus, for an LSEA, successfully producing a leadership outcome is seldom a simple process of defining and achieving a goal. It is rather a matter of continuing stewardship, monitoring and adjusting as needed to sustain an outcome at the desired level of quality while also modeling effective collaboration and trust-building, and problem-solving. The quality of each outcome can be assessed at any point in time, like taking a freeze-frame in an ongoing movie, as long as one remembers that quality of each outcome continues to change, and that maintaining quality requires constant vigilance. For example, the leadership outcome "workplace norms" can be affected by changes in district policies, turnover in district executive leadership, community advocacy for changes in special education programs, and changes in composition of special education staff. To sustain positive and productive

workplace norms, LSEAs need to constantly monitor the norms that are in place and respond to emerging changes by choosing from a repertoire of leadership practices.

Third, leadership outcomes in education are almost always the result of shared work among a variety of individuals (Boscardin, Rude, Sutze, & Tudryn, 2018; Spillane, 2006). Despite popular notions of heroic individual leaders, contemporary understandings of educational leadership emphasize that effective leadership is widely distributed and emerges as much from interactions among group members as from any single individual's actions (Leithwood, Mascall, & Strauss, 2009). Individual leaders do have influence over leadership outcomes like an organizational architecture, or workplace norms, and individual leaders' capabilities, traits, and practices do contribute in important ways, but important leadership outcomes are ultimately produced with the involvement of many others. Consequently, outcomes in the LSEA Outcomes Model are not intended to describe only the individual work of the LSEA. Instead, each leadership outcome is best seen as a result of collective work across the entire special education program and, often, across the entire school district. From this viewpoint, the LSEA is responsible for orchestrating the work toward each outcome, ensuring that the needed leadership is present and operating in each area of the model, providing some leadership personally, filling gaps where needed, and incorporating the leadership contributed by others.

Leadership Arenas

As the literature on top and middle-level functional leaders makes clear, sustaining each leadership outcome in the LSEA model involves work, not only within the special education program, but also across various district and community groups. To achieve improved outcomes

for students, LSEAs lead in a variety of arenas toward leadership outcomes, using vertical, horizontal, and external connections to support student outcomes. Figure 1 identifies the most visible of these leadership arenas in the ring nearest the center of the diagram, including district executives and program managers, school leaders, teachers, and external constituents. Each of these leadership arenas provides a potentially important influence pathway for leading changes that improve student outcomes. LSEAs depend on others in these influence pathways to enact, adapt, mediate, and otherwise support the LSEA's work in order for eventual outcomes for students to be realized.

Student Outcomes

The center of Figure 1 emphasizes that the ultimate goal of LSEA leadership is to improve the outcomes experienced by students. Individually, student outcomes include progress in the general education curriculum, achievement of results identified in students' individualized educational programs (IEPs), and longer-term outcomes related to student successful transition to work and adult living. Outcomes for students as a group focus on equity, including reduction of disparities in student results across student groups as well as overall performance of the students in a community as they progress through school and transition to adulthood.

Toward a Knowledge Base for the LSEA Outcomes Model

The LSEA Model is a general theory about how LSEA leadership can contribute to student outcomes. At its foundation, the model is a hypothesis that, if an LSEA sustains high quality in each of the model's leadership outcomes, then procedural compliance and student outcomes should follow. Because the LSEA's influence over student learning is indirect, the logic that connects leadership outcomes with outcomes for students has many intermediate links:

If the LSEA Outcomes Model is valid, then the leadership outcomes that reflect defined quality dimensions (a) create conditions in the district and schools that (b) support quality in teachers' work and (c) create supportive learning environments for students that, in turn, (d) are related to improved student outcomes. Each step in this chain of impact deserves critical analysis. Figure 2 uses a simplified logic model to illustrate this chain of indirect relationships between an LSEA's leadership outcomes and the ultimate goal of student learning.

Figure 2: Simplified Logic Model Illustrating Influence Pathways that Connect LSEA Leadership to Student Outcomes
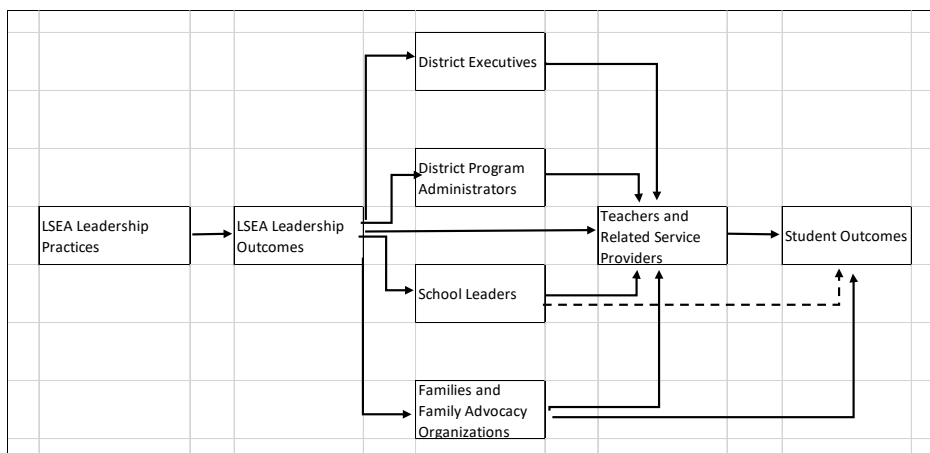
For example, consider again the leadership outcome "professional learning opportunities," It is important, first, to know whether variation in this outcome is related to intermediate outcomes in the influence pathway or to later student outcomes. Meta analyses of research on principal leadership indicates that support for professional learning does contribute significantly to student learning outcomes (Robinson, 2011). Thus, there appears to be a sound basis for including this outcome in the LSEA model.

Each of the outcomes in the LSEA model then pose similar questions: (a) What makes the leadership outcome effective? To continue the professional learning example, research has

identified several features of professional development that are related to changes in instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). (b) What conditions mediate or moderate the effectiveness of the outcome? For example, are there characteristics of a school's climate that affect whether investments in professional learning will have the intended effects on teachers' instruction? (c) How important is the change, that is, does the impact on student outcomes make a practical difference? For example, Robinson's meta-analysis of principal leadership practices clearly shows that popular leadership strategies very greatly in their actual impact on student achievement (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Knowing the degree of impact, or effect size, could help an LSEA set priorities and spend more time working toward leadership outcomes that make the most difference (Hattie, 2009).

The LSEA Model proposes partial answers to these questions about the links between leadership outcomes and ultimate student outcomes. We consider the model a work in progress, however, because leadership practices in special education have received far less research attention than instruction and intervention procedures. Our elaboration of the LSEA model reflects research and practical knowledge from a variety of sources. In some areas, research conducted with special education professionals or students receiving special education services is available and informs the model. For example, studies reviewed by Billingsley (2005; 2011) provide helpful insights into leadership practices associated with the outcome, "full and appropriate staffing." In other parts of the LSEA model, the foundation for responsibilities, outcomes, and quality criteria comes more from studies of principal leadership with general education students. In yet other areas, when less empirical is available from educational organizations, our leadership outcomes and quality criteria rely more on research and practice in

other settings. For example, while recent studies have explored leadership pipelines related to the principalship, much of the research related to the outcome, "leadership pipeline" has emerged outside education (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Van Velsor, McCauley & Ruderman, 2010). Finally, our recommendations also rely on the craft knowledge of the faculty, graduates, candidates, and colleagues in the State of Washington's ECSEL program for preparing local special education leaders (Bellamy and Iwaszuk, 2017).

Our focus on leadership outcomes suggests one strategy for augmenting the research on how LSEA leadership influences ultimate student outcomes. Most quantitative research on principal effectiveness, like much of the broader study of leaders' effectiveness, depends on teachers to rate various practices of their administrators. Concepts that emerge from clusters of these ratings are then investigated to determine if correlations exist with measures of student learning or other important outcomes. Although this approach has demonstrated that leadership practices do indeed influence student learning, the research is weakened by measurement weaknesses—ratings are typically highly intercorrelated and subject to halo effects (Favero, Meier, & O'Toole, 2016), and also by ambiguities in the leadership constructs that clusters of responses purport to measure (Robinson & Gray, 2019). Research based on measures of leadership outcomes offers a supplementary approach. One can imagine direct measures of whether leadership outcomes actually meet quality criteria without depending on staff evaluations of individual leaders. By exploring the extent to which a leadership outcome is sustained at a high level of quality in a school or district, researchers could focus on what is actually accomplished through an organization's shared leadership. Resulting measures could provide validation for more conventional measures of leadership and also offer another way of

studying how these proximal leadership outcomes affect intermediate results and, ultimately, student learning.

To summarize, we propose the LSEA Model with an understanding that our knowledge is incomplete, and the model will need continued revision as research in special education builds a more thorough understanding of the LSEA leadership outcomes that make a difference. In the meantime, we offer the model as a practical guide for local leaders and a stimulus for additional research on LSEA leadership.

Postscript: Supporting the LSEA Leadership Transition

Compared to special education teachers and university-based researchers, local administrators have been the focus of less research funding, fewer grants supporting professional preparation, and less attention from technical assistance programs. The result of this relative inattention is evident in structures supporting the profession: In recent years, the number of university preparation programs and faculty positions focused on special education administrative leadership have decreased, and fewer states now require specialized credentialing for LSEA position (Boscardin, Weir & Kusek, 2010; Crockett, 2019).

Relative neglect of the role of LSEAs could also be an unintended consequence of the way that research dissemination has been studied and practiced. Much of this literature focuses on the work of researchers and model program purveyors, who attempt to stimulate use of a particular program or practice by consulting from outside the school district (Fixsen, Blase and VanDyke, 2019). This "product-driven" approach to dissemination often fails to account for the full range of a school leader's responsibility and can result in advocacy for complex structures that support single programs, rather than comprehensive and coherent systems that address the

full range of an administrator's responsibilities. New models of research dissemination are needed that can integrate separate research-based programs more strategically into the full range of challenges for which LSEAs are responsible.

Research on top functional leaders gives reason to rely on LSEAs as agents of change toward improved student outcomes. But addressing the "last mile" in bringing special education research to typical practice also depends on significant rethinking of the LSEA, with increased emphasis on advocating for district-wide changes, developing district capacity, overseeing implementation, and ensuring continuation of research-based practices. These changes, in turn, require not only the efforts of LSEAs themselves, but also the larger system that supports their profession. To accelerate needed changes in LSEA leadership, support is needed to improve initial preparation and ongoing development for the position, a renewed commitment to research on leadership practices and outcomes through which LSEAs can impact student outcomes from their unique position in the district organization, and greater understanding by other educational leaders of the system-wide changes that are required for system-wide failure prevention and effective services for students with disabilities.

Over time, progress in special education has depended on emphasis on different aspects of the overall system. The national advances made to date reflect a braid of personnel preparation, research on effective programs, enforcement of federal and state policies, and advocacy from families and their representatives. While each of these support strands continues to be important, a renewed focus on local administrative leadership is a timely and important next step in special education's braided progress.

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Appendix A

Leadership Outcomes, and Quality Dimensions in the LSEA Model

Responsibility 1: Direction	
Outcome and Quality Dimensions	**Definition and Explanation**
Outcome 1.1. Purpose	Leading with purpose, allows the LSEA to align practices, policies and procedures in a manner which provides effective, equitable, proactive and responsive services.
a. Inspirational	The extent to which the purposes of the special education program (SEP), the school district, and individual schools provide inspiring and motivating views of student learning and students' futures.
b. All-Inclusive	The extent to which purpose statements and processes communicate that each student, including each student experiencing a disability, is included in the inspirational vision that guides the district, the SEP, and each school.
c. Sufficient Guidance	The extent to which purpose statements define values and commitments that can guide performance in ambiguous situations, when established procedures or typical professional practices do not provide sufficient information.
d. Participation	The breadth and quality of involvement by families, district staff, and others, including those with particular interest in students with disabilities, in the process of developing goal statements and aligning services to those established goals.
e. Values Aligned	The extent to which purpose statements and processes align with the values underlying special education, including universal access, collaborative individualized planning, effectiveness of services, equity and least restrictive environments.
Outcome 1.2: Strategies	As an outcome of leaders' work, strategies define actionable goals and objectives for the organization's work, normally with expected results, timelines and measures of success. For LSEAs, the outcome involves development of a departmental plan for the SEP as well as supporting the development of a district's strategic plan and improvement plans in each school.
a. Responsive	The extent to which proposed goals and strategies reflect identified local needs and opportunities. Responsive goals and strategies comprehensively address the full scope of the organization's responsibilities, including activities that should be maintained as well as those targeted for change.
b. Feasible	The capacity of the organization to implement a proposed strategy, together with staff confidence that the work is feasible within the time and resources available. The needed capabilities include leadership, staff skills, tools and programs, and supports for new ways of working.
c. Specific and measurable	The extent to which strategy and goals make it clear what is to be achieved by whom within what time frame. While such goals often specify ultimate outcomes, such as degree of student learning, the most useful goals typically focus on the changes in staff practices that are expected to result in improved student learning.
Outcome 1.3. Effective Practice Information	Effective practice information encompasses knowledge of research, model programs, practices used in particularly successful districts, and new approaches to emerging challenges. This knowledge allows the LSEA to compare the SEP's existing practices with what is possible and identify opportunities for improvement. Best practice knowledge also supports the LSEA's work within

Responsibility 1: Direction

Outcome and Quality Dimensions	Definition and Explanation
	the larger district and with schools by helping to communicate possibilities and identify requirements for use of new approaches.
a. Early information about emerging practices	The extent to which the LSEA and SEP staff maintain awareness of emerging knowledge about programs and services for the full range of needs experienced by students with disabilities.
b. Collaborative evaluation for local use	The extent to which practices are evaluated for usefulness in the particular district's situation, including potential for improvement over current results, the values on which the practice is based, and how the procedures might fit with local resources and constraints.
c. Effective communication about useful practices	The extent to which new practices are communicated effectively within the SEP and across programs for consideration as improvement plans and priorities for change are developed in the SEP, individual schools and the district.
Outcome 1.4: Workplace Norms	As an outcome of leaders' work, organizational culture norms are the desired and customary ways of working with others in an organization. Norms provide a foundation for collaborative work, mutual trust, and shared commitment to organizational vision, mission, and goals. For LSEAs, this outcome includes norms within the SEP as well as efforts to influence and help develop norms for the district and each school.
a. Norms produce a supportive staff culture	The extent to which espoused and apparent norms, taken together, can be reasonably expected to produce a staff culture characterized by positivity, mutual trust, shared learning, and professional community.
b. Norms defined, communicated, and modeled	The extent to which leaders define, communicate, and model desired behavioral norms, and the extent to which these norms are understood within the organization.
c. Accountability to norms	The extent to which people in the organization have a reasonable expectation that something will happen when norms are violated, that is, that formal or informal leaders will ensure that some follow-up occurs.

Responsibility 2: Systems

Outcome and Quality Dimensions	Definition and Explanation
Outcome 2.1: Organizational Architecture	Organizational architecture structures how the work of a school, district, or SEP is to be done by defining specialized roles for individuals and teams, specifying standards for performance in those roles, and providing coordinating mechanisms, such as procedures, timelines, and communication flows that align efforts across the organization. This outcome includes the LSEA's structuring of the SEP as well as support for structures in the district and various schools that facilitate services for student with disabilities.
a. Appropriate for the work	The extent to which the organizational architecture is comprehensive in planning for all the work associated with the unit's responsibilities and goals, and that various procedures, roles, structures, and coordinating mechanisms are designed to fit the kinds of work to be done.

Responsibility 2: Systems	
Outcome and Quality Dimensions	**Definition and Explanation**
b. Clear responsibilities	How well individual and team responsibilities are communicated, including expected outcomes, required procedures, timelines, and authority for decision making.
c. Coordinated	How well work is aligned with other tasks, with other programs in the district, and across organizational levels, including alignment of work assignments, timelines, resource commitments, family communications, and professional development.
d. Monitored	The effectiveness of an organization's measures, timelines, and routines for communicating about work accomplished, providing and receiving feedback, and making adjustments to strategy or structure.
Outcome 2.2: Frameworks for Compliance	The outcome, "frameworks for compliance" comprises the supports that are provided by the LSEA to identify, scaffold, and ensure performance of the practices of various staff members that are needed for the district to comply with special education procedural requirements.
a. Sufficient guidance	The extent to which procedures, training, manuals, and guidance documents provide information that staff need to recognize situations with compliance implications and respond in accordance with district policies. When guidance is sufficient, each district staff member has information about what compliant practices require in their own work.
b. Useful tools	The extent to which tools, (such as meeting agendas, checklists, sample products, and event calendars) give effective, real-time assistance to individuals as they engage in practices that are governed by compliance requirements.
c. Performance audits	The extent to which actual practices in the district are assessed for compliance and used to improve guidance and tools and to correct problems.
d. Compliant reports	The timeliness, accuracy and quality of required reports associated with procedural compliance and special education outcomes.
Outcome 2.3. Strategic resourcing	The strategic resourcing outcome encompasses decisions about how people, time, and money will be garnered and allocated to achieve goals for special education. For LSEAs, the outcome encompasses resource management within the SEP as well as support and influence in allocation of resources in schools and across the district.
a. Accurate forecasting	The accuracy with which future resource needs are projected, including the number of students who will need special education services, the expected intensity of those services, the cost of implementing new requirements or program enhancements, and new staff required to address the projected needs.
b. Resource needs communicated	How well resource needs and potential impacts of meeting those needs are communicated to school and district decision makers, granting agencies, and other potential supporters.
c. Allocations aligned with priorities	The extent to which resources are aligned with current best evidence about what supports learning for students with disabilities, while also complying with procedural requirements and enabling investment in program improvement.
Outcome 2.4. Complex problem-solving	The outcome, complex problem solving, encompasses how the LSEA and other SEP staff respond to current student outcomes and emerging situations—what they select for attention, what changes they hope to achieve in the way events unfold, and what actions they take to accomplish hoped-for changes. For LSEAs,

Responsibility 2: Systems

Outcome and Quality Dimensions	Definition and Explanation
	the outcome involves both problem solving in the SEP and support for district- and school-level problem solving.
a. Focus on high-leverage problems	The extent to which problem-solving efforts are focused on issues in which closing the gap between current and desired practices or conditions could have a significant impact on student learning and other valued outcomes.
b. Prioritized solution requirements	The extent to which the desired results of a problem-solving effort have been defined, including defining and prioritizing various solution requirements—constraints and criteria to be accommodated—in order to close the gap between the actual and desired conditions.
c. Creative theory of action	The skillful use of personal and organizational leadership strategies to address as many of the solution requirements as possible, including those that seem in contradiction to each other.
d. Provisions for learning from experience	How well information about the impact of problem-solving activities on staff and other participants is mined for lessons about future leadership approaches, in the absence of long-term data on the ultimate impact on students.
Outcome 2.5 A Stream of Improvements	This outcome is a set of regular improvements in the way that special education services are provided and managed in the district that are expected to improve ultimate outcomes for students with disabilities. The LSEAs responsibilities for this outcome include improvements led by the LSEA as well as the LSEA's support for improvements at the district and school levels.
a. Practice-focused	The extent to which improvement efforts are focused on specific changes in practices that are to be used by those providing, supporting, or managing service delivery.
b. High Impact	The extent to which evidence indicates that a new practice could have a significant impact on student learning once it is fully implemented.
c. Feasible	The feasibility of implementing a proposed improvement in practice, taking into account such factors and staff capabilities, history with the practice, resources, and support among affected constituencies.
d. Supported	The extent to which the implementation of new practices is supported with adequate materials, tools, training, coaching, and time.

Responsibility 3: Instruction and Services

Outcome and Quality Dimensions	Definition and Explanation
Outcome 3.1. Students qualified for services	Achieving this outcome means that students who qualify for special education are identified and evaluated, services are planned in compliance with federal and state requirements, and procedures at both school and district level create reliable systems for evaluation and individual planning.
a. Opportunities for family participation	The extent to which the SEP's procedures and actions enable full family participation in evaluation and service planning and comply with regulations related to notice and participation opportunities.
b. Comprehensive evaluation	The extent to which evaluations are sufficiently comprehensive to determine if a student is eligible for special education and to provide substantive information about specific strengths and areas for growth that can inform collaborative individualized planning.

Responsibility 3: Instruction and Services

Outcome and Quality Dimensions	Definition and Explanation
c. Collaborative individualized planning	The extent to which statutory requirements are fully implemented, so that families, individuals who have information to support individualized educational planning, and those who will be responsible for plan implementation are involved in collaborative decisions about goals and services for each student Pre-K-21.
Instructional problem-solving	The extent to which the evaluation process and data consider the legal and professional obligations embedded in the special education process. The LSEA supports the development and implementation of relevant assessment processes that influence IEP development.
Outcome 3.2 Individual Program Planning	As an outcome of LSEA leadership, Individual Program Planning is the framework of procedures, materials, tools, protocols, relationships, and materials that support district-wide development of compliant (Endrew) and effective IEPs, encompassing valid and reliable assessments, collaborative planning, documentation, and accountability for implementation. The framework includes collaborative decision-making for annual goals and least restrictive environment.
a. Procedural Implementation	The extent to which the LSEA effectively supports teams to implement procedurally compliant and instructionally effective individual education programs.
b. Data-based individualization	The extent to which an individual educational program team understands and implements an increasing intensity of services problem-solving framework.
c. Collaborative individualized planning	The extent to which statutory requirements are fully implemented, so that families, individuals who have information to support individualized educational planning, and those who will be responsible for plan implementation are involved in collaborative decisions about goals and services for each student Pre-K-21.
Outcome 3.3. Multi-tiered framework for intensification	A multi-tiered framework for managing intensification is a system for organizing and leading a variety of different programs and interventions for students who require different levels of intensity to succeed. As an outcome of LSEA leadership, an MTSS framework provides program definitions, resource allocations, programs, tools, data, and leadership for coordinating service planning and delivery across levels of intensification and encompasses procedures in the SEP, individual schools, and district administration.
a. Leadership and commitment to core principles	The extent to which key district administrators understand and collectively support the critical principles, components, and operations of an MTSS system.
b. Implementation capacity	The extent to which the resources needed to implement an MTSS system are committed and aligned, including sufficient staff, materials, tools and professional development.
c. Team coordination for day-to-day implementation	The extent to which comprehensive coordination is available at the school level, including team membership, structures, and routines, as well as the breadth of participation and capabilities that team members bring to the work.
d. Evaluation of implementation and results	The extent to which the district monitors how well the MTSS program is implemented and what results are being achieved through that implementation.
Outcom3.4	This outcome includes data systems that help individual teachers, school teams, and school and district leaders make decisions about tiers of service needed by individual students in various subject and behavior domains, as well as decisions

Responsibility 3: Instruction and Services

Outcome and Quality Dimensions	Definition and Explanation
Data Systems Supporting Intensification	about student progress and modifications needed as services are provided. Thus, the outcome encompasses measurement tools, practices, and routines for data use
a. Assessment quality	The extent to which assessment instruments used for screening and progress monitoring result in reliable data that are valid for the purposes for which they are used.
b. Data usability	The extent to which data are available to decision makers in a timely way, summarized and organized at an appropriate level of scale to support decision making, and available to a broad group of users who can bring different perspectives to interpretation.
c. Data use routines	The quality of data use to make decisions about adjustments in interventions or tiers of service, including frequency of progress monitoring, who is involved in examining data, and how decision-making is linked to data analysis.
Outcome 3.5 Programs and tools for intensification	The outcome, "programs and tools for intensification," means the array of instructional programs, procedures, and tools which the special education program sanctions and provides support for use. For LSEAs, the outcome includes tools used the SEP to support special educators, programs and tools used at the school level to support students, and programs adopted for general use in the district.
a. Evidence of effectiveness	The quality of evidence that the tool or program has worked in other settings and can be reasonably expected to work in the district's context, including effectiveness with students experiencing disabilities.
b. Clear purpose linked to student learning goals	The degree of alignment between school goals and tool purpose. Useful tools directly address the district's academic standards and its goals for students' personal, social, civic, and ethical learning.
c. Application to diverse learners	The extent to which curriculum materials and other instructional tools support learning for the diverse students served in most schools.
d. Tool usability	The extent to which use of programs and tools is realistic, with a focus on such issues as clear and practical examples, misconception alerts, and cognitive load.
Outcome 3.6 Comprehensive array of services	This outcome addresses the LSEA's responsibility to ensure that the school district provides the variety and quality of services needed to address the needs and educational goals of each student eligible for special education services.
a. Requisite variety	The extent to which the services provided by the district provide a continuum of services that is sufficient to address the full range of student needs for supplemental, related, and other services that students with disabilities need in order to participate in school and meet individualized goals for learning.
b. Service quality	The extent to which each educational and related service offered by the district incorporates standards of relevant professional groups, utilizes research-based practices, and is supported by relevant professional expertise.
c. Service integration and inclusion	The extent to which specialized educational and support services are integrated with general classroom instruction, school experiences, and administrative arrangements in the district and its schools.

Responsibility 4: Professional Capacity	
Outcome and Quality Dimensions	**Definition and Explanation**
Outcome 4.1. Staffing	By full and appropriate staffing, we mean that sufficient positions are available to address special education needs, and these positions are filled with qualified individuals whose skills and commitments match the district's priorities and values. The outcome includes staffing for the SEP as well as at the school level and in other district departments that serve students with disabilities.
a. Sufficient positions	The extent to which the number and type of positions match the expected workload in special education with caseloads that are within professional guidelines.
b. Qualified applicants	The availability of qualified applicants for vacant positions and the quality, timeliness, and scope of recruitment activities that ensure a sufficient number of qualified applicants.
c. Smart selection	The effectiveness of processes for selection among applicants, including clarity of information about the capabilities and commitments that are needed, guidance for selection committees, and compliance with equal opportunity requirements.
d. First year supports	The extent to which new staff receive support and mentoring that facilitates their successful entry into new positions.
Outcome 4.2. Working Conditions	By supportive working conditions we mean the work environment and the conditions that support or detract from individual and team performance, including those that are established through policy and collective bargaining as well as the conditions that are more directly affected by the LSEA and other supervisors of staff who support students with disabilities in schools and throughout the district.
a. Shared understanding of roles and responsibilities	The extent to which special educators, general educators, principals, and other administrators have similar expectations for how special educators work with colleagues across a variety of settings and tiers of service.
b. Time for planning and collaboration	The extent to which sufficient time is available in the work day for staff to plan for both individual practice and collaborative work with other professionals.
c. Consistent administrative support	The extent to which special educators experience alignment in expectations and communication among the principal, LSEA, department chair, and others regarding the role and priorities of special educators.
Outcome 4.3. Professional learning	For special education, this outcome involves opportunities for staff throughout the district to develop the capacity to succeed with an increasingly wide range of students, learning goals, operational domains, and situations—in other words to expand individual and collective capabilities to address whatever new student needs and goals arise.
a. Resources and opportunities for professional learning	The extent to which time, funding, leadership, technology support, and other resources are available to support individual and group learning.
b. Learning goals grounded in expert knowledge	The extent to which goals for professional learning focus on applying research-based approaches to problems of practice, and whether the use of those practices is supported by tools and routines that facilitate implementation.
c. Effective learning facilitation	The quality of professional development programs, coaching, and mentoring as well as the procedures and routines that support learning through individual and group inquiry into problems of practice.

Responsibility 4: Professional Capacity

Outcome and Quality Dimensions	Definition and Explanation
Outcome 4.4. Reliable Performance	Reliable performance exists when individuals regularly complete assigned work, respond effectively to unplanned events, and achieve expected results. Since achieving results frequently involves a measure of innovation in response to new developments, reliability depends on a sufficient breadth of skills to adapt to the unexpected. For LSEAs, reliable performance involves both supervision of staff in the SEP and providing support to supervisors in other district departments schools where staff serve students with disabilities.
a. Clear definition of expected practice	The extent to which the district (or SEP's) view of effective professional practice is defined in sufficient detail to communicate what is expected and to enable fair assessment of whether an individual is meeting expectations.
b. Multifaceted performance assessment	The extent to which assessment of individual performance in relation to what is expected is an ongoing process of accumulating evidence through multiple methods, such as frequent observations, review of results achieved, new capabilities developed, and other contributions to the organization's goals.
c. Prompt and actionable feedback	The extent to which each data collection event is followed quickly with feedback that identifies areas of strength and possible areas for future attention.
d. Accountability for persistent performance problems	The extent to which supervisors respond effectively when performance problems persist while implementing established personnel procedures.
Outcome 4.5. Leadership Pipeline	A leadership pipeline exists when individuals throughout the organization have opportunities to develop the capabilities and accomplishments that qualify them for the next level of leadership within the organization. For the LSEA, this outcome involves coordinating leadership development opportunities for special education staff in schools, in the SEP, and in other units.
a. Expected leadership capabilities defined	The extent to which the SEP (or district) has defined and communicated the capabilities that leaders in the organization are expected to exhibit, thus making expectations transparent for aspiring leaders.
b. A progression of leadership responsibilities	The extent to which opportunities to lead in the district are available, sequenced progressively, and communicated effectively.
c. Effective supports for learning from experience	The extent to which the LSEA and SEP help aspiring leaders learn from challenging leadership assignments, including regular feedback, coaching or mentoring, access to supplemental academic learning, guidelines for effective reflection, and collaborative groups whose members share learning experiences.

Responsibility 5: Collaboration

Outcome and Quality Dimensions	Definition and Explanation
Outcome 5.1. Relationships	The collaboration and relationships outcome encompasses the network of relationships that connect the LSEA and other special educators to staff and administrators in the school district, students and families, and others in the

Responsibility 5: Collaboration

Outcome and Quality Dimensions	Definition and Explanation
	community. The outcome also includes the structures, tools, and guidance that support such collaboration and relationships.
a. Relationship effectiveness	The extent to which cross-level and multi-functional relationships connect the LSEA and SEP in positive relationships with key individuals across departments and throughout the district, with each school, with general and special education teachers, families of students with disabilities, and others in the community whose interests affect students and families with disabilities.
b. Community and family engagement	The extent to which the LSEA and SEP staff are actively involved in community activities that affect students with disabilities, and to which SEP staff facilitate opportunities for families and other community members to bring varied perspectives to school and district conversations and planning meetings.
c. Social capital	The extent to which members of the special education community—families, students, teachers, community service providers, and so on—are connected to each other in networks of trusting relationships. This quality dimension goes beyond developing the LSEA's own interpersonal relationships, and focuses on the ability to connect members of the community to each other.
d. Community partnership activities and services	The extent to which the LSEA and SEP facilitate development of agreements between community agencies and the district that create valued opportunities for students with disabilities in and out of school.
Outcome 5.2 Frameworks for collaboration	By frameworks for collaboration, we mean the guidance, tools, procedures, and routines for how special education staff will work together within special education teams, with general education teachers and administrators, and with families and other community members. The purpose of these frameworks is to increase the ability of groups of people to work together toward shared goals for students, and in ways that build capacity for future collaboration.
a. Expectations for collaboration	The extent to which the LSEA communicates that collaboration is the expected way to work across differences as SEP staff work with others to achieve the district's goals for student with disabilities
b. Collaboration tools and routines	The extent to which assistance for successful collaboration is provided through tools, protocols, instructions, planning procedures, and so on, and provide practical guidance for the process of collaboration in various contexts and that help individuals develop collaboration skills.
c. Communication supported	The extent to which supports exist for regular communication with and among individuals whose collaboration is important in the SEP's work, including provisions sufficient time to work together, standing meetings, electronic communications, and opportunities to meet and work across organizational boundaries.
Outcome 5.3. Conflict engagement	The outcome, "conflict engagement," focuses on the LSEA's responsibility to address conflicts that are not adequately managed by school-level professionals, and involves ensuring a fair and compliant process as families negotiate differences with the school district in either informal negotiations or resolution of formal complaints.
a. Framework for conflict engagement	The extent to which there is clear communication and a shared understanding about what constitutes a conflict situation, who is responsible for leading responses to various kinds or levels of conflict, and the general approaches and decision rules that guide responses by SEP staff.

Responsibility 5: Collaboration	
Outcome and Quality Dimensions	**Definition and Explanation**
b. Analyzing and understanding conflict situations	The extent to which the SEP and LSEA quickly notice and develop a shared understanding of each conflict situation that has potential negative impacts on the SEP's goals.
c. Appropriate conflict-specific engagement strategies	The extent to which the LSEA's selects from a broad repertoire of strategies an approach that matches each conflict situation, including consideration of factors such as time pressure, importance of the issue, importance of the continuing relationship among parties, and relative power.
d. Effective representation of district interests	The extent to which the LSEA's engagement with conflict situations ensures that the district complies with applicable regulations while maintaining an ability to focus resources on the district's priority goals.
Outcome 5.4 Public engagement	This outcome is achieved when the LSEA and SEP staff provide an effective voice for the interests of the school district as well as students with disabilities within the district, with schools, and in the larger community.
a. Context awareness and issues identification	The extent to which the LSEA and SEP staff maintain up-to-date knowledge of issues and emerging topics that could contribute to or detract from goals of the district, the SEP, and individuals with disabilities in the community.
b. Issue analysis	The quality of ongoing collaborative processes for understanding the possible impact of emerging issues, the history and current support or opposition for the issue, and what would constitute progress from the LSEA's perspective.
c. Issue advancement	The extent to which actions taken by the LSEA and SEP influence events related to issues affecting students with disabilities, and includes consideration of how interests are communicated, engagement of constituents, and operation within the constraints of district policy.
Community engagement	The extent to which actions taken by the LSEA influence the ongoing collaborative processes for the understanding of issues of interest to the community, the history, and current support or opposition for the issue including providing opportunities for listening to and engaging community members.

Responsibility 6: Managing Self	
Outcome and Quality Dimensions	**Definition and Explanation**
Outcome 6.1. Leadership identity	This outcome addresses the LSEA's development of their own leadership knowledge, views and practices. One's leadership identity integrates personal, organizational, professional, and public values in a comprehensive approach to understanding and responding to leadership situations that involve complex choices among competing values.
a. Situational analysis and ethical decision making	The comprehensiveness and quality of reasoning about what constitutes morally and ethically appropriate ways of responding in leadership situations, with consideration of professional values, legal requirements, and the facts of each particular situation.
b. Transparent communication about value laden decisions	The extent to which others who are affected by leaders' ethical decisions are given opportunities for involvement in deliberation about what to do and informed of the rationale for leaders' actions.

Responsibility 6: Managing Self	
Outcome and Quality Dimensions	**Definition and Explanation**
Outcome 6.2. Motivated and skillful learning	By "motivated and skillful learning" we mean a habit of identifying and developing individual capabilities that improve effectiveness in a leadership position.
a. Responsibility-focused learning	The extent to which the capabilities that an individual selects for development are relevant to position requirements, responsive to situational developments, and integrated with existing knowledge and skills.
b. Learning from experience	The extent to which learning is supported by habits and strategies that increase learning from experience, including seeking out challenging tasks, getting ongoing feedback, involving others, and using reflection to distill and articulate lessons.
c. Learning in relationships	The extent to which an individual has cultivated a network of developmental relationships that support learning, including mentors, coaches, colleagues, supervisors, and communities of practice, and the extent to which these relationships support learning through feedback, exemplary models, encouragement, and different perspectives.
d. Applied conceptual skills	The extent to which a leader uses the profession's theories, conceptual frameworks, and analysis models to size up emerging situations; plan, explain, and justify leadership responses to those situations; and take lessons from the experience.
Outcome 6.3: Cultural competence and humility	The cultural competence and humility outcome highlights the LSEA's commitment to support learning for each and every student, regardless of race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status. Individual cultural competence is actualized through the LSEA's effort to make effective instruction available to each student; to challenge and remove institutional, organizational, and attitudinal barriers to learning; and to create work environments and partnerships that are inclusive and welcoming for diverse individuals and communities in the district.
a. Cultural self-awareness	The extent to which the LSEA's actions reflect an understanding of her or his own identity and cultural origins and build awareness of the perspectives, privileges, and barriers to learning that affect professional and leadership actions.
b. Understanding assets and barriers to participation and learning	The extent to which the LSEA recognizes, names, and communicates about specific opportunities and barriers that affect full participation and successful learning for individuals, student groups, and families.
c. Model courageous response to participation barriers	The extent to which the LSEA's commitment to cultural competence is evident in a pattern of respectful listening, collaborative work across differences, and courageous actions to confront and alter conditions that limit individual opportunities because of race, class, culture and language, gender, sexual orientation, and disability or special status.
Outcome 6.4. Effective Self-deployment	Effective self-deployment means that the LSEA's attention, time, energy, affect, and skills are used strategically in response to changing situational circumstances, all with the aim of achieving goals for the SEP and, ultimately, the district's goals for students with disabilities.
a. Situational responsiveness	The extent to which the LSEA matches leadership actions to circumstances, using strong situational awareness to select appropriate actions from a deep repertoire of capabilities.

Responsibility 6: Managing Self	
Outcome and Quality Dimensions	**Definition and Explanation**
b. Self-awareness and self-regulation	The effectiveness of the LSEA's habits of self-management, so that use of time, emotions, and energy is intentional and focused on what's most important for SEP and district goals.
c. Emphasize strengths	The extent to which the LSEA's relies on leadership approaches that emphasize individual strengths while compensating effectively for areas of weakness.
d. Actions grounded in leadership theory and research	The extent to which the LSEA's practices apply research and theory in order to respond effectively to leadership challenges and situations.