
Improving the Results for Students with Disabilities: A Road Map for Educators

Laurie VanderPloeg

We are all striving to improve outcomes for all learners, particularly those with disabilities. The Office of Special Education Programs initiative to facilitate systematic improvement plans is at the forefront of efforts. This session will feature an overview of OSEP's efforts to raise the bar for state special education programs to improve the educational outcomes for America's 6.5 million children and youth with disabilities, including our individuals with Down syndrome. This update will feature an understanding of the specific frameworks and efforts in place, an update on what OSEP is witnessing across the country in success of this work, and the next steps or stages in place to ensure that all stakeholders are working together to ensure that everyone has the necessary supports to address the needs of all children, including those with disabilities.

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will gain an understanding of OSEP's current efforts to facilitate state systematic improvement plans targeting the needs of students with disabilities.
- Participants will be able to identify and understand how OSEP's leadership is having a direct impact on the supports and services in place and being provided to facilitate positive outcomes for our children and youth with disabilities.
- Participants will understand the vision and the additional steps underway to continue to build upon OSEP's previous successes to further the positive outcomes for all children.

About the Presenter:



Laurie VanderPloeg is the director of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), in the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), at the U.S. Department of Education. VanderPloeg ensures the effective implementation of OSEP's legislative mission, advises the assistant secretary on federal education policy related to individuals with disabilities, and provides leadership in addressing issues of American education for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities through OSEP activities and within the context of the policies of OSERS, the Department, and Congress.

Prior to joining the department, VanderPloeg served as director of special education at Kent Intermediate School District (Kent ISD) in Michigan. Also at Kent ISD, she served as assistant director for monitoring, compliance and parent support. Prior to Kent ISD, she served as a local supervisor of special education, and a special education teacher in the Grand Rapids Public Schools. VanderPloeg also served as an adjunct professor at Grand Valley State University in the special education administration program. She is a parent of an adult with disabilities. VanderPloeg graduated from Grand Valley State University with a master's in special education administration and a bachelor's degree from Grand Valley State College. She holds administrative approvals as both supervisor and director of special education and certification in learning disabilities, cognitive impairment, emotional impairment, and K-8 regular education.