



Fundamental Attributes of Exemplary State Special Education Dispute Resolution Systems

Between Fall 2008 and Summer 2010, CADRE analyzed state special education dispute resolution systems and their components, with the objective of identifying particularly effective systems and creating a resource that other states could draw on when considering improvement activities. Four states with exemplary systems and practices were identified (IA, OK, PA and WI), profiles were developed and a database of resources from these state systems was created. Analysis of common features across these systems identified a number of elements as being fundamental to their success, including the following:

- Oversight Guided by a Clear and Integrated Vision of the System
 - Management structure that includes a specific individual or group having responsibility and authority for coordination and performance of the system
 - Reliable financial and personnel resources adequate to support all system components
 - Transparency in the design, implementation, performance and evaluation of the system
 - Use of evaluation data to guide continuing system improvement efforts
 - Active and *meaningful* engagement of a broadly representative group of system stakeholders in planning, promotion, evaluation and improvement activities
- A Continuum of Dispute Resolution Options and Practices
 - Preventative or “upstream” dispute resolution approaches, including early informal assistance and resources, offering alternatives to due process and formal complaint procedures
 - A single “point of entry” for families, including personal assistance to provide information, help identify and resolve issues, or suggest an appropriate dispute resolution option
 - Educational materials comparing dispute resolution procedures and describing how to use them effectively
 - Information and training in collaborative strategies, including dispute prevention skills, available to educators and parents
- Standards, Training and Technical Assistance
 - Relevant experience, education and training requirements are in place and utilized for each role and position in the dispute resolution system
 - Clearly articulated standards and guidance for performance, practice and expected results for all personnel
 - Continuing education and professional development opportunities that respond to identified dispute resolution and prevention training needs
 - Technical assistance at the state and local level that leads to improved performance in specific activities and in overall system functioning
- Public Awareness, Outreach and Stakeholder Involvement
 - The state education agency/lead agency and stakeholder organizations (i.e., PTIs, CPRCs) collaborate on resource development to ensure understandability and relevance for the widest audience possible
 - Documentation of dispute resolution options and practices are readily available to the public in accessible formats
 - The system makes use of a wide range of outreach activities and information dissemination methods
 - Educational materials that compare dispute resolution procedures and describe how to use them effectively are available
 - A cross-section of individual and organizational resources are used to support outreach to stakeholders
- Collection, Analysis and Reporting of Evaluation Data for Continuous Quality Improvement
 - Standards that incorporate benchmarks and assess against “best performance” measures
 - Mechanisms for data collection and tracking that provide systematic information about individual dispute resolution practices and practitioners, as well as the performance of the system as a whole
 - Procedures for assessing how well the standards, personnel guidance, training and technical assistance are achieving the organizational mission

