

Maryland's SES data dream

Maryland's supplemental services program takes data-driven decision-making to a whole new level.

With a comprehensive data system and monitoring cycle for both schools and providers, Maryland officials said they have 67.7 percent participation, more than triple the national average.

"We are not gentle with vendors or with districts," said Ann Chafin, assistant state superintendent for student, family and school support. "A huge percentage of Maryland's Title I dollars can go to this program, and we are not going to see it wasted."

Supplemental services have been wrapped into the state's comprehensive data system, which includes detailed information on each provider's program, contact information, schools of operation and progress goals for each student, created with the school. Jane Fleming, SES coordinator, said less than a third of the 35 companies that applied last year became providers, and each is reviewed regularly to ensure they meet contract requirements and student goals.

"With three or four keystrokes we are able to test the effectiveness of services anywhere in the state," Fleming said. "That monitoring instrument has really paved the way for implementation of the program, as well as providing us with ways to improve the program."

The state monitors each school's implementation with three site visits and reviews any district with leftover money from the 20 percent set-aside at the end of the year. If the district has insufficient participation, attendance or monitoring, the state forces the district to roll leftover money into the next year's SES fund, rather than general Title I money. It's a difference lawmakers are considering extending in the NCLB reauthorization.

Other states are beginning to explore similar data systems, in part through two federal pilot programs which allow districts in need of improvement to offer SES and allow schools in some districts to offer tutoring before transfers in the order of sanctions.

"We're finding that by paying attention to various elements and exerting a strong state role, you can make a difference," said Gene Wilhoit of the Council of Chief State School Officers.

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