

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM SSIP PHASE I IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE - Part B

Background: As stated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the primary focus of Federal and State monitoring shall be on improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children and youth with disabilities and ensuring that State educational agencies (SEAs) meet the program requirements within IDEA, with a particular emphasis on those requirements related to improving educational results for children and youth with disabilities. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has revised its monitoring priorities to ensure a balance between compliance and results by placing a greater emphasis on accountability and technical assistance (TA) activities that focus on improving SEA capacity to develop, strengthen, and support improvement at local levels. OSEP also recognizes the continued importance of ensuring compliance with IDEA requirements. While the procedural requirements of IDEA do not guarantee improved outcomes for children with disabilities, they are designed to ensure that processes and protections are in place that, when properly implemented, will lead to the provision of appropriate services to address the individual needs of each child with a disability.

OSEP has developed a Results Driven Accountability (RDA) system to better align its activities and use of resources to more effectively support States' capacity to drive systems change that leads to improved results at the local level. OSEP is aligning its resources across OSEP's two divisions, Monitoring and State Improvement Planning (MSIP) and Research to Practice (RTP), to ensure that its efforts support States' efforts to improve outcomes for children and youth with disabilities. In addition, OSEP is working with other ED offices (such as the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Implementation Support Unit) to identify common initiatives and leverage available TA resources to assist SEAs and localities to achieve these improved results.

OSEP will conduct differentiated levels of monitoring and provide TA to SEAs, depending on individual SEA needs. While OSEP's monitoring and TA efforts will continue to address compliance issues, the focus will be on working collaboratively with SEAs to develop and strengthen their capacity to implement, scale-up, and sustain local level systems change.

We see the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) as a major focus of States and OSEP's efforts to improve results for children with disabilities. To support States in the development of Phase I of their SSIPs, OSEP is offering to provide technical assistance to every State through on-site visits and conference calls. We will be using this [SSIP Phase I Implementation Guide](#) as the framework for our conversations with the State about the development of Phase I of the SSIP.

The outcomes from SSIP Phase I visits/calls include:

- Using the Implementation Guide, OSEP and States will engage in dialogue around components of the Phase I SSIP as they apply to State improvement efforts focusing on the SEA's capacity to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in implementing IDEA and improving outcomes for children with disabilities.
- OSEP and SEA partners will identify TA that may be available to SEAs to increase their capacity to develop and implement the SSIP.

Implementation Science Considerations: The stages of implementation have bearing on this work because they help pinpoint activities for the SEA and partners to take that will eventually lead to successful implementation of the SSIP. The following is a brief overview of the activities that occur in the first stage, exploration, for Phase I of the SSIP.

- **Exploration** – Identifying the need for change, learning about possible initiatives that may provide solutions, learning about what it takes to implement the initiatives effectively, developing stakeholders and champions, assessing and creating readiness for change, and deciding how to proceed.

The other stages are installation (preparing the resources and systems to support use of the new practice), initial implementation, and full implementation. Initial findings demonstrate that working through each stage fully and quickly will help an entity to reach successful implementation (Saldana, Chamberlain, Wang, & Brown, 2011). For more information about the stages of implementation, please visit: <http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/module-4/topic-1-implementation-stages-overview>

Implementation Questions:

The questions below are designed to guide the discussion during the implementation visit/calls. For organizational purposes, this tool is divided into four broad areas: Data Analysis; Analysis of SEA Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity; Selection of a State-identified Measureable Result for Students with Disabilities, Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies, and Theory of Action; and Technical Assistance and Support. Please note that the Theory of Action section of Phase I is the end result of the exploration work that a SEA does during this phase. Accordingly, the Theory of Action will be a focus of discussion only as it relates to the TA the SEA needs to complete its Theory of Action.

There is no expectation that SEA personnel complete this tool prior to the implementation visit or calls. This document is provided to the SEA to assist in planning for and structuring the dialogue between the State and OSEP.

Element	Questions	Discussion Notes
Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which stakeholders have been involved in your data analysis for the SSIP and how have you involved them? • Explain how your agency has established clear expectations for effective data use across SEA offices and departments. Describe the processes the SEA uses to support LEAs in effective data use. • What formal mechanisms require LEAs and individual schools to engage in continuous improvement using data-based decision making? Describe how LEAs and individual schools are supported in their efforts. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how the SEA provides targeted or differentiated tools/products/services that facilitate the effective use of data to improve instructional practice and student learning. • Describe how the SEA analyzes data related to student outcomes and /or root causes (e.g., SPP/APR indicators, 618 data, Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR) data, and other EDFACTS data). • Describe how data are disaggregated (e.g., geographic locality, race/ethnicity, gender, disability type or status, age, low-income or other criteria)? What conclusions were you able to draw from disaggregating the data? • What additional data might be necessary to determine root causes for low performance? What methods would the SEA use and what would the timeline be to collect the additional data? • Describe how the SEA uses data, including compliance data, to identify barriers to improving results for students with disabilities. • How does the SEA use data to engage in continuous improvement for their own State-level efforts? • How does the SEA use data to determine which LEAs are achieving improved results for students with disabilities? 	
Element	Questions	Discussion Notes
Analysis of SEA Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which stakeholders have been involved in your infrastructure analysis and how were they involved? 	

<p>to Support Improvement and Build Capacity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the SEA’s role and approach to increasing the capacity of LEAs to improve results for students with disabilities. • Describe the SEA’s infrastructure for supporting improvement and building capacity in LEAs to improve results for students with disabilities. What are the strengths of the SEA’s system? • How are the different components of the infrastructure support system aligned and how do they inform one another? (Infrastructure components include: governance, fiscal, quality standards, professional development, data, technical assistance, and accountability.) • Describe the mechanisms or procedures the SEA has in place to facilitate communication, coordination and collaboration across general education and special education programs within the SEA. • Describe the general and special education initiatives, grants, or SEA-wide activities the SEA currently engages in to improve results for all students, including students with disabilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Describe how these multiple initiatives are aligned to achieve common goals, and how do they leverage available resources. ○ Describe how the SEA’s reform initiatives are addressing the needs of students with disabilities. • Who is involved in planning for SEA-wide systemic improvement, and how do they make decisions about 	
--	--	--

	<p>systemic improvements (how are stakeholders and other SEA offices involved)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the policy or practice barriers to improving results for all students, especially students with disabilities. • Describe how the SEA’s policies and procedures support the use of evidenced-based practices to improve results for all children, including students with disabilities. • Describe how the SEA is informed as to whether the TA and/or professional development is reaching LEAs, schools, and teachers (both special education and general education) of students with disabilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Describe how the SEA evaluates the effectiveness of the TA and/or professional development? If the TA and /or professional development are determined to be ineffective, what is the process for making adjustments? 	
Element	Questions	Discussion Notes
<p>State-identified Measureable Result (SIMR) for Students with Disabilities</p> <p>and</p> <p>Selection of Coherent Improvement</p>	<p>(Please note that depending on the timing of the visit or calls, the SIMR and strategies may not have been chosen yet.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which stakeholders have been involved in determining your SIMR and how have you involved them? • Describe the process of the infrastructure analysis and how the data and the analysis support the selection of the SIMR and the related improvement strategies. • Since the SIMR must be aligned to a SPP/APR results indicator, how will the coherent improvement strategies 	

Strategies and Theory of Action	<p>differ from previous strategies to improve results?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how the improvement strategies are coherent and able to be implemented with current resources. • Describe how the improvement strategies will address the root causes. • How does the SEA support LEAs in designing formative evaluations of district-wide implementation of focused improvement strategies and establishing benchmarks that will be used to show progress towards meeting the SIMR • How is the SEA supporting and disseminating the practices of specific LEAs that have resulted in improved outcomes for students with disabilities? 	
Element	Questions	Discussion Notes
Technical Assistance and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the support the State needs, for the topics below, to develop and implement an effective SSIP. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ stakeholder engagement ○ data analysis ○ infrastructure analysis ○ SIMR ○ coherent improvement strategies ○ Theory of action • How can OSEP assist the State to address barriers to improving results for students with disabilities? • What assistance does the State need to apply research related to effective implementation (including TA and professional development), systems change, and school reform? 	