



City of New York

OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

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IT AUDIT AND RESEARCH

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Deputy Comptroller for Audit

Audit Report on the
Department of Education's
Special Education Student
Information System

7A12-114

July 22, 2013

<http://comptroller.nyc.gov>



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER
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NEW YORK, N.Y. 10007-2341

John C. Liu
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July 22, 2013

To the Residents of the City of New York:

My office has audited the Department of Education's (DOE) Special Education Student Information System (SEIS) to determine whether it meets the overall goals to ensure efficient and reliable information to meet court-mandated State and Federal reporting requirements; exists in a secure environment; and provides effective and available access to its users. We audit entities such as DOE as a means of ensuring that systems and technological development and resources of City agencies are cost-effective, efficient, secure, and operate in the best interest of the public.

In 2008, DOE contracted with Maximus, Inc. to implement SEIS, which would facilitate efficient and reliable information for DOE to handle the administrative requirements associated with the Special Education Program. However, the audit determined that SEIS is not meeting its overall goal, which is to provide its users with an efficient and reliable system that meets court-mandated State and Federal reporting requirements. Moreover, DOE did not take necessary steps to ensure that the SEIS system and its data are protected and secured. Our audit also revealed that users are not satisfied with SEIS. For example, our review identified problems concerning data integrity and system availability as well as timely resolution of technical problems associated with pre-identified bugs and basic user functions in SEIS. The audit contains 17 recommendations that, if implemented, should improve the availability, stability, and usability of SEIS by solving technical issues and addressing needed improvements in SEIS training, usage, and support.

The results of the audit have been discussed with DOE officials, and their comments have been considered in preparing this report. Their complete written response is attached to this report.

If you have any questions concerning this report, please e-mail my audit bureau at audit@comptroller.nyc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Liu".

John C. Liu

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**ADDENDUM II - Department of Education March 27, 2012 Request for
Audit Postponement**

THE CITY OF NEW YORK OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER IT AUDIT AND RESEARCH

Audit Report on the Department of Education's Special Education Student Information System

7A12-114

AUDIT REPORT IN BRIEF

In 2008, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) contracted with Maximus, Inc. to implement a Special Education Student Information System (SEGIS) that would facilitate efficient and reliable information for the Department to handle the administrative requirements associated with the Special Education Program. The system requires a dynamic workflow process—from the time in which students are referred to Special Education for services, assessment, conferencing, recommendations, placement, and provisions—through to service delivery phases and to meet court-mandated State and Federal reporting requirements. DOE's Office of Special Education Initiatives is responsible for establishing policies and procedures for students with disabilities in both public and non-public school settings. The contract, which started September 1, 2008, is near the end of its initial five-year term expiring on November 1, 2013. The total cost of the SEGIS contract is approximately \$55 million.

As of January 24, 2013, DOE has spent a total of \$67 million on the contract plus two amendments. The contract also provided for two additional two-year renewal options (at the DOE's discretion) with the first renewal not to exceed \$5.7 million and the second not to exceed \$6.3 million.

Audit Findings and Conclusion

The audit determined that SEGIS is not meeting its overall goal, which is to provide its users with an efficient and reliable system that meets court-mandated State and Federal reporting requirements. Moreover, DOE did not take necessary steps to ensure that the SEGIS system and its data are protected and secured. Our audit also revealed that users are not satisfied with SEGIS. For example, our review identified problems concerning data integrity and system availability as well as timely resolution of technical problems associated with pre-identified bugs¹ and basic user functions in SEGIS.

¹ A software bug is an error, flaw, failure, or fault in a computer program or system that produces an incorrect or unexpected result, or causes it to behave in unintended ways.

Audit Recommendations

This report makes a total of 17 recommendations. DOE should:

- Immediately perform an on-site review of Maximus's operations to ensure that Maximus's policies and procedures comply with DOE directives and contract requirements.
- Review its internet service performance and track its stability, along with the network usage, at various schools to improve upon the SESIS operating environment.
- Actively solicit feedback from SESIS users to identify issues for immediate resolution.
- Establish a special team composed of technical and operational specialists to conduct an extensive review and identification of all data and synchronization deficiencies and immediately correct these issues.
- Make certain that every reported report content or format discrepancy be thoroughly investigated and resolved.
- Address technical issues involving other systems (i.e., ATS², CAP³, and SEC⁴), which interact with SESIS. All interface issues should be investigated, remediated (if required), tested, and tracked for assurance of data accuracy.
- Develop/enhance its SESIS training program to assist users in printing from SESIS.
- Track and investigate each SESIS printing issue for resolution.
- Encourage users to communicate with its Help Desk whenever they encounter a SESIS printing problem to promote efficient use of the system.
- Establish a policy to ensure all new users are trained before they are allowed access to SESIS or any application to avoid misuse of the system and to promote usage efficiency.
- Make improvements to its training program to improve system usability.
- Improve training communications to the user community by developing a plan to improve on its training announcements to SESIS users.
- Make a sustained effort in promoting awareness of its SESIS Help Desk facility to its users;
- Establish and promote a feedback facility for SESIS users in providing DOE with a measure of its Help Desk effectiveness;
- Track and monitor all SESIS issues to detect patterns that would assist DOE in detecting inefficiencies or points of potential problems;
- Establish and promote a facility for SESIS users to submit comments or recommendations to DOE on enhancements, improvements, or general issues related to SESIS; and

² Automate the Schools (ATS) is a school-based administrative system which standardizes and automates the collection and reporting of data for all students in the New York City public schools.

³ Child Assistance Program is a computerized data collection system that was developed and implemented as a result of the 1979 Jose P. federal court decision, mandating the New York City Department of Education (DOE) to develop a data system to track the process students go through when referred for possible special education services.

⁴ Special Education Component (SEC) - of the Student Information System.

- Develop a comprehensive strategy plan to address needed improvements in SESIS training, usage, and support as well as an action plan to remedy the deficiencies currently reported by SESIS users.

DOE Response

In their response, DOE officials stated:

“The findings in this report are in no way a surprise as the timing of the audit practically guaranteed such a result. The timing of the audit was premature and served neither agency’s legitimate interests. The Department sought to persuade the Comptroller of such at the March 19, 2012 entrance conference, and then by way of a formal appeal to the Deputy Comptroller. The audit was premature as SESIS was so new that all planned modules had not yet been developed and rolled out; and, the Department was involved in active litigation on issues having significant overlap with and impact on the subject matter of the pending audit. The Comptroller seemed to think that the Department was claiming that there was a legal bar to the audit. This was not the case. The matter, rather, turned on whether each agency’s resources would be well spent on pursuing an audit of an unfinished data system and whether, ultimately, useful recommendations would result from those efforts.”

If the matter turned on “the unfinished data system” as DOE claims, it is unclear why DOE stated the exact opposite in its March 27, 2012 request for a postponement. In an email accompanying the original request, DOE stated “Per our discussion...at last week’s entrance conference, attached is a letter requesting consideration of a postponement of the SESIS audit, predominately due to active litigation between the NYCDOE and the UFT on issues having significant overlap with and impact on the subject matter of the pending audit. “ The official letter similarly stated that the more critical reason for a postponement was that “the Department is involved in active litigation...” adding that “In light of the pending litigation, an audit review and report regarding SESIS would be inopportune and may interfere with the pending litigation.” DOE now admits that there was no legal bar to the audit, supporting our decision to proceed. DOE needs to understand that if in one document they say one thing and then in another they contradict themselves – they lose credibility. Needless to say we disagree with DOE’s characterization of events. We have included DOE’s March 27, 2012 request for postponement in Addendum II.

Finally, we note that DOE despite the above comments, did not refute our findings, and in fact apparently considered as valuable our recommendations to fix the SESIS issues.

INTRODUCTION

Background

In 2008, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) contracted with Maximus, Inc. to implement a Special Education Student Information System (SE SIS) that would facilitate efficient and reliable information for the Department to handle the administrative requirements associated with the Special Education Program. The system requires a dynamic workflow process—from the time in which students are referred to Special Education for services, assessment, conferencing, recommendations, placement, and provisions—through to service delivery phases and to meet court-mandated State and Federal reporting requirements.

DOE provides primary and secondary education to over one million pre-kindergarten to grade 12 students in 32 school districts in over 1,700 schools, and employs approximately 73,000 teachers. The overall student population of approximately 1,041,500 includes approximately 221,700 students (21 percent of total population) who are enrolled in the Special Education program (for students with disabilities). Recent years' Special Education enrollment is as follows:

Student Enrollment⁵

(000 omitted)

Fiscal Year	Special Education ⁶	Total Enrollment	Percent of Special Ed to Total Enrollment
2008	195.2	1,035.3	18.9%
2009	206.8	1,029.5	20.1%
2010	213.8	1,036.7	20.6%
2011	220.3	1,043.8	21.1%
2012	221.7	1,041.5	21.3%

DOE's Office of Special Education Initiatives is responsible for establishing policies and procedures for students with disabilities in both public and non-public school settings. The contract, which started September 1, 2008, is near the end of its initial five-year term expiring on November 1, 2013. The total cost of the SE SIS contract is approximately \$55 million.

As of January 24, 2013, DOE has spent a total of \$67 million on the contract plus two amendments. The contract also provided for two additional two-year renewal options (at the DOE's discretion) with the first renewal not to exceed \$5.7 million and the second not to exceed \$6.3 million.

⁵ From the September 2012 Mayor's Management Report.

⁶ Special Education enrollment includes all students receiving special education services.

Objectives

The objectives of this audit are to determine whether SESIS:

- meets the overall goals to ensure efficient and reliable information to meet court-mandated State and Federal reporting requirements;
- exists in a secure environment; and
- provides effective and available access to its users.

Scope and Methodology Statement

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93 of the New York City Charter. The scope of this audit covers the current state of SESIS' processing environment as of April 30, 2013.

Discussion of Audit Results

The matters covered in this report were discussed with DOE officials during and at the conclusion of this audit. A preliminary draft report was sent to DOE officials and discussed at an exit conference on June 11, 2013. On June 13, 2013, we submitted a draft report to DOE officials with a request for comments. We received a written response from DOE on June 27, 2013.

In their response, DOE officials stated:

“The findings in this report are in no way a surprise as the timing of the audit practically guaranteed such a result. The timing of the audit was premature and served neither agency's legitimate interests. The Department sought to persuade the Comptroller of such at the March 19, 2012 entrance conference, and then by way of a formal appeal to the Deputy Comptroller. The audit was premature as SESIS was so new that all planned modules had not yet been developed and rolled out; and, the Department was involved in active litigation on issues having significant overlap with and impact on the subject matter of the pending audit. The Comptroller seemed to think that the Department was claiming that there was a legal bar to the audit. This was not the case. The matter, rather, turned on whether each agency's resources would be well spent on pursuing an audit of an unfinished data system and whether, ultimately, useful recommendations would result from those efforts.”

If the matter turned on “the unfinished data system” as DOE claims, it is unclear why DOE stated the exact opposite in its March 27, 2012 request for a postponement. In an email accompanying the original request, DOE stated “Per our discussion...at last week's entrance conference, attached is a letter requesting consideration of a postponement of the SESIS audit, predominately due to active litigation between the NYCDOE and the UFT on issues having

significant overlap with and impact on the subject matter of the pending audit. “ The official letter similarly stated that the more critical reason for a postponement was that “the Department is involved in active litigation...” adding that “In light of the pending litigation, an audit review and report regarding SESIS would be inopportune and may interfere with the pending litigation.” DOE now admits that there was no legal bar to the audit, supporting our decision to proceed. DOE needs to understand that if in one document they say one thing and then in another they contradict themselves – they lose credibility. Needless to say we disagree with DOE’s characterization of events. We have included DOE’s March 27, 2012 request for postponement in Addendum II.

Finally, we note that DOE despite the above comments, did not refute our findings, and in fact apparently considered as valuable our recommendations to fix the SESIS issues.

The full text of the DOE response is included as Addendum I to this final report.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The audit determined that SESIS is not meeting its overall goal, which is to provide its users with an efficient and reliable system that meets court-mandated State and Federal reporting requirements. Moreover, DOE did not take necessary steps to ensure that the SESIS system and its data are protected and secured. Our audit also revealed that users are not satisfied with SESIS. For example, our review identified problems concerning data integrity and system availability as well as timely resolution of technical problems associated with pre-identified bugs and basic user functions in SESIS.

SEGIS is not Meeting Its Overall Goal to Provide Users with Accurate and Reliable Data

Our review of DOE's internal system performance reports found extensive data problems since the DOE data migration from CAP to SESIS in May 2010. Specifically, the reports showed 1) a significant number of student data errors in SESIS, 2) duplication of information between two systems feeding into SESIS, and 3) a large number of IEPs that required manual remediation:

- A report, dated April 2013, showed 72 categories of potential errors in SESIS student data, and the overall progress in removing those errors from month-to-month—the total number of errors (across all 72 categories) identified were 100,346 in April 2013, 107,033 in March 2013, and 404,391 in September 2012.
- A second report found during the month of April 2013 alone 483 records needed to be deleted due to duplication between two legacy systems feeding into SESIS (CAP and ATS).
- A third report showed the number of IEPs that had to be manually remediated (corrected) within CAP. For the approximate three-month period from December 26, 2012, to April 09, 2013, a total of 3,939 IEPs were remediated. Gartner Consulting (Gartner), which DOE contracted to provide quality assurance and project monitoring services for the SESIS project, identified the need for manual remediation as an issue several times during the contract.

SEGIS users and help desk logs also identify data inaccuracy as an issue. Users stated:

- “A lot of info is missing or incorrect. We understand a lot of the problems come from CAP but something will have to be done to get SESIS to be more accurate. Annual Reviews this year were all out of date and soem students missing or inactive w/o reason.”
- “Data is missing b) data does not reflect what's in CAP c) it's time consuming to finalize and unfinalize every page.”
- “Data on SESIS does not match ATS and/or CAP. SESIS problems prevent ease of flow in doing IEPs & generate compliance & funding issues.”
- “Dates don't match, for example, Triennial due dates don't correspond to the CAP Triennial dates which are correct.”
- “information does not migrate to CAP/SEC correctly cases have been completed but show up as out of compliance on SEC/CAP reports, lot of migration issues/glitches.”

When the help desk is called I am given ticket numbers and issues are not resolved or followed up.”

- “related service mandates are incorrect in SEC reports, data does not carry over to CAP/SEC. profiles are incorrect.”
- “There are discrepancies between the various other reports that I receive from ATS and CAP that do not match SESIS reports.”
- “There are major discrepancies between SESIS reports and CAP and SEC reports. It is difficult to reconcile the different database reports.”
- “There are numerous discrepancies between SESIS and other DOE systems such as CAP and SEC. Whenever we bring it to the attention of ASESIS, they only have one standard answer, - Known Issue.”

The critical issues described above contribute to a sustained data integrity problem, which originates from SESIS legacy data sources (primarily from CAP). Further, as identified above, discrepancies that currently exist between CAP and ATS also contribute to the critical problem of data accuracy. Consequently, SESIS has failed to meet its objectives in providing a reliable system to its users.

DOE Has Not Ensured System Security

DOE does not have adequate controls to ensure that student data currently being stored at Maximus’s data center locations are sufficiently protected from unauthorized viewing, usage, or loss. SESIS is an internet-based system (users can access and update information only through the internet) and is currently being run from Maximus’s remote sites located outside New York City limits. According to §3.7 of the contract, Maximus is responsible for maintaining the security of the system and its data.

Although DOE has the right to perform a security audit of the SESIS system and the hosting sites, DOE has not done so. Instead, DOE has relinquished control over the system along with its data, which contains confidential student information, to Maximus. In addition, DOE also did not review Maximus’s operational procedures and controls to ensure they were in accordance with acceptable City standards⁷. These internal controls should include, but are not limited to, controls over application programs and operating-system maintenance; access to data files and program libraries; standardized procedures in computer operations; and ensuring that those procedures are actually followed.

Recommendation

DOE should:

1. Immediately perform an on-site review of Maximus’s operations to ensure that Maximus’s policies and procedures comply with DOE directives and contract requirements.

⁷ The Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT) is responsible for publishing Citywide Information Security Policies and Standards which all City agencies, employees, contractors, and vendors must to follow.

DOE Response:⁸ “The Department has taken far more direct action before the commencement of work on SESIS than is recommended by the Comptroller.”

“In today's global economy, service organizations or service providers must demonstrate that they have adequate controls and safeguards when they host or process data belonging to their customers. Consistent with these needs, the Department had required Maximus to contract with a Statement on Standards for Attestation Engagements (“SSAE”)¹ audited hosting facility². The SSAE, which is managed by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, is the industry standard for data center facility audits insofar as a service auditor's examination performed in accordance with applicable guidelines³ represents that a service organization has been through an in-depth audit of its control objectives and activities, including controls over information technology and related processes⁴.

The SSAE hosting facility with which Maximus contracted is Verizon. Verizon, which provides the data centers that host all components of the production SESIS system, i.e., the live system with which users interact, not only meets the exacting security standards referenced above, but is Payment Card Industry (“PCI”) Data Security Standards Compliant Level 1.

¹ The cited section replaced SASE 70.

² Action was taken pursuant to Section 9.0 P-24 Third Party Hosting Services Physical Security Program of A-25 SESIS Release One SOP Manual-1.0v9 June, 2011. This document was submitted to the audit team.

³ The cited guidelines are found in SSAE No. 16.

⁴ In addition, the requirements of Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 make SSAE No. 16 audit reports even more important to the process of reporting on the effectiveness of internal controls over financial reporting.”

Auditor Comment: If DOE read the AICPA standard that they are relying upon, they would be aware that SSAE 16 as well as its predecessor SAS 70 relate to a service organization's internal controls over financial reporting (ICFR). A service organizations compliance with non ICFR directives and contract terms - the focus of this recommendation are not covered by an audit conducted under SSAE 16. DOE should therefore reconsider their response to the recommendation as the control they appear to be placing reliance upon is not appropriate for this purpose.

SEGIS System Availability Problems

Our review identified significant problems with system availability. Specifically, a review of the latest 30-day internet traffic reports of SESIS usage for the period of March 23 through April 22, 2013, as well as the latest Monthly School Outage Report (on internet service interruptions) for the same period, found that approximately one-third of the 30 days in the period had some level of Internet service interruptions. Such a scenario would cause difficulty for users to access the web-based SESIS, especially during periods of heavy traffic (weekday hours of between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.). Further, based on the users' survey responses, approximately 34 percent of users surveyed stated that they had difficulty accessing the system. In addition to problems related to unreliable Internet/network service, comments indicated accessibility issues

⁸ Several sentences from this section of DOE's response appear to have been based on the website http://sas70.com/sas70_overview.html.

associated with lack of access to computers at schools, and possible time-out features in SESIS⁹. Among the more serious comments from users:

- “At times the system will 'shut down' and the work that I am doing will be deleted. Though the save feature is frequently utilized, there are times, due to thought flow, etc, that resulted in it being impossible to save constantly. I am referring to time periods of five minutes, less, slightly more, when SESIS will not follow save command and work becomes deleted. Extremely frustrating!! Terribly time consuming!!”
- “SEGIS frequently has glitches and shuts down a lot. Especially on fridays, during cse reviews, faxed attendance sheets don't attach. When you try to cut and paste it throws you off the system and does not save your work. Even during Saturday pre-session-it had glitches and I had difficulty saving work and it threw me out the system.”
- “the system logs you off for no reason ...says "timed out". This is a major problem because it could take an hour to complete a task that should take 5 minutes. It is very frustrating and interferes significantly with my productivity.”

Based on the reported instances of system interruptions malfunctioning features, we conclude that SESIS did not achieve and maintain a high level of availability (e.g., by having a sufficient number of computers for access and a stable Internet/network infrastructure).

Recommendations

DOE should:

2. Review its internet service performance and track its stability, along with the network usage, at various schools to improve upon the SESIS operating environment.

DOE Response: “The Department does review internet service performance and track stability, along with network usage, at *all* schools.”

Auditor Comment: If such reviews are conducted, they should not allow poor service performance to continue without corrective action as noted in our audit. DOE does not monitor the network to ensure it meets adequate support to perform its basic functions.

3. Actively solicit feedback from SESIS users to identify issues for immediate resolution.

DOE Response: “The Department already has taken the action contemplated by the recommendation.”

Auditor Comment: In November 2012, we sent our survey to DOE for comment; we were not aware of any action resulting from users' feedback or usability studies.

⁹ We received 194 responses to our survey question; these responses can be found in Appendix III.

High Volume of Incidents Reported that Remain Unresolved

DOE is unable to resolve SESIS technical issues in a timely manner. Our review found that DOE's Help Desk¹⁰ facility to assist SESIS users is ineffective. As a result, users' problems often remain unresolved. Users reported in their responses to our survey that a large number of their calls to the Help Desk result not in solutions to problems, but responses that their calls relate to 'known issues.' This corresponds with the information from the Help Desk logs which indicate the 'known issues' to be known bugs within SESIS. SESIS user calls to the Help Desk are handled initially by DOE personnel at a Tier 1 level (and, if necessary, by SESIS personnel at DOE premises at a Tier 2 level). Tier 1 delivers support for basic end user issues, including assistance with navigating the application, creating documents, and faxing troubleshooting. If the Help Desk representative (at Tier 1) is unable to assist the caller, the service request is escalated over to Tier 2 for handling. Tier 2 level calls include data entry and data abnormality issues, and coordinates fixes for technical errors with the vendor development team.

Tier 1 Help Desk Logs

We reviewed a three-month sample of the Tier 1 Help Desk logs to evaluate the types of issues being handled at that level. There were 35,119 Tier 1 cases recorded for the three-month period (October 1 through December 28, 2012). The 35,119 cases were logged by topic (such as 'Case Closings,' 'Caseloads,' 'Documents,' 'IEP Process,' in a total of 28 categories) to identify the issue requiring assistance. The nature of the calls reported in the 35,119 cases included:

- Missing or inaccurate data;
- Data discrepancies between systems feeding into SESIS and out from SESIS;
- Reports fail to print;
- Reports contain inaccurate data; and
- Various SESIS functional issues.

A call volume of over 35,000 reported issues in just three months represents approximately 580 calls for each workday (20 workdays per month times three months = 60 workdays). We do not believe a mission critical system such as SESIS should have this level of poor performance requiring such a high volume of Help Desk support.

Further, an analysis of the three-month Tier 1 calls showed that as of December 28, 2012, 3,559 calls remained in the open/pending resolution.

Total Tier 1 Level Calls

Three Months (October-December 2012)
Call Status Analysis

Status	Number of Calls
Pending (resolution)	9
Open	3,550
Closed (includes those sent to Tier 2)	31,560
Totals	35,119

¹⁰ A Help Desk facility is a resource intended to provide the customer or end user with information, support, and troubleshooting problems/providing guidance software.

Tier 2 Help Desk Logs

We also reviewed the similar three-month sample of the Tier 2 Help Desk logs to evaluate the types of issues being handled at that level. There were 12,641 Tier 2 calls recorded for the three-month period (October 1 through December 28, 2012). Of the 12,641 calls, 5,156 calls (over 40 percent) pertained to 61 individual pre-identified bugs (and had bug IDs assigned) within SESIS. An analysis of the three-month Tier 2 calls showed that as of December 28, 2012, 3,370 calls remained open/pending resolution as follows:

Total Tier 2 Level Calls

Three Months (October-December 2012) Call Status Analysis

Status	Number of Calls
Pending (resolution)	12
Open	3,358
Closed	9,271
Totals	12,641

The results of our SESIS user survey indicated many instances of users having called the Help Desk and receiving a response that the call pertained to a “known issue” (pre-identified bugs):

The following analysis shows the portion of Tier 2 level calls pertaining to a “known issue”.

Total Tier 2 Level Calls

Three Months (October-December 2012) “Known Issue” Call Analysis

Type	Number of Calls
Calls requiring Tier 2 Level Assistance	7,485
Calls relating to any one of 61 “Known Bugs”	5,156
Totals	12,641

A further analysis of those Tier 2 calls with “known issues” showed 2,082 of the 5,150 calls remained open and unsolved. Of the total of 5,156 calls, the following three categories were most frequent:

Known Bug ID	Bug ID	High-Frequency Bugs (from the Total of 5,156 Bug-Related Calls)	Number of Calls	Percent of Total
K115	AGEA-BA9LIA	SEGIS to CAP data flow	2,708	52.52%
K181	AGEA-JAGS3W	Process closing on Initial Cases	705	13.67%
K1157	AGEA-P7F6C7	Student with Revoked Consent Remains Active	232	4.50%
		TOTALS	4,229	82.02%

The following observation is from an individual responding to our user survey within the DOE's IT area, underlining the severity of the problem:

"...the system has been implemented very poorly and is riddled with numerous data errors. It has failed to communicate properly with other DOE legacy data systems such as CAP and SEC. This has prevented the provision of special education services to students. At last count there are about 30,000+ data errors in SESIS. Whenever a user calls about these errors they are told that it is a "Known Issue". These "Known Issues" have now gone into their second year."

Clearly, SESIS is not meeting its goals and DOE's needs, which is to serve its users with an efficient and reliable system. It needs: 1) remediation of inaccurate data, programming bugs, poor system availability, and better systems interfacing (i.e., the Child Assistance Program (CAP), Automate the Schools (ATS)); 2) reinforcement/rejuvenation of SESIS training by promoting better communications among the SESIS training entity; and 3) improvement of the Help Desk facility. In addition, DOE should attempt to seek solutions to reporting and printing problems.

The computerization of the students' IEP form enables teachers to access specific details regarding the services recommended for each student. The creation of an automated system further allows DOE to track students' progress towards meeting educational goals and to assess students' current levels of service and instructional programs. In order to meet the various requirements by federal, state, and court-mandated decrees, specific client-related information must be included in each client's file, such as:

- Client's name
- Specific type of service provided
- Whether the service was provided individually or in a group
- The setting in which the service was rendered (school, clinic, other)
- Date and time the service was rendered (length of session)
- Brief description of the student's progress made by receiving the service during the session
- Name, title, signature, and credentials of the person furnishing the service and signature/credentials of supervising clinician as appropriate

It is imperative that client information be accurate to serve DOE's Special Education program requirements as stated.

Recommendation

DOE should:

4. Establish a special team composed of technical and operational specialists to conduct an extensive review and identification of all data and synchronization deficiencies and immediately correct these issues.

DOE Response (to Recommendations 4, 5, and 6): "The Department clearly has a vested interest in resolving all technical issues related to the roll-out of SESIS and so already engages in the actions that are recommended."

SEGIS Overall User Satisfaction

From our sample of 5,700 SEGIS users that we surveyed, 594 (10 percent) responded.

We found that 60.4 percent of users who responded to our survey¹¹ were not fully satisfied with the system and would like to see changes made to the system. Some of these changes include faster response times, increased application availability, better isolation of errors, improvement of data accuracy, improved systems synchronization, and ease of use.

How Satisfied Were Users	Number of Users Responded	Percentages
Fully	235	39.6%
Partially	315	53.0%
Not at all	44	7.4%
Totals	594	100.0%

The SEGIS User Survey that was sent is attached as Appendix II. Based on survey responses, users also identified problems in report formats, printing, training, and user support.

SEGIS Report Format Problems

Of the 594 SEGIS users who responded to our survey, 27 percent experienced report content or format discrepancies. This is a very high percentage and of particular importance due to the mission critical nature of SEGIS with significant impact on the correct placement of students in the Special Education Program, which relies heavily on the substance in the report.

Recommendations

DOE should:

5. Make certain that every reported report content or format discrepancy be thoroughly investigated and resolved.
6. Address technical issues involving other systems (i.e., ATS, CAP, and SEC), which interact with SEGIS. All interface issues should be investigated, remediated (if required), tested, and tracked for assurance of data accuracy.

DOE Response (to Recommendations 4, 5, and 6): “The Department clearly has a vested interest in resolving all technical issues related to the roll-out of SEGIS and so already engages in the actions that are recommended.”

Auditor Comment: If DOE was effectively engaged in actions pertaining to our recommendations 4, 5, and 6, we should not have received users’ feedback indicating the need for actions.

¹¹ For user comments from our survey, see appendices at the end of this report.

SEGIS Printing Problems

More than 75 percent of SEGIS users who responded to our survey stated that they require the SEGIS printing feature to complete their tasks. However, over 60 percent of these users reported the printing capability to be “moderate” to “difficult” to use—in response to our survey¹² Some comments allude to computer hardware issues and/or needs for initial SEGIS printing training (or re-training). Other comments pertain to SEGIS feature limitations and data accuracy.

Recommendations

DOE should:

7. Develop/enhance its SEGIS training program to assist users in printing from SEGIS.
8. Track and investigate each SEGIS printing issue for resolution.
9. Encourage users to communicate with its Help Desk whenever they encounter a SEGIS printing problem to promote efficient use of the system.

DOE Response: (to Recommendations 7, 8, and 9): “The Department already engages in the actions that are recommended.”

Auditor Comment: If DOE was engaged in actions pertaining to our recommendations 7, 8, and 9, we should not have received users feedback indicating the need for actions: in learning how to print (recommendation 7); help with printing impediments (recommendation 8); and, communicate effectively with SEGIS users (recommendation 9).

SEGIS Training Program Needs Improvement

We found that the training afforded to SEGIS users had several shortfalls and needs improvement. According to the Request for Proposal, dated December 12, 2008, §1.6 Technology Objectives, states that the vendor consider its overall technology solution, services and integration capabilities against the following technical objectives: Define and deploy a feasible and sustainable solution for supporting and training the NYCDOE's large population (estimated at over 12,000 teachers, psychologists, social workers and service providers).

Our survey revealed that 179 (30 percent) of the 594 users who responded received training after they started to use SEGIS. One-hundred and forty-five users (24 percent) responded that they never received any SEGIS training. Meanwhile, 137 users (23 percent) of those trained felt that the training was unsatisfactory. If we combine all those individuals who responded (that they received training after starting to use SEGIS, never received training, and felt that training was unsatisfactory), the results indicate that 77 percent of the individuals who use SEGIS were poorly trained. Below are some of the more serious comments from SEGIS users:

¹² See Appendix IV for a complete listing of the comments.

- “The trainer who came to our school didn't know how to use this software.”
- “It's not user friendly. You are not able to come back to SESIS months after the training and maneuver through the website without retraining.”
- “It's time consuming, no formal training provided, not user friendly”
- “Any difficulty that I've experienced I believes stems from not having attended a formal training, and what I have wasn't in a systematic fashion.”

By improving on the scope and quality of training and enhancing the method of communicating training opportunities to new and existing SESIS users, DOE would be able to improve on the current SESIS user experience. In addition, the training program should actively solicit feedback from users for suggestions on improving the training.

Recommendations

DOE should:

10. Establish a policy to ensure all new users are trained before they are allowed access to SESIS or any application to avoid misuse of the system and to promote usage efficiency.

DOE Response: “Mandated training for all new SESIS users is not required.”

11. Make improvements to its training program to improve system usability.

12. Improve training communications to the user community by developing a plan to improve on its training announcements to SESIS users.

DOE Response: (to Recommendations 11 and 12): “The Department already has taken the recommended actions.”

Auditor Comment: We regard DOE's response to Recommendations 10, 11, and 12 to be irresponsible by suggesting that new users should navigate a “highly complex system such as SESIS” with sensitive student data without mandatory training. We reiterate our recommendation for mandatory pre-use training.

SEGIS User Support Needs Improvement

Users also identified issues with the timeliness of issue resolution by the Help Desk. An adequate support structure for a mission critical application such as SESIS is one that attempts to and resolves every reported issue or tracks unsolvable issues for detailed analysis with feedback to the reporting user.

Tier 2 Call Resolution Rate

User comments are supported by Help Desk logs. Of the 12,641 Tier 2 calls received from October to December 2012, 9,271 were closed. About 30 percent of the 9,271 closed calls were resolved either on the same day or the next day. Over 40 percent of the closed calls took 10 or more days (ranging up to 167 days) to resolve.

Below is an analysis of how long DOE took to resolve the 9,272 Tier 2 closed calls during the three-month period:

Tier 2 Call Resolution Rate

Range of Days To Resolve the 9,271 Closed
Calls Three Months – October through
December 2012

Days Required for Resolution	Number of Calls	Percent of Total Closed
Same Day	1,368	14.8%
1 Day	1,524	16.4%
2 Days	365	3.9%
3 Days	436	4.7%
4 Days	318	3.4%
5 Days	383	4.1%
6 Days	499	5.4%
7 Days	336	3.6%
8 Days	168	1.8%
9 Days	104	1.1%
10-29 Days	1,994	21.5%
30-49 Days	647	7.0%
50-79 Days	495	5.3%
80-109 Days	345	3.7%
110 Days & Over	289	3.1%
Total Closed Tier 2 Calls	9,271	100.0%

Below is an example of a typical comment from users:

- “known issues' take ridiculously long to correct; difficult to figure out what the Known Issues are and what to do about them; Help Desk takes way too long to respond; attendance feature is time consuming and tedious with repetitive input not recognized automatically; keeps students who have been discharged on the caseload even after multiple edits. . .”

Recommendations

DOE should

13. Make a sustained effort in promoting awareness of its SESIS Help Desk facility to its users;
14. Establish and promote a feedback facility for SESIS users in providing DOE with a measure of its Help Desk effectiveness;

15. Track and monitor all SESIS issues to detect patterns that would assist DOE in detecting inefficiencies or points of potential problems;
16. Establish and promote a facility for SESIS users to submit comments or recommendations to DOE on enhancements, improvements, or general issues related to SESIS; and
17. Develop a comprehensive strategy plan to address needed improvements in SESIS training, usage, and support as well as an action plan to remedy the deficiencies currently reported by SESIS users.

DOE Response (to Recommendations 13 through 17): “The Department’s positions with respect to similar recommendations have been addressed throughout this Response.”

Auditor Comment: We regard DOE’s response to Recommendations 13 through 17 to be misguided by suggesting that users should utilize SESIS without the ability to have an avenue to report problems, deficiencies, and changes. We reiterate our recommendations 13 through 17, each of which address a specific operational area of SESIS needing improvement. We encourage DOE to respond proactively for an improved user environment for all SESIS.

Other Issue

Deliverables Not Delivered in a Timely Manner

DOE has not received all the deliverables proposed in the Maximus SESIS contract. All elements of the system were estimated to be implemented by March 2011. These included the following DOE Special Education service locations:

- Public schools
- District 75
- Charter schools
- Approved Non-Public schools
- Private and Parochial Schools
- Hospital Pre-K settings

As of April 2013, DOE has implemented the services as follows:

- Public schools were completed in February 2011
- District 75 schools were completed in March 2011
- Charter schools were completed in March 2011
- Non-public schools (school-age NYS Education Department-approved programs) will be completed in Fall 2013
- For the remaining sites referenced in the RFP, the DOE still is determining their readiness to have their procedures operational through SESIS.

However, even though implementation has occurred at many of the above-noted sites, service might not be optimal due to the issues discussed earlier in this report.

DETAILED SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. This audit was conducted in accordance with the audit responsibilities of the City Comptroller as set forth in Chapter 5, §93 of the New York City Charter.

The scope of this audit covers the current state of SESIS' processing environment as of April 2013. To achieve our audit objectives, we also reviewed the Maximus contract and the contract's Request for Proposal (RFP), which was incorporated into the contract.

- Met with certain members of DOE for background information on the Special Education Student Information System.
- Obtained background information on the Special Education Program to acquire an understanding of the processes involved in the Special Education Program.
- Obtained information on the missions of the DOE for an understanding of the scope of public services rendered by the agency in addition to the Special Education Program.
- Obtained information on the Special Education student population to understand the scope of the processing needs required from SESIS.
- Obtained and reviewed the SESIS specifications for an understanding of its features and functionality.
- Obtained information on the legacy data cleansing process at DOE prior to SESIS implementation.
- Obtained data to analyze and assess the SESIS implementation process.
- Reviewed the SESIS user training program information to assess its offerings.
- Assessed the SESIS support structure for its effectiveness.
- Obtained and reviewed the SESIS maintenance schedule information.
- Obtained and reviewed the SESIS operational statistics for information relating to system outages.

In addition, we conducted a survey of a random sample of SESIS users during November to December 2012 to determine users' experience with the SESIS system. This survey consisted of sending a questionnaire (Appendix II) to 5,700 (5 percent) of the total 114,000 SESIS users given to us by DOE. We received 594 (10 percent of survey recipients) validated¹³ and non-duplicate¹⁴ responses from SESIS users.

¹³ Validation consisted of accepting only those surveys from respondents whose email address matched one from the list of selected survey recipients.

¹⁴ We accepted only the first response received from validated respondents, and discarded any and all subsequent responses from the same respondent.

To verify internet slow service and internet outage issues mentioned by SESIS users, we obtained and evaluated the most recent Internet traffic and Internet service interruption reports.

To verify SESIS functionality issues with Help Desk implications as mentioned by SESIS users, we obtained and evaluated the DOE Help Desk logs for a three-month period between October 1 and December 31, 2012.

To verify and evaluate the data integrity issues mentioned by SESIS users, we obtained information and evaluated logs pertaining to data cleansing, data conversion, and data error correction.

As criterion for this audit, in addition to the Maximus contract and respective RFP, we used the New York City Comptroller's Directive 18 Guidelines for the Management, Protection & Control of Agency Information & Information Processing systems, the DoITT Citywide Information Security Policies and Standards, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology Generally Accepted Principles and Practices for Securing Information Technology Systems.

Department of Education Legacy Systems with Interfaces to SESIS¹⁵

- CAP - Child Assistance Program is a computerized data collection system that was developed and implemented as a result of the 1979 Jose P. federal court decision, mandating the New York City Department of Education (DOE) to develop a data system to track the process students go through when referred for possible special education services.
- ATS - Automate the Schools is a school-based administrative system which standardizes and automates the collection and reporting of data for all students in the New York City public schools. It provides for automated entry and reporting of citywide student biographical data; online admissions, discharges, and transfers; attendance; grade promotion; pupil transportation and exam processing; and many other functions. In addition, it has a school-based management component that supplies aggregate student data, human resources data, and purchasing information for use by school administrators and school-based management committees.
- LCGMS - The Location Code Generation and Management System is where to go for information regarding locations of schools, other learning communities, and administrative offices. New locations are initiated and approved in the system. LCGMS also provides linking between systems with different coding structures.
- Galaxy - is a web-based DOE system for human resources and budgeting.
- SOHO - A system for entering Superintendent Suspension Requests.
- ARIS - Achievement Reporting and Innovation System is a first of its kind system that provides teachers with student achievement data and instructional resources all on the same platform.
- CAFS - Child Adolescent and Family Services Student Roster.
- DAIS-Decision Action Items Tracking System is used for special education students.
- Personnel Eligibility Tracking System (PETS) - DOE's web-based database for monitoring the fingerprinting status of each staff member--members who directly interact with students or have access to student information are cleared (with background check, etc).
- Special Education Component (SEC) - of the Student Information System.
- Impartial Hearing System (IHS) - The DOE promotes the participation of parents, families, and communities in the education of the children with special needs. There may be times when a parent or guardian (herein after referred to as parent) will have a concern related to his or her child's education and the services offered by the Department. If this concern cannot be resolved between the district and parent, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides parents with several means to address special education concerns by requesting a Due Process Hearing.
- SPINS (Substance Abuse Prevention Intervention Network) is a program whereby a teacher conducts weekly classes for students and one to two classes for parents on drug use prevention, stress management, coping, decision making, and self-awareness. SPINS is integrated into the school curriculum and focuses on drug prevention and development of socialization skills.
- IVR-Interactive Voice Response system is used to record the provision of related services to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and is used by Service Providers for reporting days of service.

¹⁵ SESIS is the acronym for the Special Education Student Information System.

SEGIS User Survey

First Name _____

Last Name _____

Office Title _____

Your work location:

Please select all relevant boroughs

- Bronx
- Brooklyn
- Manhattan
- Queens
- Staten Island

What is your primary assignment/function?

Please select from the following choices or enter your particular assignment/function

- Administrator
- Teacher
- Service Provider
- Other: _____

Ques. 01 - When did you start using SEGIS?

Please select from the following choices

- 1st QTR 2011
- 2nd QTR 2011
- 3rd QTR 2011
- 4th QTR 2011
- 1st QTR 2012
- 2nd QTR 2012
- 3rd QTR 2012
- 4th QTR 2012

Ques. 02 - How often do you use SEGIS?

Please select from the following choices

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Seldom

Ques. 03 - Were you trained on how to use SESIS?

Please select from the following choices

- Before using SESIS
- After starting to use SESIS
- Never received training

Ques. 04 - If trained, how was the training conducted?

Please select from the following choices

- At central locations
- Online
- At central locations & Online

Ques. 05 - If trained, how adequate was the training?

Please select from the following choices

- Exceeded expectations
- Satisfactory
- Unsatisfactory

Ques. 06 - If trained, and you need additional training, are you able to request/be approved for additional training?

Please select from the following choices

- Yes
- No

Ques. 07 - Are you periodically notified/made aware of new SESIS training/retraining opportunities?

Please select from the following choices

- Yes
- No

Ques. 08 - Is SESIS available to you whenever you need access to the system?

Please select from the following choices. If 'Sometimes' or 'Never' is selected, continue with question #08a; otherwise, skip to question #09.

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

Ques. 08a – If SESIS is only available to you 'Sometimes' or 'Never' as selected in question #08:

Please briefly describe the situation (within 50 characters)

Ques. 09 - Do you use SESIS for data-entry?

Please select from the following choices

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never
- My job does not entail SESIS data entry

Ques. 10 - Do you use SESIS for inquiry (rather than data entry)?

Please select from the following choices

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never
- My job does not entail SESIS inquiry

Ques. 11 - Do you use reports from SESIS?

Please select from the following choices

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never
- My job does not entail use of SESIS reports

Ques. 12 - If you do use reports from SESIS, how would you rate the ease-of-use for running and/or printing reports?

Please select from the following choices. If 'Difficult to use' is selected, continue with question #12a; otherwise, skip to question #13.

- Easy to use
- Moderately easy to use
- Difficult to use

Ques. 12a - If you determined running and/or printing reports from SESIS is 'Difficult to use' as selected in Question #12:

Please briefly describe the difficulty (within 50 characters)

Ques. 13 - If you have encountered running and/or printing difficulties using SESIS reports, did you report it to DOE's Help Desk?

Please select from the following choices

- Yes, and I have reported the difficulties to DOE's Help Desk
- Yes, but I have NOT reported the difficulties to DOE's Help Desk

Ques. 14 - If you do use reports from SESIS, have you observed report content/format discrepancies?

Please select from the following choices. If 'Yes...' is selected, continue with question #14a; otherwise, skip to question #15.

- Yes, and I have reported the discrepancies to DOE's Help Desk
- Yes, but I have NOT reported the discrepancies to DOE's Help Desk
- No, I have NOT observed report content/format discrepancies

Ques. 14a - If you have observed report content/format discrepancies in using reports from SESIS, and if you selected 'Yes...' from above question #14:

Please briefly describe the situation (within 50 characters)

Ques. 15 - How would you rate the ease-of-use of SESIS?

Please select from the following choices. If 'Difficult to use' is selected, continue with question #15a; otherwise, skip to question #16.

- Easy to use
- Moderately easy to use
- Difficult to use

Ques. 15a – If you rated the ease-of-use of SESIS as 'Difficult to use' from the above question #15:

Please briefly describe the difficulty aspect(s) (within 50 characters)

Ques. 16 - Is there a user feedback opportunity available to you to make comments or suggestions pertaining to any aspect of SESIS?

Please select from the following choices

- Yes, and I have made suggestions
- Yes, but I have NOT made suggestions
- No, there is no feedback opportunity available

Ques. 17 - Are you aware of SESIS support via a 'Help Desk' service?

Please select from the following choices

- Yes
- No

Ques. 18 - How often have you had to call the 'Help Desk' regarding SESIS functions?

Please select from the following choices

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Seldom/Never

Ques. 19 - On the occasion(s) when you had to call the 'Help Desk', were your SESIS questions/problems resolved?

Please select from the following choices

- Always
- Sometimes
- Never

Ques. 20 - Overall, are your SESIS-related assignments/functions served by SESIS, as designed?

Please select from the following choices

- Fully
- Partially
- Not at all

ALL RESPONSES FROM SESIS USERS REGARDING QUESTION 08a

Ques. 08a - If SESIS is only available to you 'Sometimes' or 'Never' as selected in question #08: (Please briefly describe the situation)
A computer has not been assigned to me. It is a coincidence that an employee who formerly used this computer changed his work space and he didn't take the computer with him. If he wants his computer back, then I will not have a computer to use in my current work space.
A computer isn't always available
access difficulties
Always
always available
always times out while woking on reports and IEP's; unable to access certain reports, unreasonably long wait times while working on IEP's
At school only whenever I am free - which is seldom.
At times I get kicked off in the middle of recording something or the computers may not be working
At times Sesis itself is not operating or it freezes.
At times the server is so slow it impedes use
At times the system will 'shut down' and the work that I am doing will be deleted. Though the save feature is frequently utilized, there are times, due to thought flow, etc, that result in it being impossible to save constantly. I am referring to time periods of five minutes, less, slightly more, when SESIS will not follow save command and work becomes deleted. Extremely frustrating!! Terroibly time consuming!!
At times we get an error server message and our school cannot access SESIS or may not always be able to view all screens.(Approx. 3-5 times a month)
At times when I needed SESIS, thesystem was undergoing a maintenance check or see if this was down.this is usually at night time
AVAILABILITY OF COMPUTERS
Can't use sesis while I amwith the students.Also,cimputerin room is slow.
Computer access is a problem, as is how to log on
Computer access is limited sometimes. the program freezes and wont allow me to enter session at other times.
computer limitations (computer is inadequate; limited # of computers
Computer may not be available, system slow

computer not always available where I am teaching
computer(s) is being used by other co-worker(s), problems with program, time constraints
Computers may at times not work.
computers or sesis is down sometimes
D75 home instruction perhaps not set up
Depending if I have access to a computer since one is shared bet 3 personnel
Depending on when during the day I try to use it, it may time out or crash.
Difficult to enter when trying to access it.
DOE Internet Connectivity is often unavailable
Does not connect or timed out
dont always have access to a computer
don't always have access to computer, at times SESIS is slow
Don't always have adequate internet connection
For about 2 weeks in September. SESIS was not working in my school.
Freezes too often
Frequent internet outages, slow internet speed, one computer that is shared by several service providers, power outages due to hurricane, etc.
get a message saying not available, waiting really long to see if it will load
Getting access to a computer is the issue although SESIS is 24 hrs.
I always have access
I am a district 75 para who is contently needed in the class.
I am an itinerant teacher and a travel to three schools per day. District 75 has not provided me with a laptop so I must seek out an available computer at the schools.
I am in multiple schools and do not always hacc computer access.
I am often receiving a Time Out Error or various error messages which do not allow me to open documents.
I am the general education teacher.
I can request information from sesis users in my school
I did not understand how to login

i do not have access to a computer in the classroom.
I do not have adequate access to a properly functioning computer to complete my SESIS entries therefore I bring it home almost everyday and complete it on my home computer. My computer of very outdated and it takes an extremely long time to access the internet and long onto SESIS and complete necessary entries.
I don't always have access to a computer during my workday.
I don't have access to a computer during the I have wait until I'm home in the evening
I dont have access to a computer as needed
I had to share the computer but some other teacher when they are working then I have to wait my turn to come.
I have difficulty in getting a computer to complete the SESIS information. Sometimes SESIS online is "down".
I have limited access to a cschool computer that works well enough to do what I'm required to do. I do almost all of my work from home. I hate that I spend hours finding info from the help sections, find it not helpful, call the help desk, wait while they look up the same info and quote it back to me. I tell them that I already saw that it at doesn't answer my question or solve my problem to no avail. The help desk DOES NOT help.
I have never used this system before. The survey was sent to me because my son receives special ed services and I am a teacher at a completely different school
IDont have access to a computer
If my computer is not working or put away after vacations, it is difficult to find a computer to use.
if the system or internet is down I dont have access
If there is an internet outage, it is unavailable and has to be done from home.
Intermittent and or slow internet
internet down
internet down at building
Internet is intermittent
Internet issues in my school
internet problems
Internet service is slow and takes a lot long time to gain access at times
Internet sometimes very slow in school.
internet/SEIS not working

Interruptions to internet access at school;
It does not work -Server timing expires too quickly
It is an online application, the internet is not always available.
It is available most of the time but it does shut down.
It is frequently down due to system problems or maintenance
It is more than sometimes however, there are times when I get timed out unexpectedly or it takes forever to input the information.
LACK OF ACCESS TO COMPUTER, OR ONLINE ISSUES
lack of computer access; very very slow internet access
Lack of computers
lack of internet access and computer
Limited use of computer - sometimes not functioning or slow
limited working computers at work shared by multiple staff members
Login in issues, unable to navigate certain areas within an IEP or for students
Maintenance Issue(s)
Many Server Time Outs sometimes
Many times, I am timed out or locked out when I am working.
Most times it is available however, on occasion it is unbelievably slow which makes working difficult.
N/A
N/A
N?A
Need computer
never heard of it
Never heard of it
no access
no access to a computer
No access to available computers at many times, or internet access is down in building

No internet connection
Not always able to do at work.
not always access to the computer
Not enough computer in the dept. or it just bump me out.
not enough computers
Not enough computers available 28 therapits to 4 computers, wireless access lost every 1/2 hr
not unavailable during upgrades
not working
Occasionally the SESIS system is down, and staff is unable to login.
occasionally the site is not available
occasionally there are system outages in the school or the internet is down. So far this year it has been better.
Often receive error messages or get kicked of. At times extremely slow service
Often slow or times out
often the system gets locked out so it is unable to be used. Monday and Friday seems to be the worst days.
oftentimes the system is down or very slow to access in certain classrooms/offices
On Friday it was out the entire day. Other times it is down, or not functioning properly for 1 to 6 hrs. You get repeatedly timed out so you can't do your work.
On line access unavailable
On occasion SESIS is non-responsive, or is extremely slow and virtually unusable
Only when I need to use it
our school internet if frequently down
Our school wide system shuts down from 2pm on
Pages that I need to work on sometimes freeze or are unaccessible,especially the recommended services page.
Problems with internet access
Regarding question #4, the IEP teacher in my school trained me to use SESIS.
server down or always timed out

server is down, internet is down
Service capture closes after 15th of month. I need it to be available always; not enough time in my schedule to input attendance daily/or too many users & get kicked off
SEGIS frequently has glitches and shuts down a lot. Especially on fridays, during cse reviews, faxed attendance sheets don't attach. When you try to cut and paste it throws you off the system and does not save your work. Even during Saturday persession-it had glitches and I had difficulty saving work and it threw me out the system.
segis frequently times me out, as a result, loose the work done. It is extremely SLOW. Can't open triannual list.Data is incorrect.
SEGIS is sometimes down.
SEGIS is sometimes either not up or extremely slow.
SEGIS is usually available, but at times, it is difficult or impossible to log in. You should have included "Most of the time" as an option.
SEGIS kicks you off or wipes info out when it's not working properly.
SEGIS sometimes seems to go down due to overuse by the system or more often, particular functions, e.g. in accessing attendance page needed for IEP are not working!!
SEGIS 'times-out'-negatively effecting compliance
SEGIS turns off after using the system for a while.
Session timed out errors occur often
slow internet access, access to laptop
slow internet at school or no Internet service at times
Sometime the system is down.
sometime the web page is down
Sometimes
Sometimes after 12am won't allow me to add enter reports
Sometimes computers are not available. System is down or slow.
Sometimes I am kicked off SEGIS or it works so slowly it is not usable.
sometimes I am not able to get on
Sometimes I cannot access the website.
Sometimes in the afternoon (2-3pm) it is difficult/impossible to access SEGIS

Sometimes internet connection is not working.
Sometimes it doesn't work
Sometimes it is difficult to connect or once you are in the system you get booted out.t
Sometimes it opens, sometimes it doesn't.
Sometimes it times out. Or it is to slow.
sometimes its difficult to access DOE portals at home
Sometimes network problems get in the way.
Sometimes SESI is down or there are problems with the system and you cannot access the appropait cases or it continuously closes itself.
sometimes the internet is down, sometimes SESIS crashes or is really slow, I have to use my own personal computer at work because there are too many of us and not enough school computers
Sometimes the internet is down.
Sometimes the server is busy and I can't access
Sometimes the SESIS is down and/or takes a long time to perform tasks.
Sometimes the system is down.
sometimes the system is very slow and takes too long to process
Sometimes there is no access to the internet in school or at home. It is an inconvenience because IEPs are due on a regular basis. When I am unable to put in the information on SESIS the IEP will be considered out of compliance.
Sometimes there is no access to the internet in the school and at home. It is a problem because IEPS are due on a regular basis.
sometimes you can't get onto the website
student information is missing, locked out, not available
system down
System goes down at times, and can be unresponsive.
system goes down or sesis is very slow
System is down sometimes in the school/VERY SLOW
system logs you off for no reason ...says "timed out". This is a major problem because it could take an hour to complete a task that should take 5 minutes. It is very frustrating and interferes significantly with my productivity.

technology glitches in the school
The computer is not always available to me because i share with other members of the team,mostly when we have IEP meetings..
The internet connection is bad. terrible. We need
The only time I don't have access to SESIS is when the system is down
The problem with access to use a computer.
The system frequently times out or the internet does not work
the system is overloaded and doesn't open in a timely manner
The system is slow at times and logs me out.
The system is sometimes shut down for updates but is mostly available.
There are times that sesis is not functional . The system is down it kicks you out.
There are times when the system is down when trying to put in hours in Service Capture or writing IEPs
There have been several cliches in the system that hindered the inquiries I attempted to make regarding reports.
There have been times when my special educaton coordinator has said SESIS is not up.
There have been times when the website is down.
There is difficulty finding available computers at time to asses sesis when all providers need to compete their encounter attendance.
There were times during the last school year when there were problems with SESIS and it was unavailable.
time allocated
Time restraint due to scheduling issues and sometimes after school hours, the system is not always available or working properly.
times out, wont load, or sysyem update
too slow at work
Unable to get into sesis on the computer at times.
Unable to get on a computer at all my sites. If I get a computer it is during a prep or lunch
Unable to Log In
Very Slow network

We have very limited Internet at my school.
Well, the internet never works at school so i can only utilize it at home.
when internet is down in the building you cant use the system
when it is not up
When my office computer was not working, I needed to find a computer available to use or use my home computer
when the system is down or the internet access was interrupted at school

ALL RESPONSES FROM SESIS USERS REGARDING QUESTION 12a

Ques. 12a - If you determined running and/or printing reports from SESIS is 'Difficult to use' as selected in question #12: (Please briefly describe the difficulty)
a report requires that each individual section be filled in by sub-section on separate screens. If the info was available on a single screen for input, I could produce and print reports more efficiently.
a search option by student instead of date would be extremely useful
Alignment to other report systems, ex. ATS/CAP, there is always a difference in the data.
at times it is difficult to navigate and can be excessively redundant, repetitive and time consuming
Because edit function dose not work sometime.
cant say
Clear menu for page selections
Confusing menu slow access
Difficulty printing more than 1 report at a time. Need to have evaluations batched together.
directions are inadequate, download takes too long
Do not like the format and progress reports are redundant! All of the info can be found on the IEP!
does not apply
Every other month there is a change, or something added to the IEP documents that need to be checked or completed.
I always receive an error message when I try to open the Status of 3-year Mandated Reevaluations in Process and Status of Requested Reevaluations
I can print reports on my computer because I don't have power point.
I can't find what I need.
I don't have a printer easily accessible. I have encountered difficulties with the system. It shuts down & the reports are not accurate.
I don't use the program, so I don't get to run a program
I find it difficult to find what I am looking for.
I had a hard time accessing the long form of the IEP
I have had no training on how to run SESIS reports.

I often experience "Server Time Out" error messages. I'm not always able to access reports I need.
I type reports and while doing this reports are instantly deleted because the server time expires too quickly.
I use psychoeducational evaluations. I have difficulty saving, cutting and pasting to the IEP's, and opening the psychoeducational reports through assessment planning.
I work for a CFN of 25 schools and there is no way to get reports for only my schools. It is either an individual school or the entire city which is too cumbersome
I wrote moderate, but I feel it is a waste of time that I don't have to re-enter my goals and other information that already exists in sesis. Once I type in my current speech goals they should appear wherever sesis wants them to, I should not have to re-type/copy-paste them. This is one example of SESIS' inefficiency.
ie:status of annual reviews report is not in date order now
It doesn't always work or make sense
It freezes - a lot! The reports requested don't come up.
It is very confusing and cumbersome, many arrows and details that take hours to figure out and still horrific
It not an easy process printing fax documents, vocational assessments, and other non IEP documents.
It takes forever to run or get reports and we do NOT have time to waste on this . SESIS is a waste of time. We need to go back to the paper reporting.
It's time consuming
know how is lacking
Lists do not match correctly between computer systems and I must cross reference my internal list with SESIS lists
locations of IEP reports not clear
missing docs and failure to print
Moderate
moderately easy to use
Moving from area to area and finding reports
N/A
n/a

n/a
N/A
n/a
n/a
n/a
N/A
NA
navigation within the system is close to impossible
Never been taught how to run reports
never print reports
Never the correct columns of information that I need.
Never trained
Never trained, have to use trial and error
No
No
No printer for therapists
no. refer to previous answer
None
Not accurate information. Reports are not reader friendly and often the chart is off the page.
not applicable
not difficult
Not separated by CFN
often unable to access three year re-evaluation reports; reports are inaccurate (they do not match CAP and ATS)
oftentimes SESIS closes down and the work that was done is unable to be saved. It is also difficult to cut and paste from another document. The cut and past feature is cumbersome and does not always work, The fonts--size and style, on a good day, are mixed and inconsistent.
oftentimes the reports are not all printed; meaning the reports sometimes have pages missing
Only prints partial reports from screen.

Parameters are difficult to define. Information is also inaccurate.
Paraprofessionals do not have access to IEPs, even their one-to-one students' IEPs. This is why I never use SESIS for inquiry. I hope this is issue will be resolved, because Paras need that access to their own students' information.
Print out is too small for anyone to read
Printers often unavailable
Printing one report is difficult and more than one is sometimes impossible. First of all, it is not easy to find a printer at work . Sometimes when I find it. There is no cartridge or the printer is not working at all. Also, often there is several people waiting to print at this printer. This is very time consuming and difficult to do.
Printing reports on SESIS is difficult because it is not easy to find a printer and if found there is no ink or there are many teacher waiting for it.
program is difficult to navigate, especially with no training!
Progress reports for each quarter to parents are lengthy and hard to print.
Repetitive
Reports are often inaccurate
reports are totally inaccurate!!!!!!!!!!!!!! CAP is much better but SESIS hardly ever migrates to CAP
Reports take too long to generate. Reports are difficult to sort according to what's relevant.
seems SOPM document requirements and SESIS are not fully aligned, eg Final Notice of Recommendation not offered as an online form on SESIS, compliance issues when assessments have been completed and uploaded
SEGIS FREEZES ALL THE TIME
SEGIS is not very intuitive and the documentation supporting it is scant.
SEGIS often freezes or displays a "tinetnet" error
social history not available
some reports are easy to locate in SESIS others more difficult
some reports, such as the Advanced Report, do not fit on page; faxed documents are not easily viewed or printed;
sometimes it is hard to interpret data from the reports (e.g. what does it mean if the report says "known issue"? WHAT is the issue then?)
sometimes shuts down
sometimes the report does not align with the information on the iep

Sometimes the reports are not accurate
System is not user friendly.
The information is in the wrong report
The main problem is in trying to generate reports that are not standard reports.
The reports are not accurate because they fail to read from CAP
The system could be more user-friendly and intuitive then it is!
the system does not address ny job. Often things take longer to complete as the system does not recognize what I do as a SAT member.
The system is very slow and I am often logged off
the whole downloading process in order to print reports on system takes too long
There are some reports that are not there or have not been created such as student accommodations.
There are times when I can't open the reports or see them accurately.
They have to be printed individually, very time consuming
To make private report is difficult because no lists of codes is given for the reports.
To many windows to open (drop down menus)
too lengthy to develop
Too many steps to get to a page or needed data for access and editing.
Usually things work well, however sometimes SESIS does not work at all. Mainly it loses information I try to save and this costs me time and is very frustrating.
When printing report there are too many steps.
When progress reports are due quarterly, it is very difficult, tedious and time consuming to search for each individual student, locate the PT goal(s) from a list of unlabeled goals, wait for screens to refresh after each data entry. Much of the information entered for each student is the same or similar and it would be much easier if we could ease the data entry process.
When trying to print multiple pages, it is time-consuming to load and print each page separately
yes it is no user friendly.

ALL RESPONSES FROM SESIS USERS REGARDING QUESTION 14a

Ques. 14a - If you have observed report content/format discrepancies in using reports from SESIS, and if you selected 'Yes...' from above question #14: (Please briefly describe the situation)

A lot of info is missing or incorrect. We understand a lot of the problems come from CAP but something will have to be done to get SESIS to be more accurate. Annual Reviews this year were all out of date and soem students missing or inactive w/o reason.
After downloading report spreadsheets, they need to be formatted. Also, not sure how students come off the report for Students Deferred to Central.
After reviewing SESIS, CAP, ATS and SEC reports; I identify discrepancies and try to resolve the issue with the family worker, SESIS help desk and the CFN.
All annual reviews have the wrong date and are in the wrong order. Some that are marked in red are not due for months.
annual reviews are a big problem
Annuals-dates are wrong and not in date order
As therapists the contents don't always relate to what we do...we make our supervisors aware of these issues
At times, students/cases are inappropriately listed on a report or do not appear on the corrcr report. For instance, we have had open initials for which we have contacted the SESIS help desk because they did not appear on the initial evaluation in -process report
ATS, CAP and SESIS do not always communicate, issues submitted through colleagues to help desk
attachments not compiled with report, student info is incorrect or missing, students who are not showing up on reports
Brooklyn
cap and sesis conflict
CAP's and SESIS do not communicate with each other which has caused many discrepancies that we are now fixing on two systems. It is double work.
Child that is due for a Mandated Three Year evaluation (as per CAP), no longer appearing on that report in SESIS. As often is the case, no resolution after reporting to HelpLine weeks ago.
Compliance Dates are sometimes incorrect - Cases that have been closed are open are open in SESIS - Students that are active are viewed as inactive on SESIS - Discrepancies between CAP and SESIS

Confusing
Contained erroneous information regarding student status
Data difference between special ed services listed on IEP and on report
Data from SESIS is not updata into CAP..and when you report a problem SESIS can not fix they just say KNOW PROBLEM
data is missing b) data does not reflect what's in CAP c) it's time consuming to finalize and unfinalize every page
Data on SESIS does not match ATS and/or CAP. SESIS problems prevent ease of flow in doing IEPs & generate compliance & funding issues.
Dates and services are at times inaccurate
Dates don't match, for example, Triennial due dates don't correspond to the CAP Triennial dates which are correct.
Dates sometimes do line up with other systems, information is frequently not alined
dates were not correct until 10/12.
did not observed
Differnt operating systems
Dischargd students who are still on my list.
discharged students, show as noncompliance issues, classification/setting not matching on iep, profile, reevals etc., classification missing on reports,time consuming
discrepancies are with re: to student's related service mandates
Discrepencies between Sesis and Sec/CAPS
does not apply
Doesn't work....no one knows how to fix it.
don't know
Errors on tri and annual reports
Example: In the Program/Service section it was recorded for one student that here placement was a 12:1:1 class. In the Summary section, it reflected ICT class.
First attend dates in SESIS vs. ATS have posed a problem for me in the past.
Grade levels are inconsistent on the different reports. Program recommendations are not always correct on program reports. Finalization report is not very helpful in giving useful information. Approved initials do not show up on any report, which can lead to major compliance issues.

Grammatical errors.
I always notice report content and discrepancies. I have to very carefully check before finalizing reports. For example, one of the students had SETSS before in recommended services. Her new IEP was for Integrated Co-Teaching Services. SESIS kept SETSS and I changed it 3 times before it finally took and then I could finalize. The charts in the psychoeducational reports sometimes won't save and/or disappear.
I do not know what to do
I have received the response that the issue is a "known" issue
I have reported discrepancies that do convert erroneously to CAP
I have seen content changed in reports.
I have to rectify some of the discrepancies in ATS and sesis.
I have too much work to do-and the correction takes too much time
I just want to note that when I write a professional report it takes less time and contains more relevant content than the format available on SESIS. In addition, I am annoyed by the time I waste copying and pasting the same information over and over.
I printed out triennials recently. They didn't agree with CAP, and some of the students were not even in the school whose report I pulled.
I report them to the family worker/SBST and they look into the errors.
Inaccurate information for a specified student
Info from SESIS doesn't always match the other systems (CAP/SEC)
information does not migrate to CAP/SEC correctly . cases have been completed but show up as out of compliance on SEC/CAP reports, alot of migration issues/glitches. When the help desk is called I am given ticket numbers and issues are not resolved or followed up.
Information found in reports is often not accurate because staff has entered information into IEPs incorrectly. For example, if teachers incorrectly enter testing accommodations into the IEP they do not show up accurately on the report.
Information is inaccurate.
innacurate information
it is difficult to create a formula that will supply appropriate reports. When it does go through, oftentimes, the report has appeared incomplete. Many students that are on SESIS are not on CAP. Comparison of SESIS info to CAP is time consuming, and the numerous inaccuracies make the need to address issues with flow impossible.
it is not clear where to find information
it's slow

List of students with services incorrect. ARP dates incorrect
Lists did not include all of the students or included incorrect students (e.g. annual review list did not show all of the students with IEPs in September, etc.)
Lists of students do not match
Long wait in telephone calls, disruptive in time frames of doing job, problem often not resolved, especially when ticket is given- problem lays in sesis for as long as 6 months, sesis tech sometimes not knowledgeable of iep process, problem recurring and unresolved e.g. case automatically deactivates and need to be frequently reactivated, technician has not answer for this problem because it is a computer problem and endemic/chronic, very disruptive of compliance dates
Many do not agree with ATS
Material in SESIS does not match information in CAP.
Mm
My IEP teacher and Family workers have all entered discrepancy reports in reference to SESIS communication errors with CAP and SEC. Also in reference to students who are missing from SESIS reports who have IEP's and errors in annual dates and incorrect compliance information.
n/a
n/a
n/a
n/a
n/a
N/A
NA
Na
no discrepancies observed
None
not yet
often errors say "known error"
Often the data is not correct. Trying to things fixed vis the Help Desk often is takes a great deal of time. The Help Desk fequent response is that it is a known issue.
on annual reports for iep's, the reports have been incorrect since august until roughly omid novemeber 2012

On one occasion work I had saved in a finalized document did not appear. The section was blank even though the input had been saved and the document finalized. Several days later the information reappeared.
One of my students are stated out of compliance, and they are not.
Page setup
Perhaps a simpler graph to display results.
Process stage errors, data migration problems, missing incorrect data after entry during fax.
re: questions 17, 18 & 19. I cannot answer them if I don't know I can call help desk.
related service mandates are incorrect in SEC reports, data does not carry over to CAP/SEC. profiles are incorrect
related services report different than iep
Reports are easy to run but often they do not represent the information contained in the IEP in relation to service recommendations.
reports do not match other DOE reports such as CAP and ATS reports
Service related mandates are not always accurate.
SESiS and CAP need to communicate better. Too many Known Issues prevent migration and we cannot solve these types of problems
SESiS needs further development - its code is broken
some names appear as out of compliance when they are not
some reports missing in sesis
someone elase reports to help desk
Sometimes does not allow immediate access or it lags (stalls).
Sometimes questions can be repeatative.
Sometimes the information on a document was changed and is wrong
speech and language mandate not reflected on summary sheet of report
Status of Annual review report is inaccurate. Students who are declassified still appear on report as out of compliance. Caseload report is not very accurate, some names are missing from reports.
student grades have not been updated
Students listed in incorrect grade. Incorrect program information. System not updated.

Students names not on annual review report; some reports are too wide to fit on a page;
students on report who have been discharged or decertified
Students whose parent (s) have withdrawn services, remain on reports and appear as out of compliance cases
Testing modifications vary and not clearly formattable.
Text size not compatible from word document, spacing errors on progress reports, and when doing encounter attendance Sesis will choose multiple students when not clicked
The alignment with other systems is not there .
The are discrepancies between SESIS, CAP and SEC
The content of the report does not flow from line to the next. When printing a report the content of material is deleted or is not continous line per line.
The dates of IEP's are often wrong and there are many discrepancies between SESIS and CAP that we have to take the time to deal with.
the information in SESIS is not always accurate. I cannot count on this information.
The information is not accurate. Not all necessary provisions and placement situations can be input.
The issues are discussed with the school's Special Education liasions. They take care of the errors.
The Related Service Providers Report is inaccurate and does not match the IEP's. I have to look up each IEP mandate to insure I am servicing the students correctly. The caseload list is impossibly incorrect, and even after editing it changes back to the incorrect information.
The school heading for a student's progress report does not match.
the signing sheet of the providers are inconsistently omitted.
the system does work well with other DOE systems such as CAP AND ATS. THIS CAUSES MAJOR PROBLEMS.
There are discrepancies between the various other reports that I receive from ATS and CAP that do not match SESIS reports.
There are discrepancy observed like incorrect mandates and Services. Beside there are many pages finaliced but without information.
There are frequently discrepancies in reports. We have called the Help Desk and have gotten ticket numbers.
There are inconsistencies with services targented and given. There are inconsitencies from one year to the next, just when you feel one thing has been cleared it reappears.

There are major discrepancies between SESIS reports and CAP and SEC reports. It is difficult to reconcile the different database reports.
There are numerous discrepancies between SESIS and other DOE systems such as CAP and SEC. Whenever we bring it to the attention of ASESIS, they only have one standard answer, - Known Issue.
There are so many discrepancies that I cannot call SESIS every time & when you call they say "it is a known issue."
There are students that are no longer attending our schools whose IEPs are still listed in our reports
There exist myriad of discrepancies between CAP and SESIS, and at time within SESIS (e.g. student grade).
There is no time to wait for the help desk during the school day. There are MULTIPLE errors this year on reports.
There was a discrepancy in status of report
These are the discrepancies we observed on SESIS: The mandates are incorrect and the services are incorrect. Also many pages are finalized and are totally blank.
Totally unacceptable
very rarely would I find a discrepancy with system and reports.
We only print the information data I put in every day.
When a student is marked as absent, a time (ex: 8:10am-3:00pm) must still be included in the daily attendance report.
When I printed out a 3 year mandated report the format was difficult to read. The first and last names were on 2 lines.
wrong grade listed with the related service report
yes especially in mandated services
yes very often and most of the time the answer is a known issue or given a ticket number. Yes I have observed discrepancies with using reports and SESIS reported as a 'known issue'.

All RESPONSES FROM SESIS USERS REGARDING QUESTION 15a

<p>Ques. 15a - If you rated the ease-of-use of SESIS as 'Difficult to use' from the above question #15: (Please briefly describe the difficulty aspects)</p>
<p>-----</p>
<p>"known issues" take ridiculously long to correct; difficult to figure out what the Known Issues are and what to do about them; HelpDesk takes way too long to respond; attendance feature is time consuming and tedious with repetitive input not recognized automatically; keeps students who have been discharged on the caseload even after multiple edits; CAP does not read end dates for services needing deferral which causes need fir revisions, so end date for services should not be an option if not usable; too many known errors and glitches which cause time burden</p>
<p>3x's the amount of time compared to old system</p>
<p>After checking the aproprate boxes, it takes an inordinately long time to be acknowledged - "Please wait" runs far too long.m</p>
<p>all necessary information is not easily accessible</p>
<p>All was need to ask others for help when I need to do something new.</p>
<p>Any difficulty that I've experienced I belives stems from not having attended a formal training, and what I have wassn't in a systematic fashion.</p>
<p>As a related service provider, sesis is extremely time consuming for attendence and session notes. Every student and every session must be entered individually, there has to be a way to streamline it, whether the schedule is entered in once and sessions are automatically programmed in. It is really frustrating at the amount of time it takes to enter needed information, how every page has to load before the next entry can be made. There has to be a way to change that.</p>
<p>As one who once worked selling productivity for IBM, this system is a disaster. It's very often not intuitive, e.g., to find what you're looking for hit "cancel." In the CSEs, we have a large volume of cases with charter schools, etc., and it is unwieldy, slow and antiquated to fax in documents individually for so many students. There are many glitches that require so much time on SESIS, waiting for document control, waiting for someone to answer in the call center, "known issues" prevent children from getting services for weeks, sometimes months. It takes me twice as long to get work done as before.</p>
<p>confusing menu slow access</p>
<p>Constantly having difficulty in the complexity of steps. Amendments, revisions, compliance issues. Help desk being unable to solve problems in a timely manner thus creating compliance issues.</p>
<p>Creating the IEP is difficult and reading the IEP is difficult trying to find information is difficult.</p>
<p>difficult in the sense that it takes a while to enter the data in</p>

Doesn't work I'm told
Don't use the program
Entering encounter attendance is time consuming - I'd like to be able to mass-certify entries.
Extremely time consuming. Internet times out and computer must be restarted. Entry of certain fields within encounter attendance does not make sense and is not user friendly.
First, access to a computer is difficult. Then the time it takes is too long. District 75 has not instructed RSP to allow time in our schedules specifically for SESIS. Silly things like how the beginning time is recorded and how the end time is recorded should be changed. There isn't a need for a.m. and p.m.
FREEZES ALL THE TIME
Freezes, tinenet errors, uploading problems, finalizing problems, migrating problems
Hard to find what I am looing for without invoking something that I did not want started. Not intuitive.
Hard to look at what you've entered and what you're entering at the same time. Just
Hard to navigate.
HORRIFIC system to use and navigate, as a mandated reporter ,doing attendance only is fine.
How things are supposed to be written are changed too often.
I believe SESIS is difficult to use because it's always an adventure. From to day you do not know what you are going to go wrong. attendace not attaching, losing half of your psy report, IEP glitches, log in issues the system overloading and not letting anyone log on, saving my work, and faxing issues.
I had difficulty logging in and its hard to find the IEP info that I really need.
I have all the students from prior years. I have to delete them every time I am going to input the new attendance for my students. The next time I log in the prior students are back on the list. It becomes very time consuming.
I have to keep re-entering the same information over and over
I need training.
I service more than 25 students each day and it takes too long to input the info. Too many drop downs and you cannot enter student group info as a group at one time rather we input individual
I think there are "easy" ways to use but hard to figure out those shortcuts

I would like to be able to see two iep's at the same time without having to close one out to see the other. I want to see you put back the ability to transfer information from an old IEP to a new IEP. I hate the faxing problem where my faxes disappear and I end up having to fax a dozen times. I hate being bumped off an IEP and losing my info due to SESIs saying I'm timed-out WHILE I'm writing and haven't stopped. I would love to be able to keep copies in SESIS of my old IEP's for wording reference even as the students move to different teachers. They could be coded without student's Identifying information.
I would like to see system streamlined to allow for quicker input of data.
IEP's are a breeze on SESIS however the reporting of attendance for related services is time consuming.
If you need to print more than 1 documents from a student's record. The time it takes to download a file.
inconsistent when entering dates on attendance should be able to enter your schedule and work off of it to attendance - should be away to cancel sessions for the day without entering each each student who s.h.been seen that day attendance is time consuming w/o time within the day to complete -
is not easy but is not difficult
It does not allow me to appropriately address my job. The job has become about paper not doing what is right for the child.
It does not reflect what services are in place, and sometimes the information is dated and difficult to remove.
It is difficult to use because it takes up a considerable amount of time. It is just like having a second job but unfortunately I am not being paid. Also, you have to take home a considerable amount of information during the weekend. This includes schedules, information that discussed during sessions. This stressful situation makes it difficult for me to do personal chores on the weekend. Laundry and house cleaning is now done only on holidays.If I was being paid I will hire a maid.
It is not clearly organized. I feel like its a task to find the information I am looking for. The wording for each type of report is confusing. I avoid it like the plague!
It is not difficult to use, but it is difficult to find what I am looking for.
It is not difficulty to use.
It is not easy to maneuver because in looking for details of a student's IEP there seem to be too manu unnecessary steps!
It is not so much that it is difficult, it just eats my time. It is ineffecient. I see the same students at the same time weekly, the system should recognize it and I should only have to type in changes, everything else should appear automatically.

<p>It is not user friendly, frequent disruptive "errors" that kick user out of the system and have to constantly start process interrupted by computer time outs, drop downs in case closing and late cases is insufficient- does not provide adequate description of why case is being closed or why case is closed- user is forced to choose inappropriate dropdown to proceed bec sesis blocks user if choice of dropdown is not made, language in cap and sesis often discrepant, when problem occurs, technician advises to fax and refax documents- but messes up the sequence of the process, i.e., referral to the finalization of iep, when faxing prior assessment, not choice in fax, and user's name is erroneously indicated as the evaluator, frequent server time out is very very very disruptive, user feedback is requested but not time to be filling this in every time out (in regard of question 16)</p>
<p>It is not user friendly, is not intuitive, you must be trained to understand most of it's use and links.</p>
<p>It is organized poorly, and you waste a lot of time waiting for pages to reset after you enter information (especially using the drop-down menus). Over all, I find it to be clunky and poorly designed.</p>
<p>It is redundant and time consuming. The same information has to be entered every day. In addition, caseloads contain students that were discharged or graduate up to three years ago. I remove these students and they keep coming back. My principal tried to delete them and they came back. Help desk was completely unhelpful. Network supervisor told me over a year ago that this was a "known issue" to SESIS and would eventually be resolved. All service providers here have this problem. Also, if a tiny change has to be made on an IEP (such as frequency or group size), there is a whole long procedure that must be followed, including faxes, that make it very time consuming and difficult to do. Lastly, session notes are to be included online every day. This can sometimes be sensitive and personal information. I keep my own session notes privately in a file in school. I am not comfortable putting private student information online, where it may float in cyberspace forever. If I was a parent, I would be horrified at this prospect. Session notes are private and should stay that way.</p>
<p>It is slow and difficult to get on line. It is sometimes very slow because too many people are in the system at the same time.</p>
<p>It is time consuming, especially if a mistake is made. Changing errors is very tedious.</p>
<p>It is time consuming, tedious, often have to click the same thing numerous times before it will enter the desired section, the times often get messed up - it should not allow a person to enter 2:00 A.M. Times should be pre-set- there should be a choice of half hour time slots as it takes extra time to enter in the exact times. Speech teachers have around 40 students they have to do SESIS for and there is absolutely no time in the day to fill out each section of SESIS and deal with the kinks.</p>
<p>It is time consuming; pages freeze; information gets self-deleted; you have to reload pages many times; you can't write notes for students without reloading the page; it is very slow; the student lists are not fixed</p>
<p>It is unnecessarily time consuming and slow</p>
<p>It takes a long time to enter in simple information. For example, it does not save my user data so every time I have to input what type of service provider I am.</p>

It takes at least 2 hours to input data for 1 set of students. We do NOT have this time. We need to report attendance using the paper system as SESIS is TOO time-consuming.
It takes too much time to enter all the data from my therapy sessions. I am doing a lot of my entering at home!
It's fairly intuitive but some details need alot of work. Glitches have a snowball affect on the whole experience.
It's not difficult to use, but difficult to find a good signal to work and get work done in a timely manner. Network is super slow.
It's not user friendly. You are not able to come back to SESIS months after the training and maneuver through the website without retraining.
It's time consuming, no formal training provided, not user friendly
moderately easy to use
Mostly it works, but sometimes it does not. Following the steps required to open new reports and doing simple things cost valuable time trying to figure out how to do these things.
N/A
N/A
n/a
n/a
n/a
N/A
NA
NA
Need more training, timing out, not easy to figure out
never migrates to CAP, Assessment Planning has too many glitches to name here.
Never trained
never use SESIS
no training
No training
None
not at all efficient for service provider too time consuming and repetitive

not clear where to find information
not difficult
NOT ENOUGH TIME ALLOTTED FOR ENTERING INFORMATION.
not user friendly
Order of documents is not as the law requires (e.g. opening revisions, re-evaluations and their transfer to CAP). If there is a "mistake" in the opening process which we usually don't know what it is... the information will not transfer to CAP. Sometimes, Initials in Process do not appear in the list of "Initials in process".
Pure confusion as to the function and operation of the site
Refer to question 14A
Ridiculously long wait times, inaccurate information, frequent time outs which kick you off SESIS without saving work done. Prior to SESIS work flow was smoother, quicker and more accurate. My time at work had been used much more efficiently.
Service capture takes 3 minutes per child per day.
Sesis is not intuitive, you have to reenter data over and over. Sesis sometimes freezes up and you lose what you were working on.
SEGIS is not user friendly. At times SESIS log in is difficult for staff at my school.
SEGIS is too time consuming. There are too many steps & drop down menu options needed to complete a task, for example service providers attendance captured.
SEGIS system has caused me a lot of health problem including headache, high blood pressure, headache and sight problem. Beside we have to bring home a lot of private information that should be kept in the school. That's no good. SESIS is time consuming; it is like having another job, because many time we have no time to take care of our family.
SEGIS to CAP flow is a huge issue that takes away much valuable time to work with students and IEPs and causes budgetary concerns for our principal, which she then wants us to correct. It then takes us hours to figure out what may have gone wrong and even then we are unsure if this same "fix" will work again what, as what works once may not have the same outcome the next time. There seems to be a lot of inconsistency with the program or small details that we and the helpdesk are unaware of that may unexpectedly hinder flow. Additionally, SESIS does not always operate or guide user in appropriate special education law. For example, the program makes us have a parent member when not legally needed. Also the program does not take into account compliance issues such as the Hurricane and has limited reasons for delay options. Even when this is successfully used, we are still cited on principal's report as out-of-compliance. Not sufficient flagging the user when something is put in wrong such as, the wrong year, incorrect sequence in process. We are then required to complete an extensive process to correct issues that are SESIS related. This generates busy work for us and the need for ammendments/reconvenes which more times than not do not sucessfully transfer to CAP. Limited space for others on attendance sheet. This is especially an issue for turning fives where we are only told right before meeting who will be attending. Also, father's name does not generally appear on IEP attendance. This insults some parents. After we finalize an IEP we are

<p>unable to view some information that we inputted such as OHI issues, reasons for delay. Also, printing, viewing and deleting FBA and BIP are complicated. In order to print, it is not enough to choose 'print all section' the FBA and BIP must be selected separately and if you want to delete one of these forms, SESIS perceives that you want to delete the whole IEP, which is very scary! Need more prompts to complete special program. Maybe mandatory red box asked if an educational program is required or not. If yes checked requires user to complete. SESIS gives option of end dates for programs as well options to defer certain programs, but these just seem like dummy options which don't reflect on reports and causes more compliance issues. Cutting and pasting into evaluations are difficult as different fonts and sizes come up and are not always easy to change. Also there should be a way to more easily access the evaluations so the results can be easily transferred to the PLOPS page of IEP. The program pages requires us to put in the language for every service, why can't SESIS ask you "is this the same language for every service?" so that we do not waste time inputting this information over and over again. SESIS should have a safeguard when deleting. The document should still be available to the person who deleted for some time before completely disappearing. 'Bob' only shows up to guide you if you had just exited the edit mode on the IEP, not if you just open the page to see what's next. Many of the special education profiles are wrong for the children (e.g., wrong status for IEP, wrong compliance dates, wrong or missing related services, incorrect date for initiation of related services). Some staff profiles (of psychologists or social workers) are incorrect with listing extra schools or inability to access assigned schools.</p>
<p>Sesis will often tell sorry server is not working or not available. There my report while typing it gets deleted or data is not put into SESIS because of its delays.</p>
<p>Situations arise about which the correct SESIS procedures are unclear</p>
<p>Slow; too many "please wait" moments; often kicked off because too many people are on at same time. SERVICE CAPTURE SHOULD NOT CLOSE @ 15TH OF THE MONTH!!</p>
<p>some options are hidden and i have not been taught all the tools</p>
<p>Sometimes the system doesn't cooperate, in order to do attendance you have to open three screens horrible waste of time, D75 does not fit into the nice little options offered. Alot is redundant. It is not parent friendly.</p>
<p>System in constant revision resulting in mis migrations</p>
<p>system runs very slow and pages with multiple input boxes have to refresh every time data is entered. Goals are entered in random order which makes finding the goals most relevant to my teaching difficult</p>
<p>takes a long time to upload-</p>
<p>takes to long to enter data and move from screen to screen</p>
<p>Takes too much time. Would be easy and less time if just the date and present wre entered like the paper records used to require. Asking for starting and ending time, group size , service and location is redundant, unnecessary, and too time consuming. Too busy during the day to finish all entries and must spend personal time on this data entry.</p>
<p>The SESIS page is expired very fast.Sometimes hard to put a new school on screen or to delete</p>

school.
The system is not user friendly in the sense that if you make a mistake and delete a document, the system moves to the next step when u did not intent to. If CAP does not talk to SESIS which is a daily issue I have, SESIS is pointless because all compliance reports read of from CAP/ATS./ SIS. Thanks to this, I am now expected and waiste a lot of time trying to trouble shoot why IEPS did not migrate into CAP. Also, the Help line, for the most part is not very helpfull. Most of the resolutions I have been given, don't work. Also, there are many components that are still lacking with SESIS. For example, deferments. We were able to defer dual recommendations in CAP. SESIS does not know how to do that. That has created many discrepancies in my school. Studnet are showing up with the wrong program recommended. Furthermore, I have been waiting for over 6 months for SEISS techs to correct these types of issues. All I receive is a " someone will work on the issue" but can't say when. The contact list in SESIS is incredibly slow. It takes me about 3 minutes to pull up a contact name. The system needs to be more userfriendly and it need an easier way to provide help. Perhaps a chat window can help. Calling the help line is a nightmare. I have had to wait over an hour for nothing really. The system should also have additional stops. For example, the Waiver to Ammend an IEP after the Annual review, my teachers are always finalizing the document without the signed waiver faxed in. Also, when teachers want to initiate services at an Annual Review, the system should stop them and indicate that this can only be done as a Reevalauation.
The system is not user friendly. It is very time intensive to complete attendance and IEPs
The system is slow and hard to manage at times
the system is very slow and very time consuming. Though writing an IEP seems to work well, attendance is horrible
The system is very slow, there aren't many on-screen help opportunities.
The trainer who came to our school didn't know how to use this software.
there are inconsistancies in the format, making it more time consuming but not necessary difficult
there is constant change and you need to be aware on how to problem solve these changes.
There is not enough time in my schedule to enter data on SESIS. I have to use my personal time to enter information in SESIS
There is not reason to repeat the gernal information over in a new IEP.
There should be ONE page with all test modifications for students. A chart would be wonderful due to its ease and efficiency. Too many steps in order to find what you need. Everything is hiding or within other folders.
time consuming, waiting for it to load, getting kicked out, time consuming to enter daily ateendance
Too easy for teachers to make mistakes

too many clicks required to get complete attendance and IEPs or get information
too many hiccups and interconnected files with no way to trace origin of mistakes
Too much loading/waiting time and a lot of redundant fields
Too time consuming, Confusing, illogical, not user friendly, cumbersome, doesn't give relevant choices, too many unnecessary steps for simple functions and procedures
Unaware of how to use it.
Very time consuming; As a speech teacher, when entering encounter attendance, you have to click on speech as the service and the child's mandate. This should be pre-populated.
Waiting for each section to load on the iep before inputting more information is really time consuming. we should be able to input a lot of information at the same time.
We need an exhaustive manual
Well, once you are trained everything is visible.
When SESIS has an error I must wait for a ticket to be completed before continuing appropriately. Too many checks and balances that slow me down. It is like SESIS assumes that I do not know how to do my job by restricting me so often.
With lack of training, navigating system is difficult
You have to keep repeating the same basic information over and over instead of having it stored so that it doesn't have to be re-entered constantly. A lot of time is wasted.



Dennis M. Walcott, Chancellor

Andrew Buher
Chief Operating Officer

June 27, 2013

H. Tina Kim
Deputy Comptroller for Audit
The City of New York
Office of the Comptroller
One Centre Street
New York, NY 10007-2341

**Re: Audit Report on the Department of Education's Special Education
 Student Information System (7a12-114a)**

Dear Ms. Kim:

This letter with the attached response to relevant findings and recommendations ("Response"), constitutes the New York City Department of Education's ("Department") formal response to the City of New York Office of the Comptroller's ("Comptroller") draft audit report titled Audit Report on the Department of Education's Special Education Student Information System ("Report").

The findings in this report are in no way a surprise as the timing of the audit practically guaranteed such a result. The timing of the audit was premature and served neither agency's legitimate interests. The Department sought to persuade the Comptroller of such at the March 19, 2012 entrance conference, and then by way of a formal appeal to the Deputy Comptroller. The audit was premature as SESIS was so new that all planned modules had not yet been developed and rolled out; and, the Department was involved in active litigation on issues having significant overlap with and impact on the subject matter of the pending audit. The Comptroller seemed to think that the Department was claiming that there was a legal bar to the audit. This was not the case. The matter, rather, turned on whether each agency's resources would be well spent on pursuing an audit of an unfinished data system and whether, ultimately, useful recommendations would result from those efforts.

Although that question logically should have been answered in the negative, the audit proceeded with what, in hindsight, was a disingenuously optimistic message that the

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Comptroller's review at this juncture might point the Department in the direction of concrete improvements. Notwithstanding that the system is highly complex, with multiple modules and interfaces, the audit ended little more than a year after the entrance conference without in-depth tests of system functionality or data reliability despite that being a stated audit objective. Rather, the audit greatly relied upon a survey to which only one-half of one percent of the universe of SESIS users responded. The Report contains snippets of the responders' strongly stated negative opinions of SESIS within the body of the Report and more of the same in the Appendix. At the exit conference, the Department questioned the reliance on unexamined, inflammatory hearsay in the body of the Report to illustrate conclusions that should have rested instead on tested and actual audit findings. The response that was forthcoming was not at all satisfactory as it had more to do with the auditors' perceived need to add "flavor" to the narrative than to provide a fair representation of the findings.

Perplexingly, nowhere to be found in the Report are the predicted recommendations for fresh, concrete improvements. Indeed, not only does the Report's lead finding - "SEGIS is not Meeting its Overall Goal to Provide Users with Accurate and Reliable Data" misrepresent actual conditions that are critical to the provision of services to students, it is not followed by any recommendation at all. Essentially, all that is revealed in the Report is what we already knew when the audit started, to wit, that data was not in all cases migrating seamlessly between SESIS and the Department's legacy student tracking system and that certain users experienced difficulty completing SESIS-related tasks during the work day and were not satisfied with the Department's allocation of resources, training and SESIS help desk support. We did not need the Comptroller to tell us or the public that or to offer recommendations that generally were implemented on the Department's initiative long before the issuance of the Report. Our own experience with data migration and other technical start-up problems, in addition to the well-publicized grievance findings, were sufficient in that regard and have informed the Department's efforts to improve SESIS access and support operations.

Notwithstanding the system's complicated roll-out, the single most important objective of SESIS – the automation of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process – has been realized and already has improved radically the availability of student information to educators and families. For reasons about which we can only speculate, that significant achievement was not acknowledged but for one sentence of the Report. It remains, however, that SESIS has so far demonstrated its value as a tool for improving many of the special education processes. When it is fully realized, we are confident that SESIS will be a benefit to all levels of staff with responsibility for provision and oversight of special education, to advocates for and families of students with disabilities, and, most critically, to students.



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It is lamentable that in the rush to make public negative findings of an ill-timed audit of an as yet incomplete data system, the Comptroller apparently was determined not to address in any meaningful way the value that the completed system will bring to hundreds of thousands of students with disabilities and their families over the long term. Members of the public are free to infer the reasons the Report has taken that tack.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Buher', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right. The signature is written over a circular stamp or seal that is mostly obscured.

Andrew Buher
Chief Operating Officer

¹ As a fair reading of the arbitrator's opinion demonstrates, the award of compensation to Department staff for the time spent on data entry after work hours was in no way an indictment of the Department's efforts to create a system that significantly improves the management of special education services.

**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSE TO FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE AUDIT REPORT ON THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S
SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (7A12-114A)**

The following, with the attached cover letter of New York City Department of Education ("Department") Chief Operating Officer Andrew Buher, comprises the response to the City of New York Office of the Comptroller's ("Comptroller") draft audit report titled *Audit Report on the Department of Education's Special Education Student Information System* ("Report").

The Report contains 17 recommendations. Because many are redundant, we have opted to combine them as appropriate and offer a single response.

Background

Before the Special Education Student Information System ("SEGIS") was created, the Child Assistance Program ("CAP") was the Department's primary system for tracking students' special education services from referral through program placement and initiation of services. While that system was a significant upgrade from the largely manual record-keeping process that preceded its development in 1979, CAP still did not have the functionality to allow the creation of an IEP directly in the system. By at least the early 2000s it was clear that CAP had reached the limits of its usefulness as a primary student tracking system in an environment that required the ability to create students' Individualized Education Plans ("IEP") on-line, retrieve those records quickly, and track and report service data contemporaneously and with a high degree of reliability.

To address many of CAP's user experience and service data reliability shortcomings, build capacity for implementing evolving special education protocols, and allow administrators to access and update student files quickly, the clear priority for the Department over the last several years has been to replace CAP with a live IEP-based interactive data system. To that end, through a competitive process, the Department engaged MAXIMUS, a nationally-recognized educational technology firm, to design a secure system with modules that not only enable on-line creation of an IEP, but, among other functionalities, permit the upload of supporting documentation such as referrals, evaluation reports, and physicians' prescriptions and allow student-specific program placement and service data to be input directly into the system at the local level.

SEGIS roll-out began in spring 2010. The module that allows school-age students' IEPs to be accessed through the web and created within the SEGIS environment was deployed in stages in schools, Committees on Special Education and other Department locations over a one-year period ending October 2011. In the meantime, SEGIS was being outfitted to accept direct input of date and time specific encounter information for each student in a covered staff member's caseload and a brief note as to outcome of the service delivery session. The on-line IEP and encounter functionalities, which are key to realizing the Department's multiple objectives for building a state-of-the-art student tracking system, have allowed school-based staff and families immediate access to critical information about a student's needs and recommended program and have moved the

Department well past full reliance on paper copies of critical special education documents that are stored in records rooms and require a time-consuming retrieval process.

Audit Finding without a Recommendation

The first finding in the Report is that "SEGIS is not Meeting its Overall Goal to Provide Users with Accurate and Reliable Data." That there are no recommendations associated with this finding is the least of our concerns, though the absence of such is telling. What we are primarily concerned about is the assertion that there are a "significant number of student data errors in SEGIS," since such a bold statement implies that a conclusion was drawn from the results of audit tests that identified the nature of the errors, quantified the errors and determined their impact on delivery of special education services. That, however, was not the case. Rather, the finding relies on nine bulleted survey responses as if repeating similar opinions is all the support that is required. (Report, p. 5). It is not.

What we can tell the public with a high degree confidence - since it is based on actual conditions - is that the program and service recommendations reflected in current IEPs are reliable because that information is entered directly into SEGIS and is not dependent on a data merge with any other of the Department's systems.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation 1. *DOE should immediately perform an on-site review of Maximus' operations to ensure that Maximus' policies and procedures comply with DOE directives and contract requirements.*

Response to Recommendation 1. The Department has taken far more direct action before the commencement of work on SEGIS than is recommended by the Comptroller.

In today's global economy, service organizations or service providers must demonstrate that they have adequate controls and safeguards when they host or process data belonging to their customers. Consistent with these needs, the Department had required Maximus to contract with a Statement on Standards for Attestation Engagements ("SSAE")¹ audited hosting facility.² The SSAE, which is managed by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, is the industry standard for data center facility audits insofar as a service auditor's examination performed in accordance with applicable guidelines³ represents that a service organization has been through an

¹ The cited section replaced SASE 70.

² Action was taken pursuant to Section 9.0 P-24 Third Party Hosting Services Physical Security Program of A-25 SEGIS Release One SOP Manual-1.0v9 June 29, 2011. This document was submitted to the audit team.

³ The cited guidelines are found in SSAE No. 16.

in-depth audit of its control objectives and activities, including controls over information technology and related processes.⁴

The SSAE hosting facility with which Maximus contracted is Verizon. Verizon, which provides the data centers that host all components of the production SESIS system, *i.e.*, the live system with which users interact, not only meets the exacting security standards referenced above, but is Payment Card Industry (“PCI”) Data Security Standards Compliant Level 1.⁵ All non-production components, *i.e.*, the environment in which the code is written and quality assurance tests are applied, are hosted by the Department at a data center operated by the Department’s Division of Instruction and Technology.

Finally, we note that the New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (“DoITT”) standards cited in the audit explicitly apply only to applications hosted on CityNet, DoITT-operated network that interconnects city agencies. SESIS is not hosted on CityNet.

Recommendation 2. *DOE should review its Internet service performance and track its stability, along with the network usage, at various schools to improve upon the SESIS operating environment.*

Response to Recommendation 2. The Department does review internet service performance and track stability, along with network usage, at *all* schools.

Using a generic 30-day “Internet traffic report,” and substituting the musings of three survey responders for facts that should have been derived from actual audit tests, the auditors conclude that “SEGIS did not achieve and maintain a high level of ability” (Report, p. 7). And, apparently seeing no need to explore further, the auditors guess that the causes were network related, which is roughly analogous to suggesting that rain is caused by umbrellas since both are observable at the same time. In order to identify the actual cause of system unavailability, logs matching the session detail of the user to system availability would have to have been reviewed. Since that work was not done as part of the audit - though sufficient details were provided to the auditors - the Department was left to undertake it. Based on that review we can report that there is no evidence of “in-stability” in the network, though some schools, which are scheduled for upgrades within the calendar year, do have lower bandwidth than is optimal.

⁴ In addition, the requirements of Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 make SSAE No. 16 audit reports even more important to the process of reporting on the effectiveness of internal controls over financial reporting.

⁵ Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (“PCI DSS”) is a set of requirements designed to ensure that all companies that process, store or transmit credit card information maintain a secure environment. The PCI DSS is administered and managed by the Payment Card Industry Security Standards Council, an independent body that was created by the major payment card brands.

Recommendation 3. *DOE should actively solicit feedback from SESIS users to identify issues for immediate resolution.*

Response to Recommendation 3. The Department already has taken the action contemplated by the recommendation.

The Department manages the following processes to solicit feedback from SESIS users in an effort to identify issues requiring immediate resolution and to measure Help Desk effectiveness:

- Usability Survey. The Department has conducted two SESIS usability studies. The first, which focused on the system overall, was completed in spring 2012; the second, which was conducted during winter 2012 and early spring 2013, covered the new functionality being built for placement.
- Dedicated SESIS call center
- Multiple training sessions provided throughout the year
- User Acceptance Testing for each new feature release

Recommendation 4. *DOE should establish a special team composed of technical and operational specialists to conduct an extensive review and identification of all data and synchronization deficiencies and immediately correct these issues.*

Recommendation 5. *DOE should make certain that every reported report content or format discrepancy be thoroughly investigated and resolved.*

Recommendation 6. *DOE should address technical issues involving other systems (i.e., ATC [ATS], CAP and SEC), which interact with SESIS. All interface issues should be investigated, remediated (if required), tested, and tracked for assurance of data accuracy.*

Response to Recommendations 4, 5, and 6 The Department clearly has a vested interest in resolving all technical issues related to the roll-out of SESIS and so already engages in the actions that are recommended.

The Department has a dedicated team comprising technical and operational specialists who conduct an extensive review and identification of all issues associated with SESIS. Because issues may be related and root cause analysis may determine multiple impacts, they must be tracked and managed holistically regardless of source. The issue and change management team prioritizes fixes and changes based on detailed assessments of impact. This team, which meets multiple times each week, maintains detailed documentation of each item tracked. The Department employs a process that meets industry standards for identifying, analyzing, prioritizing and tracking issues that works in tandem with a change management process that governs how and when changes can be made to any component in the system.

As for the findings upon which the recommendations rest, of great concern is that conclusions are drawn and opinions are stated without the benefit of supporting background, context, case studies, general industry knowledge or any other fact-based analysis. For example, on page 8 of the Report,

the auditors offer that there were 35,000 calls to the call center in a three month period. The auditors then conclude that this level of calls is evidence of systems performance problems. However, a high volume of calls to a call center that supports a complex and critical operation is not indicative of an unusual performance problem in a system. The auditors show no causal relationship between SESIS poor performance and high call volume, but, apparently, wish to encourage the public to assume as the auditors have done that many recorded issues translates into poor system performance. Nonetheless, those with a background in data systems would know that when systems support transaction volumes in the millions, those production systems normally operate with thousands of known issues and call centers support thousands of calls a month.⁶ A tracking system with issues logged and actively worked on is an industry best practice. That is the current practice for SESIS.

Recommendation 7. *DOE should develop/enhance its SESIS training program to assist users in printing from SESIS.*

Recommendation 8. *DOE should track and investigate each SESIS printing issue for resolution.*

Recommendation 9. *DOE should encourage users to communicate with its Help Desk whenever they encounter a SESIS printing problem to promote efficient use of the system.*

Response to Recommendations 7, 8, and 9. The Department already engages in the actions that are recommended.

The Department has developed a more robust training strategy that is focused on leveraging various formats for delivering training and guidance to SESIS users, including computer-based modules, tip sheets, Frequently Asked Questions, and in-person training and office hours. Further, Department managers are in the process of revising existing training materials to better align to current user needs. Additionally, network staff have been trained to support their schools in trouble-shooting common issues and providing additional support as it is needed. Clear, quick guidelines for users on the Department's website, tools for navigating printing issues and instructions for escalating problems are in production.

Recommendation 10. *DOE should establish a policy to ensure all new users are trained before they are allowed access to SESIS or any application to avoid misuse of the system and to promote usage efficiency.*

Response to Recommendation 10. Mandated training for all new SESIS users is not required.

⁶ The current list of known issues totals over twenty thousand for Google's Chrome internet browser. <http://productforums.google.com/forum/m#!categories/chrome/report-a-problem-and-get-troubleshooting-help>. Further, Microsoft reports several hundred active known issues, each with multiple instances recorded, for version 10 of its web browser, Internet Explorer (IE 10), which was just launched in February 2013 and is not widely used (about 9% of IE users, use IE 10). <https://connect.microsoft.com/IE/Feedback>.

Staff involved in the IEP process must have special education training and certification. New special education staff will have already been trained to understand the components of the New York State IEP and will recognize that SESIS merely automates the process of creating that IEP. SESIS itself guides users through key special education processes.

If more support is required new users have access to in-person training that is offered throughout the school year, as well as computer-based training modules that can be accessed online. School support networks also are positioned to assist new school users in developing system competence through a combination of in-person and online training and reference materials, with staff available to provide customized instruction as needed.

Recommendation 11. *DOE should make improvements to its training program to improve system usability.*

Recommendation 12. *DOE should improve training communications to the user community by developing a plan to improve on its training announcements to SESIS users.*

Response to Recommendations 11 and 12. The Department already has taken the recommended actions.

In addition to taking the steps outlined in the response to recommendations 7 – 10, the Department has launched “SEIS in 10 minutes,” which are short training modules that are accessible on-line and targeted to specific issues and their solutions.

As for improving communications, all information for SESIS training is advertised in the *Principals' Weekly* newsletter and on the Department's website. In addition, network teams are asked to identify the issues school staff raise regarding the use of SESIS so that training can be tailored accordingly.

Recommendation 13. *DOE should make a sustained effort in promoting awareness of its SESIS Help Desk facility to its users.*

Recommendation 14. *DOE should establish and promote a feedback facility for SESIS users in providing DOE with a measure of its Help Desk effectiveness.*

Recommendation 15. *DOE should track and monitor all SESIS issues to detect patterns that would assist DOE in detecting inefficiencies or points of potential problems.*

Recommendation 16. *DOE should establish and promote a facility for SESIS users to submit comments or recommendations to DOE on enhancements, improvements, or general issues related to SESIS.*

Recommendation 17. *DOE should develop a comprehensive strategy plan to address needed improvements in SESIS training, usage and support as well as an action plan to remedy the deficiencies currently reported by SESIS users.*

Response to Recommendations 13 - 17. The Department's positions with respect to similar recommendations have been addressed throughout this Response.

Recommendations 13 – 17 are an outgrowth of a simple count of the number of days – without regard to the nature of the reported problem – that the Tier 2 Help Desk took to close cases between October and December 2012. The text accompanying the *Tier 2 Resolution Rate* table highlights the math only to the extent of reporting that 30 percent of the calls were resolved either the same or next day, but that over 40 percent took 10 or more days. (Report, p. 13)

Using the same *Tier 2 Resolution Rate* table we offer these additional computations to provide perspective: 65.4 percent of the cases were closed within nine days; 86.9 percent within 30 days; and, 19.1 percent in excess of 30 days. Although we are not suggesting that case closing times are optimal, there is no view of the reported timelines that supports wrapping up the audit finding with "a typical comment from users," to wit, that "known issues' (*sic*) take ridiculously long to correct" (Report, p. 14). We are not certain whether using survey responses in this manner merely evinces a desire to make the audit report more interesting from a narrative point of view or is purposefully misleading. In either case, as we have noted elsewhere in this Response, the cited comments have no place in the Report.



Brian Fleischer
Auditor General

March 27, 2012

Tina Kim
Deputy Comptroller for Audit
The City of New York
Office of the Comptroller
1 Centre Street, Room 1100
New York, NY 10007-2341

Re: Audit of the Department of Education's Special Education Student Information System

Dear Ms. Kim:

As we discussed with Vincent Liquori at the entrance conference, we are requesting that you consider holding off on the initiation of the audit of the Department of Education's ("Department") Special Education Student Information System ("SEGIS"). We base our request on two points. First, the system is so new that not all planned modules have been rolled out as of this writing. **Second, and more critical, is that the Department is involved in active litigation on issues having significant overlap with and impact on the subject matter of the pending audit.** At Mr. Liquori's request, I have consulted with the Department's attorneys and am writing this letter to you to expand upon the matter of the litigation.

The United Federation of Teachers ("UFT") currently has three claims that are pending regarding the Department's implementation of SEGIS, two before the New York State Public Employment Relations Board and one before an arbitrator. Regarding the claim pending at arbitration, the UFT maintains that the Department's implementation of SEGIS violated several collective bargaining agreements between the UFT and Department in that the use of SEGIS extends employees' contractual work days. The UFT is still presenting its case and the Department has not yet begun to introduce evidence in support of its defenses. **In light of the pending litigation, an audit review and report regarding SEGIS would be inopportune and may interfere with the pending litigation.**

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this matter further. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'B. Fleischer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brian Fleischer
Auditor General

cc. Vincent Liquori Karen Solimando
 Michael Best Marlene Malamy
 David Brodsky