



COLORADO
Department of Education

Robert Hammond, Commissioner of Education

Randy Boyer, Assistant Commissioner

State Systemic Improvement Plan

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Exceptional Student Services Unit

www.cde.state.co.us

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What is the State Systemic Improvement Plan?

Beginning in Federal Fiscal Year 2013 (FFY 2013; school year 13-14) guidance was disseminated from the Federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) regarding changes to the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) that outlined the implementation of a “results-driven accountability framework that leads to increased state and local capacity to improve results and functional outcomes for children with disabilities.”¹ Diving deeper, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, “Every child, regardless of income, race, background, or disability can succeed if provided the opportunity to learn....we know that when students with disabilities are held to high expectations and have access to the general curriculum in the regular classroom, they excel.”²

Moving in the direction of incorporating a results-driven accountability framework, the requirements for the new SPP/APR for FFY 2013–2018, included a new indicator, the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) {Indicator 17}, which is a “comprehensive, ambitious yet achievable plan for improving results for students with disabilities. The basis for this plan is a detailed data and infrastructure analysis that will guide the development of the strategies to increase the state’s capacity to structure and lead meaningful change in Local Education Agencies (LEAs).”³ This plan will be implemented in three phases.

Phase I (reported in FFY 2013) includes the following 5 elements:

- 1) Data Analysis
- 2) Analysis of Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity
- 3) State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities (SiMR)
- 4) Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies
- 5) Theory of Action

Phase II (reported in FFY 2014) includes the following 3 elements:

- 1) Infrastructure Development
- 2) Support of Administrative Units in implementing evidence-based practices
- 3) Evaluation Plan

Phase III (reported in FFY 2015-2018) includes the 3 following elements:

- 1) Results of the ongoing evaluations
- 2) Extent of student progress
- 3) Revisions to the State Performance Plan

Additional information about the SSIP can be found at: <https://osep.grads360.org/#program/ssip>

¹ <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/new-accountability-framework-raises-bar-state-special-education-programs>

² <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/new-accountability-framework-raises-bar-state-special-education-programs>

³ <https://osep.grads360.org/#communities/pdc/documents/6454>

State Systemic Improvement Plan Overview

Description of State-identified Measurable Result

After reviewing the aggregated and disaggregated data, as well as considering the current infrastructure throughout the state, the Exceptional Student Services Unit along with various stakeholder groups determined the focus of the State Systemic Improvement Plan will be improving the reading achievement of students with disabilities in grades K-3rd. This decision aligns with the Colorado Department of Education's strategic goal, *Read by Third Grade*, as well as leveraging specific legislation, i.e., the Colorado READ Act.

Description of State Program

Overview

As a ***dynamic service agency***, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) provides leadership, resources, support, and accountability to the state's 178 school districts and 2211 schools to help them build capacity to meet the needs of the state's 876,795 public school students. As of December 1, 2013, 89,204 (10.17%) of these students were receiving special education services.

The CDE provides services and support to boards of cooperative educational services (BOCES), early learning centers, state correctional schools, facility schools, the state's libraries, adult/family literacy centers, and General Education Development (GED) testing centers reaching learners of all ages. The CDE operates the Colorado Talking Book Library which provides supports for people who have vision, print, and reading disabilities. In addition, the CDE provides structural and administrative support to the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind and the Charter School Institute.

The CDE is divided into five Divisions, each with specific responsibilities: the Achievement & Strategy Division, the Accountability, Performance & Support Division (which includes the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU)), the Innovation, Choice & Engagement Division, the Communication Division, and the School Finance Division. Each Division is further divided into Units and Offices designed to meet specific needs. The ESSU, is comprised of three offices: the Office of Special Education, the Office of Facility Schools, and the Office of Gifted Education. The ESSU provides leadership, resources, support, and accountability to the 178 school districts, which are divided into 62 Administrative Units (AU), to help them build capacity to meet the needs of the state's 89,204 students who are receiving special education services.

As a ***learning organization***, the CDE actively partners with administrative units, districts, schools, educators, families, and community agencies to assess needs, foster innovation, identify promising practices, learn from each other, and disseminate successful strategies to increase student achievement and ensure college and career readiness.

As a ***change agent***, the CDE seeks to continually advance and improve the state's education system to prepare all learners for success in a rapidly changing world. The CDE sets a clear vision for increasing student and overall system performance and holds itself and the state's AUs, schools and districts

accountable for results. The CDE continues to be mindful of the rapid pace of change and is constantly working to push the system in ways that it anticipates and prepares students for the world they will inhabit as adults. As such, we're helping envision and provide models of what learning needs to look like in order to prepare students for the future. The ESSU embraces our role as a change agent in the development & implementation of a SSIP, which will prepare students with disabilities for the world in which they will live as adults.

Additional information about the infrastructure of the CDE can be found at <http://www.cde.state.co.us>

Colorado Department of Education's Strategic Goals

Our four strategic departmental goals are based on the fundamental belief that our education system as a whole must support every student at every step of the way throughout his/her schooling. Our goals are based on a theory of action that if we can help students start strong through quality early learning and school readiness, attain proficiency in reading by the end of third grade, meet or exceed the Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) throughout their schooling, and graduate from high school, then all students will have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they need to contribute to society and successfully participate in postsecondary education and the workforce.

The CDE strategic goals are:

- 1. Start strong: Every student starts strong with a solid foundation in grades preschool-3.**
- 2. Read at or above grade level by the end of third grade: Every student reads at or above grade level by the end of third grade.**
- 3. Meet or exceed standards: Every student meets or exceeds standards.**
- 4. Graduate ready: Every student graduates ready for college and careers.**

Additional information about the strategic goals of the CDE can be found at <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomm/aboutcde>

Elementary and Secondary Education Act - Flexibility Waiver

Accountability System

In February of 2011, the CDE announced the approval of our application for a waiver from the Federal No Child Left Behind law. The waiver gave us the authority to use the state's accountability system in place of key federal accountability requirements.

There are six key components to our single accountability system:⁴

1. “All schools and districts receive performance results based on the state’s School and District Performance Framework report, which includes data on academic achievement, academic growth, growth gaps, and post-secondary readiness indicators. This data is reported using disaggregated groups, including students with IEPs.
2. All schools and districts complete the Unified Improvement Plan (UIP) process to analyze their data more completely, and implement continuous improvement. These plans must include an analysis of sub-populations, including students with disabilities. The requirements for the READ ACT also will be included beginning with the Spring 2015 UIP submission.
3. Schools assigned Turnaround or Priority Improvement plans (the lowest performance levels) are required to make significant changes in practice. No school may remain in Turnaround or Priority Improvement for more than five years, per state law. The ESSU provides technical assistance at the Administrative Unit level addressing changes in practice related to students with disabilities.
4. Districts rated as Turnaround or Priority Improvement (the lowest performance levels) are required to make significant changes in practice. No district may remain in Turnaround or Priority Improvement for more than five years, per state law. The ESSU provides technical assistance (TA) at the Administrative Unit level addressing changes in practice related to students with disabilities.
5. A Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) is targeted towards helping schools and districts improve in order to ensure all students graduate from high school college- and career-ready. The ESSU’s tiered system of accountability is designed to identify TA and professional development needs.
6. A dynamic and interactive data reporting system, SchoolView.org,⁵ creates transparency through easy access to the state’s comprehensive K-12 data, regardless of whether the data are included in the accountability system or not. SchoolView.org provides disaggregated data at the instructional group level for n sizes greater than 16”.

This system is based upon the performance and needs of individual students. Disaggregated elements within the accountability system assure that students with disabilities are included in the accountability and continuous improvement process. These elements include: Academic Achievement, Academic Growth, Academic Growth Gaps, and Post-workforce Readiness. Every year each district and school

⁴ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/accountability/downloads/nclbwaiver/summarycoeseawaiverapplication.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview>

receives a performance framework report that summarizes each element and the progress that has been made over the past academic school year.

Colorado Growth Model

Another component of our accountability system is the Colorado Growth Model (CGM)⁶. “Under the CGM, an individual student’s academic progress is expressed as a growth percentile, which describes the student’s progress relative to other students at the same grade level with similar score histories. Using these observed student score trajectories, the CGM can also calculate forward-looking projections that quantify how much growth a student would need in order to reach a benchmark scale score over differing time-frames. These data can be accessed and viewed disaggregated by separate student groups (i.e., students with disabilities)”. For tutorials and additional information about the Colorado Growth Model see <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview>

“The graphic representation of a students’ performance (Figure 1) have proven to be powerful catalysts of action in Colorado, illustrating not just where achievement gaps exist, but how much progress needs to occur at the individual level for such gaps to be closed. As demonstrated in Figure 1, these data provide greater information about a student—in this case, a partially proficient 9th grade student. The student represented was proficient in math in 8th grade, but without at least high levels of growth in the next year, will not be college and career ready in math in 10th grade. With this information educators understand not just the student’s current status, but the direction in which this student is headed, and can intervene in time.”⁷ This is a powerful tool to aid educators of students with disabilities in order to guide and direct the provision of direct and explicit instruction in the area of need.

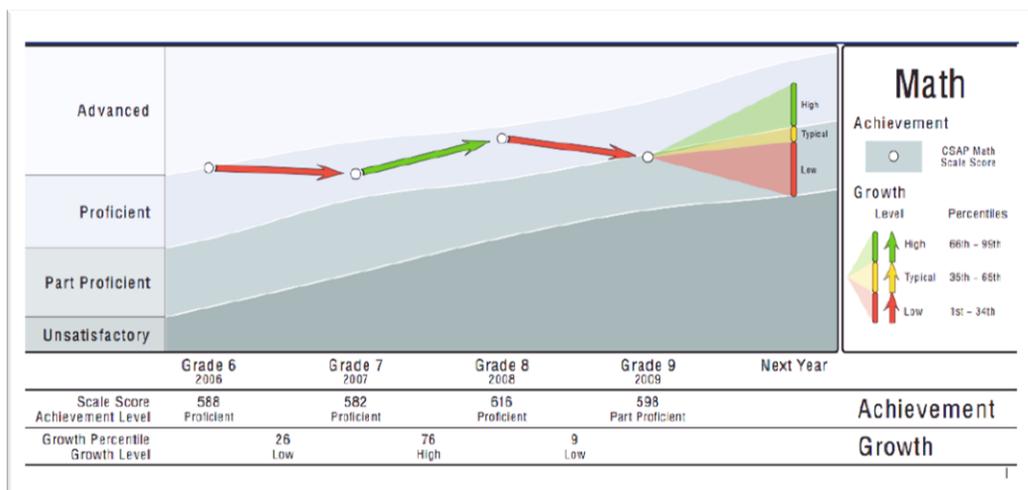


Figure 1

⁶ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/coloradogrowthmodel>

⁷ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/accountability/downloads/esea%20waiver%20request%20rewards%20schools%204-1-13.pdf>

Our Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver is focused on three principles:

Principle I: College- and Career-Ready Expectations for all Students

- Development and implementation of college and career ready standards
- Development and administration of annual, statewide, aligned high-quality assessments that measure student growth

Principle II: State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability and Support

- Development and implementation of a state-based system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support
- Establishing ambitious, but achievable annual measurable objectives
- Improvement strategies to build school capacity to improve student learning

Principle III: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership

- Development and implementation of teacher and principal evaluations and support systems

The ESSU has been involved in the development and implementation of these principles focusing on students with disabilities and their educators. By incorporating these elements into the focused work of the ESSU, we continue to align with the department's four strategic goals which are based on the fundamental belief that the education system as a whole must support every student at every step of the way throughout his/her schooling.

A few examples of the focused work of the ESSU related to the ESEA Principles and the SSIP are listed below.

Principle I: College- and Career-Ready Expectations for ALL Students

- Content Collaborative Advisory Team - offering leadership and technical development for each of the state's 10 content areas so that Colorado's special educators could have access to the latest and most effective instructional and assessment tools, examples, and professional development⁸
- Writing Standards-aligned Individual Education Plans - capacity building for special educators and administrators to understand the Code of Colorado Regulations (CCR), and review the enrolled grade-level and alternate achievement standards within a train the trainer's model⁹

Principle II: State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability and Support

- Development of the Results Driven Accountability (RDA) Administrative Unit Determination matrix utilizing the growth model
- Tiered levels of technical assistance and professional development based upon determination

Principle III: Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership

- Regional Brain Injury and Special Education Eligibility Training (Level 2): included training for teachers of students with congenital brain impact (e.g., Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) and all acquired brain injury (i.e., non-traumatic and traumatic); assessment of

⁸ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/contentcollaboratives>

⁹ http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/iep_forms

and interventions in neurological development/functioning, language development, social & behavioral regulation, executive function skills, and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) special education eligibility criteria (students with brain injury, and Specific Learning Disability (SLD), (Speech Language Impairment (SLI), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and Serious Emotional Disability (SED)

- Interventions to Improve Executive Function Skills Training: this statewide, full-day training was a “live” video conference to 10 sites across Colorado, covering each of the regions with 550 educators representing students with disabilities
- Interventions to Improve Executive Function Skills Trainer of Trainers: 65 administrators and education leaders, representing students with disabilities, were trained as trainers to further the implementation supports and capacity building efforts
- Through the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) work, a highlight document of the family components of the Educator Effectiveness principal and teacher standards and rubrics was created entitled the “Colorado State Model Evaluation System for Principals, Assistant Principals, and Teachers: Key Family Components – Standards, Rules, and Rubrics Summary”¹⁰
- Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP) conferences are offered several times a year and are a joint learning opportunity for families of a child with a disability and educators; PEP promotes partnerships that are essential in educating and including children with disabilities and their families in schools and the community
- Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) Support Network of Families, Educators, and Community Resources - This network of over 1,000 stakeholders is a venue for sharing about trainings, resources, and promising practices. The goal is to provide updated information through a periodic electronic mailing and request “two-way” sharing of successes, stories, and solutions. Issues of the FSCP Support Network Bulletin are posted
- Webinars, Trainings, and “On the Team and At the Table” Toolkit- These practical multi-tiered family, school, and community partnering resources are for all stakeholders and are adaptable to a specific site or situation’s needs
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Family-School Partnering Fact Sheet and Video - two resources designed to support learning communities in implementing multi-tiered family, school, and community partnering. They apply research to practice by using the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships (PTA, 2008) to every learner and his/her family¹¹
- MTSS Essential Component Fact Sheet and Videos – these resources are designed to support educators in understanding the six essential components of MTSS as defined in Colorado (Shared Leadership; Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring; Evidence-Based Instruction, Intervention, and Assessment Practices; Layered Continuum of Support; Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making; Family, School, and Community Partnering)
- Funds from IDEA Part B, section 619, supported several training and technical assistance opportunities focused on: Evaluating Dual Language Learners with Disabilities, Teacher workshops for Dual Language Learners with Disabilities, Effective Teaming Between General Education and Special Education, Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment,

¹⁰ http://www.cde.state.co.us/rti/co_statemodelevalseystem_keyfamilycomponentsnov2014

¹¹ <http://www.pta.org/nationalstandards>

Routines- Based Interview, and online courses on Developing Functional Goals and Inclusion in the Preschool

- Provision of professional development (PD), by Robin McWilliam, on Quality Preschool Inclusion Practices
- Provision of PD, by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, on Data Driven Instruction
- Collaborated with University of Northern Colorado (UNC) & IDEA Part C to host an Early Childhood Literacy Summit
- Preschool teams collaborated on the development of the Early Learning & Development Guidelines (ELDG). These guideline are more comprehensive and encompass the preschool Colorado Academic Standards (CAS)
- The SLD Reading Project: Phonology, Advanced Decoding, and Word Study (for teams of special and general educators) was a multi-component professional development project which included an initial workshop, regional workshops, and web-based sessions with the presenter. The topics covered were diagnostic assessment, implementation of strategies, progress monitoring, and a final report-out that included evidence of impact on student learning
- Equity in School Discipline Practices Training: Included investigating discipline data to determine whether disproportionate discipline practices for students of color, as well as students with disabilities, were occurring and effective discipline practices within a multi-tiered framework for behavior support

Colorado Department of Education’s Theory of Action

Our goals (i.e., Start Strong, Read by Third Grade, Meet or Exceed Standards, and Graduate Ready) serve as the foundation for the Special Education SSIP that is focused on students’ improved outcomes. We believe strongly that if we are to have an aligned system, we need to examine at the state level the same goals and related measures we monitor at the district and school level. The department-wide efforts and focused unit work are based on the following theory of action:¹²

If we, at the CDE:

- Foster key conditions and research-based turnaround principles
- Diagnose systems issues and structure focused improvement planning
- Align, differentiate, and leverage the allocation of all funds to ensure equity and to maximize impact
- Use appropriate measures and indicators to track and monitor progress
- Actively support new and growing turnaround talent and development programs
- Pursue bold and urgent interventions and actions with schools and districts

Then:

- The percentage of districts with a district performance plan assignment of Priority Improvement or Turnaround (PITA) on the district performance framework will decrease by 20% each year from 2013 through 2015, and these districts will maintain their improved rating
- The percentage of schools with a school performance plan assignment of Priority Improvement or Turnaround on the school performance framework will decrease by 20% each year from 2013 through 2015
- At least 50% of the schools who move out of Priority Improvement or Turnaround will improve to a Performance Plan assignment each year from 2013 through 2015

As the ESSU considered our focused unit work in light of the state’s Strategic Plan, the state’s Departmental Goals, the ESEA Flexibility Waiver, and the state’s Theory of Action, we identified key ideas and threads throughout these documents that directly influence the SSIP.

Key Ideas:	Threads Throughout the Plans:
<p><i>Best First Instruction</i> <i>Identify & Respond to Needs</i> <i>Student Growth (Catch Up, Keep Up, Move Up)</i> <i>Collaboration and Partnerships are Essential</i></p>	<p><i>Educator Effectiveness</i> <i>Data Based Decision Making</i> <i>Department Flexibility & Collaboration</i> <i>Parent/Family Engagement & Community Partnerships</i></p>

Table A

¹² <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomm/aboutcde>

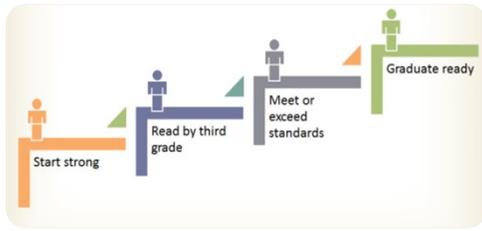


Table B

The ESSU looked at the four CDE Department goals and initially identified areas to align and potential leverage points to address the needs of students who receive special education services (Table B). In each of the four goal areas we identified specific components that could be considered as we conduct our data and infrastructure analyses.

<p>Start Strong –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase skills in Preschool (Part C to B transition, Preschool Special Education, Colorado Preschool Program (state funded program for children who are at risk)) 2. Preschool Teaching Pyramid 3. Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge 4. School Readiness Plans 5. Early Learning and Development Guidelines 6. Colorado’s Competencies for Early Childhood Educators and Administrators 	<p>Read by 3rd Grade –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. READ Act - Significant Reading Deficiencies 2. Office of Literacy – Reading Foundations Academy 3. Increasing Achievement and Growth Grant 4. Professional Development for Educators of Students with Disabilities: Literacy (Pre-K through Grade 3) Competitive Grant 5. High - Achieving School Study 6. ESSU Set-aside Projects 7. Multi-tiered System of Supports
<p>Meet & Exceed Standards –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Colorado Measures of Academic Success 2. Colorado Alternate Assessment Program 3. ESEA Flexibility Waiver 4. Educator Effectiveness 5. Provide educators with quality samples 6. Provision of Data & Training 7. Provide Self – Auditing tools 8. Align & Leverage Legal Pathways 	<p>Graduate Ready –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drop Out Prevention 2. College & Career Readiness Skills 3. Individual Career & Academic Plans 4. Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) opportunities 5. Next Generation Living Skills 6. Colorado Measures of Academic Success

Throughout this process, the ESSU and stakeholders have been encouraged to keep in mind the vision and mission of the CDE, but also those of the ESSU:

ESSU VISION – All students with exceptionalities are prepared for continued learning and pursuit of post-school opportunities.

ESSU MISSION – The Exceptional Student Services Unit provides leadership, professional development, and guidance to build the capacity and effectiveness of Colorado educational systems in meeting the academic, social-emotional, and independent living needs of students with exceptionalities - leading to enhanced achievement and post-school outcomes.

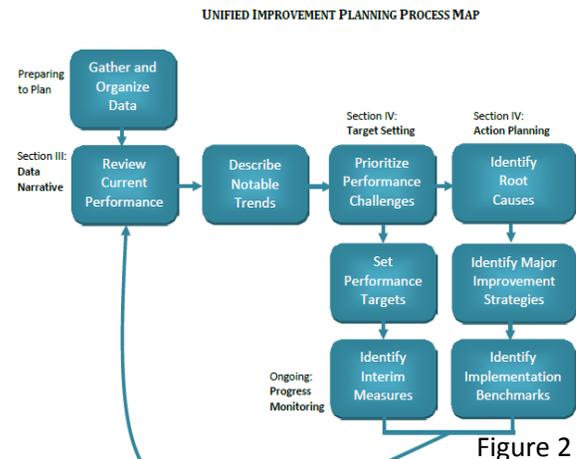
Process Used for Developing Phase I of the SSIP

Continuous Improvement Planning Process

The method the ESSU followed while developing Phase I of the SSIP was a process developed by the Colorado Department of Education’s Unified Improvement Planning Office which also is a part of the Accountability, Performance & Support Division. “Required by our ESEA Waiver, this process is used annually by all Colorado schools and districts and can lead to improved student learning and system effectiveness by engaging in a cycle of continuous improvement to manage performance (Figure 2). The CDE developed a UIP template and processes to support schools and districts in their performance management efforts.”¹³

This process includes the following elements:

- 1) Gather and organize data
- 2) Review of current performance
- 3) Conduct a trend analysis
- 4) Determine and prioritize performance challenges
 - a. Set performance targets
 - b. Identify interim measures
- 5) Identify root cause(s)
 - a. Identify major improvement strategies
 - b. Identify implementation benchmarks



The continuous improvement planning process for the ESSU is focused on successful outcomes for students with disabilities through a tiered system with a layered continuum of support.

The ESSU Colorado Continuous Improvement Process Objectives are:

1. Ensure a meaningful and continuous improvement process that focuses on improving academic performance and outcomes for students with disabilities by linking AU data, including indicator data, to improvement activities.
2. Partner with AUs to ensure compliance with IDEA regulations and ECEA rules.
3. Connect AU-level and school-level improvement activities to support Colorado’s Systemic Improvement Plan and Identified Measurable Result.
4. Connect AU-level and school-level improvement activities with IDEA regulations and ECEA rules.
5. Support each AU in the process of self-audits, evaluation, and improvement of instructional effectiveness and compliance to ensure growth in student academic performance and outcomes.
6. Link improvement activities with long term, multi-year professional development to support capacity building and sustainability of compliance and instructional effectiveness.
7. Gather continuous improvement data that includes the AU’s self -report and summary of analyses of student performance data as well as self-audits of student records for compliance.

¹³ http://www.cde.state.co.us/uip/uip_templates

Component #1: Data Analysis

Data Identification and Disaggregation

The ESSU conducted broad and focused data analyses between January 2014 and March 2015. These analyses were conducted with a wide variety of stakeholders and included multiple resources. In preparation for improvement planning, and throughout the process, the ESSU gathered and organized relevant data from a variety of sources. This included performance data (*e.g.*, student assessment results, and educational outcome measures such as dropout or graduation rates), compliance data (*e.g.*, disproportionality, timeliness), demographics (*e.g.*, characteristics of a population such as number of students in a school or gender, grade level, race/ethnicity), process data (*e.g.*, measures that describe what is being done to get learning results, such as programs, strategies, and practices), and perception data (*e.g.*, information that reflects opinions and views of educational stakeholders). (Table C) (1a, 1b)

Samples of Types of Data Analyzed:

Performance Data	Demographic Data	Process Data	Perception Data
State and local summative and interim assessment results and growth data	State and local district and school characteristics (<i>e.g.</i> , poverty, gender, race/ethnicity, types of disabilities)	Discipline referrals and suspension rates	Teaching and learning condition surveys (<i>e.g.</i> , Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Colorado)
Performance and compliance data from SPP indicators		Family and community involvement	Perception survey data (parents, community, school leaders)
K-3 reading assessment results as required by the Colorado State READ Act		Professional development (structure, participation, focus)	Self-assessment results
Title I - High growth & high achieving school data		Services / Programs	
		MTSS - Fidelity of Implementation	

Table C

Actual Data Sources Analyzed & Documents Considered:

Colorado Department of Education Strategic Performance Plan – updated October 2014, this plan identifies the strategic priorities and improvement strategies for the CDE.¹⁴

Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines – describe the trajectory of children’s learning and development from birth to 8 years old in Colorado.¹⁵

Colorado Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project – assessment tool that teachers may use to obtain real-time assessments of the reading skill levels of students in kindergarten through third grade. The intent was to support state purchase of software that provides individualized assessments with

¹⁴ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomm/cdeperformanceplan>

¹⁵ <http://earlylearningco.org/>

immediate results, stores and analyzes those results, and recommends activities based on those results.¹⁶

Colorado Education Statistics – The Colorado Department of Education collects and evaluates certain educational data as mandated by the state General Assembly. District-by-district data in specific educational areas is available, as well as a yearly collection of general education statistics for the state.¹⁷

Colorado Federal Programs High-Achieving Schools Research Study – in collaboration with other Units across the CDE including the ESSU, analysis of 5 schools in Colorado that had achieved high achievement with their lowest performing students across all student sub-groups, including students with disabilities. The common themes, practices, and strategies used in these schools were analyzed and studied.¹⁸

Colorado Federal Programs High-Growth Schools Research Study – analysis of Title I schools in Colorado that had achieved high growth with their lowest performing students in 2010-2011, regardless of Title I funding amounts in prior years. The common themes, practices, and strategies used in these schools were analyzed and studied.¹⁹

Colorado Growth Model Data – the purpose of this data is to show groups of students (and individual students) progress from year to year toward state standards.²⁰ Each student's progress is compared to the progress of other students in the state with a similar score history on the state assessment in that subject area. It also identifies the level of growth that needed to observe in order to say that students were, on average, on track to catch up, keep up, or move up.²¹

Colorado Performance Frameworks Data – the district and school performance frameworks provide a snapshot of the district or school's level of attainment on academic achievement, growth, growth gaps and postsecondary readiness.²²

Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee – this data was gathered by the State Performance Plan subcommittee to identify trends and what was working in the sites that showed improved outcomes for students with disabilities.²³

Colorado State Academic Performance Assessment and Colorado Alternate Academic Performance Assessment – the purpose of this data is to provide a snapshot of student academic achievement. It provides annual assessment scores for Reading, Math, and Writing.²⁴

Colorado State Performance Plan / Annual Performance Report – the state's plan and data submitted to the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) that evaluates the state's efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of Part B of the IDEA and how the state will improve the implementation of IDEA Part B.²⁵

¹⁶ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/elatboytomoyresults>

¹⁷ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval>

¹⁸ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms>

¹⁹ http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/ti/a_hgschs

²⁰ http://www2.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/documents/ISR_explanation.pdf

²¹ <http://www2.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/documents/CUKUMU.pdf>

²² <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/performance>

²³

[http://www.boarddocs.com/co/cde/Board.nsf/files/9QZ36X7FB6E7/\\$file/Final%20CSEAC%20SBE%20Annual%20Report%202014%201017.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/co/cde/Board.nsf/files/9QZ36X7FB6E7/$file/Final%20CSEAC%20SBE%20Annual%20Report%202014%201017.pdf)

²⁴ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/assessment/CoAssess-DataAndResults#summarydata>

²⁵ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SPP-APR.asp>

Colorado Unified Improvement Plans – improvement plans provide information on the district or school's data trends, root causes and targets, and identify strategies and resources the district or school will use to improve student academic outcomes.²⁶

District Dashboard (DISH) – the DISH is a visualization tool that graphs out currently available district data over time (n>16 students or more for demographic and achievement data, n ≥20 students or more for growth data), such as demographics, achievement, growth and performance framework data.²⁷

Elementary Education and Secondary Act (Flexibility Waiver) – updated April 2013, this document provides an explanation of Colorado's unified accountability system which streamline's schools' improvement work and supports the state's system of continuous improvement.²⁸

Exceptional Children's Educational Act Rules (ECEA) – updated March 2013, these rules are to provide the administrative framework for services offered to students pursuant to the terms of the Exceptional Children's Educational Act (ECEA).²⁹

Guidelines for Identifying Students with Specific Learning Disabilities – these guidelines, consistent with §300.8 and §300.309 of IDEA 2004, provide information from the amended Colorado Rules and Regulations which set forth the definition and criteria for the determination of a specific learning disability.³⁰

mCLASS DIBELS Next Data – these data are provided by Amplify and identify what percent of students fall into risk levels. This information is excellent to assist in planning instruction and interventions. However, being able to take that to the next level and determining how well we are assisting our students in growth is extremely important.”³¹

READ Act Data – the purpose of the READ collection is to determine per pupil funding for districts by taking a count of students at the end of the year who have a significant reading deficiency (SRD). This data includes demographics and interim reading assessment scores to determine who has an SRD and student progress.³²

READ Act Legislation and Guidelines – these focus on K-3 literacy, assessment, and individual plans for students reading below grade level, parent communication, funding to support intervention, a resource bank of assessments, instructional programming, and professional development.³³

Results Matter – this data is used to describe child progress across specific developmental and educational domains as well as through global outcomes developed by the national Early Childhood Outcomes Center and the U.S. Department of Education.³⁴

²⁶ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolview/performance>

²⁷ <http://www.schoolview.org/dish/dish.asp>

²⁸ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/accountability/nclbwaiver>

²⁹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/spedlaw/rules>

³⁰ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SD-SLD.asp>

³¹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/determininggrowthboytomoy>

³² http://www.cde.state.co.us/datapipeline/snap_read

³³ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readact/index>

³⁴ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/resultsmatter>

Special Education December Count – this data collection contains an annual count of eligible students under Part B of the IDEA as of December 1st. This information is used for Federal and Indicator reporting and to monitor state performance.³⁵

Special Education Discipline – this data collection contains information on children with disabilities served under IDEA subject to disciplinary removal. This information is used for Federal and Indicator reporting, to monitor state performance, and to examine issues related to disproportionality and in policy development decisions.³⁶

Special Education End-of-Year – this data collection contains information on students who were referred, evaluated, or received services in your Administrative Unit or State Operated Program throughout the school year. This information is used for Federal and Indicator reporting and to monitor state performance.³⁷

Student October Count – this data collection contains student enrollment information as of the pupil enrollment count date. This information is used for Federal and Indicator reporting and to monitor state performance. This information is also used to determine the school demographics, number of students in instructional programs, free and reduced lunch counts, English Language Learners, and distribution of school finances across the state.³⁸

Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Colorado Survey – an anonymous, voluntary statewide survey of licensed school-based educators to assess teaching conditions at the school, district and state level.³⁹

³⁵ http://www.cde.state.co.us/datapipeline/snap_sped-december

³⁶ http://www.cde.state.co.us/datapipeline/snap_sped-discipline

³⁷ http://www.cde.state.co.us/datapipeline/snap_sped-eoy

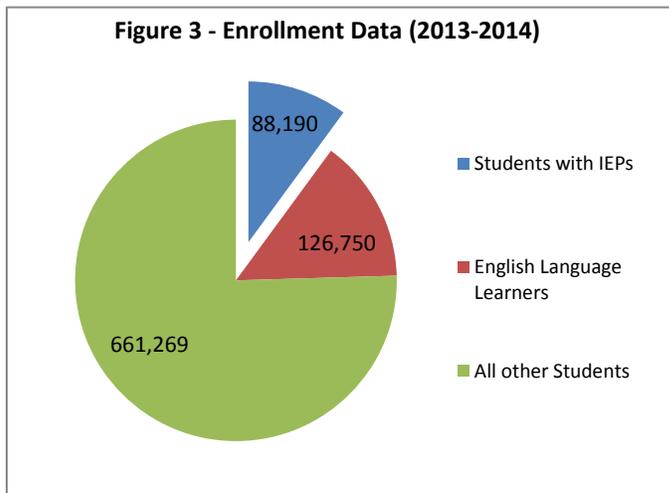
³⁸ http://www.cde.state.co.us/datapipeline/snap_studentoctober

³⁹ <http://tellcolorado.org/>

Data Analysis

Broad Analyses

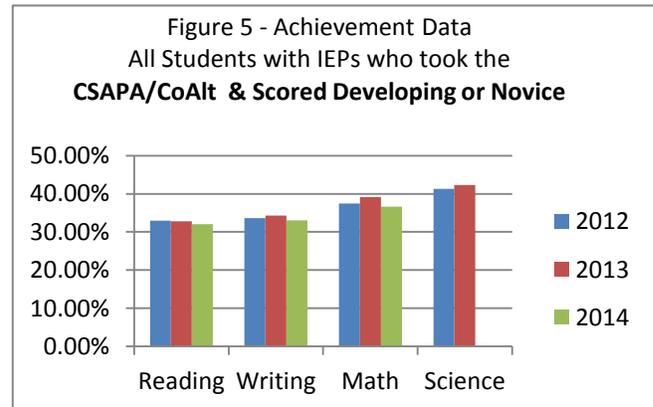
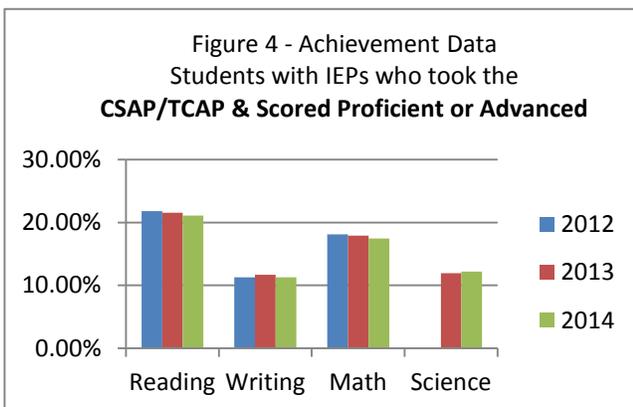
The ESSU and various stakeholder groups reviewed the above sources at various times throughout the year. There were clear requests from stakeholders (*e.g.*, Directors of Special Education, Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC), and ESSU Consultants) to include certain types of information in these analyses. These requests specifically included: Unified Improvement Planning data, TELL Survey data, and the CSEAC Student Outcomes Sub-Committee data. Aggregate and disaggregated data were examined throughout the data analyses process. (1a, 1b, 1d, 1e, 1f)



According to SchoolView.org, during the 2013-2014 school year 10.06% of the students enrolled in Colorado public schools were students receiving special education services (Figure 3). Conducting broad data analyses, we analyzed demographics (*e.g.*, grade, eligibility category, gender, race / ethnicity) as well as specific SPP indicators (*e.g.*, graduation rates, achievement, and disproportionality). Positive trends were identified in compliance indicators.

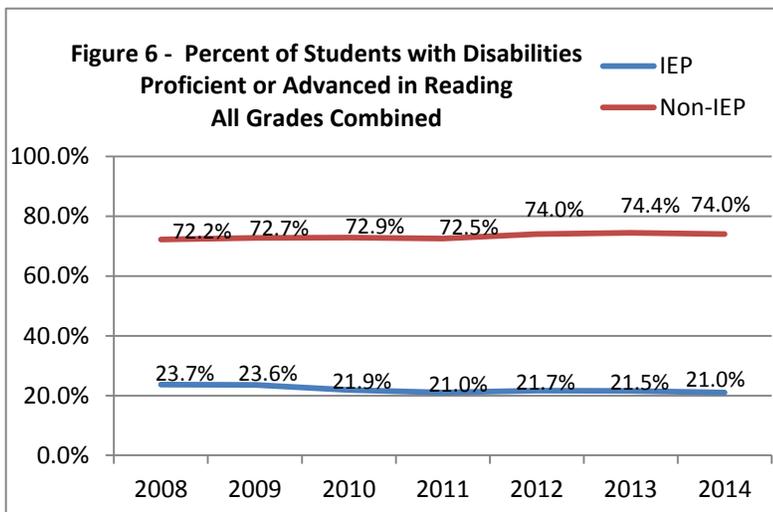
It was noted that there were no major concerns or barriers regarding compliance indicators and long term patterns of compliance in the AU's were noted as verified and correct (1d).

The team reviewed the State Performance Plan (SPP) Indicator data and looked at Colorado's academic achievement data in reading, writing, and math, looking for trends that were positive and those that appeared concerning. After review, it became apparent that Indicator 3 was our priority performance challenge for students receiving special education services (Figures 4 & 5).



The team spent time discussing the literacy and math scores and believed that with the state’s focus on literacy and the need to align with the state’s goals and initiatives, literacy would probably be the focus of the SSIP, with confirmation still required from deeper analyses and stakeholder input. Narrowing our focus was the next step in the analytical process.

In Colorado, in addition to the achievement data, the state includes a growth formula as an added variable for accountability of programs, schools, and districts with regard to student outcomes. With this growth formula, there are multiple measures of students’ growth towards the standards. There are 3 specific measures (*i.e.*, Step Up, Catch Up, and Keep Up) that calculate, respectively, a student’s ability to step up from unsatisfactory to partially proficient, catch up to proficient, or keep up his or her proficient status within 3 years or by the 10th grade. In addition, schools and districts are able to determine their median growth percentiles for student subgroups in reading and math, as well as the adequate growth percentile they would need to reach in order for that subgroup to reach and maintain proficiency.

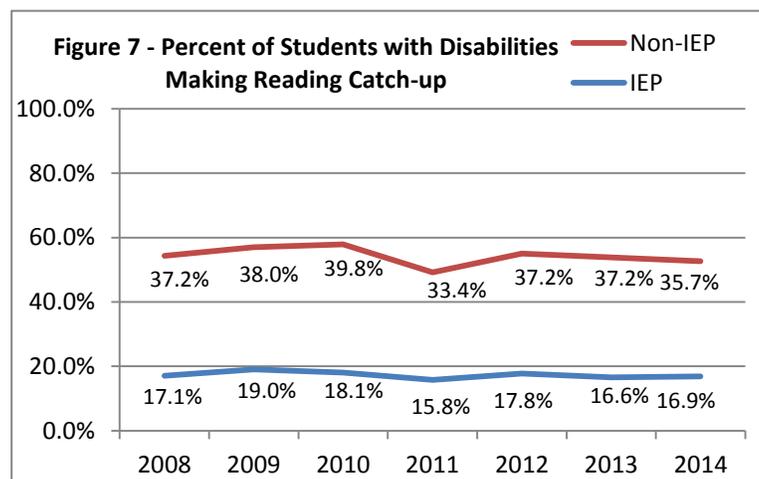


The data results have not been positive for students on IEPs in the state of Colorado. When taken in the aggregate, students have remained stagnant (Figure 6). Students on IEPs consistently score lower in reading, math, and writing than their peers without disabilities across all grade levels.

Although the achievement gap has remained consistent across multiple years, with a slight increase in the gap occurring in the last few years, another trend noticed was the flat achievement scores for all students.

As the ESSU and stakeholders analyzed these data and considered potential contributing factors, the initial stakeholder discussions revolved around differentiated core instruction as well as the use of standards-aligned curriculum and IEPs. (1f)

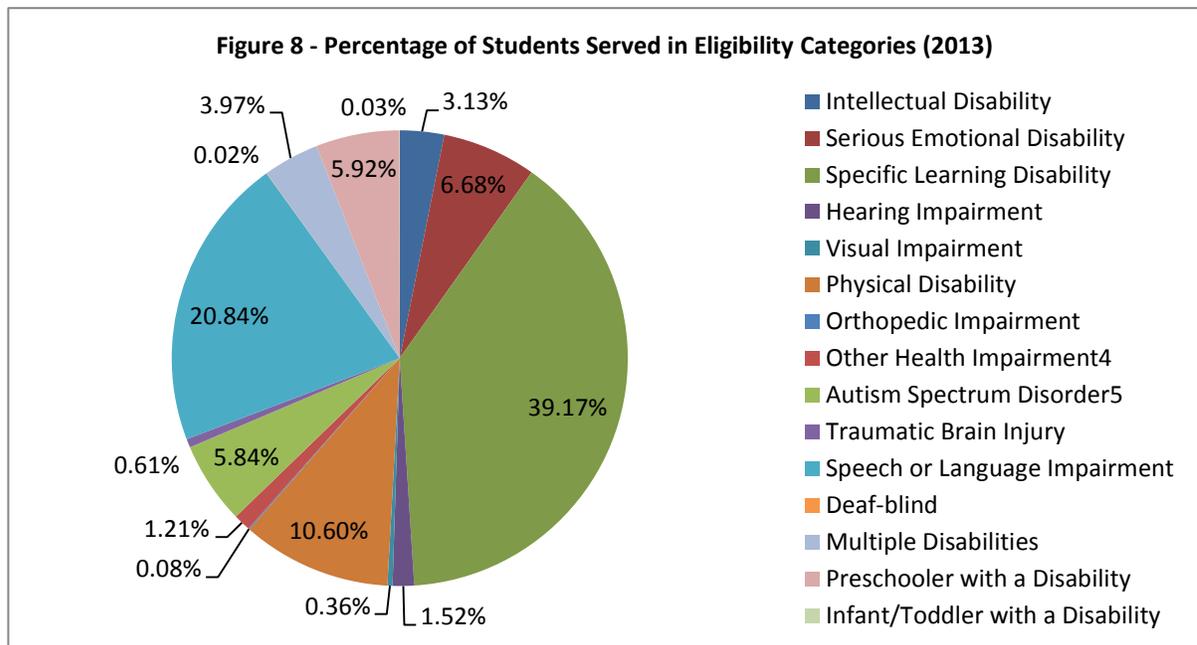
Implementation of the new Colorado Academic Standards (CAS) has happened gradually over a three year time-frame, but stakeholders agreed that the lack of curriculum aligned to the CAS may be a root cause (1f). Additionally, since curriculum is selected at the local LEA level, it is possible that teachers may not fully understand how to take a pre-written curriculum and ensure that it aligns to Colorado’s grade level academic standards.



This concern is already being addressed by the ESSU through professional development offerings to build capacity of special educators and administrators in understanding the CAS and alternate achievement standards. A manual, “Writing Standards-Aligned Advanced Learning Plans (ALPs) and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs): A Supplemental Guidance Document for Designing Effective Formal Educational Plans”, has also been developed.⁴⁰

When comparing students with and without disabilities in Catch-Up, there are also gaps (Figure 7). When compounded by poverty and English learning status, these gaps widen even further.

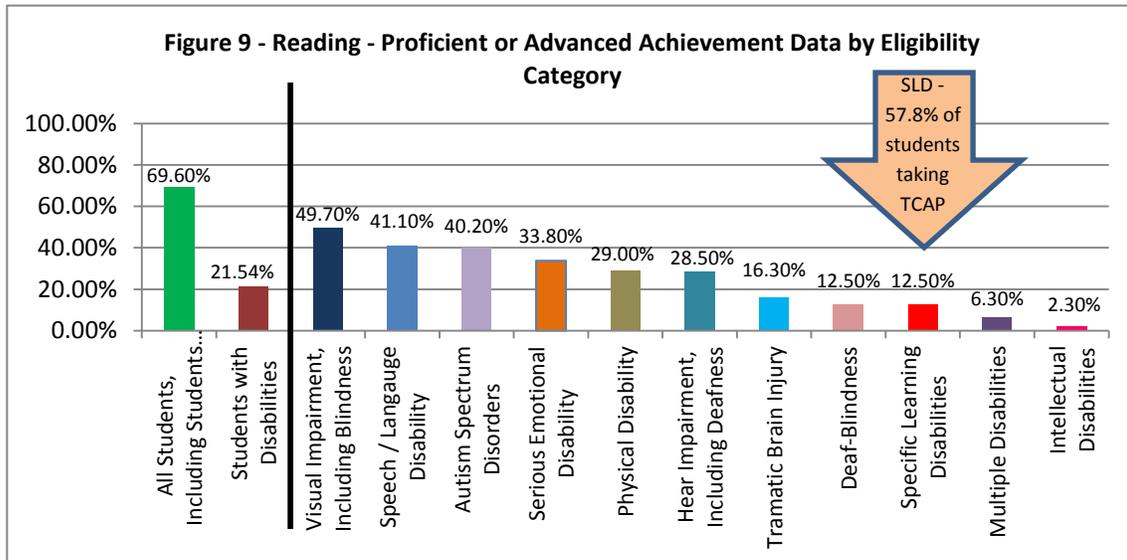
Achievement scores over several years show similar trends in writing and math as well. To develop a deeper understanding of the individual reading and writing scores making up the state average, there were focused data analyses. Through that process we identified that students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD), make up the largest population of students receiving special education (Figure 8).



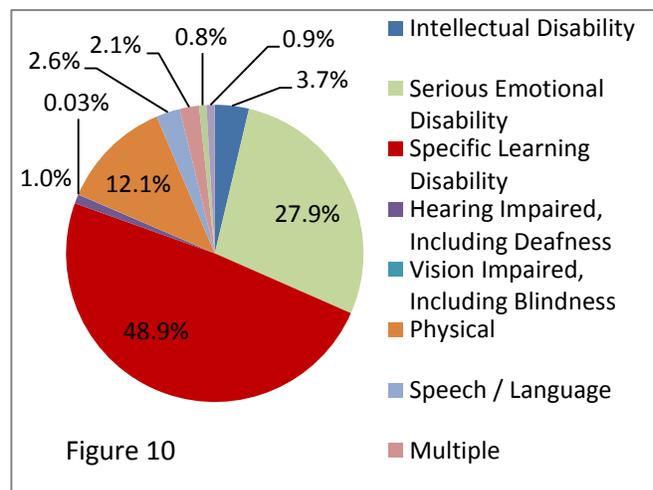
⁴⁰ http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/iep_forms

Focused Analyses - Specific Learning Disabilities

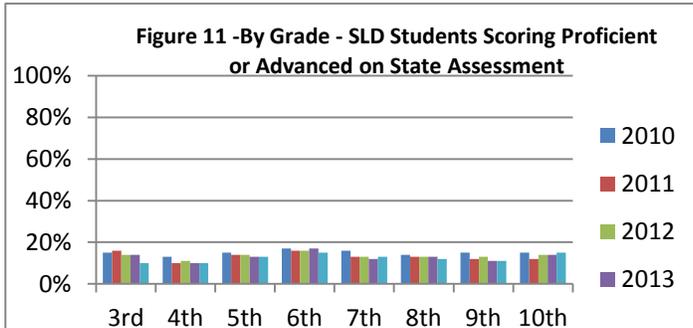
We analyzed achievement data, comparing eligibility categories (Figure 9). From these data several things were noted: students with visual impairments, including blindness, have the highest achievement scores; students with SLD, who make up our largest population of students taking the state’s assessment in reading (*i.e.*, 57.8% of students on IEPs), scored extremely low. Therefore, the performance of the largest group of students taking the state assessment (*i.e.*, SLD) not only has impacted the overall achievement and growth gaps between students with and without disabilities but also served to mask the achievement that is occurring in other disability categories.



The achievement of students with SLD elicited concern so we continued to focus on the data of this group of students. We analyzed graduation and dropout rates and discovered that 76.8% of students with disabilities who drop out have either SLD (48.9%) or a SED (27.9%) (Figure 10). Most stakeholders expected to see a high number of students with SED. As the ESSU considered all of these data, addressing the literacy needs of K-12 students with specific learning disabilities emerged as the primary focus. However, strong feedback from stakeholders emphasized that students with SLD in grades preschool through 12th was too broad to consider; rather their desire was to narrow the focus even further. Additionally there were discussions surrounding the pre-service education of new teachers in colleges and universities. Stakeholders discussed the knowledge level of both special and general educators regarding teaching reading to students with disabilities. There were discussions surrounding the need to align the professional learning systems across the state to address knowledge gaps of educators emphasizing literacy. (1f)



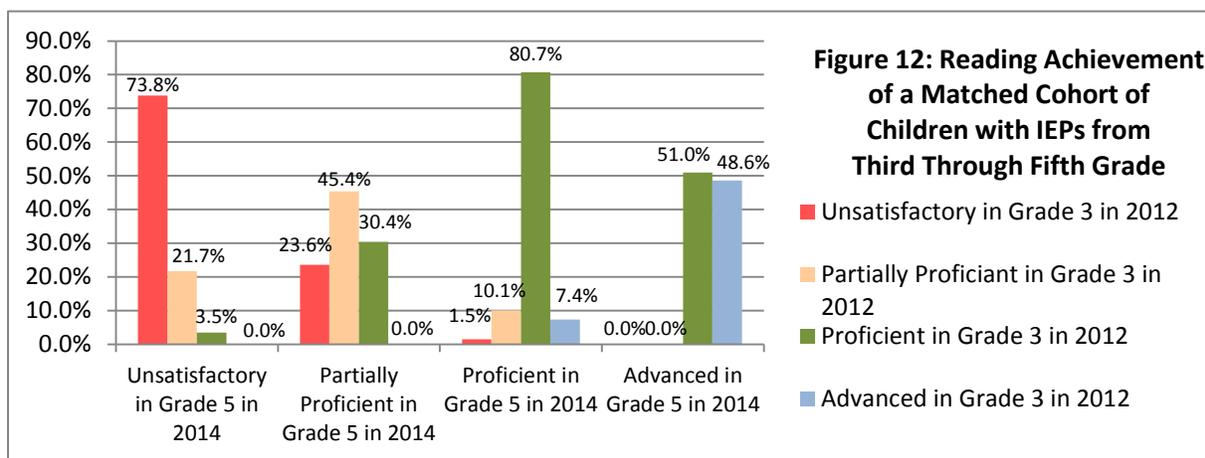
We narrowed the data focus of students with SLDs and examined grade level performance to determine if there was a specific grade level at which a decreasing trend in proficiency occurs. We were surprised to find that the trend data reflected flat scores throughout the 3rd – 10th grades, (*i.e.*, all grades included in state level assessments) (Figure 11). Stakeholder discussions focused on students not having the



required reading skills prior to the end of third grade. This led the ESSU and stakeholders to consider alignment to the Colorado state goal, *Read by Third Grade*, as a possible focus for the SiMR. As these data were analyzed and discussed across various stakeholder groups, one continued point of concern focused on the fact that students on IEPs spend the majority of their academic time within the general education classroom. Other questions posed by the

multiple stakeholder groups included students’ access to core content (*i.e.*, “pull out” occurring during core class time), general educators providing differentiated instruction, and whether the curriculum being taught is actually aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards, and general and special educators knowing how to teach reading to students with disabilities.

After reviewing the long term achievement reading scores of students with SLD, and knowing the trend data for all students with disabilities was flat (pg. 20) in collaboration with the Office of Learning Supports and in consideration of the statewide focus on a MTSS, reading achievement scores for a cohort of all students with disabilities were analyzed between 3rd grade and 5th grade (Figure 12). Of the students who scored unsatisfactory in 3rd grade, 73.8% were still unsatisfactory in reading in the 5th grade, while 23.6% improved their achievement to partially proficient by the 5th grade. When we consider all of these data together, once a student is testing in the unsatisfactory range, it is extremely difficult to catch up.



Through extensive feedback from Stakeholders that the SSIP focus should not emphasize only students with a SLD rather their desire would be to address early literacy need for all students with disabilities. (1f)

Focused Analyses - Preschool and School Readiness

In order to confirm and narrow the focus of the SSIP, we reviewed the school readiness of our youngest learners, ages 3-5, and the alignment to the state goal “Start Strong.” Colorado demonstrated its commitment to school readiness and success for all children through the passage of Senate Bill 08-212, Colorado’s Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K) and the ESEA Flexibility waiver to align Colorado’s academic standards preschool through postsecondary education system. The Colorado State Board of Education defines school readiness as “both the preparedness of a child to engage in and benefit from learning experiences, and the ability of a school to meet the needs of all students enrolled in publicly funded preschool or kindergarten. School readiness is enhanced when schools, families, and community service providers work collaboratively to ensure that every child is ready for higher levels of learning in academic content.”⁴¹

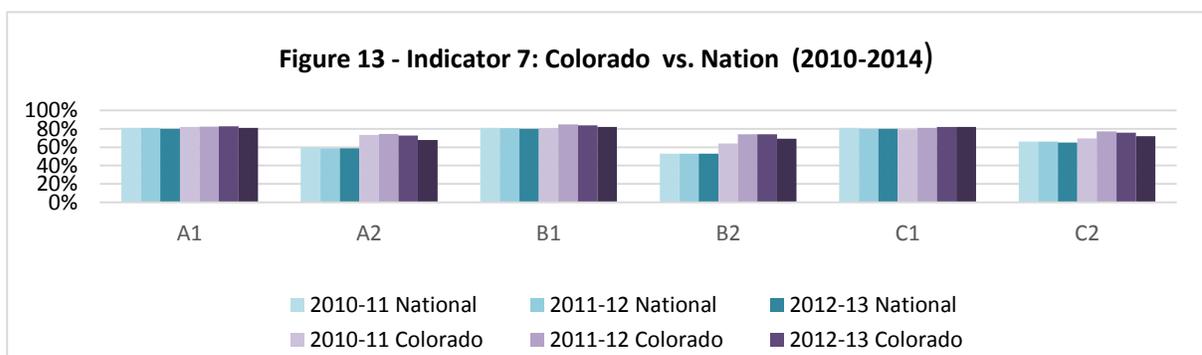
CAP4K requires that all students in a publicly funded kindergarten be evaluated using a state approved school readiness assessment. The purpose of the school readiness assessment is to inform the development of a school readiness plan in order to provide a responsive learning environment for each child. This process aligns with the department’s first goal is for all students to “Start Strong”. For children receiving Part C early intervention and Part B special education services, this goal also encompasses aligning the two systems. In a reciprocal process of attending SSIP stakeholder meetings, Part C and Part B have aligned, as Part C’s focus area is on Indicator 3C that children will use appropriate behaviors to get their needs met. School readiness describes the status and ongoing progress a child makes within the domains of physical well-being and motor development, social and emotional development, language and comprehension development, and cognition and general knowledge.

The ESSU and stakeholders reviewed the growth data of children who were exiting preschool. Indicator 7 data was analyzed according to the three outcomes: (Figure 13)

1. Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);
2. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy); and
3. Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.

Each of these three outcomes are reported and analyzed according to two summary statements:

1. Summary Statement One: Of those preschool children who entered the preschool program below age expectations in each Outcome, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program.
2. Summary Statement Two: The percent of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations in each Outcome by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program.



⁴¹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/schoolreadiness>

These data reflecting *Outcome B2*, (Table D) which measures the acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy), is specifically looking at the percent of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program.

B. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy)	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
1. Summary Statement One: Of those preschool children who entered the preschool program below age expectations, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program.	80.6%	84.8%	83.6%	82.1%
2. Summary Statement Two: The percent of preschool children who were functioning within age expectations by the time they turned 6 years of age or exited the program.	64.1%	74.1%	74.2%	69.3%

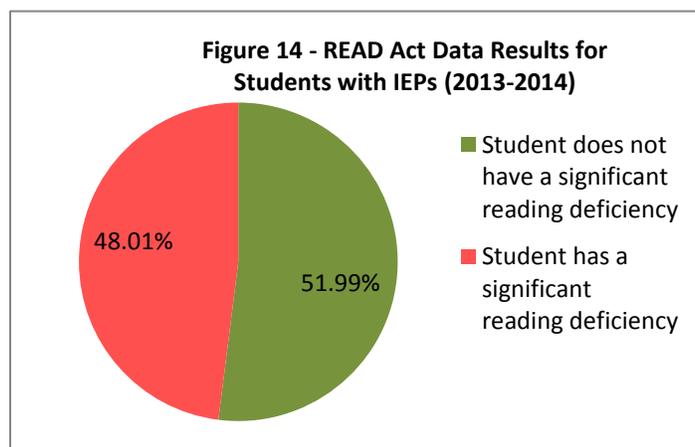
Table D

These data show that students with disabilities, who attended a Colorado preschool and were evaluated using the approved assessment, demonstrate an increased rate of growth and acquisition of grade level expectations to demonstrate school readiness, although improvement is still needed.

It is important to note that data collections do not currently allow for tracking students who attended preschool and those who have significant reading deficiencies as identified through the READ Act assessments. These linkages may be available in the future.

Focused Analyses - Kindergarten through 3rd Grade

Next we analyzed data available regarding students with disabilities in grades K-3 (Figure 14). The ESSU, working in collaboration with the CDE Office of Literacy and stakeholders, reviewed the characteristics of this target population and the prevalence of Significant Reading Deficiencies (SRDs). Prior to 2013, statewide achievement data related to literacy achievement of students with disabilities enrolled in Kindergarten through 3rd grade was extremely limited, (not until spring of their third grade year in which students would participate in a statewide assessment.) However, with the passage of the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (the READ Act) in 2012⁴², statewide data for these populations are now accessible.



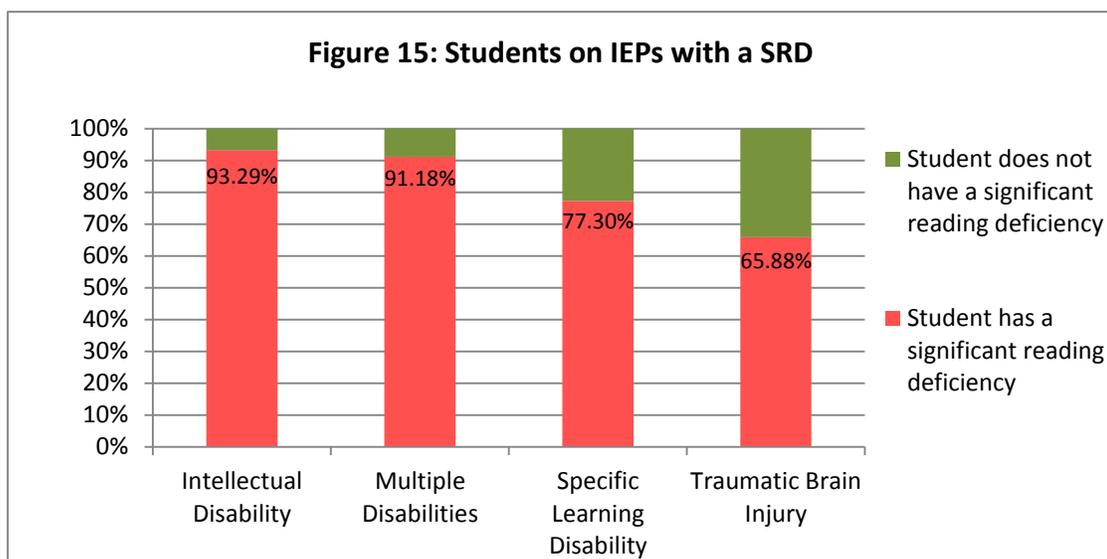
⁴² <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readact/index>

The READ Act requires the use of an approved interim assessment to determine whether a student has a Significant Reading Deficiency (SRD) in grades K through 3.⁴³ A SRD is defined by Colorado HB 12-1238 as “the minimum skill levels for reading competency, in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, including oral skills, and reading comprehension established by the State Board pursuant to section 22-7-1209 for the student’s grade level.”⁴⁴ After the first of three annual assessments, completed within 30 instructional days of the beginning of the year, if a student is identified with a SRD, appropriate interventions are put in place, based on the results of required diagnostic assessments to identify areas of need (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, including oral skills, and reading comprehension.)

Additional information about identifying a Significant Reading Deficiency is available on our website at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/professionaldevelopmentopportunities>

According to the April 2014 READ Act Legislative Brief, “Students receiving special education services were more likely to be identified with a significant reading deficiency than their non-eligible peers (49% compared to 14%). This trend was expected as the cut-scores for a significant reading deficiency are low and tend to represent the lower quartile of students across all four interim assessments.”⁴⁵

The ESSU, Office of Literacy, and stakeholders reviewed the first year of READ Act data. In 2013-2014, 90.23% of students in K-3 with IEPs had READ Act data that could be analyzed and 48.01% of these students were identified with a Significant Reading Deficiency (Figure 14). From the list of approved assessments, 78.8%, of the 90.23% of students who had valid READ records, took either the DRA2 or the DIBELS Next. Of the students with IEPs who had valid READ records, students with an intellectual disability showed the highest rate of SRD (93.29%), followed by those with multiple disabilities (91.18%), followed by SLD (77.3%), and then traumatic brain injury (65.88%) (Figure 15). (1a, 1b, 1e)



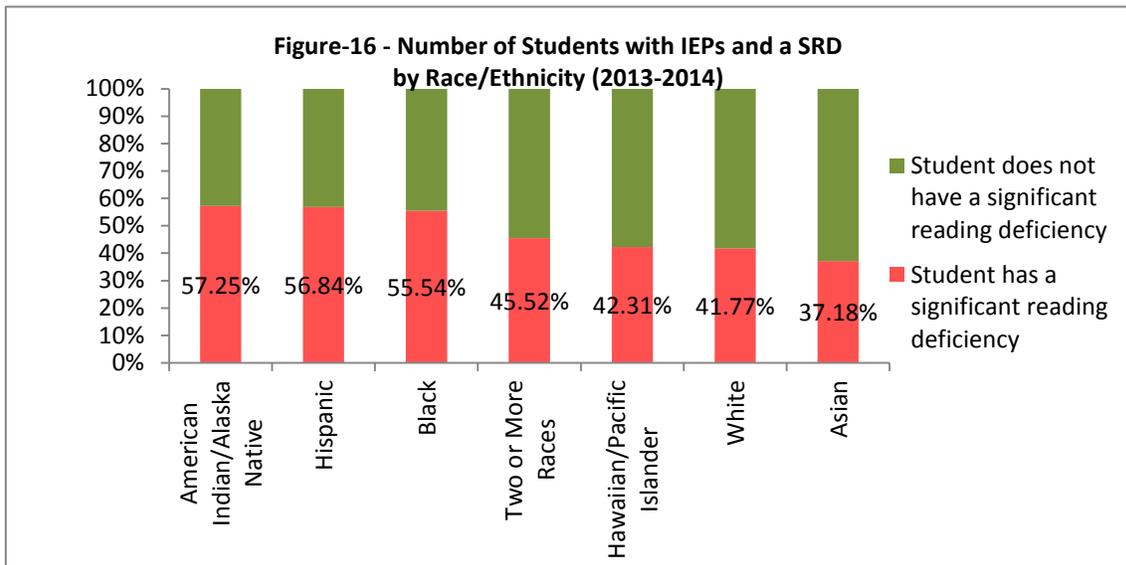
⁴³ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readact/resourcebank>

⁴⁴ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/documentsandfaqs>

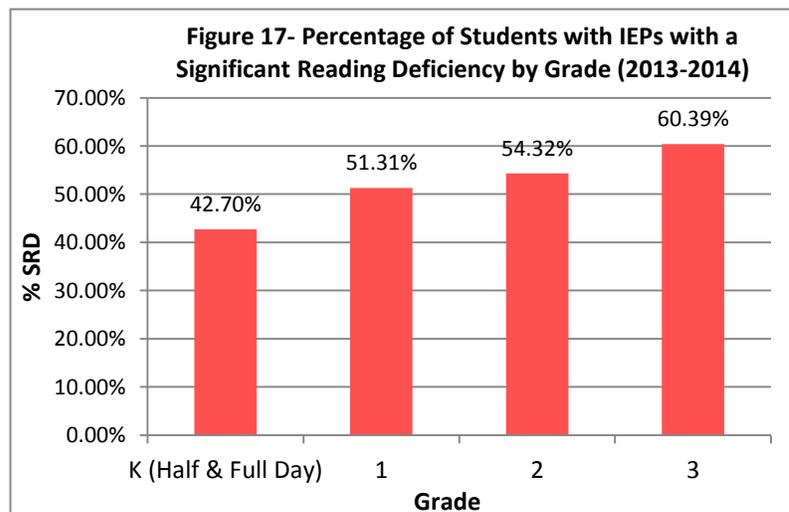
⁴⁵ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/documentsandfaqs>

We examined gender and noted nearly equal distribution of SRDs with females having the slightly higher percentage (male : female = 43.5% : 47.5%). We also examined race/ethnicity (Figure 16). According to this data, students with disabilities who are American Indian (57.25%), Hispanic (56.84%), and African American (55.54%) reflect the highest percentages of SRDs.

The Office of Literacy considered the number of students who are English Language Learners and have proposed rule changes to Colorado HB 12-1238 regarding the assessment of reading in order to allow districts an option to assess for a SRD in the language of instruction. If approved by the State Board, this will go into effect during the 2015-2016 school year. The ESSU and Office of Literacy will continue monitor the number of students with an SRD by Race/Ethnicity.



Next we reviewed the data disaggregated by grade levels and found that by third grade 60.39% all students with IEPs, who had a valid READ status, were identified with a significant reading deficiency (Figure 17). It should be noted that this is one year of data, and a trend is not implied. However, there is a strong correlation with other data regarding the need for early intervention.

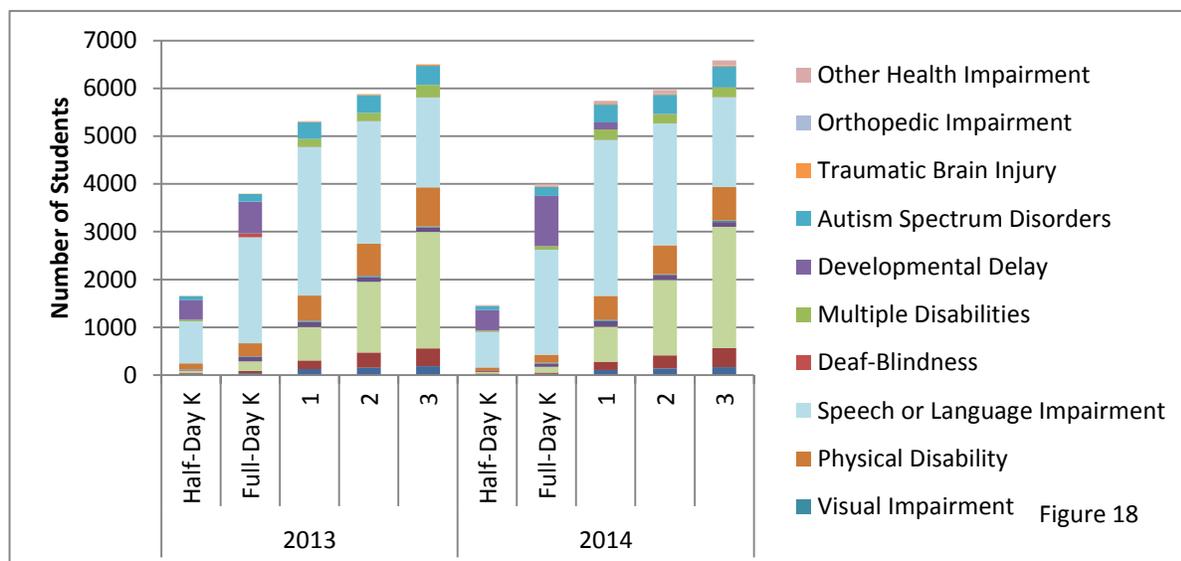


Re-addressing our concern from the beginning regarding students with SLD, we analyzed the grade level information of when the initial identification for SLD occurred. Second grade, closely followed by third grade, are when the highest initial identification rate occurs.

Table E shows the number of students by grade level and corresponding percentages of the total initial SLD identifications (K-12).

Table E	2012-2013		2013-2014	
Grade	Number of Students with <u>initial</u> identification of SLD	%	Number of Students with <u>initial</u> identification of SLD	%
Kindergarten	154	3.71%	134	3.01%
1st	508	12.24%	570	12.81%
2nd	806	19.41%	961	21.60%
3rd	802	19.32%	864	19.42%
4th	596	14.35%	608	13.67%
5th	519	12.50%	510	11.46%
6th	206	4.96%	208	4.68%
7th	142	3.42%	162	3.64%
8th	162	3.90%	172	3.87%
9th	114	2.75%	106	2.38%
10th	67	1.61%	78	1.75%
11th	46	1.11%	51	1.15%
12th	30	0.72%	25	0.56%
TOTAL	4152	100.00%	4449	100.00%

Next we analyzed the eligibility categories of students who were in kindergarten through third grade (Figure 18). By third grade, the number of students identified with disabilities has peaked. We hypothesized that students with SLI became eligible under SLD by third grade. We analyzed the data of students who were in 2nd and 3rd grades to determine the answer. When we compared these students



with the previous school year (2012-2013), it was noted that 83.4% of them were eligible due to SLD in 2012-2013, while 13.1% were eligible due to a SLI. We analyzed data through the previous 4 years and discovered that nearly all of these students were either eligible under SLD, SLI, or Preschooler with a disability. These data show that a majority of our 3rd grade students with SLD, were already receiving special education services in K-2.

The 4388 unique students from 2013-2014 who were 2nd and 3rd grader <u>existing SLD</u> students were the following disabilities in previous school years		2012-2013		2011-2012		2010-2011		2009-2010	
00	No disability/Found not eligible	10	0.2%	27	1.0%	54	2.7%	31	2.3%
01	Intellectual Disability	25	0.6%	25	0.9%	20	1.0%	2	0.1%
03	Serious Emotional Disability	27	0.6%	30	1.1%	18	0.9%	3	0.2%
04	Specific Learning Disability	3480	83.4%	1643	58.5%	530	26.4%	94	6.9%
05	Hearing Impairment, including Deafness	4	0.1%	5	0.2%	7	0.3%	4	0.3%
06	Visual Impairment, including Blindness	3	0.1%	5	0.2%	4	0.2%	3	0.2%
07	Physical Disability	51	1.2%	50	1.8%	53	2.6%	17	1.3%
08	Speech or Language Impairment	548	13.1%	945	33.6%	961	47.8%	600	44.3%
09	Deaf-Blindness	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%
10	Multiple Disabilities	10	0.2%	9	0.3%	4	0.2%	1	0.1%
11	Preschooler with a Disability	2	0.0%	57	2.0%	350	17.4%	593	43.8%
12	Infant/Toddler with a Disability	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
13	Autism Spectrum Disorders	9	0.2%	11	0.4%	8	0.4%	4	0.3%
14	Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)	2	0.0%	2	0.1%	1	0.0%	0	0.0%
15	Orthopedic Impairment	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
16	Other Health Impairment	2	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
		4173		2809		2011		1353	

If a student attended in multiple AUs with a different disability in the same school year, they would have multiple counts above in that school year. The counts overall decrease in past school years as some of the students were likely not yet in special education.

Table F

As noted on page 26, the highest number of students with a significant reading deficiency are those who Intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, specific learning disabilities, and a traumatic brain injury. As the new category of Developmental Delay is implemented, we expect to see a shift in these data.

Although students with SLD and SLI are not the primary focus of the SSIP, we hypothesize that these groups of students will demonstrate increased reading scores in higher grades and have higher graduation rates.

Focused Analysis - Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project

Next we examined data from the Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project (ELAT). The ELAT Project is based upon the 2012 School Finance Act which required the CDE to select a contractor to supply an early literacy assessment tool that teachers may use to obtain real-time assessments of the reading skill levels of students in kindergarten through third grade. The intent was to support state purchase of software that provides individualized assessments with immediate results, stores and analyzes those results, and recommends activities based on those results. Through a competitive bid process, the contract was awarded to Amplify for its DIBELS Next system and diagnostic reading assessments in January, 2013. This is a non-competitive project.⁴⁶ (Table G)

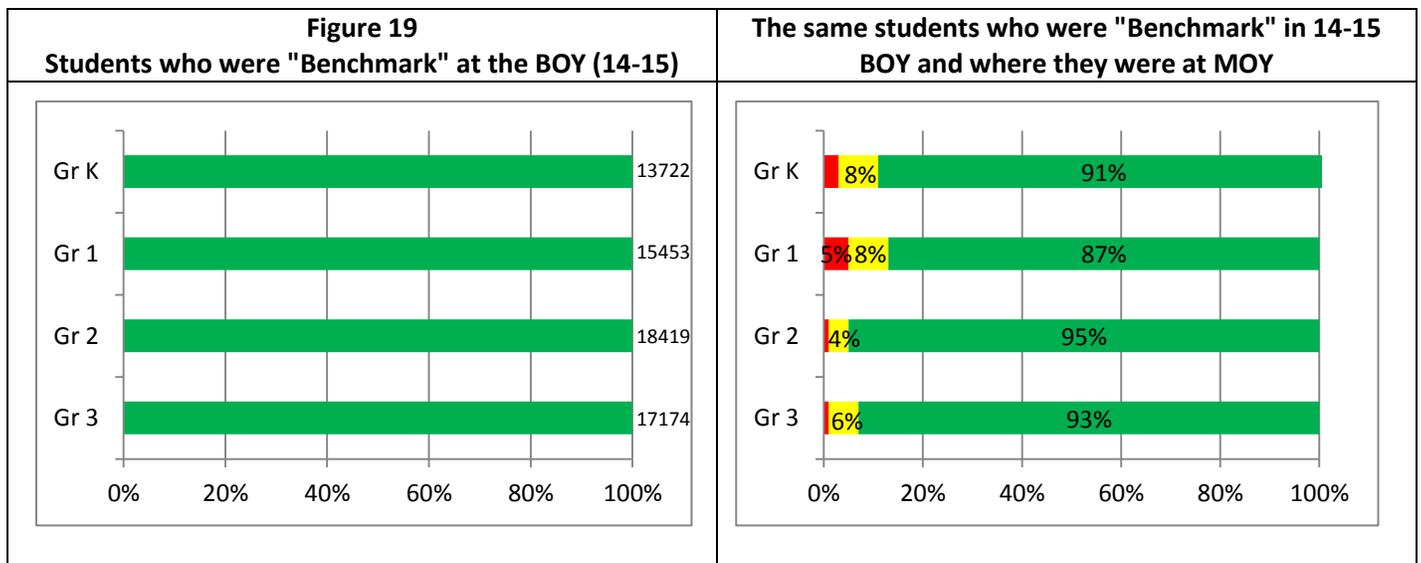
ELAT Project Scope:	2013-2014	2014-2015
Schools	417	482
Districts/Charters	124	126
Students	91,000 (approx.)	110,000 (approx.)

There are three levels within the tool that identify the level of support a student is likely to need: Table G

- At or Above Benchmark / Likely to Need Core Support
- Below Benchmark / Likely to need Strategic Support
- Well below benchmark / Likely to Need Intensive Support

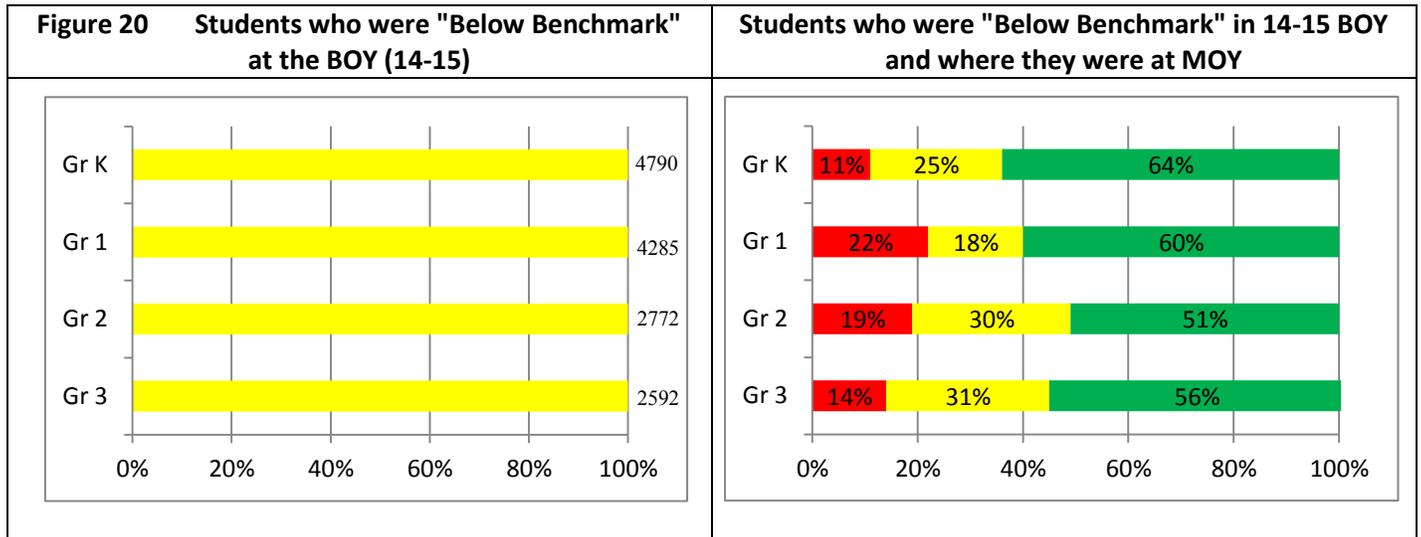
The figures below represent the three levels. The data on the left indicate the scores at the beginning of the year and the data on the right denote the scores for the same students at the middle of the year. For additional clarification, these data represent students, including students with disabilities, who were in READ Act collection for 2014-2015 and attended schools that were participating in the Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project., which included approximately 110,000 students.

Students at the beginning of the year (BOY) at Benchmark and remained at “Benchmark” in the Middle of the year (MOY), are represented by the color green (Figure 19). For students who lost ground, the color yellow represents “Below Benchmark,” and the color red represents “Well Below Benchmark.” For example in grade one, of the 15,453 students who were at Benchmark in September, by December 8% of them dropped to “Below Benchmark” and 5% of them dropped to “Well Below Benchmark.”

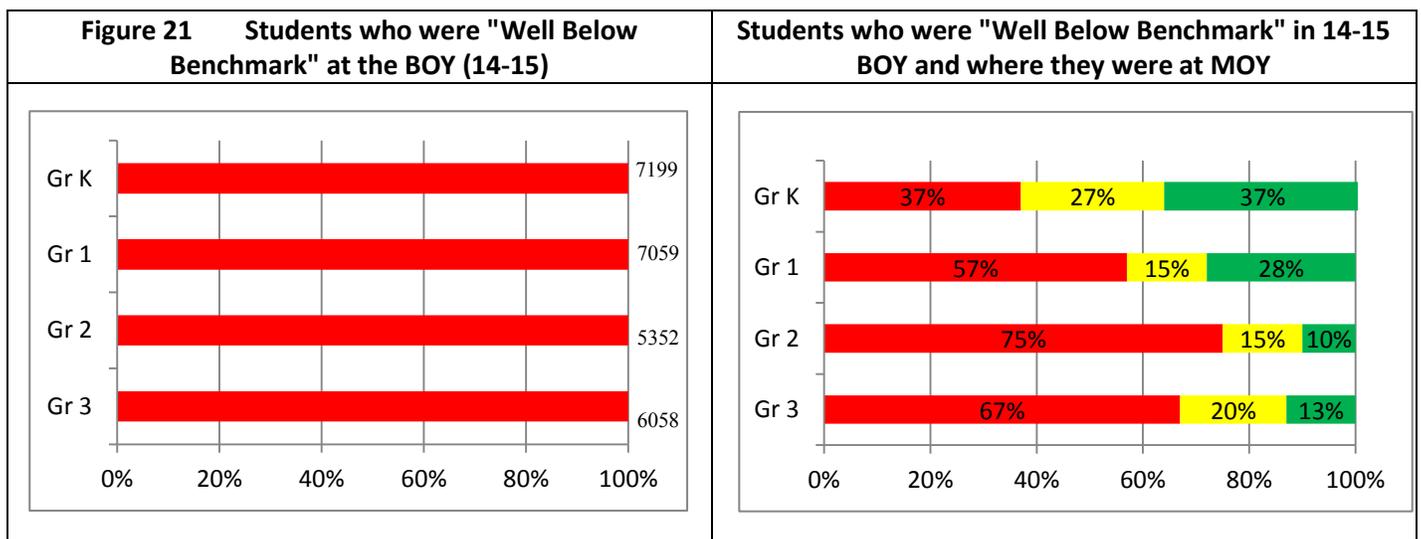


⁴⁶ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readact/assessmenttool>

For students who began the year at “Below Benchmark” and remained at “Below Benchmark” in the MOY, they are represented by the color yellow (Figure 20). These students are remaining stagnant and have not improved. For students who did improve, they are represented by the color green and are at “Benchmark.” The color red represents students who lost ground to “Well Below Benchmark.” For example in grade one, of the 4,285 students who were at “Below Benchmark” in September, by December 60% of them improved to “Benchmark.” However, 18% of them remained “Below Benchmark” and 22% dropped to “Well Below Benchmark.”



For students who began the year at “Well Below Benchmark” and remained at “Well Below Benchmark” in the MOY, they are represented by the color red (Figure 21). These students are not improving and continue to lose ground. For students who did improve, they are represented by the color yellow and are at “Below Benchmark,” and by the color green and are at “Benchmark.” For example in grade one, of the 7059 students who were at “Well Below Benchmark” at the beginning of the year, by December 57% of them still remained “Well Below Benchmark.” Additionally, for those students in grade two, of the 5352 students who were at “Well Below Benchmark” at the beginning of the year, by December 75% of them remained “Well Below Benchmark.”



When analyzing the DIBELS data provided by Amplify regarding the movement of students from the beginning of the year to the middle of the year, 57 % of first grade students and 75% of second grade students who started the year well below benchmark continue to appear to be “losing ground.”⁴⁷

Data Quality

The CDE reviewed the quality of the data and there are known issues with the collection of the READ Act data and students who are identified with SRD (pages 26-27). Because the SRD data collection is a new collection for Colorado (i.e., this is the second spring of the collection), the data are still incomplete. Last year, there were 9,000+ students across the state who were not screened for SRD. The department has worked to resolve some of the complications with the collection to ensure more valid and reliable data is collected in the future. The CDE found that some districts did not report all of their students which may be attributed to some confusion in the field regarding the data collection for the READ Act. The department is working to increase communication to the field regarding reporting requirements and to provide support for an accurate count. As the field continues to increase their understanding of the READ Act, it is expected that the data accuracy regarding SRD identification will improve. (1c)

The assessment tool for the Early Literacy Assessment Tool project is DIBELS Next. The validity of this tool had been documented through its technical development. Amplify, the company that manages the tool and analyzes the data, has also demonstrated that the tool produces reliable results. Therefore, there are no concerns with regard to the reliability and validity of the data produced through the Early Literacy Assessment Tool project. (1c)

With regard to disability-specific data, at the CDE, there are a variety of failsafe procedures in place to ensure the reliability and validity of the data and there are no concerns with these data. (1c). For example, with regard to the indicator-related data results that are generated by the December count and Special Education End of Year data collections, all data submitted by the LEAs are first summarized in a variety of reports and presented to the local special education directors for review prior to the closings of the collections. Each director is required to review the data summaries (approximately 20+ data reports, e.g., crosstabs of LRE by grade, identification rates by race/ethnicity, etc.) and to verify their accuracy. Once verified, the directors are required to sign the reports as their assurances of data quality. Once verified and approved, the data are then “consumable” for data reporting. The EdFacts coordinator, representatives from the Data Services Unit, and representatives from the ESSU then work in collaboration to generate data summaries and reports, with internal procedures in place to cross-validate the results to ensure accuracy.

This year (2014-15), the ESSU has established a state level web-based application, the ESSU Data Management System, where the business of and data for the implementation of IDEA by the CDE and the LEAs are stored in a secure environment. Examples of information stored in this system include the LEAs’ Comprehensive Plans as well as graphs, charts, and tables reflecting their academic achievement performance data. Parent survey data are entered through this system and verified through a systematic process for ensuring accuracy. The data are then summarized in graphic form and through reports for the LEAs. This system is also under current revision to include an intricate scorecard of the LEAs’ performance across all indicators, where they may view their current status on the indicators as compared to the state’s targets as well as to other LEAs.

⁴⁷ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/elatboytomyresults>

Stakeholder Involvement:

The ESSU was intentional when considering stakeholder involvement. When defining the characteristics of our stakeholders, the ESSU was deliberate in including individuals and groups who were directly impacted as well as those who were further removed from the plan, but would still be impacted in the long run. We specifically sought input during the entire process from individuals and various groups of stakeholders who had been “living life” at the ground level, those who had influence or access to individuals who could make changes, those who possessed technical knowledge and expertise, and those who were invested in the outcome. Some stakeholder groups were already functioning in advisory and technical roles (*e.g.*, Parent Advisory Panels, Communities of Practice), while other groups were gathered together for the specific purpose of providing input into the development of the plan.

Multiple stakeholder meetings were conducted using a variety of methods, with face-to-face meetings being the most common. Other meetings took place via webinars and telephone conferences. The group sizes varied from 2 to 65, with the most common size being 10 to 20. Structured and semi-structured interviews, stakeholder group meetings, focus groups, round-table discussions, brainstorm sessions, environmental scans, on-site evaluations, and surveys were some of the methods used to gather input. Stakeholders provided essential guidance and helped shape the direction of the State Systemic Improvement Plan throughout the process.

The Stakeholders represented from across the state were from:

A variety of departments from the Colorado Department of Education: representatives from the Exceptional Student Services Unit, the Office of Learning Supports, the Office of Literacy, the Federal Programs Unit, the District and School Performance Unit, the Improvement Planning Office, Teaching and Learning Unit, and the Early Learning and School Readiness Unit

Representatives for Parents/Families: Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC), the Family, School, and Community Partnership Community of Practice, and Parent Training and Information Center - PEAK Parent Center

Leadership Teams: Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB), Colorado Department of Human Services- Early Intervention (Part C), Statewide Directors Leadership Team (SDLT - representing all Administrative Units in Colorado)

A variety of urban and rural school districts: Boulder Valley Schools, Denver Public Schools, Jefferson County Schools, Johnstown/Milliken School District, Lewis Palmer School District, Poudre School District, Sterling School District, Westminster School District, Windsor School District, Facility Schools, Pikes Peak Regional Directors, North Central Regional Directors, Northeast Regional Directors, Metro Denver Regional Directors, and Southeast Regional Directors

Institutes of Higher Education: Metropolitan State University of Denver, University of Northern Colorado, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, and the University of Colorado at Denver

Technical Assistance Provided by: the US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center (MPRRC), Data Driven Enterprises, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), Technical Assistance for Excellence in

Special Education (TAESE), the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems (DaSy), and the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI)

Throughout the data analyses process there were clear requests from stakeholders (e.g., Directors of Special Education, Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee, and ESSU Consultants) to include certain types of information in these analyses. As the ESSU and stakeholders analyzed these data and considered potential contributing factors, the stakeholder discussions revolved around differentiated core instruction as well as the use of standards-aligned curriculum and IEPs and stakeholders agreed that the lack of curriculum aligned to the CAS may be a root cause (1f).

When considering the data of students with a SLD and whether this group of students should be the focus of the SiMR, stakeholders provided strong feedback that emphasized that students with SLD in grades K-12 as a focus for the work too broad to consider; rather the preference was to narrow focus even further, but also to consider the reading needs of all students with disabilities, not just one group.

Further stakeholder discussions focused on students not having the required reading skills prior to the end of third grade. This led the ESSU and stakeholders to consider leveraging the Colorado state goal, *Read by Third Grade*, as a possible focus for the SiMR.

As these data were analyzed and discussed across various stakeholder groups, one continued point of concern focused on the fact that students on IEPs spend the majority of their academic time within the general education classroom. Other questions posed by the multiple stakeholder groups included students' access to core content (i.e., "pull out" occurring during core class time), general educators providing differentiated instruction, and general and special educators knowing how to teach reading to students with disabilities. That led to discussions surrounding the pre-service education of new teachers in colleges and universities and the need to align the professional learning systems in the state to address knowledge gaps of educators emphasizing literacy.

After reviewing these data and extensive discussions, this led the ESSU and stakeholders to confirm that the SSIP would align with the Colorado state goal, *Read by Third Grade*, and would leverage the data being collected through the Colorado READ Act and the ELAT Project, with a concentrated focus on students with disabilities in the first and second grades.

Component #2: Infrastructure Analysis

During and after the ESSU and stakeholders conducted the broad and focused data analyses, we also examined various infrastructure components across the state. We analyzed our current system for areas of strength and needs in order to support improvement, build capacity in Administrative Units, and scale up evidence-based strategies to improve results for students with disabilities. The process we utilized aligns with the Continuous Improvement Planning Process, a part of our ESEA Flexibility Waiver, which was discussed on page 14. (2a)

Governance

In Colorado, there are 7 elected members of the Colorado State Board of Education who are charged by the Colorado Constitution with the general supervision of the public schools. They have numerous powers and duties specified in state law.⁴⁸ The Commissioner of Education, employed by the School Board, acts as a non-voting secretary to the Board. The State Director of the Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) also serves in the role of Assistant Commissioner.

The State of Colorado is considered a local control state. There are 178 districts, all with individual School Boards, who are also charged with general supervision responsibilities and must meet, at a minimum, state expectations. However, they have the authority to decide how those expectations are met. This is an area of strength in that our parents/families and community members have a very strong voice within their own neighborhood schools. Since the local boards determine how to meet state expectations, implementing improvement strategies statewide may look different depending upon the location, but it can be realized with careful planning and consideration of the districts' own UIPs. Another way to address the infrastructure needs is to ensure that our work is aligned with other offices within the CDE are working to accomplish. As we move forward in implementing the SSIP, we plan to increase collaborative professional development and technical assistance with the Office of Literacy and the Office of Learning Supports (MTSS) and the Federal Programs Unit. (2b, 2c)

Accountability

The CDE ESSU maintains an accountability system for all public special education AU and state-operated programs. The 62 AUs consist of 15 BOCES (membership includes 141 smaller school districts), the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI) and 36 larger school districts with 4,000 or more total students or 400 or more children with disabilities. BOCES are comprised of member school districts with pupil membership fewer than 4000 students or 400 children with disabilities. In some cases, an AU may have obtained a variance from the CDE to operate with fewer students. Charter schools are the responsibility of the authorizer, which may be a school district or the CSI. That is, a charter school is a school within the authorizing school district or the CSI and is not an independent LEA for purposes of the IDEA.

While the CDE continues to monitor IDEA regulation and ECEA rule compliance, the renewed focus includes partnering with Administrative Units (AUs) for Results Driven Accountability (RDA). The Colorado Continuous Improvement Process, which aligns with the Differentiated Recognition, Accountably, and Support portion of the ESEA Flex Waiver, focuses on successful outcomes for students with disabilities through a tiered system with a layered continuum of support. The CDE is committed to

⁴⁸ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeboard>

working collaboratively in partnership with AUs to develop and strengthen their capacity to implement, scale-up, and sustain system change at the Administrative Unit (AU) level. The priority of the Continuous Improvement Process is maintaining compliance while facilitating increased student achievement performance and positive outcomes for students with disabilities through the provision of a Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). (2b, 2c)

ESSU Continuous Improvement Process Objectives

1. Ensure a meaningful and continuous improvement process that focuses on improving academic performance and outcomes for students with disabilities by linking AU data, including indicator data, to improvement activities.
2. Partner with AUs to ensure compliance with IDEA and ECEA regulations.
3. Connect AU-level and school-level improvement activities to support Colorado's Systemic Improvement Plan and Identified Measureable Result.
4. Connect AU-level and school-level improvement activities with IDEA and ECEA regulations.
5. Support each AU in the process of self-audits, evaluation, and improvement of instructional effectiveness and compliance to ensure growth in student academic performance and outcomes.
6. Link improvement activities with long term, multi-year professional development to support capacity building and sustainability of compliance and instructional effectiveness.
7. Gather continuous improvement data that includes the AU's self-report and summary of analyses of student performance data as well as self-audits of student records for compliance. Additional AU data and policies, procedures, and processes to be reviewed include family-school partnering and involvement, staff qualifications, fiscal reporting, discipline use of data for instructional planning, secondary transition and post-school outcomes, disproportionate representation, IEP components corresponding to student achievement, and professional development.

Technical Assistance and Professional Development

The CDE provides technical assistance and professional development to school districts and Administrative Units (AUs). Most of the Offices at the CDE (e.g., Federal Programs, Office of Literacy, and Office of Learning Supports) provide that support directly to the districts rather than to AUs. The Exceptional Student Services Unit, on the other hand, supports 62 AUs. The AU may be a single member district or multiple member districts (BOCES). These differences can, at times, be a barrier in that the ESSU is the only department that works at the Administrative Unit level. The ESSU addresses these delivery barriers by aligning with the professional development offered through other offices as well as through a regional training model. The AU model also has strengths in that smaller school districts can combine resources in order to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Several smaller districts through the AU level have applied for and received professional development grants from the ESSU that are leading to improved student outcomes.

Additionally, the ESSU links the accountability system and AU improvement activities with long term, multi-year professional development opportunities to support capacity building and sustainability of compliance, performance, and instructional effectiveness. If an AU receives a "meets requirements" determination, they can request technical assistance and/or professional development, but it is not required. If an AU receives a "Needs Assistance" determination, they are highly encouraged to access

professional development and technical assistance, and occasionally it is required, in addition to reporting 4 times per year on their status. If an AU receives a “Needs Intervention” determination, they are required to access appropriate technical assistance and professional development. They also need to report on their status monthly. Professional development and technical assistance is offered via a number of delivery methods (*e.g.*, large conferences, smaller conferences and meetings, on-site technical assistance, webinars, and blended learning opportunities.) (2b, 2c)

Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee

CSEAC is a state level committee mandated by federal and state law. Members are interested in the quality of education received by children/youth with disabilities. The committee includes parents of and individuals with disabilities, educational service providers, administrators and representatives from a variety of related agencies. Participation is statewide and representative of diverse disabilities.⁴⁹ There are standing subcommittees of the state level CSEAC that meet quarterly to carry out the work of the Advisory Committee.⁵⁰ Members from the ESSU attend, provide information, and collaborate with the Committee. The student outcomes subcommittee was especially helpful to the development of the SSIP. These members served both on mixed stakeholder groups, CDE stakeholder groups, and the CSEAC stakeholder group. Information was provided for data analysis, infrastructure analysis, and discussion surrounding the improvement strategies. Increased collaboration for the implementation of improvement strategies is expected between the ESSU and CSEAC. It is anticipated that an increased flow of communication between the CSEAC constituents and the ESSU will be facilitated by the state level CSEAC Advisory Committee. (2e, 2f)

The current subcommittees are:

- **Bylaws and Procedures:** Proposes changes to bylaws as necessary.
- **Communications:** Formulates and carries out plans to exchange information statewide.
- **Membership Nomination:** Searches for and proposes new committee members to serve for six years (three 2-year terms).
- **Public Policy and Legislative:** Stays abreast of and disseminates information affecting education of children/youth with disabilities through electronic mail to members.
- **Student Outcomes:** (Formally the SPP Subcommittee) Advises on the development and implementation of the Colorado Special Education State Performance Plan.

PEAK Parent Center

“PEAK Parent Center is Colorado's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI). PEAK is a statewide organization for and by parents of children with disabilities reaching out to assist families and professionals. The mission of PEAK Parent Center is to provide training, information and technical assistance to equip families of children birth through twenty-six including all disability conditions with strategies to advocate successfully for their children. As a result of PEAK's services to families and professionals, children and adults with disabilities will live rich, active lives participating as full members of their schools and communities.”⁵¹ Members from Peak Parent participated in large stakeholder meetings as well as on the student outcome subcommittee for the CSEAC. The wide network of families that are connected to the PEAK Parent Center is a major strength. It is anticipated that increased

⁴⁹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/cseac>

⁵⁰ http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/CSEAC_Subcommittees

⁵¹ <http://www.peakparent.org/>

collaboration between PEAK and the ESSU will occur for the delivery of training for parents and families surrounding early literacy. (2e, 2f)

State Advisory Council on Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE)

“SACPIE is a legislated council, which advises and provides information, in conjunction with CDE, on involving families in preschool through higher education and reports to the State Board of Education, Colorado Commission on Higher Education, and the Education Committees of the Senate and House. It includes members who represent families of students with disabilities and works to close achievement gaps between student groups, including those with disabilities. SACPIE also provides resources as stakeholder brochures, training materials, national links, and the annual proclamation.”⁵²

Currently SACPIE, in collaboration with CDE, is “collecting promising practices from schools and districts across the state to publish in the first annual Promising Partnership Practices – Colorado book.⁵³ The purpose of this book is for schools, districts, and other educational organizations in Colorado to share how they partner with families and the community for student success.” The ESSU partners with SACPIE with a representative that serves on the board, along with SACPIE representatives who participate in the Family, School, and Community Partnering CoP.

Fiscal

To understand the funding process, and how it impacts students with disabilities, we looked at the CDE Divisions, Units, and Offices that oversee the financial resources.

- The Public School Finance Division is responsible for administering the School Finance Act and other state and federal funds that are distributed to school districts other than those programs that are defined as categorical programs.⁵⁴
- The Grants Fiscal Management Office administers ESEA, IDEA, and State and Federal competitive grants that are distributed to Administrative Units (AUs) and State Operated Programs (SOPs). This includes reviewing grant budgets and fiscal reports and processing requests for reimbursements for districts.⁵⁵ This office also distributes State ECEA funds to AUs.
- The Field Analyst Support Team (FAST) ensures compliance with funds received via the Public School Finance Act of 1994. The FAST performs compliance audits of school districts every one to four years depending on the student population and other predetermined risk factors.⁵⁶
- The Budget/Accounting Unit is responsible for budgeting and tracking the funds and resources used by CDE as a whole and each unit within the department for each fiscal year.⁵⁷
- The Federal Programs Unit administers funds under the ESEA⁵⁸ as well as a variety of other federal and state competitive grants and awards.⁵⁹ The ESSU partners and is aligned with Federal Programs to ensure seamless supports with supplemental dollars.

⁵² <http://www.cde.state.co.us/sacpie>

⁵³ http://www.cde.state.co.us/rti/fscp_networkbulletinmar2015

⁵⁴ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance>

⁵⁵ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefisgrant>

⁵⁶ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdefinance/auditunit>

⁵⁷ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/offices/budgetaccountingunit>

⁵⁸ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ov/index>

⁵⁹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeawards>

- The ESSU supports personnel serving students with exceptional educational needs. Technical assistance and programming support are available for students who have disabilities and/or are gifted and talented. ESSU establishes and maintains the state’s ECEA Rules and the Federal IDEA Regulations for children with disabilities.⁶⁰ The ESSU administers the state-level IDEA administrative and set-aside funds along with monitoring the IDEA programs at the AU/sub-recipient level.

Additionally, in September 2006, Colorado “established the Colorado Special Education Fiscal Advisory Committee (SEFAC), which consists of 12 members including a representative from the ESSU responsible for the administration of Special Education Programs, a special education director from a board of cooperative services (BOCES) with expertise in special education finance, a business official from a small rural administrative unit, a business official from a large urban or suburban administrative unit, and eight special education specialists with appropriate statewide geographic representation.”⁶¹

As we analyzed the fiscal component of the state system, we considered how the state supports improvement strategies for students with disabilities as well as how support across funding sources is leveraged to maximize resources. Colorado’s Exceptional Children’s Education Act (ECEA) funds are distributed on a formula basis (minus \$4M for high cost applications). Recognizing the shift to an accountability system that focuses on results, as well as compliance, the Grants Fiscal Unit and ESSU, looked at fiscal implications.

ESSU’s Results Driven Accountability Team (RDA) is responsible for monitoring compliance and performance across our AUs. With the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) charge of reducing fraud, waste, and abuse, it was determined that we need to have an increased focus on fiscal accountability at the state and LEA level. Starting with the 2014-15 school year, fiscal self-audits began to be completed at the LEA level to ensure fiscal compliance linked to results for students with disabilities. (2b, 2c, 2d)

When considering the coordination of improvement strategies guided by our SiMR, we examined the funding sources available to Administrative Units, Districts, and Schools. Currently there are 3 competitive grants in process that are related to literacy.

1. The Increasing Achievement and Growth Grant, focusing on literacy for all students with disabilities, and is in its 3rd year of a 4 year award. \$4.65 million is split between 4 administrative units (over the 4 year period) to assist the AUs in coordinating and developing local resources focused on literacy for students receiving special education services in all disability categories. The goal of the grant is to focus on improving educational outcomes, academic results, and closing the academic achievement gaps for all Colorado students with disabilities. (2d)
2. The High-Achieving School Study, a joint research venture between ESSU and Federal Programs (Title), allotted \$100,000 (\$50,000 ESSU and \$50,000 Title), to be equally distributed among 5 schools across the state that, based upon data analyses, are showing higher than average growth results for disaggregated groups, including students with

⁶⁰ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdespedfin>

⁶¹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdespedfin/SEFAC>

disabilities and students in poverty, and implemented in a two phase process. Phase one, conducted during 2014-2015 includes a deeper analysis of the data and an intense study of the infrastructure in place at each school. This is to ascertain some of the key practices contributing to each school's success. Key practices garnered from the results of this study will then be strategized for implementation, during phase two (2015-2016), to assist other low performing schools to implement policies, practices, and procedures identified in phase one. (2c, 2d)

3. The Professional Development for Educators of Students with Disabilities: Literacy (Pre-K through Grade 3) Competitive Grant, which is aligned to the SSIP, is a one year grant with \$150,000 distributed among awarded schools across the state. The grant purpose is for the coordination and development of local resources for the provision of professional development focused on instructional practices that will increase literacy achievement, improve academic results, and narrow the academic achievement gaps for students with disabilities in grades PreK-3. (2d)

When considering fiscal leveraging opportunities beyond the CDE, we currently partner with the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) to address needs of students with disabilities (*e.g.*, Race to the Top Early Literacy, the Colorado Brain Injury Program).

Additionally, CDHS/Colorado Brain Injury Program received a 5 year HRSA grant (2010-2014). This grant provided the ESSU the opportunity to expand the focus to all brain injury areas (congenital (*e.g.*, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), non-traumatic, and traumatic). Between January 2013 and September 2014, 49 trainings have been provided to Colorado educators, parents, and community members on brain injury, the typical impacts on learning, interventions, and resources. All trainings focus on PreK-21yrs, and some audiences were exclusively PreK-3 educators. The technical assistance and professional development opportunities that have been established through this grant will continue to be supported by the ESSU, including a focus on Preschool – 3rd grades.

The Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado (BIAC) is an important partner to the ESSU Brain Injury Specialist. BIAC provides the referral point to the Youth Brain Injury Connections (YBIC). YBIC works to provide coordinated care across community, health, and educational settings to meet the individual needs of children and youth (0-21 years old) with a brain injury and their families. This includes coordinating educational opportunities to parties seeking further information on brain injury. This partnership is an area of strength that will continue to be developed to support K-3 students in the improvement of reading proficiency. (2c, 2d)

The Colorado Literacy Framework

The Colorado Literacy Framework comes from the mission of the CDE to "provide all Colorado children equal access to quality, thorough, uniform, well-rounded educational opportunities in a safe, civil environment" and the vision that "all children in Colorado will become educated and productive citizens." The elements of the "Colorado Literacy Framework" define the parameters for a "consistent voice around literacy with which to address literacy challenges... that will provide a foundation for

focused support from the CDE.”⁶² This framework will provide a structure and guideline for improvement strategies identified in the SSIP. (2b, 2c, 2d)

The elements of the Colorado Literacy Framework are:

- “The integration of the five components of Reading must inform CDE’s literacy initiatives.
- Early learning experiences support literacy development in young children.
- Research-based instructional approaches fostering communication skills, including oral and written language, promote access, opportunity and academic achievement.
- Purposeful, direct, explicit, and systematic instruction is valuable for continuous literacy achievement.
- Student learning and motivation are enhanced by a connection to cultural experience and personal relevance.
- Valid and reliable student literacy achievement data supports grantees and constituents in measuring success of initiatives.
- Collaboration among education professionals, family, and community is essential to improved student literacy achievement.”⁶³

Ensuring that the State Systemic Improvement Plan is aligned to the Colorado Literacy Framework has been a driving factor behind the development of improvement strategies.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports

MTSS is defined as a whole-school, data-driven, prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for EVERY student through a layered continuum of evidence-based practices and systems.⁶⁴ (2b, 2c, 2d)

As a part of our ESEA Flexibility Waiver to support effective instruction and leadership, Colorado has adopted the MTSS conceptual framework as a representation of two sustainable systems change frameworks, RtI and PBIS. To better articulate a focus on equitable and efficient learning environments and high-quality instructional practices, usage of the term MTSS has emerged. Research and lessons learned from schools and districts contributed to the shift to a MTSS as the best description of a continuum of effective academic and behavioral instruction and supports for every student.⁶⁵

IDEA 2004 included a heightened emphasis on effective core instruction and universal interventions. This change in practice results in improved educational outcomes for all students, including those at-risk for emotional and/or behavioral difficulties, as well as students already identified as having an emotional disability. Similarly, a heightened federal emphasis on positive behavioral supports reinforces the implementation of an MTSS problem-solving approach, using evidence-based practices for screening, prevention, and early support of students’ emotional and academic needs. The integration of

⁶² <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy>

⁶³ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/clf/index>

⁶⁴ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss>

⁶⁵ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/evolutionfactsheet>

an MTSS framework increases the chances that appropriate services are being provided prior to formal referral and identification for students in need.

Research has demonstrated that such a prevention-oriented approach leads to significantly better outcomes in social, academic, and disciplinary areas over the long-term (Beard & Sugai, 2004; Fox, Dunlap, & Cushing, 2002; Isaacs, 2008; Reid, Patterson & Snyder, 2002; Kagan & Neuman, 2000; Weist, 2003).⁶⁶ The layered continuum of supports are culturally- and developmentally- relevant practices that are layered from universal (all students) to targeted (groups of students) to intensive (individual students), in order to support the academic and behavioral needs of every student.

Within Colorado, there are six essential components in the MTSS framework: Shared Leadership, Data-Based Problem Solving and Decision Making, Layered Continuum of Supports, Evidence Based Instruction, Intervention, & Assessment Practices, Universal Screening & Progress Monitoring, Family, School, & Community Partnering (FSCP). These components are not sequential and not hierarchical. They are complementary, and they are not mutually exclusive.⁶⁷

Educators are responsible for every tier, although some educators specialize in certain interventions. It is important to recognize that tiers do NOT represent qualification for special education, nor a location, nor a specific program. There are students who may require additional supports who are not eligible for special education services. Based upon the Problem Solving Model, educators and families make informed decisions regarding layered supports and interventions.⁶⁸

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), supports implementation of a MTSS because it has proven to be effective in accelerating learning for all students, including students with disabilities. When the MTSS framework is implemented with fidelity, students' educational needs are more intentionally addressed by designing, developing, and delivering needed, appropriate supports.⁶⁹

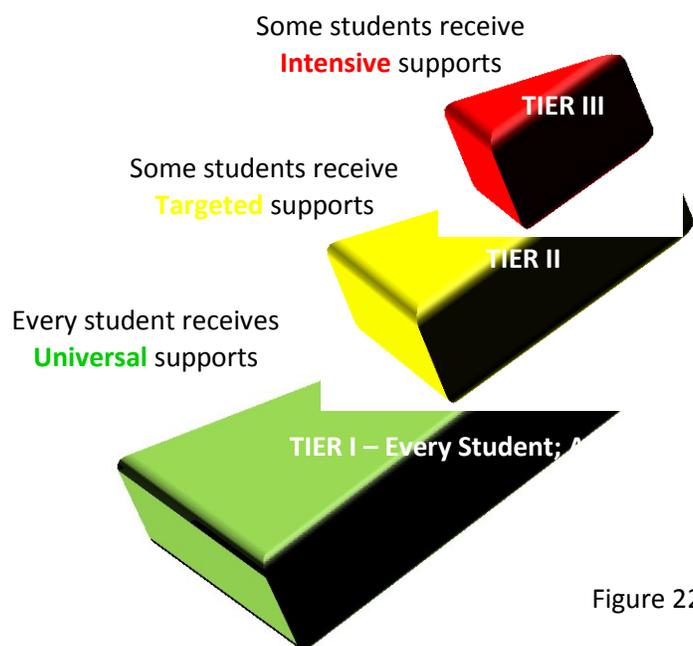


Figure 22

The layered continuum of supports are culturally- and developmentally-relevant practices that are layered from universal (all students) to targeted (groups of students) to intensive (individual students), in order to support the academic and behavioral needs of every student.

⁶⁶ http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/guidelinesfordeterminingeligibility_sed

⁶⁷ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/components>

⁶⁸ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/problemsolvingprocesspages>

⁶⁹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/mtss/sped>

IDEA 2004 also focuses on strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families of such children have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home. This focus is based on 50 years of research that supports the importance of partnering with families in improving student outcomes (Christenson & Reschly, 2010). Recent meta-analyses (Jeynes, 2012) find that school-initiated, specific family participation programs – such as shared reading, homework checking, and teamed two-way communication – are significantly related to academic achievement for students at all levels. As a result, family partnering is an essential component of MTSS, especially for students with disabilities, throughout all the tiers/layers of support.

Based upon the work of Dean Fixen and Karen Blasé, through the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) and their mission to “contribute to the best practices and science of implementation, organization change, and system reinvention to improve outcomes across the spectrum of human services,”⁷⁰ the Office of Learning Supports (OLS) conducted a statewide evaluation of MTSS. They identified that across Colorado districts and schools were in varying stages of implementation, some further along than others, and some success stories were shared. However, when considering the six essential components, the OLS identified shared leadership as a major concern.

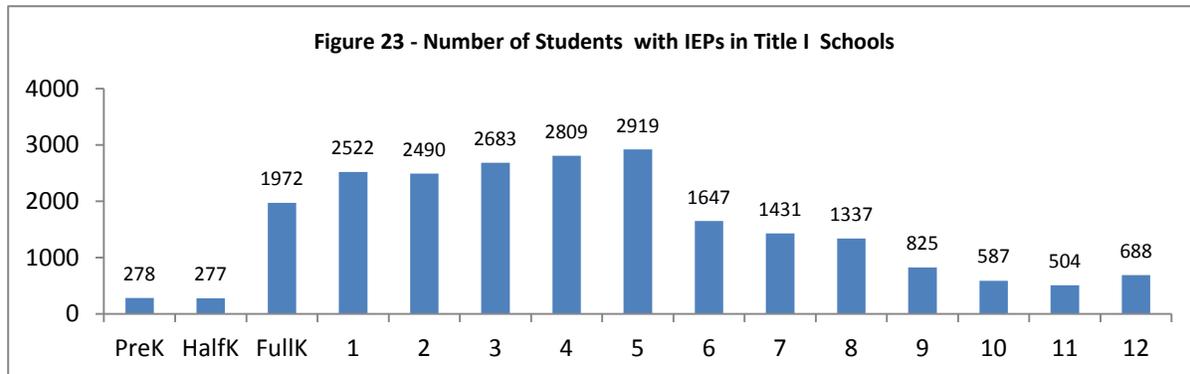
Through the statewide analysis, it became apparent that essential partners were not always at the discussion table. This was occurring at all levels: statewide, district, and school. The OLS identified that creating district and school leadership teams is needed to effectively and efficiently implement a MTSS. These teams bring together representative membership for the purpose of identifying and communicating a common vision, mission and ownership for implementation. Shared leadership incorporates the idea of valuing input from a team perspective.

The ESSU and stakeholders confirmed the value of providing a layered continuum of supports for students with disabilities; additionally we agreed that Colorado has many effective intervention practices, but the fidelity of how interventions are implemented is an area of concern. The OLS is intentional in making a cross-departmental effort to provide guidance and support to Colorado’s schools and districts in their efforts to implement a MTSS. Continued collaboration between the ESSU and the OLS is expected, especially via joint professional development and technical assistance offered by the state. (2c)

⁷⁰ <http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/>

Federal Programs

The Federal Programs Unit funds services for students who are most at risk of failure. They do this by providing services to eligible children identified by the school as most at risk of failing to meet the state's academic content standards, to supplement the services that would be provided by nonfederal sources, in the absence of the Title I, and by supporting methods and instructional strategies that are proven to be effective and that strengthen the core curriculum. Figure 23 shows the number of students with IEPs in Title I schools, with a significant majority being in elementary schools. As the ESSU moves forward



with implementing the SSIP, an increased partnership between Federal Programs and the ESSU will aid in the leveraging of funds to support methods and instructional strategies that are proven to be effective and strengthen the core curriculum. This partnership will also extend to the OLS and the Office of Literacy as we collaborate to meet the early literacy needs of high risk students with disabilities. (2b, 2c)

As we analyzed the number of students and achievement scores of students with IEP's at Title I schools, it was noted that a high number of students' scores are unsatisfactory or partially proficient in Reading, Writing, and Math (Table H). By leveraging the partnerships between the four CDE offices, we expect improved outcomes for students with disabilities. (2b, 2c, 2d)

Table H % Prof/Adv	TITLE 1	Non-Title 1	Difference
READING	12.19%	24.31%	12.12%
MATH	12.96%	19.04%	6.08%
WRITING	5.69%	13.31%	7.62%

Standards and Indicators for Continuous School Improvement

Colorado's *Standards and Indicators for Continuous School Improvement*⁷¹ were originally developed in 2003 in response to federal requirements that State Education Agencies provide assistance to schools and districts identified for improvement (Title I Part A, Section 117 of the No Child Left Behind Act). Since the development of a rubric in 2003, it has been used extensively in Colorado schools by School Support Teams (SST). The current revision was completed July 2012 under the leadership of CDE and

⁷¹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/coloradostandardsandindicatorsforcontinousschoolimprovement>

experienced members of Colorado School Support Teams. One purpose of the current revision was to align with the current initiatives and direction of CDE. These standards and indicators were utilized by the ESSU during a collaborative research effort with Federal Programs.

Federal Programs

Building on the partnership with Federal Programs, the ESSU and stakeholders analyzed data from two research studies conducted by the Federal Programs Unit. The second research study, High-Achieving School Study Competitive Grant, was conducted in collaboration with the ESSU.⁷²

Research Study of High-Growth Schools

“The first research project, conducted in 2012-2013, was a study of high-growth Title I schools to ascertain some of the key practices that were contributing to each school’s success. Nine selected schools were provided the opportunity to participate in an Effective School Practices (ESP) review - an external, qualitative review of the school focused on nine standards: (1) Curriculum; (2) Classroom Evaluation/Assessment; (3) Instruction; (4) School Culture; (5) Professional Growth, Development, and Evaluation; (6) Student, Family, and Community Support; (7) Leadership; (8) Organizational Structure and Resources; and (9) Comprehensive and Effective Planning.”⁷³

The first three standards represent academic performance within a school. Standards four through six reflect the learning environment and the last three standards the organizational effectiveness of the school. In analyzing the results from the ESP reviews, several key areas of effective practices stand out among the many efforts that are contributing to the successes in these nine schools. The practices can be categorized into three main areas: Leadership, School Culture, and Best First Instruction.⁷⁴

Research Study of High-Achieving Schools

The second research project, currently underway and in partnership with the ESSU, was a study of 5, high-achieving schools (one Title I school and four non-title schools). Stakeholders and representatives spanned across the two Units as well as the five schools which included parents/families, general and special education teachers, related service providers, and administrators. (2e, 2f)

These 5 high-achieving schools showed achievement success across four sub-groups: students with disabilities, students eligible for free & reduced lunch, English language learners, and students of minority. The schools were selected to participate in a comprehensive review based upon the eight standards from the *Colorado Standards and Indicators for Continuous Improvement*.⁷⁵

“These standards are organized into two groups: Teaching for Learning (Standards & Instructional Planning, Best First Instruction, Assessment of & for Learning, and Tiered Support) and Organizing for Results (Leadership, Climate & Culture, Educator Effectiveness, and Continuous Improvement). This study, although comprehensive and rigorous in nature, captured a limited snapshot of the plethora and depth of activities that occur during a school year. Therefore, it is acknowledged that many more

⁷² http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/ti/a_hgschs

⁷³ http://www.cde.state.co.us/FedPrograms/ti/a_hgschs

⁷⁴ http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ti/a_hgschs_rep

⁷⁵ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdechart/coloradostandardsandindicatorsforcontinuouschoolimprovement>

policies, procedures, and practices are likely contributing to the success of the schools. Nonetheless, during the course of the study, the following trends were compelling across the five schools” (Table I).⁷⁶

TABLE I: Several key areas of effectiveness were noted across the schools:	Colorado Standards and Indicators for Continuous Improvement
Relationships are Valued	Leadership, Culture & Climate
Time is Invested and Protected	Leadership
Performance Monitoring is Purposeful, Frequent, and Effectively Used	Assessment of & for Learning
Decisions are Student-Centered	Leadership, Culture & Climate
Expectations are Set High, Made Explicit, Frequently Expressed, and Consistently Applied	Leadership, Culture & Climate
Learning is Purposefully and Meaningfully Structured	Standards & Instructional Planning
Staff intentionally Uses Common Language for Consistent Messaging	Leadership, Culture & Climate
Capitalizing on Available Resources	Leadership, Best First Instruction, Culture & Climate

There are two phases in the study. The objectives of Phase I included identification of the policies, procedures, and practices, especially those pertaining to the disaggregated groups that appear to be contributing to the success of schools and could be replicated using ESEA or IDEA funds. The ultimate goal is to have schools and districts articulate, showcase, and disseminate successes.

Phase II, which will occur during the 2015-2016 school year, will include the creation of incentives for low performing schools to implement the policies, practices, and procedures identified in Phase I, with guidance and input from the High Achieving Schools and their districts. They will work with the high achieving schools and districts to create networking and mentoring opportunities.

This collaborative effort is one example of the anticipated leveraging of resources that support improvement, build capacity in AUs, and scale up evidence-based strategies to improve results for students with disabilities. (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d)

Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee Student Outcomes Subcommittee -

The CSEAC student outcomes subcommittee also reviewed data gathered from Special Education Directors. During the 2012-2014 school years “the CSEAC SPP Subcommittee set a goal to identify high achieving schools and low achieving schools with a focus on outcomes for students with disabilities. [Five] school districts were interviewed, making the scope and depth of this work narrow in nature. The purpose of reviewing data was to identify school values, trends, practices and next steps.” (Table J)⁷⁷ This information identifies what is important to the AUs. From these data, trends were identified that also appear in the Federal Programs Research and the TELL Colorado survey. (2a, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2f)

⁷⁶ For information about the study, contact Nazanin Mohajeri-Nelson at Mohajeri-nelson_n@cde.state.co.us

⁷⁷

[http://www.boarddocs.com/co/cde/Board.nsf/files/9QZ36X7FB6E7/\\$file/Final%20CSEAC%20SBE%20Annual%20Report%202014%201017.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/co/cde/Board.nsf/files/9QZ36X7FB6E7/$file/Final%20CSEAC%20SBE%20Annual%20Report%202014%201017.pdf)

Table J: Values In Place- Overarching Ideas	Trends- What’s common among the districts who are having more success with SWD	Best Practices / Activities	Concerns / Impacts (Which will lead to Next Step Discussions in the CSEAC Committees)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission statements • Superintendent philosophy • Collaboration as a key component (general education/special education, school/parents) • High Expectations for all students • Focus on students as the thread of commonality in the midst of disagreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally responsive teaching/interventions • Regular review of data/use of gap analysis • Increase time in general education to access rigorous curriculum • High quality specialized individualized instruction • Highly qualified teachers • Professional Development is universal in approach and design • Effective utilization of paraprofessionals • Effective RTI systems: universal screening and identified best practices to meet the needs of students represented Tiers 1, 2, and 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Instructional Plan • No pull out during core instruction • Use of after or before school • Various programs being used: Language!; Math Triumph; Math Touch; Wilson Reading; Read Natural or Edmark; Hands on Equations; Progress monitoring using CBM or STAR; MAP/Path (Math) • Numbers-World • Every Child a Reader/Writer • Effective PBIS/MTSS • Fading para supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in funding has made impacts (increased caseloads) • Inequity in distribution of funding • Cost of technology • Teachers asked to do more with less as student needs increase • Decreased Professional Development • Less conducive learning environments with modular vs. buildings

The CSEAC Student Outcomes Committee will be involved in both an advisory role for the implementation of the SSIP, and will participate in the implementation of improvement strategies. Their connection to constituents across the state provides an invaluable link to parents/families in order to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. (2e, 2f)

The analyses of the Literacy Framework, MTSS, the research conducted by Federal Programs and the ESSU, and the Colorado Special Education Advisory Sub-Committee Report, all support the incredible importance of all eight standards from the Colorado Standards and Indicators for Continuous Improvement, but especially **Leadership, Climate & Culture, and Best First Instruction**.

Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Survey

Another area examined was perception data of administrators, experienced teachers, and new teachers provided through the online TELL Survey. The TELL Colorado website states, “The **Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Colorado** survey is an anonymous statewide survey of licensed, school-based educators to assess teaching conditions at the school, district and state level. The survey results are intended to support school and district improvement planning and to inform policy

decisions.”⁷⁸ TELL Colorado is administered every other year and the 2013 statewide response rate was 53.54%, with 89% of the respondents identifying themselves as a Teacher and 57% indicating they had been employed as an educator for 11+ years. These data provide information to identify overall trends, especially when analyzing the last 3 surveys conducted over a 5 year period. The 2015 survey is currently open but the results will not be released until July 2015. The TELL asks for responses in eight categories (Table K) and rates according to the educator’s personal opinion. The following perception data and information is directly from the TELL Survey provided by the New Teacher Center.⁷⁹ (2a, 2b, 2c)

Table K: 2013 TELL Survey Constructs⁸⁰	
Construct	Descriptor
Time	Available time to plan, to collaborate, to provide instruction, and to eliminate barriers in order to maximize instructional time during the school day
Facilities and Resources	Availability of instructional, technology, office, communication, and school resources to teachers
Community Support and Involvement	Community and Parent /Guardian communication and influence in the school
Managing Student Conflict	Policies and practices to address student conduct issues and ensure a safe school environment
Teacher Leadership	Teacher involvement in decisions that impact classroom and school practices
School Leadership	The ability of school leadership to create trusting, supportive environments and address teacher concerns
Professional Development	Availability and quality of learning opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching
Instructional Practices and Support	Data and support available to improve instruction and student learning

The TELL Survey, provided in conjunction with the CDE, the Governor’s Office, the Colorado Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers in Colorado, the Colorado League of Charter Schools, the Colorado Association of School Boards, and the Colorado Association of School Executives, is to “assess whether educators across the state report having the resources and supports necessary to encourage the most effective teaching.”⁸¹

These surveys and results (conducted in 2009, 2011, and 2013) by the New Teacher Center⁸², identified some major trends emerging across the state. The major trends identified were⁸³:

- “Educators continue to report supportive environments that acknowledge teacher leadership and expertise.”(page 3)
- “Educators report an increase in agreement for most items related to time, although time is still identified as a challenge.” (page 4)

⁷⁸ <http://tellcolorado.org/>

⁷⁹ <http://newteachercenter.org/>

⁸⁰ <http://tellcolorado.org/research>

⁸¹ http://www.tellcolorado.org/uploads/File/CO13_brief_prelim.pdf

⁸² <http://newteachercenter.org/>

⁸³ http://www.tellcolorado.org/uploads/File/CO13_brief_prelim.pdf

- “Educators report less agreement with items related to resources and materials.” (page 4)
- “Induction support is not systematically available to new teachers.” (page 4)
- “While educators report less agreement with items related to evaluation, districts piloting the new system report smaller declines.” (page 5)

While analyzing the data for the 2013 survey, which included all 53.54% of respondents (none were excluded), the ESSU looked deeper into selected questions from the 2013 TELL survey (Table L). These questions relate to *Time, Resources, Instructional Practice, Community Support and Involvement, School Leadership, Coaching & Mentorship, and Professional Development*. These specific questions and results are directly from the TELL Survey conducted by the New Teacher Center.⁸⁴ The full report can be seen at <http://tellcolorado.org/>.

Table L ⁸⁵ : Time	
Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.	52.8% agreed
Teachers have time to collaborate with colleagues.	60.3% agreed
Collaborative planning time	59% reported spending ≤ 1 hour per week
Delivery of assessments	51% reported spending ≥1 but ≤5 hours per week

Resources	
Teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials and resources.	71.3% agreed
Teachers have sufficient training and support to fully utilize available instructional technology.	56.6% agreed
Teachers have sufficient access to a broad range of professional development.	76.3% agreed

Instructional Practice	
State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	44.4% agreed
Teachers in this school use formative assessments in their classroom to make appropriate adjustments to instruction.	93.2% agreed
The curriculum taught in this school is aligned with Common Core Standards	86.3% agreed
The curriculum taught meets the needs of the students.	77.8% agreed

Community Support & Involvement	
The community we serve is supportive of this school.	82.4% agreed
Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.	70.5% agreed
The school works directly with parents/guardians to improve the educational climate in students' homes.	73.6% agreed
This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.	84.4% agreed
Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	71.8% agreed

School Leadership	
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school	68.5% agreed
The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.	71.7% agreed
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	65.1% agreed
The components of the teacher evaluation process accurately identify effectiveness.	61.6% agreed
The school leadership consistently supports teachers.	76.5% agreed
The school leadership facilitates using data for delivering instruction.	89.9% agreed

⁸⁴ <http://newteachercenter.org/>

⁸⁵ <http://tellcolorado.org/results/report/78/7485> and <http://tellcolorado.org/results/report/15/7485>

Coaching & Mentorship	
As a beginning teacher this year, I was formally assigned mentor.	77% agreed
As a new teacher, I had a formal time to meet with my mentor during school hours.	44% agreed
Spent time developing lesson plans with my mentor.	27% never received help with lesson planning, and 20% received help < once per month
Was observed teaching by my mentor.	26% never were observed by their mentor, and 34% observed by mentor < once per month
Observing my mentor's teaching.	45% never observed their mentor, and 32% observed mentor < once per month

Professional Development	
Professional development provides teacher with the knowledge and skills most needed to teach effectively.	67.9% agreed
An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.	62.4% agreed
Professional development offerings are data driven.	73.8% agreed
Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.	44.7% agreed
Professional development enhances the teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs.	67.5% agreed
Follow-up is provided from professional development in this school.	55.8% agreed
Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.	45.8% agreed

Professional Development (Amount of PD received was ≤ 10 Clock Hours During the Past Two Years)	Professional Development Requested (Percent of Educators Requesting Additional PD in the Future)
Differentiating instruction (60% responded ≤ 10 clock hours)	Differentiating instruction (54% request additional PD)
Data gathering, management, and use (52% responded ≤ 10 clock hours)	Data gathering, management, and use (45% request additional PD)
Special education - students with disabilities (83% responded ≤ 10 clock hours)	Special education (students with disabilities) (49% request additional PD)
Closing the achievement gap (73% responded ≤ 10 clock hours)	Closing the achievement gap (60% request additional PD)
Integrating technology into instruction (60% responded ≤ 10 clock hours)	Using technology in classroom instruction (63% request additional PD)
Reading strategies (61% responded ≤ 10 clock hours)	No corresponding question

As we moved deeper into considering these data, the ESSU and stakeholders noted the areas of concern and requests made by these educators. The responses will help guide the professional development and technical assistance coordinated in the future by the ESSU. Additionally, when the new TELL Survey information is available, the ESSU will analyze that information in light of implementing the SSIP. (2c, 2d)

One of the stakeholder groups, the Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) Community of Practice, encouraged a deeper examination into “the research foundation that links teaching conditions, as measured by the TELL Colorado Survey, to student achievement ...” (page 1, Tell Colorado Student Achievement and Teacher Retention Analyses, New Teacher Center, 2014) so as to help guide and support AUs in improving achievement and growth for students with disabilities, and especially in early literacy outcomes. (2f)

Additionally, this analysis reported that “in schools where educators report better teaching conditions, higher percentages of students achieve proficiency ... and show more academic growth. Specifically, schools with strong Community Involvement and Support have more students proficient on [state assessment] and demonstrate more academic growth than other schools.” (page 4, Tell Colorado Student Achievement and Teacher Retention Analyses, New Teacher Center, 2014)

The FSCP identified implications related to the infrastructure and potential improvement strategies stated directly in the Tell Colorado Student Achievement and Teacher Retention Analyses (2014, pg. 5) report as follows:

“Together, these analyses build a compelling argument for how many factors within the control of stakeholders and policymakers contribute to creating environments where strong teaching and learning can occur. These findings suggest that community involvement plays a key role across the outcomes of student learning, student academic gains and teacher retention, and across school levels. Stakeholders may consider additional analyses to better understand the intersection between community involvement and outcomes of interest, especially at the middle and high school levels where strong community involvement is less typical.”

Unified Improvement Plans

“Unified Improvement Planning was introduced to streamline the improvement planning components of state and federal accountability requirements and is a component of the ESEA Flexibility Waiver. The common UIP template and planning processes used represent a shift from planning as an “event” to planning as a critical component of “continuous improvement.” This process reduces the total number of separate plans schools and districts are required to complete with the intent of creating a single plan that has true meaning for its stakeholders. Because schools and districts are required to publicly post their improvement plans through the state department of education website (www.schoolview.org), UIP also provides a mechanism for external stakeholders to learn about schools’ and districts’ improvement efforts.”⁸⁶

“The diagram depicted here illustrates the theory of action behind Colorado’s approach to improvement planning. By engaging in a continuous improvement cycle to manage performance, districts and schools will improve their effectiveness and the outcomes for students. That cycle includes: Focus attention on the right things (performance indicators); Evaluate performance by gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data about performance; Plan improvement strategies based on performance data and root cause analysis; and Implement planned improvement strategies. Then, enter the cycle again multiple times throughout the school year: Evaluate (or monitor) performance (based on interim measures) and implementation of improvement strategies (based on implementation benchmarks) at least quarterly. Make adjustments to planned improvement strategies, and implement revised strategies, as needed.”⁸⁷ (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d)

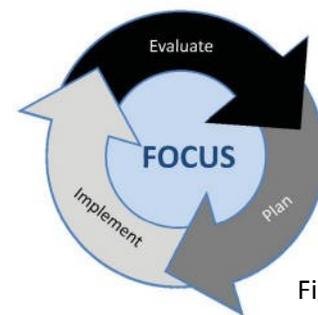


Figure 24

⁸⁶ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiipoverview>

⁸⁷ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/uiip/uiipoverview>

The ESSU examined the planned Improvement Strategies from the 2013-2014 UIPs for all 178 Districts in the state in order to determine if there were any trends. The following were included as areas of improvement related to the SSIP that the districts were planning to work on during 2014-2015 school year:

- 93 districts listed literacy in improvement strategies
- 81 districts were addressing the need for increased use data to inform instruction
- 55 districts listed coaching, mentoring, and leadership development in improvement strategies
- 47 districts were addressing MTSS/PBIS/RTI in their improvement strategies
- 35 districts had differentiation in improvement strategies

In addition to the wider system analyses, we also considered the infrastructure, grants, and professional development offered through the CDE Office of Literacy, to determine how the ESSU will align with that Office and determine what improvement strategies could be implemented to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

The Office of Literacy

Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project

In addition to the examining the data provided through Amplify (pgs. 30-31), we looked at the tools offered through a non-competitive grant, the ELAT Project. From this project local education agencies are supplied with an online assessment of DIBELS Next⁸⁸, an approved interim measure, and DIBELS Deep diagnostic reading assessments, an approved diagnostic measure. “First-time participating LEAs receive assessment kits, and each school will receive one kit per grade level (renewal applicants do not receive additional kits). All LEAs receive software to use the assessment. The tool stores and analyzes the results and recommends school and home activities based on those results. Districts are responsible for providing their own hardware.”

The tool provides the teacher assistance to establish individual student progress monitoring goals, evaluate student progress and rate of growth, and determine the effectiveness of support at the classroom level to inform instructional next steps.⁸⁹ Progress monitoring is a critical element required by the READ Act. “The desired frequency for monitoring students at well below benchmark level during a semester is once every two weeks; for below benchmark it is every three weeks.”⁹⁰

According to the mid-year project review by Amplify in March 2015, “Schools with highest fidelity [of progress monitoring] have generally made greater reductions in the percentage [of students] at well below benchmark and greater improvements in the percentage [of students] reaching benchmark than the lowest fidelity schools. That said, the simple act of monitoring will not foster student progress if not translated into more effective instruction.”⁹¹

⁸⁸ <http://www.amplify.com/assessment>

⁸⁹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/elatmarchnewsletter>

⁹⁰ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/elatboytomoyresults>

⁹¹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/elatboytomoyresults>

Amplify has been contacted regarding some additional data reporting requirements for students with disabilities that will allow the ESSU to analyze student progress. There also are plans to increase the technical assistance offered by Amplify specifically for Special Education teachers. They currently provide several trainings and technical assistance across the state. (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d)

ELAT Project Highlights⁹² March 2015:

1. Approximately 60% of ELAT schools are making above average or well above average progress in bringing students up to Benchmark on DIBELS Next.
2. The program shows better progress monitoring of “Well Below Benchmark” students than “Below Benchmark” students.
3. Data continues to demonstrate that more progress is made with students in schools with higher rates of progress monitoring.

There are 17 schools that have been identified as sites of promising practice. Similar to the Phase II high-achieving schools research study sharing out of best practices, during 2016-2017, these schools will have also the opportunity to share their practices with other schools across the state. Collaborative efforts between the Office of Literacy and the ESSU regarding the communication of the promising practices are occurring. As a result of the SSIP improvement strategies, joint professional development is being planned and will be implemented at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year. (2a, 2c, 2d, 2e)

Professional Development Opportunities:

As part of the ELAT project, summer opportunities will be provided during June of 2015. The regional trainings will be one or two day sessions focusing on: Data Analysis at the Student Level, DIBELS Next Refresher Training, DIBELS Deep, Advanced Progress Monitoring, Informing READ Plans and setting Goals using your DIBELS Next and DIBELS Deep Results as well as regional data review sessions during which we would discuss progress made by students in 14-15, using DIBELS Next to set appropriate goals for 15-16, next steps for schools, and how ELAT can support the next steps for the participating schools. The trainings are designed to build capacity within the schools and target audiences are classroom teachers, coaches, and instructional leaders.⁹³ The ESSU will be partnering with the Office of Literacy and the vendor Amplify to provide opportunities for teachers of Special Education in these one or two day sessions. Additionally, there will be focused technical assistance that will include data analyses and appropriate goal setting that will move a student from “Well Below Benchmark” to “Benchmark.” (2d)

READING Foundations Academy

The Office of Literacy initiated a teacher training program called the READING Foundations Academy, a no-cost professional development opportunity for Colorado educators in grades K – 3 that will provide teachers an opportunity to expand their knowledge of foundational reading skills, with ties to standards and comprehension throughout each class, to support their students in developing and advancing their reading ability. This established Academy is a strength upon which we can build as future partnering with the Office of Literacy will include professional development and technical support to improve reading outcomes for students with disabilities. There were 75 seats offered to special educators during 2014-2015 and 100 seats will be offered next year. (2d)

⁹² <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/elatmarchnewsletter>

⁹³ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/elatfebruarynewsletter#sthash.legnzgeg.dpuf>

Early Literacy Grant

The purpose of the Early Literacy Grant (ELG) is designed to distribute funds to local education providers, including school districts, BOCES, and district charter schools or CSI, to ensure the essential components of reading instruction are embedded into all elements of the primary, K-3 teaching structures in all schools, including universal and targeted and intensive instructional interventions, to assist all students in achieving reading competency. The ELG is funded every three years. The current cycle of the grant is from 2013-2016. The 2013-2014 school year was the first year of the grant program, implemented in 30 schools representing 15 school districts in 7 regions of the state.

Discussion with the Office of Literacy about partnering with the ELG project was occurred, but it was determined that aligning with the ELAT Project the preferred course of action.

Early Learning and Development Guidelines

“Colorado’s Early Learning and Development Guidelines are the result of a partnership between the Colorado Department of Education including the ESSU, the Colorado Early Childhood Leadership Commission, and Colorado Head Start and provide a common framework for understanding the continuum of development of children from birth through age eight. These Guidelines are aligned with and complement the Colorado Academic Standards for preschool through third grade and with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.”⁹⁴ As the ESSU considered these guidelines, we recognize that aligning the work of the SSIP and the information provided in the Guidelines, will also assist in aligning the work of Part C and Part B. (2d)

Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR)

Based upon stakeholder feedback in the 2014 summer meetings regarding the direction of the SSIP, which included representatives from Higher Education, we identified the need for all educators to be able to effectively teach reading, and an improvement strategy was proposed to examine and align the professional learning system in Colorado. This will include pre-service training through the licensing process and professional development offered to licensed educators. Therefore, in the fall of 2014 the ESSU, in collaboration with the University of Northern Colorado (UNC), Metropolitan State University of Denver (Metro), and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS) applied for and received a grant from CEEDAR for the purpose of aligning our professional learning systems. This alignment spans from college and university training – through licensure – to ongoing professional development. Beginning 2015-2016, targeted TA will be provided the state. “Targeted services will involve short-term activities provided to states interested in reforming, restructuring, and improving their professional learning systems.”⁹⁵ This will be followed by intensive services provided by the CEEDAR Center to address “system reform and improvement efforts [to] include (a) revising licensure and certification standards, (b) enhancing content, structure, and practice in teacher education and leader education programs, and (c) refining statewide data systems to improve these teacher and leader programs.”⁹⁶

⁹⁴ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cpp/earlylearningstandards>

⁹⁵ <http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/targeted-technical-assistance/>

⁹⁶ <http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/intensive-technical-assistance/>

Additionally, for on-going support, the “CEEDAR Networked Improvement Communities (NICs) will provide opportunities for intensive TA recipients to learn from and support each other as they implement new content and pedagogical practices.”⁹⁷

This opportunity provided by the CEEDAR Center will aid the state in examining and aligning the professional learning system with the new priorities of the State Performance Plan and the focus on improved outcomes for students with disabilities. (2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 2f)

Stakeholder Involvement

As mentioned in the data analysis section of the SSIP (pgs. 33-34), the ESSU was intentional when considering stakeholder involvement. Multiple stakeholder meetings were conducted using a variety of methods, with face-to-face meetings being the most common. (2e, 2f)

The Stakeholders represented in the infrastructure analysis from across the state were from:

A variety of departments from the Colorado Department of Education: the Exceptional Student Services Unit, the Office of Learning Supports, the Office of Literacy, and the Federal Programs Unit

Representatives for Parents/Families: the Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee (CSEAC), and the Family, School, and Community Partnering (FSCP) Community of Practice

Leadership Teams: Statewide Directors Leadership Team (SDLT - representing all Administrative Units in Colorado)

A variety of urban and rural school districts: Pikes Peak Regional Directors, North Central Regional Directors, Northeast Regional Directors, Metro Denver Regional Directors, and Southeast Regional Directors

Institutes of Higher Education: Metropolitan State University of Denver, University of Northern Colorado, and the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs

Teachers who responded through the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Colorado survey (an anonymous, statewide survey of licensed school-based educators to assess teaching conditions at the school, district and state level).

As the stakeholder discussions moved toward focusing on the infrastructure related to early literacy needs of students with disabilities, the ESSU and stakeholders decided to leverage the Colorado state goal, *Read by Third Grade*, the Colorado READ Act, and the Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project in collaboration with the Office of Literacy. Additionally, stakeholders agreed there should be increased alignment in the delivery of services with the Federal Programs Unit and the Office of Learning Supports.

Stakeholder input encouraged the application for the grant through the Center Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) which will assist the state in the alignment of the professional learning systems and licensure.

⁹⁷ <http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/intensive-technical-assistance/>

Through the research provided by our stakeholders, we identified effective practices implemented in high-growth and high-achieving schools which can be categorized into the following areas: Leadership, Culture & Climate Leadership, Assessment of & for Learning, Standards & Instructional Planning, and Best First Instruction. The same effective practices were identified by the CSEAC student outcomes subcommittee.

Our teachers, represented through the TELL survey, indicated a desire for professional development in differentiation, special education for students with disabilities, narrowing the achievement gap, and in reading strategies. Additionally, the role of parent and community involvement is a significant factor to improved outcomes of student with disabilities as identified by the FSCP Community of Practice.

Our districts, as reported through their UIPs, identified for training and support needs in literacy, how to effectively use data to inform instruction, assistance via coaching & mentoring, and leadership development.

Component #3: State-Identified Measurable Result

Overview of Alignment

Throughout this process the ESSU and stakeholders identified areas of alignment and potential leverage points to improve the outcomes for students with disabilities. Table M identifies these key components. (3a, 3b)

Table M

Alignment to State Performance Plan Indicator	Indicator 3 – Increase the Reading Achievement of Students with Disabilities
Alignment to State Goal	Read by Third Grade
Alignment to State Legislation	House Bill 12-1238: The Colorado READ Act Senate Bill 13-193: Increasing Parent Engagement in Public Schools; Senate Bill: 10-191 Educator Effectiveness; Senate Bill 08-212: Colorado’s Preschool to Postsecondary Alignment Act
Alignment to ESEA Flexibility Waiver	College and Career Ready Expectation for All Students, State-Developed Differentiated Recognition, Accountability & Support, and Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership
Alignment to State Guidelines	The Colorado Literacy Framework, Standards and Indicators for Continuous School Improvement, and the Early Learning and Development Guidelines
Alignment to State Initiatives	Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project (ELAT) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports
Collaboration with other CDE Offices	The Office of Literacy, the Office of Learning Supports, and the Federal Programs Unit
Collaboration with Institutes of Higher Education	CEEDAR Grant - Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform
Partnerships with Family, School, and Community Organizations	The Family, School, Community Partnership COP, the Colorado State Education Advisory Committee, and PEAK Parent
Partnership with the Colorado Education Initiative	Accelerator Project Learning Networks: for Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)

After reviewing the aggregated and disaggregated data listed on pages 15-34, as well as considering the current infrastructure throughout the state on pages 35-57, the Exceptional Student Services Unit along with various stakeholder groups determined the focus of the State Systemic Improvement Plan will be improving the reading achievement of all students with disabilities in Kindergarten through 3rd grade.

Stakeholder Involvement

The Stakeholders listed on pages 33-34; 54-55 were an integral part of the process. They participated in data analyses, infrastructure analyses, selection of the State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) and the selection of improvement strategies. Through extensive discussion, input, and feedback throughout the entire process, our Stakeholders participated in every level and directed the emphasis to be focused on reading for all students with disabilities in K-3rd grade. We originally intended the measurement of success to be the removal of a SRD resulting in a decrease in the percent of students with IEPs having a SRD. Instead, we determined to use a focused measure at the time as described in the next section. (3d)

Selecting the Measurement

Prior to 2013, statewide achievement data related to the literacy achievement of students with disabilities enrolled in Kindergarten through 3rd grade were extremely limited. However, with the passage of the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act (the READ Act) in 2012⁹⁸, statewide data for these populations are now accessible. The READ Act requires the use of an approved interim assessment to determine whether a student has a Significant Reading Deficiency (SRD) in grades K through 3 and the results are subsequently reported to the state. However there are known concerns regarding the reliability and validity of the current collection that will remain until at least FFY 2016 (pages 26-27). As the field continues to increase their understanding of the READ Act, it is expected that the data accuracy regarding SRD identification will improve. Additionally, with a new state assessment beginning the spring of 2015, baseline data are not available at this time from which the state would be able to set targets for improved 3rd grade reading achievement.

However, there are K-3 reliable and valid reading data available to the ESSU from an approved interim assessment through the Office of Literacy's ELAT project (pgs. 30-31; 51-52). As of this year, 482 elementary schools representing 41% of the elementary schools in the state, are participating in the project with more expected to join beginning fall 2015. These data, although not a statewide collection, provide reliable and valid data that can be used to set initial targets for the SiMR.⁹⁹ (3c, 3e)

According to the April 2014 READ Act Legislative Brief, "Students receiving special education services were more likely to be identified with a significant reading deficiency than their non-eligible peers (49% compared to 14%). This trend was expected as the cut-scores for a significant reading deficiency are low and tend to represent the lower quartile of students across all [approved] interim assessments."¹⁰⁰ The cut scores for the currently approved interim assessments can be viewed at:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/2014interimassessmentresultsandcutscores>

Students who are assessed at "well below benchmark" through the DIEBELS Next assessment are identified with a SRD. Thus in these data and targets, although a high percent of these students have disabilities, not all students identified "well below benchmark" in K-3 have a disability, although they are clearly at risk. The ESSU, in collaboration with other CDE offices, other units, and stakeholders intend to implement improvement strategies to improve the reading proficiency of all students with disabilities across the State. However, the measurement results for the SiMR will focus on schools participating in the ELAT project until additional reliable and valid data can be collected. (3c, 3d, 3e)

⁹⁸ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readact/index>

⁹⁹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/elatresourcesdocuments>

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/documentsandfaqs>

SiMR

Students in K-3rd grades, who attend schools that are participating in the Early Literacy Assessment Tool project, and are identified at the beginning of the school year as “Well Below Benchmark” according to the DIBELS Next Assessment, will significantly improve their reading proficiency as indicated by a decrease in the percentage of students who are identified at the end of the school year as “Well Below Benchmark”. (3d)

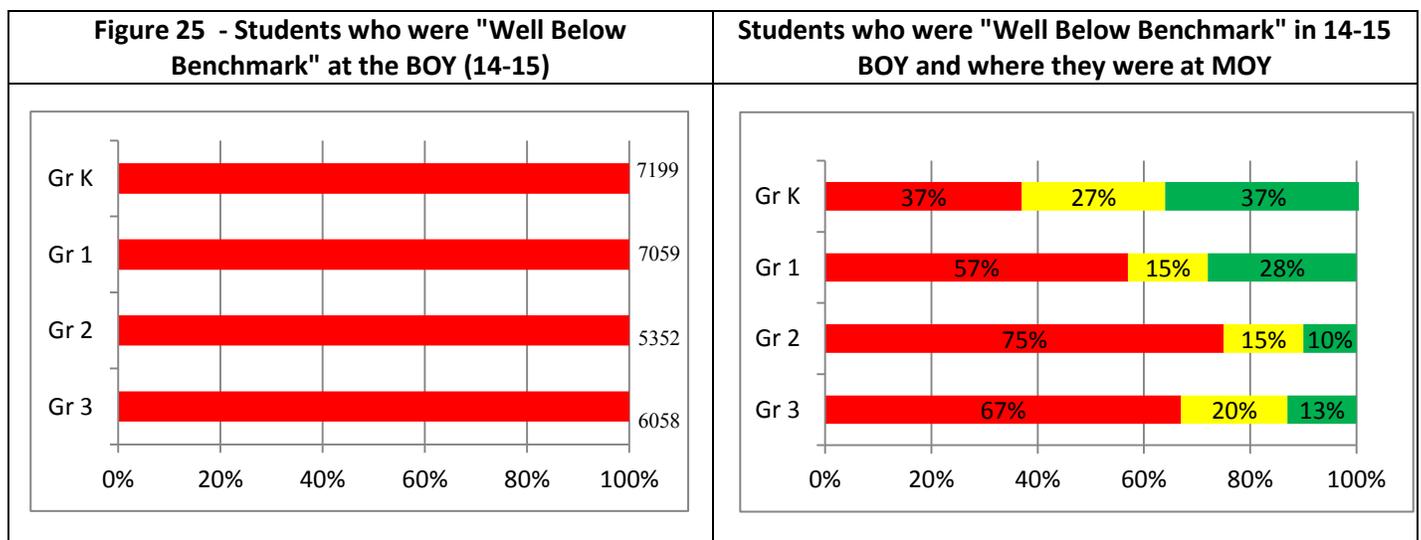
Measurable Targets

Table N

Grade Level	Baseline at Beginning of Year Sept. 2014	Target (End of Year 2015) FFY 2014	Target EOY FFY 2015	Target EOY FFY 2016	Target EOY FFY 2017	Target EOY FFY 2018
K	28.00%	18.00%	15.00%	13.00%	12.00%	11.00%
1	26.34%	23.00%	21.00%	19.00%	18.50%	18.00%
2	20.16%	18.00%	17.50%	17.00%	16.50%	16.00%
3	23.46%	19.00%	18.50%	17.50%	17.00%	16.50%

Setting the Targets

Amplify (2013) states, “Traditionally we look at our DIBELS Next data and analyze what percent of students fall into each risk level. This information is excellent to assist in planning instruction and interventions. However, being able to take that to the next level and determining how well we are assisting our students in growth is extremely important.”¹⁰¹ The “Amplify Progress Planning Tool for DIBELS Next...utilizes data from the mCLASS users across the nation to provide schools and districts with a meaningful comparative perspective for their progress during the school year.”¹⁰² This tool, available through the CDE website, provides assistance in setting growth targets for the students who were “well below benchmark”.



¹⁰¹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/determininggrowthboytomoy>

¹⁰² <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/elatresourcesdocuments>

Additional Measures

As stated on page 26, The ESSU, Office of Literacy, and stakeholders reviewed the first year of READ Act data. In 2013-2014, 90.23% of students in K-3 with IEPs had READ Act data that could be analyzed and 48.01% of these students were identified with a Significant Reading Deficiency. The goal of the ESSU is that students with disabilities will significantly improve their reading proficiency as indicated by the removal of the identification of a SRD. We will continue to monitor this statewide, and as the collection improves, we will determine if this is an appropriate measurement to track, or if there are other measurements to add.

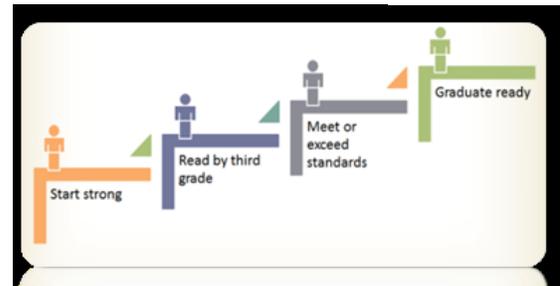
The removal of an SRD indicates that a student has made sufficient progress and is no longer below the cut scores. However, that does not mean the student no longer needs additional support and interventions to remain above the cut score on future assessments. To remove a student from a READ Plan there must be a body of evidence (determined locally) that indicates grade level proficiency.

The ESSU will collaborate with the Office of Literacy within the Teaching and Learning Unit at CDE on a literacy project, i.e., Early Literacy Assessment Tool project, which involves schools focusing on K-3 literacy using the tools within DIBELS by Amplify (pgs. 30-31; 53-54). With the data available from this ESSU / Office of Literacy project, there will be a measureable summative result for all of the students within this project; the assessment tool will yield a percentile measure of the students' reading abilities toward reading proficiency.

Component #4: Coherent Improvement Strategies

Framework for Strategies

Figure 26



Throughout the development of the State Systemic Improvement Plan, improvement strategies have been at the forefront of thought and planning. As the CDE and stakeholders worked through this process, one of the root causes we identified is the persistent presence of silos that seem to be firmly entrenched between general education and special education.

One of our stakeholders commented, “We have done this to ourselves.” Another said, “There is divisiveness in the terms themselves.” While it could be said that most people working in education firmly believe and support the education of all students¹⁰³, many of us still tend to think in terms of “our students” or “their students” as evidenced by our daily language.

Throughout this process there were numerous times when stakeholders strongly emphasized that students with disabilities are general education students first, who also require specialized instruction to meet their unique educational needs. Our challenge is tear down the silos that separate us, while simultaneously improving the provision of a free and appropriate education for students with disabilities in order to realize improved results. With this in mind, we have selected strategies that will increase collaborative opportunities between general education and special education at all levels across the State. We utilized three CDE guidance documents that lent structure and direction to the process. The ESSU participated in the development of these evidence-based guidance documents as representatives of children with disabilities. They are: the *Colorado Standards and Indicators for Continuous Improvement*, the *Colorado Literacy Framework*, and the *Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines*. (4d)

Colorado Standards and Indicators for Continuous Improvement

The Standards and Indicators for Continuous School Improvement (2012) were developed by the Federal Programs Unit as a part of the accountability requirements of state’s ESEA Flexibility Waiver. “It provides an outline the elements of systemic improvement within Colorado schools at elementary, middle, and high school levels necessary to ensure student success in postsecondary and workforce settings. Originally developed as a diagnostic appraisal to assist schools in their improvement efforts, the revised Standards and Indicators are used by others to identify quality school practices.”¹⁰⁴ (4d) Some of the document is included here and the entire document is available online at:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/federalprogramsguidance>

Drawing from the CDE Standards-Based Teaching/Learning Cycle: 2nd Edition (2012)¹⁰⁵, there are eight standards organized into two strands:

- Strand I: Teaching for Learning
- Strand II: Organizing for Results

¹⁰³ <http://tellcolorado.org/> (* 2013 TELL Survey – 95% of the respondents agreed, “The faculty are committed to helping every student learn.”)

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/federalprogramsguidance>

¹⁰⁵ Document can be downloaded at by entering the following address in your web browser - http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/dl/ti_a-ti_sstmembers_standardsbased

Strand I: Teaching for Learning

The ‘Teaching for Learning’ strand (Table O) describes the necessary elements of a comprehensive, standards-based teaching and learning cycle informed by four primary questions:

1. What do students need to know, understand, and be able to do? (Plan)
2. How do we teach effectively to ensure students are learning? (Do)
3. How do we know students are learning? (Reflect)
4. What do we do when students are not learning or are reaching mastery before expectation? (Revise)

The four standards that organize this strand are:

Table O

Standard 1: Standards and Instructional Planning	The school implements a curriculum that is aligned to Colorado Academic Standards and ensures rigorous, effective instructional planning.
Standard 2: Best First Instruction	Instructional staff members provide aligned, integrated, and research-based instruction that engages students cognitively and ensures that students learn to mastery.
Standard 3: Assessment of & for Learning	Teachers use multiple sources of data and consistent, high quality assessment practices to guide school, department, grade-level, and classroom decisions.
Standard 4: Tiered Support	The school implements a comprehensive system of tiered academic and behavioral support to enable students to master grade-level expectations.

Strand II: Organizing for Results

The Organizing for Results strand describes key elements required for schools to function as effective learning organizations. The standards and indicators within this strand identify critical organizational supports for the standards-based teaching and learning cycle to ensure effective results for students.

The strand is informed by four primary questions:

1. How do we lead the school to accomplish effective results for students? (Lead)
2. How does our school community ensure high expectations for the performance of all students and staff? (Expect)
3. How do we develop and support a high quality professional staff? (Develop)
4. How do we keep our focus on and reach the teaching and learning goals we’ve set? (Sustain)

The four standards that organize this strand are:

Table P

<p>Standard 5: Leadership</p>	<p>School leadership ensures the school functions as a learning organization focused on shared responsibility for student success and a rigorous cycle of teaching and learning.</p>
<p>Standard 6: Culture and Climate</p>	<p>The school functions as an effective learning community and supports a climate conducive to performance excellence for students and staff.</p>
<p>Standard 7: Educator Effectiveness</p>	<p>School leadership actively develops a high quality professional staff through professional learning, supervision, evaluation, and commitment to continuous improvement.</p>
<p>Standard 8: Continuous Improvement</p>	<p>The school implements a mission-driven cycle of continuous improvement that optimizes learning and ensures organizational effectiveness.</p>

Colorado Literacy Framework

“The Colorado Literacy Framework provides a context for the literacy work of the Colorado Department of Education and guides the organization’s support to its constituents, primarily educators, community members and administrators involved in literacy instruction. The framework supports the charge of CDE “to create a purpose-driven and dynamic system of educational leadership, service and support that relentlessly focuses on the learning of all students.”¹⁰⁶ (4d)

A continuously updated, elaborated version is available online at:
http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/clf/eightelements_01-fivecomponents.

Some of the document is shown here and is also available for download at:
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/clf/index>

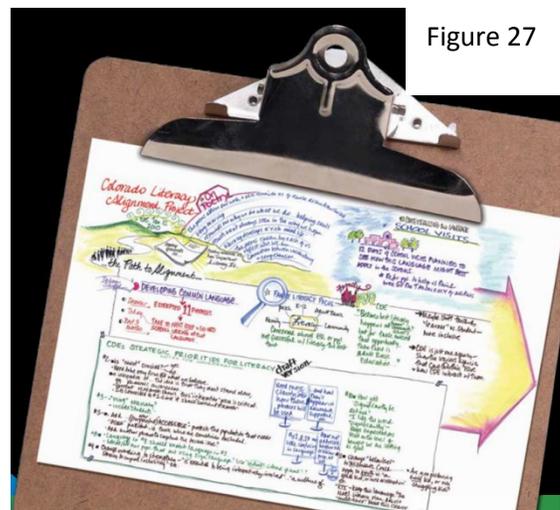


Figure 27

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/clf/index>

The CDE, including the ESSU, have identified three literacy goals.

1. All families and care-givers have access to literacy support for young children. Supporting early literacy prevents gaps later.
2. The literacy achievement gap is eliminated.
3. All Colorado students have the literacy and language skills to meet the growing demands of knowledge- based global society. All students must be sophisticated in their use of language and literacy skills to be productive and contributing members of the 21st century.

The eight elements that comprise the literacy framework are:

Table Q

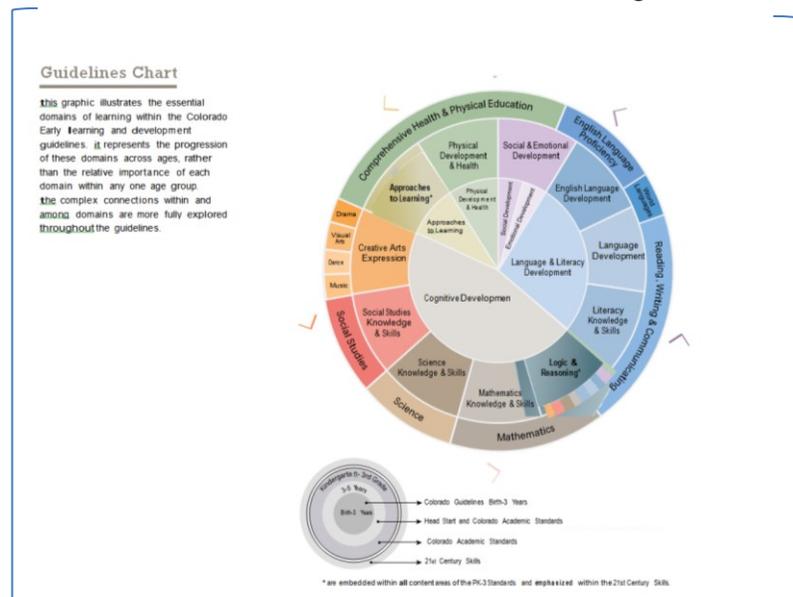
ELEMENTS OF THE COLORADO LITERACY FRAMEWORK¹⁰⁷
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The integration of the five components of reading informs CDE’s literacy initiatives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early learning experiences support literacy development in young children.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research-based instructional approaches fostering communication skills, including oral and written language, promote access, opportunity and academic achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposeful, direct, explicit and systematic instruction is valuable for continuous literacy achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student learning and motivation are enhanced by a connection to cultural experience and personal relevance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid and reliable student literacy achievement data support grantees and constituents in measuring success of initiatives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration among education professionals, family and community is essential to improved student literacy achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students benefit from literacy instruction provided within a multi-tiered system of support that provides students instruction that is needs-based, intensive and of sufficient duration to accelerate learning.

¹⁰⁷ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/clf/index>

The Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines

The Guidelines “describe the trajectory of children’s learning and development from birth to 8 years old in Colorado. They include a broad description of children’s growth to ensure a holistic approach to creating positive early childhood environments. (Figure 28¹⁰⁸) For each age level, this document addresses approaches to learning, health and physical development, social and emotional development, language, literacy, numeracy, logic and reasoning, and other subject-specific learning.”¹⁰⁹ (4d)

Figure 28



“The Colorado Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines are intended to:

- Improve families’ and professionals’ knowledge of child development;
- Guide families and professionals working with children in planning and implementing developmental and learning activities;
- Inform or guide developmental support, instruction, assessment, and intervention; and
- Provide unifying guidelines that are embraced by and embedded in programs and services (e.g. early care and education, home visitation, medical homes, early intervention) across the comprehensive early childhood service delivery system.”¹¹⁰

Some of the document is shown here and the entire document is available online at:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/early/preschoolstandardsresources>

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/Early%20Learning%20Guidelines.pdf>

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/early/preschoolstandardsresources>

¹¹⁰ <http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/Early%20Learning%20Guidelines.pdf>

Identified Root Causes:

As the ESSU and stakeholders evaluated the various components related to K-3 reading improvement and several root causes were identified at both state and local levels. (4d) The primary root causes are:

- Minimal cross departmental collaboration for training opportunities related to students with disabilities.
- School instructional leaders do not sufficiently emphasize the shared responsibility of all staff for student success and a rigorous cycle of teaching and learning emphasizing best first instruction.
- School instructional leaders do not adequately understand how to implement and sustain a multi-tiered system of supports.
- Special education teachers, general education teachers, and literacy specialists are not trained as a team nor given adequate common planning time for collaboration during the school day.
- Special education generalists have limited content knowledge regarding how to teach reading. General education teachers have a limited knowledge regarding specialized instructional practices for students with disabilities.
- Time and intensity is not always adequate for direct and explicit literacy instruction of students with disabilities.
- Teachers do not systematically use data to inform instructional practices
- Children who are struggling readers do not spend enough time practicing reading outside of school hours.

Improvement Strategy Selection Method

To narrow down the number of improvement strategies to those that would have the most impact in Colorado, the ESSU and stakeholders utilized the *Quick Reference Guide: Working with Stakeholders to Identify Potential Improvement Strategies for Program Improvement*.¹¹¹ (4a, 4e) The overall purpose of the resource was to help states involve stakeholders in:

- Identifying possible improvement strategies that address the root causes and lead to improving the expected result for program improvement and the SIMR in Phase I of the SSIP;
- Identifying potential steps that will need to be taken to implement the improvement strategies (for SSIP Phase II).

The stakeholders listed on pages 33-34 participated at various times in the development and proposal of improvement strategies and built upon the work of others who had provided input at earlier stages. The information in step one (Table R) and step two (Table S) were gathered and developed from stakeholder input compiled over nine months, along with focused feedback during Feb. – March 2015. Stakeholders had an additional opportunity, via an online survey of the top identified strategies (Appendix D), to rate each strategy in comparison to one another in order to determine what steps we would undertake in Phase II of the SSIP. The results of the survey are reported on pages 74-75. (4e)

¹¹¹ http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/ssip/ssip_strategies_for_improvement.pdf

Table R

STEP 1: What’s our vision? If we were to see significantly improved outcomes by FFY 2018, what would it look like?

Consider 5 different levels:

Children and parents/families, educators, programs at AUs, professional development, and infrastructure.

Questions	Vision Statements
<p>What would it look like for children and parents/families if the expected results are achieved in 5 years?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children love to go to school and enjoy reading • Children choose to read during their free time at home and school • Parents/Families are fully engaged in reading with their children at home (both school work <i>and</i> pleasure) • Parents/Families access high-quality, early intervention because of the importance of early literacy (Infant/Toddler to school age) • Children receive high-quality supports and focused interventions from the moment they are identified with difficulties • Literacy Training Academies are regularly provided to parents/families and these are “packed-out” events • Parents/families feel confident and fully involved in the instruction of their children • Children feel confident in their abilities and demonstrate growth • All students with disabilities are fully integrated into classroom instruction • Strong communication with their child’s school is occurring at all levels
<p>What would it look like in 5 years for the educators and service providers? What would they know, do, and believe to help students achieve reading proficiency?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educators and service providers demonstrate a deep seated conviction and belief that all students can learn; that growth outcomes can be achieved • Educators believe that all students are general education students first • Educators provide direct evidence-based, differentiated instruction to all students that are aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards • Educators and service providers experience significant value and professional insight from their ongoing collaborative peer relationships and communities of practice • Educators are fully equipped to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms, accessing a full range of professional knowledge and skills to meet the literacy needs of all students • Educators and parents/families have strong collaborative relationships, built upon the strengths, knowledge and experiences of each person

<p>Table R (cont.)</p> <p>What would AU’s, districts, schools, have in place in 5 years that are supporting educators in delivering effective, differentiated instruction to all students?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master schedules provide all educators regular access to professional learning communities and effective Professional Development / Technical Assistance, which advances their knowledge and skills, and in turn impacts and changes the teaching practices of students with disabilities • Mentoring/Coaching is available for educators which provides job-embedded assistance on the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices for students with disabilities • Universal system of core instruction is provided to all students by the best qualified educator • Multi-tiered Systems of Support are established and robust, providing appropriate interventions for all students (Universal, Targeted, and Intensive) • Regularly scheduled Literacy Training Academies for parents/families • Induction Programs that build on pre-service literacy training received at Institutes of Higher Education; expanding on effective and differentiated instruction for all students • Mandatory Kindergarten; full-day preschool opportunities
<p>What would the professional development mechanisms look like in 5 years that support and sustain practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutes of Higher Education require coursework for all pre-service teachers resulting in newly licensed teachers who know how to teach reading • PD is provided via “joint” offerings for all teachers because all teachers provide instruction for students with disabilities (e.g. Office of Literacy and the Exceptional Student Services Unit) • Regional structures are in place to address similar PD/TA needs • PD has strong evaluative components that consider various levels of impact • Coaching/Mentoring and PD follow-up are ongoing and job embedded • On-Line training library is available to educators
<p>What regional/local agency and state infrastructure (policy, guidelines, data systems, funding, procedures, monitoring, etc.) will be in place in 5 years that assures quality statewide?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional support is in place for all systems: instruction, assessment, data management • Colorado Continuous Improvement Process is fully established • Quick access by AUs to their data via the Data Management System • Funding Flexibility • Licensure requirements in place for new teachers that includes literacy instruction • Consistent policies, procedures, and practices across AUs • State level collaboration and consistency is the norm • Technology systems in place (e.g. PD/TA requests, PD/TA participant evaluation, access to professional development library) • Early Childhood Literacy Guidelines, School Readiness Guidelines, and K-3 Literacy Standards are aligned

Table S

STEP 2: How do we achieve our vision by 2019? What strategies would we need to undertake to achieve those results, address the root causes of the expected result/SIMR, and leverage existing initiatives?

Level: *Children and Parents/Families*

(What would it look like for children and parents/families if the expected results are achieved in 5 years?)

Identified Vision Statements	Possible Improvement Strategies & Collaborative Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Children love to go to school and enjoy reading</i> • <i>Children choose to read during their free time at home and school</i> • <i>Parents/Families are fully engaged in reading with their children at home (both school work and pleasure)</i> • <i>Parents/Families understand the importance of early literacy and act on it by reading often to their children and access high-quality, early intervention (Infant/Toddler to school age)</i> • <i>Children receive high-quality supports and focused interventions from the moment they are identified with difficulties</i> • <i>Literacy Training Academies are regularly provided to parents/families and these are “packed-out” events</i> • <i>Parents/families feel confident and fully involved in the instruction of their children</i> • <i>Children feel confident in their abilities and demonstrate growth</i> • <i>All students with disabilities are fully integrated into classroom instruction</i> • <i>Strong communication with their child’s school is occurring at all levels</i> 	<p>In partnership with AUs, parent organizations (e.g. CSEAC, PEAK), community organizations (e.g. Colorado Education Initiative, Libraries), Advisory Councils, Institutes of Higher Education, and other Offices at the CDE (e.g. Office of Literacy, Office of Learning Supports, Federal Programs, Early Learning and School Readiness Unit) -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue/Establish local Early Literacy Academies for parents/families. 2. Develop guidelines for parent/family involvement in the Multi-tiered System of Supports for students who are identified with a significant reading deficiency. 3. Intensify collaboration with Early Intervention Services so that all children have early interventions as needed, and parents/families have connections to literacy and understand childhood developmental stages.

Table S (cont.)

Step Two: How do we achieve our vision by 2019? What strategies would we need to undertake to achieve those results, address the root causes of the expected result/SIMR, and leverage existing initiatives?

Level: Educators and Service Providers - (What would it look like in 5 years for the educators and service providers? What would they know, do, and believe to help students achieve reading proficiency?)

Identified Vision Statements	Possible Improvement Strategies & Collaborative Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Educators and service providers demonstrate a deep seated conviction and belief that all students can learn; that growth outcomes can be achieved</i> • <i>Educators believe that all students are general education students first</i> • <i>Educators provide direct evidence-based, differentiated instruction to all students that are aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards</i> • <i>Educators and service providers experience significant value and professional insight from their ongoing collaborative peer relationships and communities of practice</i> • <i>Educators are fully equipped to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms, accessing a full range of professional knowledge and skills to meet the literacy needs of all students</i> • <i>Educators and parents/families have strong collaborative relationships, built upon the strengths, knowledge and experiences of each person</i> 	<p>In partnership with AUs, parent organizations (e.g. CSEAC, PEAK), community organizations (e.g. Colorado Education Initiative, Libraries), Advisory Councils, Institutes of Higher Education, and other Offices at the CDE (e.g. Office of Literacy, Office of Learning Supports, Federal Programs, Early Learning and School Readiness Unit) -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue the work of the committee “Re-visioning Special Education in a Results Driven World” (formally Re-Inventing Special Education) to champion inclusion; to <u>change</u> the perception/belief that students with disabilities are recipients of special education first and general education second. (e.g. Best First Instruction; aligned structures between general ed. and special ed.; integration of staff roles; break down silos) 2. Provide Professional Development and TA jointly for Special Educators & General Educators related to differentiated literacy instruction. (e.g., early identification, data analysis and instructional adjustment, components of reading, family collaboration, paraprofessionals provided training in inclusive practices and intervention strategies) 3. Establish online Community of Practices so early literacy educators have access to collaborative peer relationships which are focused on meeting the literacy needs of all students.

Table S (cont.)

Step Two: How do we achieve our vision by 2019? What strategies would we need to undertake to achieve those results, address the root causes of the expected result/SIMR, and leverage existing initiatives?

Level: AU's, Districts, Schools, Programs (What would AU's, districts, schools, have in place in 5 years that are supporting educators in delivering effective, differentiated instruction to **all** students?)

Identified Vision Statements	Possible Improvement Strategies & Collaborative Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Master schedules provide all educators regular access to professional learning communities and effective Professional Development / Technical Assistance, which advances their knowledge and skills, and in turn impacts and changes the teaching practices of students with disabilities</i> • <i>Mentoring/Coaching is available for educators which provides job-embedded assistance on the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices for students with disabilities</i> • <i>Universal system of core instruction is provided to all students by the best qualified educator</i> • <i>Multi-tiered Systems of Support are established and robust, providing appropriate interventions for all students (Universal, Targeted, and Intensive)</i> • <i>Regularly scheduled Literacy Training Academies for parents/families</i> • <i>Induction Programs that build on pre-service literacy training received at Institutes of Higher Education; expanding on effective and differentiated instruction for all students</i> • <i>Mandatory Kindergarten; full-day preschool opportunities</i> 	<p>In partnership with AUs, parent organizations (e.g. CSEAC, PEAK), community organizations (e.g. Colorado Education Initiative, Libraries), Advisory Councils, Institutes of Higher Education, and other Offices at the CDE (e.g. Office of Literacy, Office of Learning Supports, Federal Programs, Early Learning and School Readiness Unit) -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand/Develop coaching/mentoring/induction programs for K-3 educators; with an emphasis on the provision of core literacy instruction, timely and appropriate tiered levels of intervention, and feedback loops that speak to direct instructional practices. 2. Professional Development and Technical Assistance offered in collaboration with other CDE offices to build on core, universal, and best first instruction principles for all students. (e.g., the Office of Literacy's Reading Foundations Academy, Office of Standards and Learning, Office of Federal Programs, Office of Language, Culture and Equity) 3. Collaborate with the Office of Learning Supports to expand the implementation of the Multi-tiered System of Supports; 3-tiered levels of instruction, interventions, and additional support for all students. 4. Re-allocate funding for students with disabilities to have increased access to Preschool and full day Kindergarten.

Table S (cont.)

Step Two: How do we achieve our vision by 2019? What strategies would we need to undertake to achieve those results, address the root causes of the expected result/SIMR, and leverage existing initiatives?

Level: Professional Development – (What would the professional development mechanisms look like in 5 years that support and sustain practice?)

Identified Vision Statements	Possible Improvement Strategies & Collaborative Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Institutes of Higher Education require coursework for all pre-service teachers resulting in newly licensed teachers who know how to teach reading</i> • <i>PD is provided via “joint” offerings for all teachers because all teachers provide instruction for students with disabilities (e.g. Office of Literacy and the Exceptional Student Services Unit),</i> • <i>Regional structures are in place to address similar PD/TA needs</i> • <i>PD has strong evaluative components that consider various levels of impact</i> • <i>Coaching/Mentoring and PD follow-up are ongoing and job embedded</i> • <i>On-Line training library is available to educators</i> 	<p>In partnership with AUs, parent organizations (e.g. CSEAC, PEAK), community organizations (e.g. Colorado Education Initiative, Libraries), Advisory Councils, Institutes of Higher Education, and other Offices at the CDE (e.g. Office of Literacy, Office of Learning Supports, Federal Programs, Early Learning and School Readiness Unit) -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Based upon a three-year technical assistance grant received by the ESSU from the center for <u>C</u>ollaboration for <u>E</u>ffective <u>E</u>ducator <u>D</u>evelopment, <u>A</u>ccountability and <u>R</u>eform (CEEDAR) and in collaboration with Institutions of Higher Education, other offices within the CDE, and the Colorado Consortium of Special Education Teacher Educators, create an aligned professional learning system that will provide effective opportunities for all teachers to master core and specialized instruction in inclusive settings. 2. Develop/Expand online professional development material and coursework (Your On-Demand Educational Library – YODEL) available at any time to administrators, educators, and parents/families across the state. 3. In collaboration with other CDE offices, implement a consistent regional structure for the provision of professional development and technical assistance with a strong evaluative component considering change of instructional practice and improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

Table S (cont.)

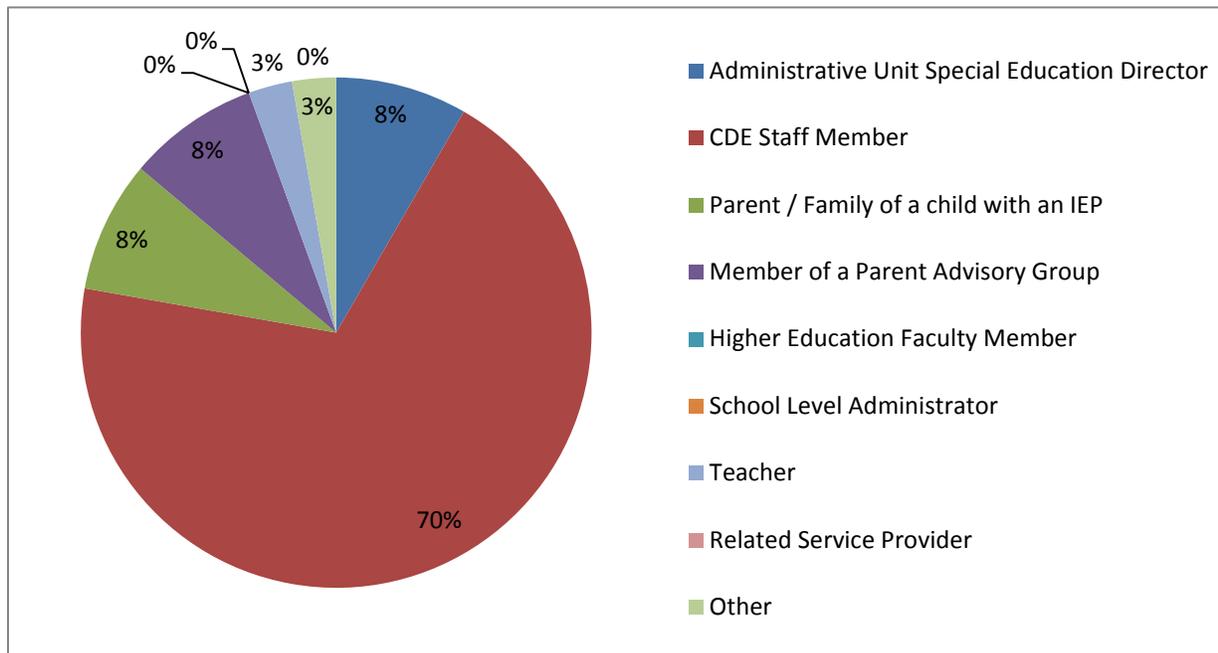
Step Two: How do we achieve our vision by 2019? What strategies would we need to undertake to achieve those results, address the root causes of the expected result/SIMR, and leverage existing initiatives?

Level: Infrastructure – (What regional/local agency and state infrastructure (policy, guidelines, data systems, funding, procedures, monitoring, etc.) will be in place in 5 years that assures quality statewide?)

Identified Vision Statements	Possible Improvement Strategies & Collaborative Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regional support is in place for all systems: instruction, assessment, data management</i> • <i>Colorado Continuous Improvement Process is fully established</i> • <i>Quick access by AUs to their data via the Data Management System</i> • <i>Funding flexibility</i> • <i>Licensure requirements in place for new teachers that includes literacy instruction</i> • <i>Consistent policies, procedures, and practices across AUs</i> • <i>State level collaboration and consistency is the norm</i> • <i>Technology systems in place (e.g. PD/TA requests, PD/TA participant evaluation, access to professional development library)</i> • <i>Early Childhood Literacy Guidelines, School Readiness Guidelines, and K-3 Literacy Standards are aligned</i> 	<p>In partnership with AUs, parent organizations (e.g. CSEAC, PEAK), community organizations (e.g. Colorado Education Initiative, Libraries), Advisory Councils, Institutes of Higher Education, and other Offices at the CDE (e.g. Office of Literacy, Office of Learning Supports, Federal Programs, Early Learning and School Readiness Unit) -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop/Expand on a Statewide K-3 Literacy Advisory Committee that is cross curricular, supported by various CDE departments, and other State agencies. (e.g., Department of Human Services Part C) 2. Evaluate and revise guidance, protocols, policies, procedures, indicators (e.g. LRE) and funding mechanisms to align with universal design principles, the READ Act, Early Childhood Literacy Guidelines, School Readiness Guidelines, and K-3 Literacy Standards.

In order to determine the most impactful strategies to undertake in Phase II, we administered an online survey (Appendix D) that was open between 3/4/15 – 3/15/15. Thirty-six respondents (25 CDE staff, 11 Non-CDE staff; Figure 29) indicated the extent to which they believed the successful completion of the idea/plan/strategy discussed in the survey item would move the state closer to its SiMR. (4e) Respondents answered 12 survey items using a 6-point likert scale (1 = *Very Low Impact*, 2 = *Low Impact*, 3 = *Not Much Impact*, 4 = *Some Impact*, 5 = *High Impact*, 6 = *Very High Impact*).

Figure 29



The descriptive statistics and statistical tests comparing the responses of the CDE staff and non-CDE staff are summarized in Appendix C.

The highest rated strategy was Q5: Develop coaching / mentoring programs for preschool through 3rd grade special educators with a strong emphasis on follow-up and feedback to inform literacy instruction ($M = 5.19, SD = 0.79$). This strategy was the highest rated strategy among CDE staff ($M = 5.28, SD = 0.74$) and the second highest rated strategy among non-CDE staff ($M = 5.00, SD = 0.89$). Overall, 80.5% of the respondents indicated this strategy to be “very high impact” or “high impact” (Figure 29).

The second highest rated strategy was Q4: Provide training related to literacy instruction for combined teams of preschool through 3rd grade special educators and general educators (e.g., early identification, data analysis that informs instruction, best first instruction principles, and disability specific best practices) ($M = 5.14, SD = 0.72$). This strategy was the highest rated strategy among non-CDE staff ($M = 5.18, SD = 0.75$) and the second highest rated strategy among CDE staff ($M = 5.12, SD = 0.73$). Overall, 77.8% of the respondents indicated this strategy to be “very high impact” or “high impact.”

The third highest rated strategy was Q8: Create an aligned professional learning system^{112*} that will provide opportunities for educators (e.g., administrators, teachers, related service providers, speech language pathologists) to master core and specialized instruction in inclusive settings ($M = 4.92$, $SD = 0.84$).

These three strategies have the smallest standard deviations among all strategies, demonstrating the high consensus among the respondents. A series of t -tests comparing the responses of the CDE staff and non-CDE staff indicated that there is no significant difference in how these two groups rated the three strategies ($t = -0.91, 0.23, 1.63$, all $ps < .05$, respectively). Furthermore, the only survey item that showed a significant difference between the two groups' responses was rated as not impactful by both groups (i.e., Q7). This shows the general consensus between CDE staff and non-CDE staff in terms of the possible impact of these strategies.

Improvement Strategies

These evidence-based improvement strategies and activities are aligned with Colorado Standards and Indicators for Continuous, Colorado Literacy Framework, and the Colorado Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines. (4b)

Improvement Strategy #1

Develop coaching / mentoring programs for preschool through 3rd grade special educators with a strong emphasis on follow-up and feedback to inform literacy instruction.

- Develop a PD & TA rubric to identify AU needs including severity of need, intensity, duration, and mode of delivery in order to provide a coordinated set of activities to address the needs of AUs with the lowest performing students with disabilities in grades K-3 (e.g. RDA Determination Matrix; Professional Development).
- Coordinate a network of mentors (instructional leaders and educators) who have seen significant improvement for students with disabilities in reading achievement in grades K-3 (e.g. SLD Basic Reading Skills Community of Practice).
- Provide quick and targeted TA for instructional leaders and K-3 literacy educators when students with disabilities, whose assessment results are "well-below benchmark" and progress monitoring demonstrates no growth or regression (i.e., ELAT Pilot Project).
- Disseminate effective practices and evidence-based interventions from model schools and programs that have students with disabilities who are making significant reading progress, and provide PD & TA to replicate model school practices in other schools (e.g. 17 ELAT Schools with Promising Practices, High-Growth Schools; High-Achieving Schools).

¹¹² *from pre-service training at universities- through licensure- to the ongoing professional development opportunities

- Disseminate early literacy information and tools to AUs that will help strengthen the role and responsibility of parents to ensure that families of students with disabilities have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home (e.g. CSEAC, PEAK Parent, Family, School and Community Partnership CoP).
- Partner with local parent organizations to identify statewide and local external partners to support students with disabilities in K-3 reading (e.g. CSEAC, PEAK Parent, Family, School and Community Partnership CoP).
- Partner with the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) to identify areas of alignment with external partners to support students with disabilities in K-3 reading.

Improvement Strategy #2

Provide training related to literacy instruction for combined teams of preschool through 3rd grade special educators and general educators (e.g., early identification, data analysis that informs instruction, best first instruction principles, and disability specific best practices).

- Provide PD & TA for Elementary School Principals through a coordinated set of activities and services that will result in strong instructional leaders who understand the literacy needs of students with disabilities (e.g. Supporting Principals with Information about Standards-based Instruction and IEPs; Specially Designed Instruction to Focus on Principles of UDL and Instructional Adaptations for SWD on Grade-level Standards).
- Provide PD & TA to K-3rd grade general education and special teachers that will result in high-quality evidence-based literacy instruction for students with disabilities that is grounded in the Colorado Literacy Framework (e.g. READING Foundations Academy, Writing Standards-aligned IEP Guidance and Training; Instructional Strategies for Teachers of Students on Alternate Academic Achievement Standards; Accommodations for Instruction & Assessment.).
- Provide PD & TA for K-3 instructional leaders and educators to accurately identify, interpret, and use data to drive the decision making processes and instructional practices for students with disabilities (e.g. SLD - utilization of diagnostic assessment that supports root cause analysis of reading difficulties; SLD - utilization of ongoing, student-centered data to make instructional decisions; DIBELS Next training).
- Provide PD for K-3 instructional leaders and educators regarding early predictive factors related to reading disabilities and TA to implement evidence-based practices for early intervention.
- Provide PD & TA, in collaboration with other CDE Divisions and parent organizations, to K-3 instructional leaders, literacy educators, parents and families regarding effective practices and evidence-based interventions in reading for K-3 students with disabilities.

- Provide PD & TA, in collaboration with the Office of School Readiness, the Office of Learning Supports, the Unified Improvement Office, and the Federal Programs Unit in order to develop effective systems to identify and respond to the early literacy needs of students with disabilities. (Child Language and Literacy; Language Development and Disorders).
- Provide PD & TA for AUs to conduct data analyses of data available through the Data Management System in order to identify areas of need, quickly respond with an appropriate intervention, and implement the AU improvement plan.

Improvement Strategy #3

Create an aligned professional learning system from pre-service training at universities - through licensure - to the ongoing professional development opportunities of licensed educators.

- Partner with IHEs to align the professional learning systems from pre-service education through professional development through technical assistance provided by the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR Grant).
- Align licensure requirements for Teachers to include additional literacy components.
- Provide professional development to current and new teachers emphasizing the Literacy Framework in relation to students with disabilities (e.g., Eight Elements of the Literacy Framework and Students with Disabilities, Advanced Progress Monitoring).
- Develop new innovative professional development (IPD) opportunities in partnership with the Colorado Education Initiative and other CDE Divisions, regarding best-first instruction to meet the needs of students with disabilities in grades K-3 (e.g. Accelerator Project Learning Networks: for Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES)).
- Research and disseminate evidence-based practices from the identified High-Growth, High-Achieving, and ELAT schools.



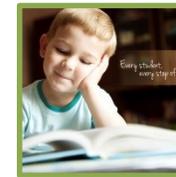
support AUs and educators by

- Providing educators with training and tools on research and evidence-based practices to increase literacy development for all students;
- Supporting educators in identifying and responding to every student's needs in literacy development as they enter and progress through school;
- Using data to identify and respond effectively to students' needs in literacy development;
- Responding quickly when any student falls behind;
- Assisting educators in partnering with families to increase students' literacy development beyond the school day and school year;
- Engaging and encouraging communities and external partners to support students' literacy development beyond the school day and school year;
- Helping school systems build the systems needed to support and sustain early literacy attainment;
- Providing targeted technical assistance to the districts and schools with the lowest percent of students meeting reading targets;



through developing and creating

- Coaching and mentoring programs for preschool through 3rd grade special educators with a strong emphasis on follow-up and feedback to inform literacy instruction;
- Training related to literacy instruction for combined teams of preschool through 3rd grade special educators and general educators;
- An aligned professional learning system from pre-service training at universities- through licensure- to the ongoing professional development opportunities;

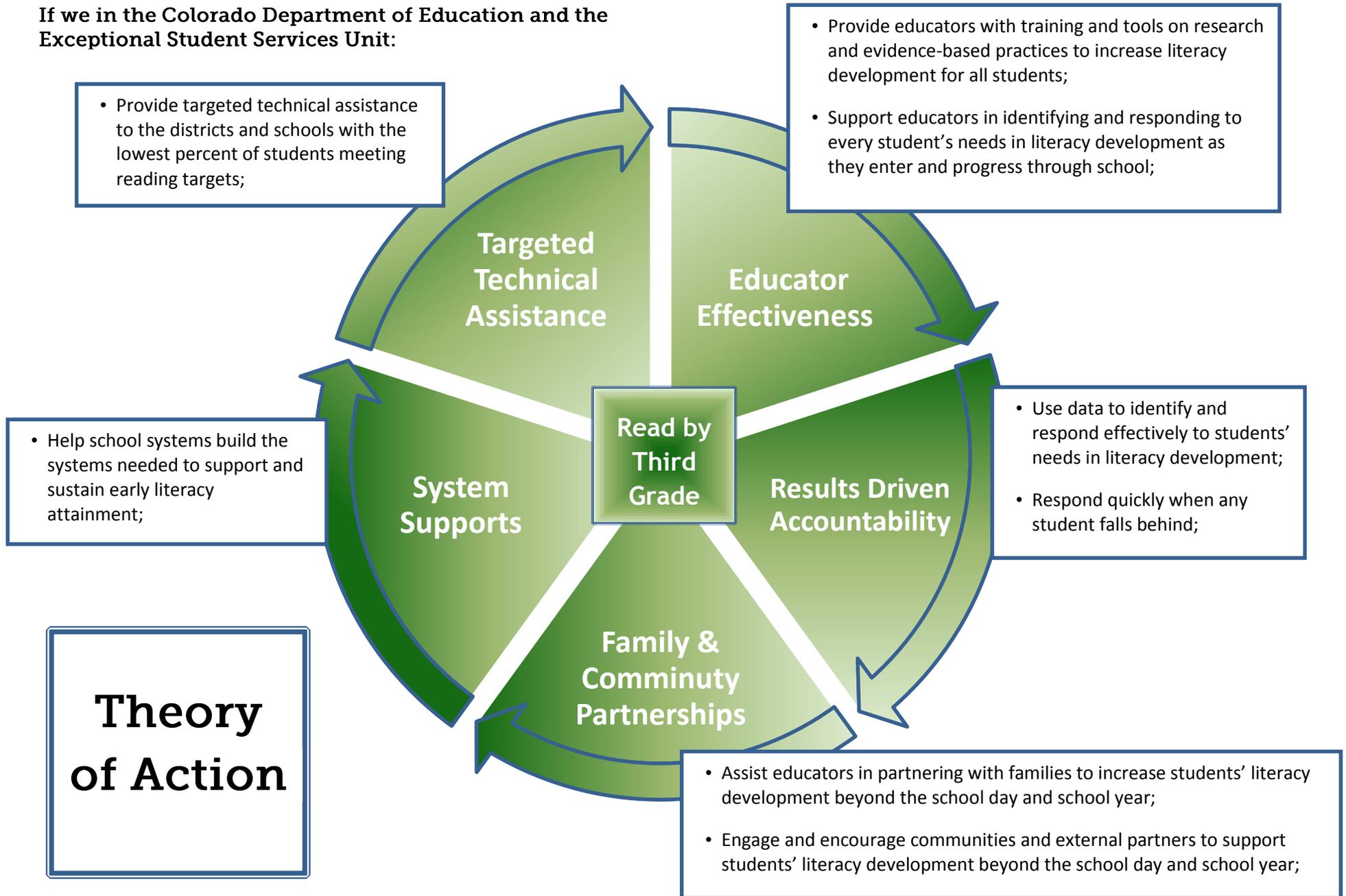


that are intentionally aligned to the

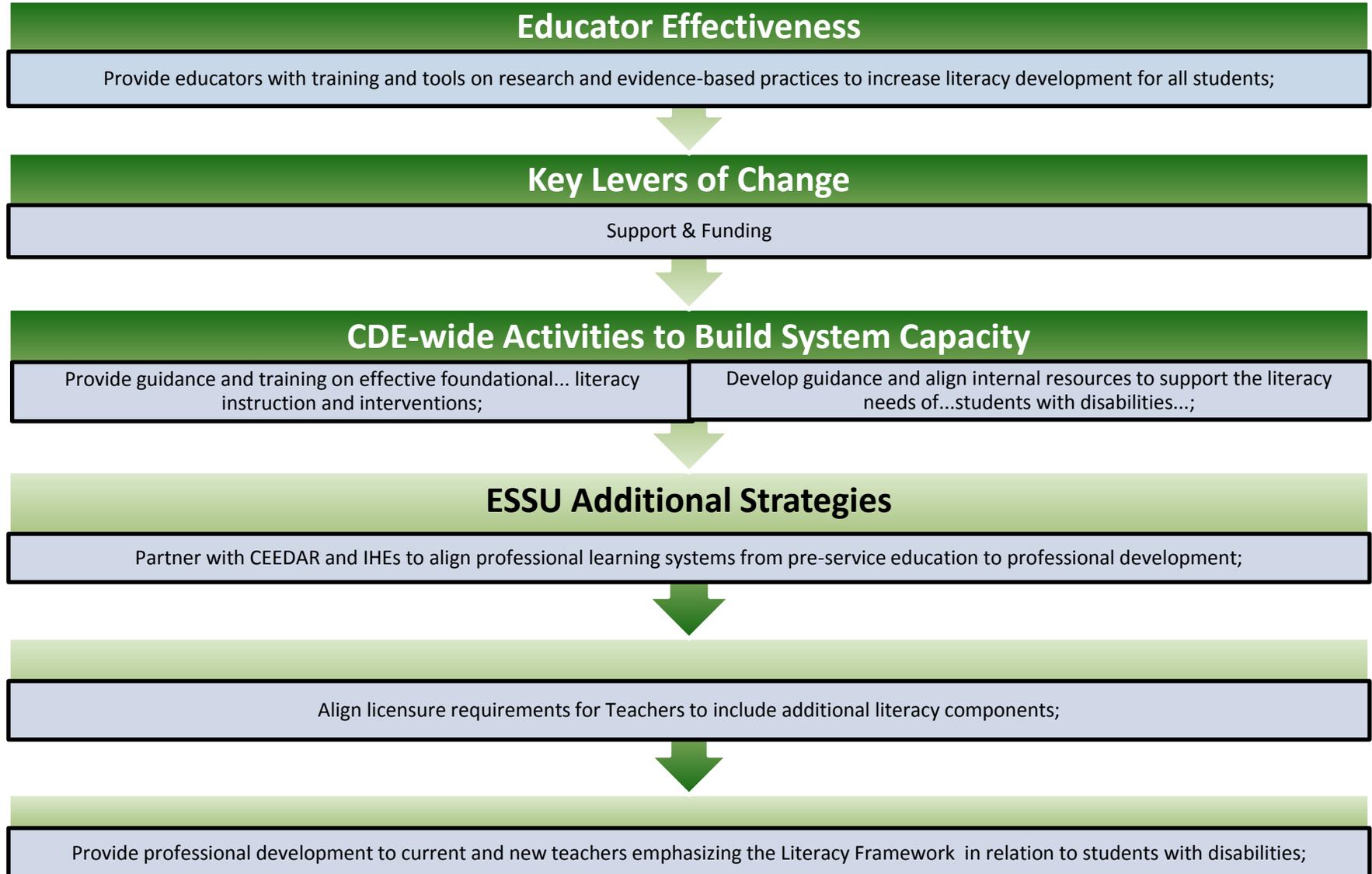
- *Colorado Standards and Indicators for Continuous*
 - Standard 1: Standards and Instructional Planning
 - Standard 2: Best First Instruction
 - Standard 3: Assessment of & for Learning
 - Standard 4: Tiered Support
 - Standard 5: Leadership
 - Standard 7: Educator Effectiveness
 - Standard 8: Continuous Improvement
- *Colorado Literacy Framework*
 - "All families and caregivers have access to literacy support for young children. Supporting early literacy prevents gaps later;
 - The literacy achievement gap is eliminated;
 - All Colorado students have the literacy and language skills to meet the growing demands of knowledge based global society. All students must be sophisticated in their use of language and literacy skills to be productive and contributing members of the 21st century";
- *Colorado Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines*
 - "Improve families' and professionals' knowledge of child development;
 - Guide families and professionals working with children in planning and implementing developmental and learning activities;
 - Inform or guide developmental support, instruction, assessment, and intervention; and
 - Provide unifying guidelines that are embraced by and embedded in programs and service delivery system;"

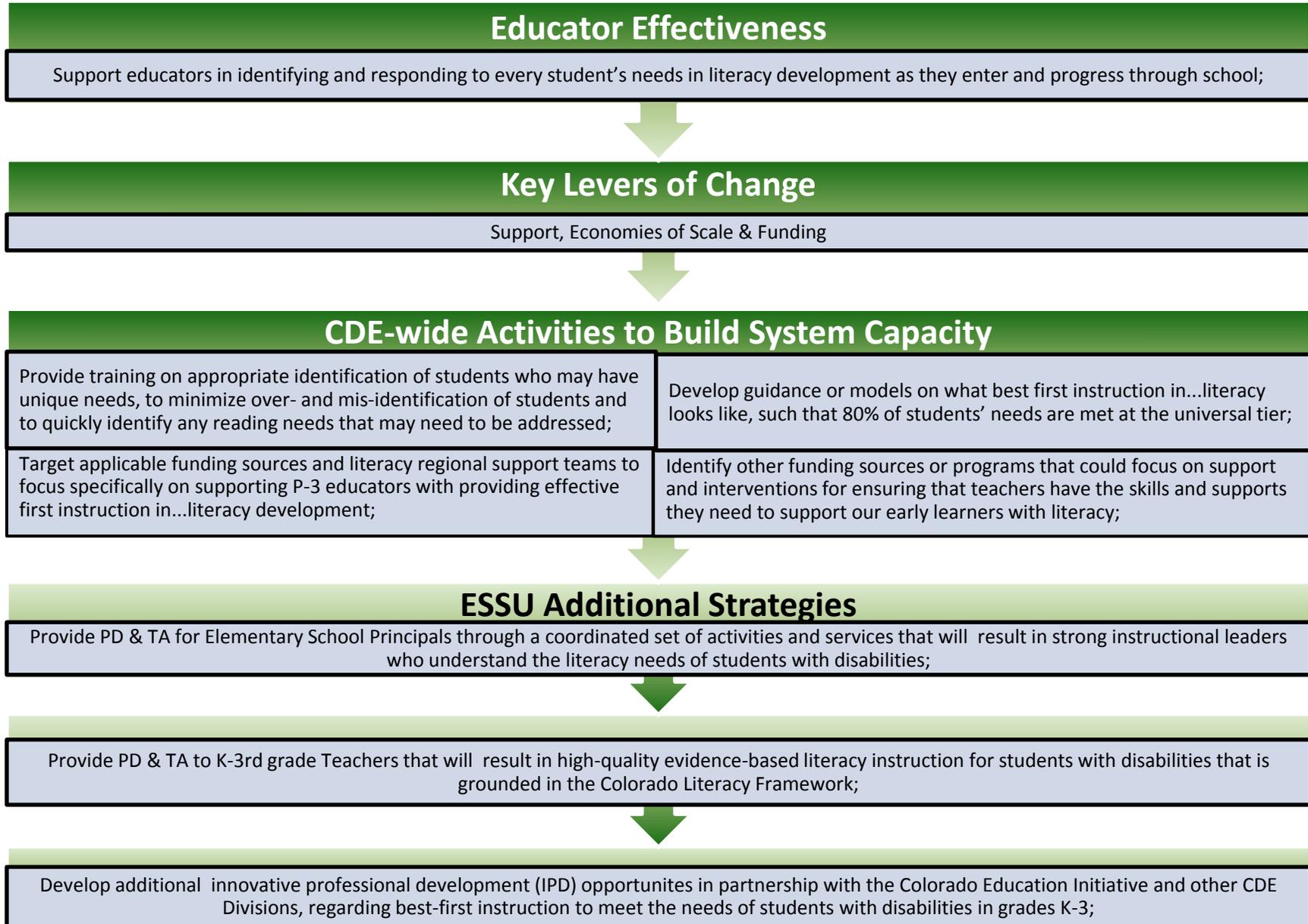
then students with disabilities will demonstrate improved reading proficiency by third grade.

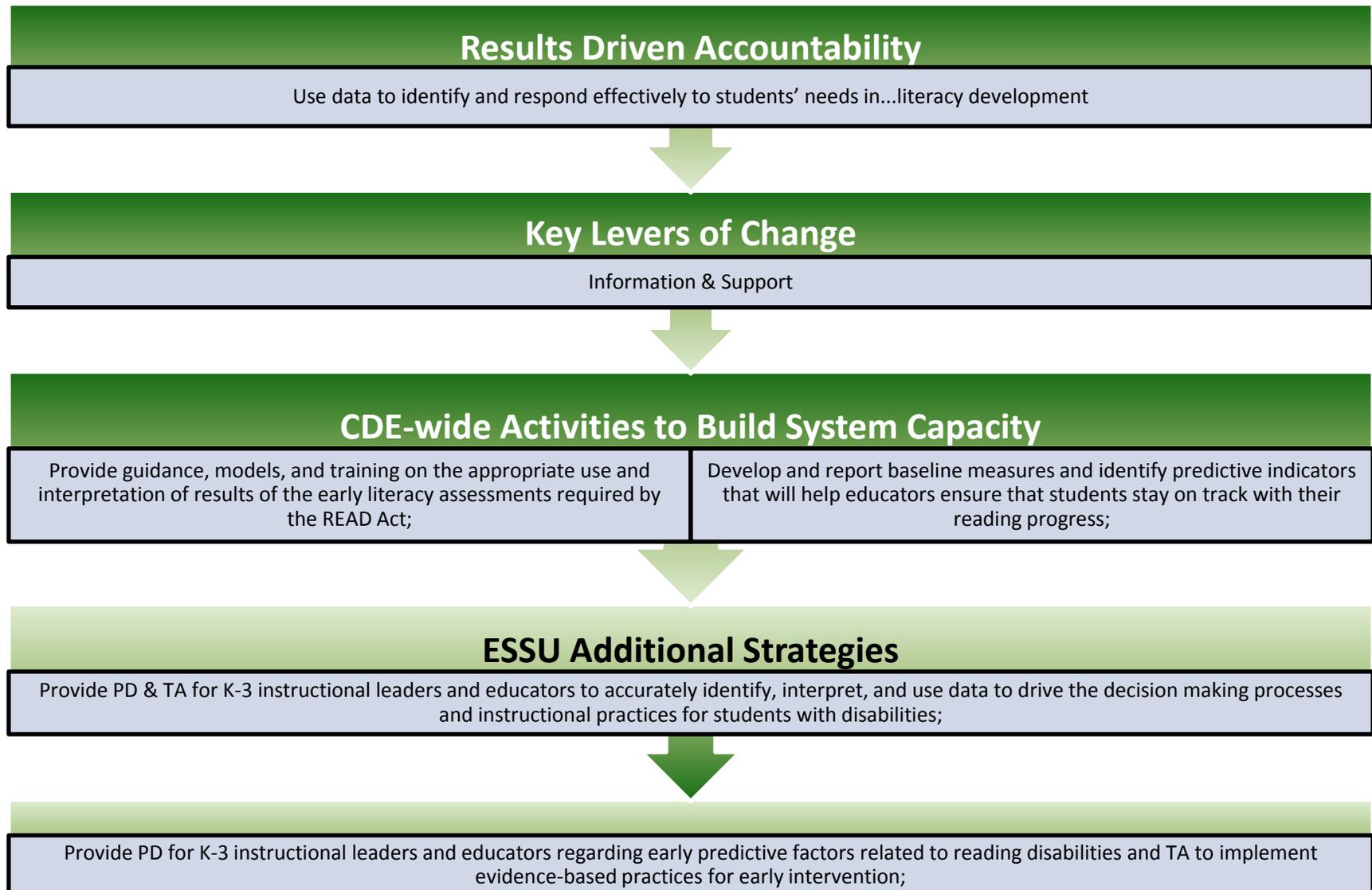
If we in the Colorado Department of Education and the Exceptional Student Services Unit:

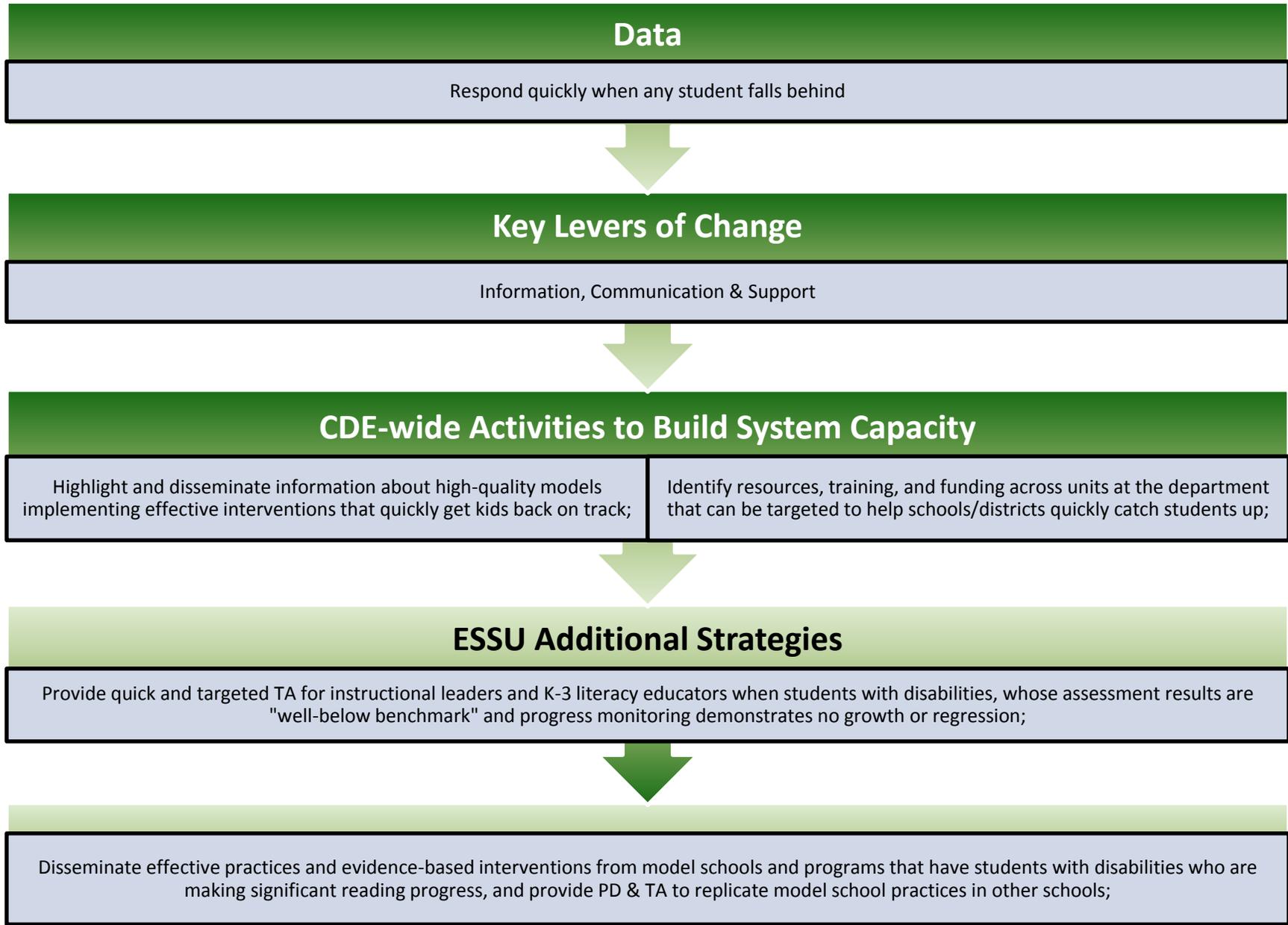


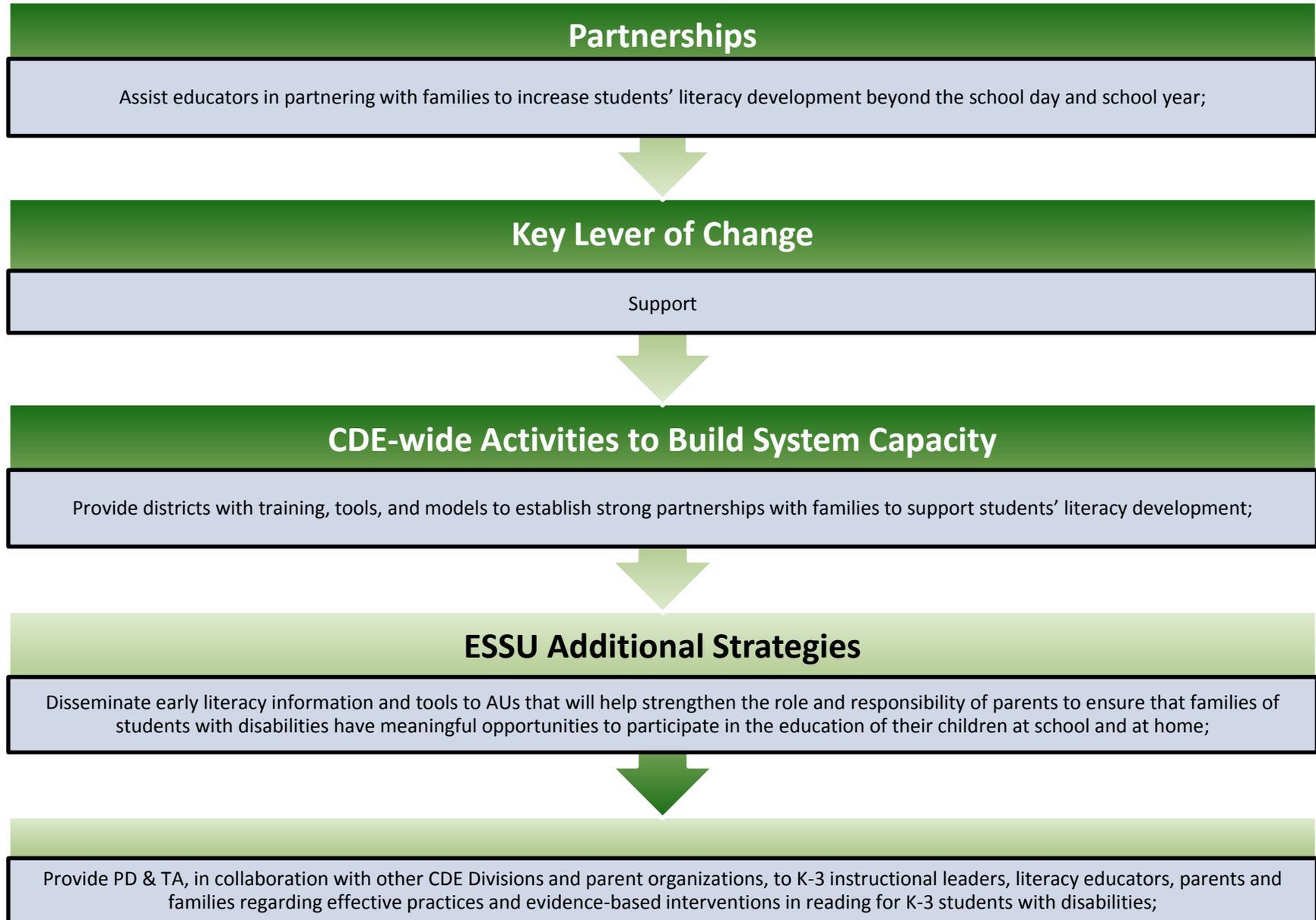
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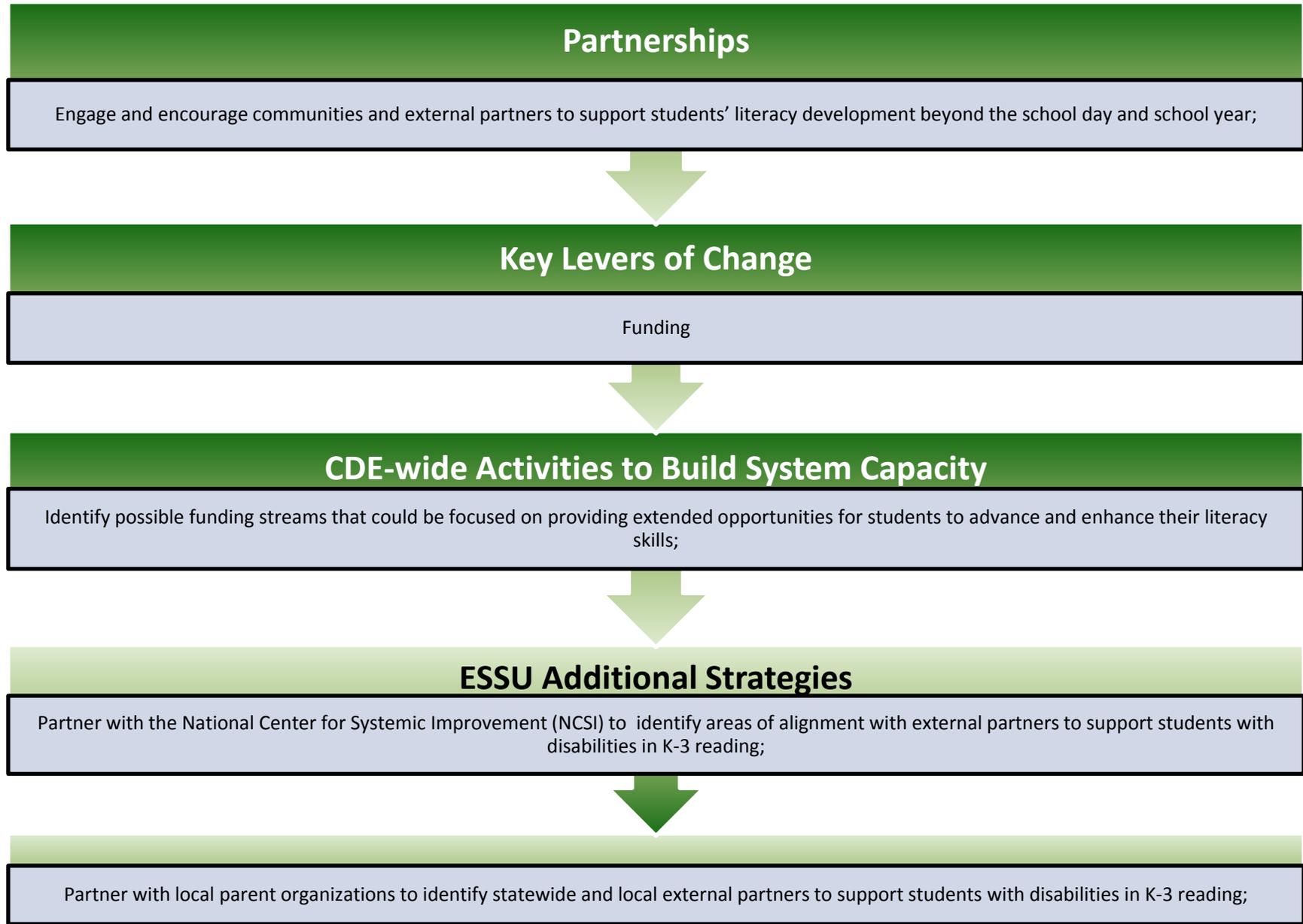












System Supports

Help school systems build the systems needed to support and sustain early literacy attainment;

Key Levers of Change

Support

CDE-wide Activities to Build System Capacity

Work with schools/districts to build the needed system-wide supports for literacy opportunities for students to advance and enhance their literacy skills;

Assist schools/districts with data analysis and embedding literacy strategies into their unified improvement plans, as appropriate;

ESSU Additional Strategies

Provide PD & TA, in collaboration with the Office of School Readiness, the Office of Learning Supports, the Unified Improvement Office, and the Federal Programs Unit in order to develop effective systems to identify and respond to the early literacy needs of students with disabilities;

Provide PD & TA for AUs to conduct data analyses of data available through the Data Management System in order to identify areas of need, quickly respond with an appropriate intervention, and implement the AU improvement plan;

Targeted Technical Assistance

Provide targeted technical assistance to the districts and schools with the lowest percent of students meeting reading targets;

Key Levers of Change

Information & Support

CDE-wide Activities to Build System Capacity

Identify key conditions for rapid success in lower performing districts and schools;

Support districts and schools in conducting diagnostic reviews and improvement planning to prioritize actions that quickly improve student learning;

By coordinating across the department, provide district-specific training and support to address the early literacy needs identified in the districts with the lowest reading performance;

ESSU Additional Strategies

Develop a PD & TA rubric to identify AU needs including severity of need, intensity, duration, and mode of delivery in order to provide a coordinated set of activities to address the needs of AUs with the lowest performing students with disabilities in grades K-3;

Research and disseminate evidence-based practices from the identified High-Growth, High-Achieving, and ELAT schools based upon the Colorado Standards and Indicators for Continuous Improvement.

Coordinate a network of mentors (instructional leaders and educators) who have seen significant improvement for students with disabilities in reading achievement in grades K-3.

APPENDICES



Appendix A

Acronyms

ALPs	Aligned Advanced Learning Plans
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
APR	Annual Performance Report
AU	Administrative Units
BIAC	Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado
BOCES	Boards of Cooperative Educational Services
BOY	Beginning of Year
CAP4K	Colorado’s Achievement Plan for Kids
CAS	Colorado Academic Standards
CASB	Colorado Association of School Boards
CCR	Code of Colorado Regulations
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
CDHS	Colorado Department of Human Services
CEEDAR	Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform
CSEAC	Colorado Special Education Advisory Committee
CGM	Colorado Growth Model
CoMASP	Colorado Model Autism and Significant Needs Programs
CSI	Colorado Charter School Institute
DaSy	Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems
DISH	District Dashboard (data)
DPER	Director of Data, Program Evaluation & Reporting
ECEA	State Exceptional Children’s Education Act
ELAT	Early Literacy Assessment Tool Project
ELDG	Early Learning & Development Guidelines
ELG	Early Literacy Grant
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESP	Effective School Practices
ESSU	Exceptional Student Services Unit
FAPE	Free, Appropriate Public Education
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
FAST	Field Analyst Support Team
FSCP	Family, School & Community Partnering
HRSA	Health Resource and Services Administration
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
GED	General Education Development
FSCP	Support Network of Families, Educators and Community Resources
LEA	Local Education Agency
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MPRRC	Mountain plains Regional Resource Center
MOY	Middle of Year
MTSS	Multi-Tiered System of Support
NASDSE	National Association of State Directors of Special Education



NCSI	National Center for Systemic Improvement
NIRN	National Implementation Research Network
OLS	Office of Learning Supports
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
OSEP	U.S. Department of Education – Office of Special Education Programs
PBIS	Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports
PITA	Priority Improvement or Turnaround
PTI	Colorado’s Parent Training and Information Center
RDA	Results Driven Accountability
READ Act	Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act
RtI	Response to Intervention
SDLT	Statewide Directors Leadership Team
SED	Serious Emotional Disability
SEFAC	Colorado Special Education Fiscal Advisory Committee
SiMR	State-identified Measurable Result
SLD	Specific Learning Disabilities
SLI	Speech Language Impairment
SOP	State Operated Programs
SPDG	State Personnel Development Grant
SPP	State Performance Plan
SRD	Significant Reading Deficiency
SSIP	State Systemic Improvement Plan
SST	School Support Team
TA	Technical Assistance
TAESE	Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
TELL	Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (Colorado Survey)
UIP	Unified Improvement Plan
YBIC	Youth Brain Injury Connections



Appendix B

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Table M	Page 57	Overview of Alignment of SiMR to Leverage Points
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Appendix C

	Comparison of responses by CDE staff and non-CDE staff		All Respondents		Statistics		
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Q1: Create or develop a series of learning opportunities to provide ongoing knowledge for parents/families related to the early literacy needs of their children receiving special education services who are also identified with a significant reading deficiency. (e.g., webinars, classes, web-based materials, conferences).	Non-CDE Staff	4.09	1.22	4.11	1.01	-.07	.94
	CDE staff	4.12	.93				
Q2: Increase collaboration with Early Intervention Colorado so that parents/families who are on an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) acquire an early understanding of school age literacy requirements and the developmental stages of children receiving special education services.	Non-CDE Staff	4.73	1.19	4.42	1.00	1.12	.28
	CDE staff	4.28	.89				
Q3: Develop an online professional development library for parents/families, administrators, and educators.	Non-CDE Staff	3.55	1.44	3.89	1.12	-1.05	.31
	CDE staff	4.04	.93				
Q4: Provide training related to literacy instruction for combined teams of preschool through 3rd grade special educators and general educators (e.g., early identification, data analysis that informs instruction, best first instruction principles, and disability specific best practices).	Non-CDE Staff	5.18	.75	5.14	.72	.23	.82
	CDE staff	5.12	.73				
Q5: Develop coaching / mentoring programs for preschool through 3rd grade special educators with a strong emphasis on follow-up and feedback to inform literacy instruction.	Non-CDE Staff	5.00	.89	5.19	.79	-.91	.38
	CDE staff	5.28	.74				

Q6: Establish an online Community of Practice for preschool through 3rd grade educators and specialists to foster collaborative peer relationships and develop knowledge focused on meeting the literacy needs of students receiving special education services.	Non-CDE Staff	3.91	1.38	4.06	1.07	-.46	.65
	CDE staff	4.12	.93				
Q7: Support the development of interpersonal awareness, cultural knowledge, and skill mastery that promotes effective cross cultural teaching of students receiving special education services.	Non-CDE Staff	3.36	.81	3.89	1.09	-2.27	.03
	CDE staff	4.12	1.13				
Q8: Create an aligned professional learning system* that will provide opportunities for educators (e.g., administrators, teachers, related service providers, speech language pathologists) to master core and specialized instruction in inclusive settings (*from pre-service training at universities- through licensure- to the ongoing professional development opportunities).	Non-CDE Staff	5.27	.90	4.92	.84	1.63	.12
	CDE staff	4.76	.78				
Q9: Implement a consistent regional structure for the provision of professional development and technical assistance.	Non-CDE Staff	4.55	1.37	4.61	.93	-.22	.83
	CDE staff	4.64	.70				
Q10: Focus on the improved outcomes of students who are receiving special education services by continuing the work initiated by the Re-Inventing Special Education Committee, whose primary task was to re-vision special education by considering and proposing ways to look beyond compliance indicators toward a new emphasis on results indicators.	Non-CDE Staff	3.64	.92	3.53	1.13	.42	.68
	CDE staff	3.48	1.23				
Q11: Convene an interagency, interdepartmental, and stakeholder preschool through 3rd grade Literacy Advisory Committee.	Non-CDE Staff	3.18	1.33	3.22	1.31	-.12	.90
	CDE staff	3.24	1.33				



Q12: Align guidance related to ECEA, ESSU, the READ Act, Early Childhood Literacy Guidelines, School Readiness Guidelines, and K3 Literacy Standards.

Non-CDE Staff	4.64	1.03					
			4.47	.91	.67	.51	
CDE staff	4.40	.87					

Appendix D

Sample of the Colorado SSIP Improvement Strategy Selection Survey that was conducted via SurveyMonkey.com and was available for input 3/4/15 through 3/15/15

1. Please select your primary role.
 - a. Administrative Unit Special Education Director
 - b. CDE Staff Member
 - c. Parent / Family member of a child with an Individualized Education Plan
 - d. Parent / Family member of a child with a Significant Reading Deficiency
 - e. Member of a Parent Advisory Group
 - f. Higher Education Faculty Member
 - g. School Level Administrator
 - h. Teacher
 - i. Related Service Provider
 - j. Other [please indicate]

Please indicate the extent to which you believe the successful completion of the strategy discussed in each survey item would move the State closer to its SiMR, significantly improved PreK-3 reading proficiency.

2. Create or develop a series of learning opportunities to provide ongoing knowledge for parents/families related to the early literacy needs of their children receiving special education services who are also identified with a significant reading deficiency. (e.g., webinars, classes, web-based materials, conferences)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

3. Increase collaboration with Early Intervention Colorado so that parents/families who are on an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) acquire an early understanding of school age literacy requirements and the developmental stages of children receiving special education services.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

4. Develop an online professional development library for parents/families, administrators, and educators.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

5. Provide training related to literacy instruction for combined teams of preschool through 3rd grade special educators and general educators (e.g., early identification, data analysis that informs instruction, best first instruction principles, and disability specific best practices).

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

6. Develop coaching / mentoring programs for preschool through 3rd grade special educators with a strong emphasis on follow-up and feedback to inform literacy instruction.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

7. Establish an online Community of Practice for preschool through 3rd grade educators and specialists to foster collaborative peer relationships and develop knowledge focused on meeting the literacy needs of students receiving special education services.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

8. Support the development of interpersonal awareness, cultural knowledge, and skill mastery that promotes effective cross cultural teaching of students receiving special education services.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

9. Create an aligned professional learning system* that will provide opportunities for educators (e.g., administrators, teachers, related service providers, speech language pathologists) to master core and specialized instruction in inclusive settings (*from pre-service training at universities- through licensure- to the ongoing professional development opportunities).

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

10. Implement a consistent regional structure for the provision of professional development and technical assistance.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

11. Focus on the improved outcomes of students who are receiving special education services by continuing the work initiated by the Re-Inventing Special Education Committee, whose primary task was to re-vision special education by considering and proposing ways to look beyond compliance indicators toward a new emphasis on results indicators.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

12. Convene an interagency, interdepartmental, and stakeholder preschool through 3rd grade Literacy Advisory Committee.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

13. Align guidance related to ECEA, ESSU, the READ Act, Early Childhood Literacy Guidelines, School Readiness Guidelines, and K3 Literacy Standards.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Low Impact	Low Impact	Not Much Impact	Some Impact	High Impact	Very High Impact

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