

Excerpt from the Washington State Systemic Improvement Plan (Phase II)
Submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) – March 30, 2016

Executive Summary

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, serving as the State Educational Agency (SEA) has completed both Phase I (Analysis) and Phase II (Development) of the Washington State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). Phases I and II are part of a three-stage process for the development and implementation of a multi-year plan to improve educational results for students with disabilities. This multi-year plan is one of seventeen performance indicators (Indicator B17) required by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to be included in each state's respective State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report. Both internal SEA representatives and external stakeholders were directly engaged throughout all aspects of Phase I and Phase II activities; an Early Literacy Action Research Team was formed to expand the depth of stakeholder engagement to include Networking and Collaborating Levels as defined by the *Leading by Convening: A Blueprint for Authentic Engagement* (2014). Broad agency, community, and parental involvement will continue throughout Phase III (Implementation and Evaluation) of the multi-year plan.

Washington State's Phase I report included detailed analyses of key elements of the state's general supervisory system which guided the selection of four primary improvement strategies designed to strengthen state and regional capacity to support district implementation of evidence-based practices to increase early literacy skills of students with disabilities. Specifically, Washington's State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) is designed to quantify and reduce the early literacy performance gap between kindergartners with disabilities and their typically developing peers. The Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) entrance assessment is the primary performance measure, with secondary impact and sustainability measures tracked through 1) Special Education Consistency Index scores from kindergarten through second grade, and 2) assessment data from the third grade State English-Language Arts assessment. An Action Research Design depicting the sequencing of measurement data within student groups and across district cohorts was submitted with the Phase I report. While the targeted student population is kindergartners with disabilities, students across the early childhood continuum exposed to the delivery of evidence-based interventions based on Implementation Science, are also likely to experience educational benefit. A Theory of Action was developed to graphically illustrate the relationships between four coherent improvement strategies tactically implemented across five inter-dependent levels of the Washington State educational system.

As noted in both the *State Performance Plan Measurement Instructions for FFY 2014* and the *OSEP Guidance and Review Rubric*¹, the focus of Phase II is on strengthening the State's capacity to support regional and local educational systems with the implementation

¹ The OSEP Guidance and Review Rubric is referenced throughout the Phase II Report; a full copy is located in the attachments and labelled Attachment A.

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and scaling-up of evidence-based early literacy practices that will lead to measurable, incremental decreases in the early literacy performance gap (EL-SiMR). Phase II includes strategic and targeted improvements to the State's infrastructure, the development of a four-year plan intentionally aligned with the Theory of Action and Action Research Design, as well as an Evaluation Plan designed to measure both implementation and impact outcomes. The Phase II report builds on the five components developed in Phase I.² Based on a sequential review and analysis conducted by internal agency representatives and external stakeholders, there are no revisions or updates necessary to the Phase I Report at this juncture.

Primary strategies for strengthening Washington State infrastructure relies heavily on alignment and leverage of current improvement plans and initiatives that cross general and special education landscapes including Strengthening Student Educational Outcomes (ESSB 5946), Washington State Needs Projects – Center for Change in Transition Services and Special Education Support Center, Race-To-The-Top Early Learning Challenge, and the WaKIDS Initiative. In addition, Washington's SiMR continues to be implemented in coordination with two national/federally-funded state initiatives including 1) a three-year National Education Association grant awarded to the Washington Education Association to make general education classrooms more accessible to special populations by improving instruction; and 2) an OSEP-funded Enhancing Capacity for Special Education Leadership (ECSEL) grant awarded to University of Washington-Bothell to enhance special education leadership in support of improved educational results for students with disabilities.

Key activities associated with enhancing supports for regional and local implementation of evidence-based practices designed to close the early literacy performance gap for entering kindergarteners with disabilities are braided across four improvement strands – Intensive Technical Assistance: Implementation Science, Coordinated Professional Development: Evidence-Based Practices, Consistency Index and Coaching, and Parent Engagement Resources. Stakeholder involvement significantly influenced the identification of potential barriers and viable solutions, implementation leaders, communication loops, fidelity metrics, and sequential timelines³ to ensure effective execution of the four-year plan.

To assist with the ongoing development, implementation, and evaluation of the State Systemic Improvement Plan, Washington State submitted a Letter of Commitment and was accepted to participate in the Early Literacy (Pre-K – 3rd Grade) Cross-State Learning

² The components of Phase I of the State Systemic Improvement Plan are (1) Data Analysis, (2) Infrastructure Analysis, (3) SiMR, (4) Coherent Improvement Strategies, and (5) Theory of Action.

³ A Gantt chart has been developed for Components 1 and 2 to show activities displayed against time; what has to be done (the activities) and when (the schedule).

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Collaborative hosted by the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI). Participation goals include 1) identification of both challenges and opportunities related to improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities, 2) increased professional learning in order to build state capacity in the areas of *data use, knowledge utilization, systems change, and communication & collaboration*, and 3) strengthening the state's system of general supervision and support to Educational Service Districts (ESDs) and local school districts. Consultation for the initial development of the Evaluation Plan was provided through an Intergovernmental Agreement with the Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (SESRC) at Washington State University. In addition, supplemental guidance and support for evaluation planning was concurrently provided by the IDEA Data Center (IDC) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

The updated FFY 2014 performance data for the Washington State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) is 20.36% representing relatively stable performance in comparison to 20.44% established as the baseline in FFY 2013. The parameters for the SiMR, including the formula, baseline, targets, updated FFY 2014 performance data, and description of the metrics are graphically depicted as part of the overview in the Phase II Strategic Plan.

In closing, in addition to the required Phase II elements identified in the State Performance Plan Measurement Table for Phase II of Indicator B17, the federal Office of Special Education Programs added a supplemental Technical Assistance and Support section on the GRADS 360 web-based reporting platform. This reporting section asked each state to describe the support the State needs to develop and implement an effective SSIP. Washington State will continue to access the federally-funded Technical Assistance Centers for both universal guidance and targeted technical assistance with a focus on continued support from the National Center for Systemic Improvement, Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems, Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, and the IDEA Data Center. The interactive institutes planned and implemented across these technical assistance systems have been especially beneficial in the early stages of the design, development, and initial implementation of the three phases of the State of Washington's IDEA Part B Indicator B17 Strategic Plan. Future technical assistance and professional development opportunities related to embedded evaluation techniques, retrospective pre/post assessment strategies, and use of advanced technology for continuous improvement monitoring would also be very advantageous.