

**Delaware Department of Education (DDOE)**  
**Exceptional Children Resources (ECR) Work Group**

**FFY 2013 Part B State Performance Plan (SPP)/ Annual  
Performance Report (APR)**

**Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan**

*Monitoring Priority: General Supervision*

**Results indicator:** Delaware's SPP/APR includes a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) that meets the requirements set forth for this indicator.

**Submitted: April 1, 2015**

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## Acronym List

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611	IDEA Part B-Section 611-Age 3 to 21 Students with Disabilities
618	IDEA Part B-Section 618-required IDEA data reporting
619	IDEA Part B-Section 619-Preschool Aged Students with Disabilities
AA	African-American
ACCESS	Adapting Curriculum and Classroom Environments for Student Success
AIM	Accessible Instructional Materials
APR	Annual Performance Report
AT	Assistive Technology
CCR	College and Career Ready
CCSS	Common Core State Standards
CEIS	Coordinated Early Intervening Services
D.C.	District of Columbia
DATI	Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative
DCAS	Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System
DCAS Alt 1	Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System- Alternative
DDOE	Delaware Department of Education
DE	Delaware
DeSSA	Delaware System of Student Assessments
DOE	Department of Education
DPAS	Delaware Performance Appraisal System
DSCS	Delaware School Climate Survey
ECR	Exceptional Children Resources
ELL	English Language Learners
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
GACEC	Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
GRADS 360	OSEP's online submission tool for the SPP/APR/SSIP
HQ	Highly Qualified
IDC	IDEA Data Center
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Program
K	Kindergarten
LEA	Local Education Agency
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
MSRRC	Mid-South Regional Resource Center
NCSI	National Center for Systemic Improvement
OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs (Federal)
Part B	Part B of the IDEA
Part C	Part C of the IDEA
PBS	Positive Behavior Support
PD	Professional Development
PIC	Parent Information Center of Delaware

PL	Performance Level
Pre-K	Preschool aged children, 3-5 years of age
PSB	Delaware Professional Standards Board
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTI	Parent and Training Information Center
RRCF	Regional Resource Center Program
RtI	Response to Intervention
SBAC	Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium
SEA	State Education Agency
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SIM	Strategic Instructional Model
SiMR	State Identified Measurable Result
SPDG	State Personnel Development Grant
SPP	State Performance Plan
SSIP	State Systemic Improvement Plan
SWD	Students with Disabilities
SY	School Year
TA	Technical Assistance
WRITES	Writing Rigorous IEPs to Teach Educational Standards

## Introduction

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The Delaware Department of Education’s (DDOE) process for the development of Phase I of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) is broadly depicted in Figure 1 below. Figure 1 describes the exploration process used to identify the need for change, learn about possible initiatives that may provide solutions, understand what it takes to implement the initiatives effectively, develop stakeholders and champions, assess and create readiness for change and decide how to proceed. The SSIP is in response to and meets the requirements set forth in Indicator #17 of the State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR).

This process described in Figure 1 was used by the DDOE, the Exceptional Children Resources (ECR) SSIP Work Group, (the unit of the DDOE responsible for the oversight of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and facilitation of the SSIP), and the SSIP Work Group.

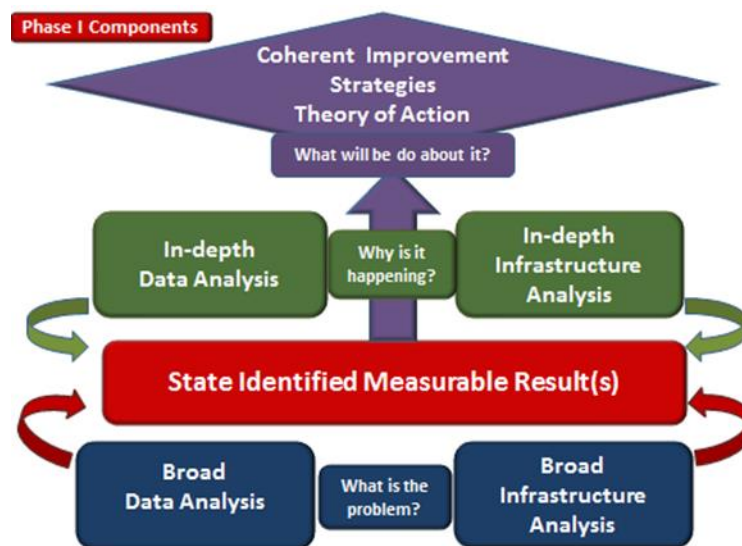


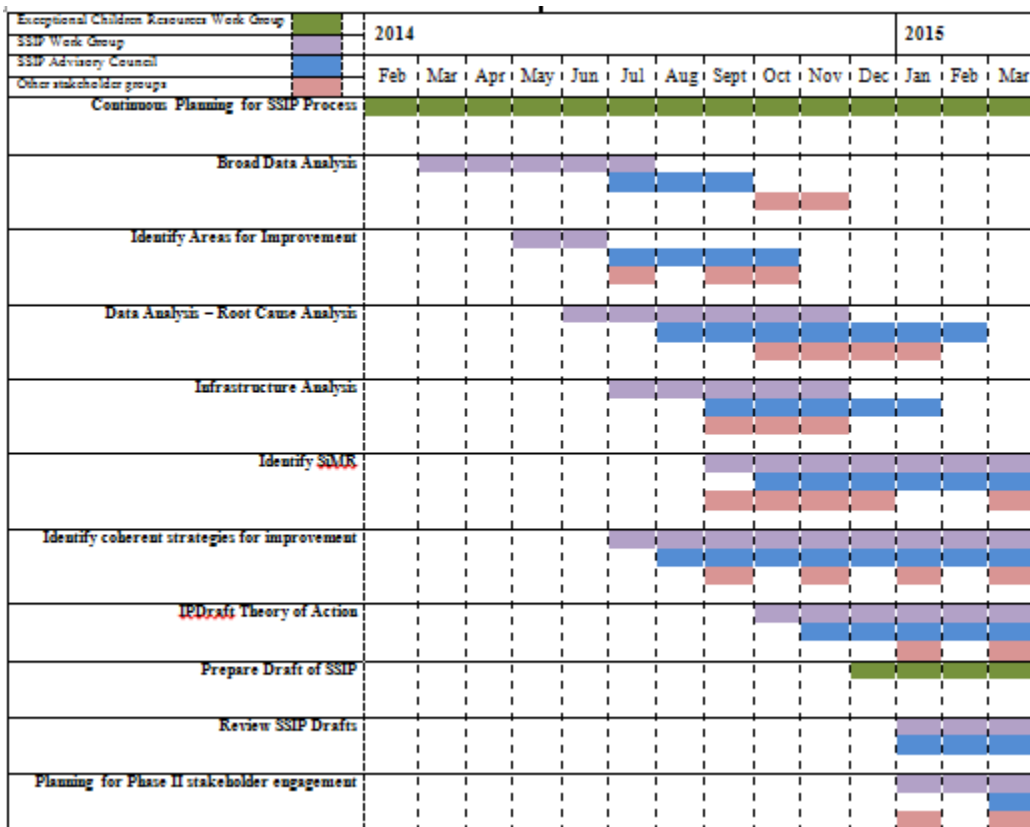
Figure 1: Phase I Process of the SSIP

The voice of Delaware (DE) citizens is strongly recognized in the policies and practices of the DDOE. Therefore, in keeping with this culture and in recognizing the contributions that interested citizens bring to the DDOE work, it is was important to provide all existing special education stakeholder committees with an opportunity for participation. All stakeholder groups were invited to send 2 representatives. This helped to keep all committees abreast of the SSIP work and provide a vehicle for each committee to inform the results. Also, these individuals have longstanding interest in special education success in the state, understand how DDOE operates and the initiatives they are providing to LEAs, and they bring a wealth of history and additional expertise to the discussions based on their personal experiences. In order to help sustain changes resulting from this work, staff and representatives that linked to the Governor’s office and the legislative branch of government were invited to participate. LEA special education administrators were selected to assure regional representation from each of the three counties in the state, and the public schools including charters, that are representative of rural, suburban and urban communities. This county-balanced representation was important given the

demographic differences across the three counties that create unique student and school strengths and needs. DDOE asked those LEA directors to identify parents of SWD to participate in order to reach parents from these diverse communities, and to strengthen LEA/parent partnerships. Practitioners that provided services to SWD and that understood the instructional process and Response to Intervention efforts at an LEA level were included. These stakeholders were essential to include as they bring a data analysis skill set to the work and a knowledge-base at the level of practice. Once these initial parameters were established, the DDOE examined the committee's make-up and added members as appropriate to assure several other parameters: 1) representatives from all of the stakeholder groups suggested by OSEP; 2) school professionals of various racial/ethnic groups representative of the students' race/ethnicity in DE; 3) school personnel that serve English language learners; and 4) representatives of early childhood services.

Below, Chart 1 details the timelines and engagement of stakeholders and the DDOE in the development of the components of SSIP-Phase I as further delineated throughout the following document.

Chart 1: Phase I-Stakeholder Engagement



This document is sequenced to align with the GRADS 360 template, and formatted to align with the Office of Special Education's (OSEP) SSIP Evaluation Tool.



## Baseline and Targets

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### Baseline Data

Baseline and targets represent percent of students with disabilities (SWD) in grade 3 who participated in the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) and Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System – Alternative Assessment (DCAS-Alt 1) state assessment and who scored below proficiency in reading (Performance Levels 1 and 2). The recommended targets anticipate a decrease over six years in the percentage of students that score below proficiency.

<b>FFY</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Data</b>	66.3%

### FFY 2014 – FFY 2018 Targets

<b>FFY</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
	66.3%	64.3%	61.3%	56.3%	49.0%

### Description of Measure

The DDOE has identified the following State-identified Measureable Result (SiMR) which is aligned to the State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR) Indicator #3C: Proficiency rate for students with IEPs, against grade level and alternate academic achievement standards.

**Increase the literacy proficiency of students with disabilities in K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade as measured by a decrease in the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students with disabilities scoring below proficiency on Delaware’s statewide assessment.**

DE reports 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level proficiency targets for indicator #3C of the SPP/APR as measured by the DCAS and DCAS-Alt 1, Delaware’s alternative assessment based on alternate achievement standards. As noted in the FFY 2013 SPP/APR submission, DE is currently in the process of an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) flexibility waiver renewal, and it is anticipated that 3C targets will be reset after the completion of the renewal process and an analysis of the spring 2015 state assessment data. Beginning with the spring 2015 testing cycle, a new statewide assessment is being introduced, the Delaware System of Student Assessments (DeSSA). The results from this assessment, which will be reported for FFY 2014, will not be comparable to prior years. Therefore, it is also anticipated that Indicator #17-SSIP targets and baseline will be subsequently reset as a result.

Additionally, DCAS and DCAS-Alt 1 reporting for the FFY 2013 SPP/APR does not include students with speech-language impairments in the disability results. Instead these students’ results are included in the general education population. Therefore, in order to maintain consistency of reporting, for FFY 2013 Indicator #17 (SSIP) baseline and projected targets, students with speech-language impairments are not included. This population of students will be included in the FFY 2014 reporting of Indicator 3, as well as in the resetting of FFY 2014 Indicator #17 (SSIP) baseline and projected targets as indicated above.

The DDOE has four levels of performance with performance: Performance Levels 1 and 2 indicate below proficiency. Performance Level 3 indicates proficient and performance Level 4 indicates above proficient. The SiMR is intended to decrease the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade SWD at performance levels 1 and 2 on the statewide reading assessment and alternative assessment on an annual basis. There are approximately 1200 SWD that are assessed annually in reading at grade 3.

### **Targets: Stakeholder Input**

In setting the baseline and measurable targets, the DDOE held conversations with the stakeholder committee (i.e., SSIP Advisory Council), to discuss: 1) which students to include in the target data; 2) how to address change in statewide assessments occurring for FFY 2014 data; 3) which measures to use in establishing the target data; and 4) the rigor for change anticipated over the 5 year period. The following points were raised during these discussions:

1. For the past three years, the percentage of students at performance level 1 has been increasing. Therefore, this trend needs to be reversed before decreases are noted.
2. Third grade had the greatest percentage of students performing below proficiency compared with other elementary grades in 2013 – 2014.
3. The SSIP Advisory Council questioned a 10% change in one year as substantial and wondered if the state had ever made such an impact in the past to expect such a rigorous change.
4. The FFY 2014 data cannot be impacted by any events associated with the SSIP work as these results will be taken from spring 2015 testing which will occur only weeks after submission of the SSIP. Therefore, FFY 2014 data will probably reflect little change.
5. The implementation strategies with Local Education Agencies (LEA) will not be in place until the 2015-16 school year, suggesting that the FFY 2015 data may demonstrate minimal impact on performance. Therefore, a minimal change was anticipated for FFY 2015 with greater impact anticipated beginning in FFY 2016 and beyond.
6. The FFY 2014 results will reflect a new assessment and cannot be easily compared to the FFY 2013 baseline. Baseline and targets will need to be reset in the FFY 2014 submission.
7. An examination of national pilot data suggested that approximately 60% of SWD will be scoring at performance level 1, rather than the state's current 39.4% baseline. Thus a FFY 2018 target of 49% for combined performance levels 1 and 2 is substantial, which most likely will need to be revisited once the FFY 2014 data is available.
8. Results for students identified with a speech-language impairment have been reported with the general population through the FFY 2013 data. The SSIP Advisory Council was supportive of including these students in the disability reporting figures beginning in FFY 2014.
9. The SSIP Advisory Council was interested in all SWD being accounted for in this indicator, not just those taking the DCAS.

The majority of the SSIP Advisory Council was supportive of decreasing the percent of students at performance level 1 on state assessments as the particular measurement, baseline and target of the SiMR. There were mixed opinions as to whether other performance levels should be considered. During these conversations, the DDOE voiced a desire to decrease the below proficiency levels (Performance Levels 1 and 2) while increasing the proficient levels (Performance Levels 3 and 4). The DDOE, taking this into consideration, recognized that Indicator 3C was still being addressed by the state and wanted to impact all students that are not proficient. The resulting decision was based on the above points that were raised during the

discussion with the SSIP Advisory Council and through further discussions within the DDOE. Therefore, a focus for Indicator 17 on decreasing students scoring below proficiency made for a strong compliment to Indicator 3C of increasing reading proficiency levels.

## Data Analysis (Evaluation Tool- Component 1)

### a. Identification and Analysis of Key Data

The state engaged in a systemic process within and across state and local agencies, (i.e., public, non-profit and private) to identify, select, and analyze existing quantitative and qualitative data, to determine the State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) and root causes contributing to low reading performance for SWD in Delaware. This process explored student demographic and outcome data, and the infrastructures and services of these organizations, while involving the voices and thinking of their staff and other Delaware (DE) citizens that have a stake in successful literacy outcomes for SWD. The general process is represented in Figure 1 below.

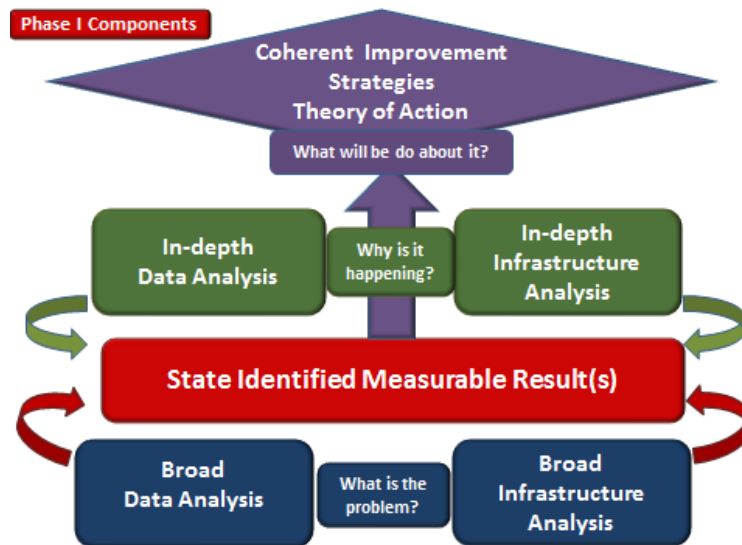


Figure 1: Phase I Process of the SSIP

The DDOE engaged in an iterative process during the broad and in-depth data analysis processes to hone in on an area of focus for needed improvement that ultimately resulted in a SiMR. Figure 1 depicts the interaction of the broad and in-depth data analysis as represented in the two *Data Analysis* boxes on the left hand side of the figure to arrive at a SiMR. The broad analysis assisted in identifying the problem area with the in-depth analysis assisting to narrow the focus of the problem in order to identify a manageable and reasonable SiMR and to illuminate probable root causes. Chart 2 describes the pathways of thinking, decision-making, and actions of the DDOE throughout this component of Phase I of the SSIP. The following is a narrative description of this process.

## **Broad Data Analysis**

The DDOE began the SSIP Phase I planning process by bringing together a group of staff from several state agencies engaged in services and support for SWD that became known as the SSIP Work Group (refer to section 1(f) for more detail about this group). They conducted a broad data analysis using questions in a series of steps to identify a beginning focus through the selection of data sources and specific data to analyze:

### Step 1: Selecting a Focus

*What outcomes and results do we want to know more about in DE? What discussions are already occurring within DE or are we considering?*

These questions revealed several critical items that focused the next steps in what data would be selected for an initial analysis:

- Critical Item #1: The state had a DDOE implementation plan called the College and Career Ready (CCR) internal work plans that identified state goals for improvement of student results and organized the state initiatives into a framework for working with LEAs on student success.
- Critical Item #2: The Director of the Exceptional Children Resources SSIP Work Group (state director of special education) was the coordinator of the intra-departmental CCR subgroup for grades K-3 with several special education staff as members of that subgroup. The K-3 section of the CCR plan had significant focus on reading literacy.

These two critical items were identified early in the discussion and focused further discussion and data analysis towards ‘learning in the earlier years and grades’ rather than on the secondary level. Additionally, the group selected student achievement rather than other student outcomes such as drop-out rates, graduation rates, or post-school outcomes as those were more secondary focused.

- Critical Item #3: In addition to all of the IDEA 611 staff in the SSIP Work Group, there were several early childhood staff members from Part C and 619, as well as the state English Language Learners (ELL) director.
- Critical Item #4: While individual members of the SSIP Work Group had information specific to their own area of state agency focus, additional information was needed relating to the achievement levels of school-aged, preschool, and ELL SWD in addition to how these children compared to non-disabled students in areas assessed by the state.

Due to the breadth of individual staff’s knowledge about student performance across various groups of SWD (early childhood, ELL, school-aged students), yet a lack of shared understanding of this information among other state agencies’ staff, the group made two decisions: 1) to narrow the focus from all academic areas to one that would allow for greater ease in identifying and reviewing the volume of data available for analysis; and 2) to identify a focus that would easily transcend the greatest cross-section of most student sub-groups represented on the SSIP Work Group (i.e., ELL, school-aged SWD and preschool SWD).

As a result, the SSIP Work Group agreed to begin by looking at reading rather than all tested subject areas specifically because: 1) reading is a critical subject for student success in all other academic areas, 2) it is a crucial skill set for ELL students’ success in schools, 3) it translated sufficiently to Indicator 7- Early Childhood Outcome #2-Knowledge and Skills; and 4) the ECR’s director and SSIP Work Group are currently engaged in implementing literacy-focused strategies as outlined with the DDOE’s internal CCR work plan.

## Step 2: Identification of Data Elements and Sources

*What more do you want to know about the reading performance of SWD? What data would be helpful in understanding the literacy achievement of SWD? What data sources can provide these data?*

Following the initial discussion in Step 1, the group then responded to these discussion starters that ultimately revealed several critical areas for further exploration: comparing the literacy achievement of SWD to their nondisabled peers and exploring their achievement by race/ethnicity, SES, and ELL sub-groups. There was also an interest in how the knowledge and skills of preschool SWD compared across LEAs with the nation. Additionally, these discussions led to further questions that allowed for more efficient identification of data sources and elements for the broad data analysis.

1. How do students with and without disabilities compare in reading performance within the state and across LEAs?
2. What is the reading performance of SWD by racial/ethnic sub-groups?
3. What is the reading performance of SWD by placement (least restrictive environment [LRE])?
4. How do 3-5 year old children with disabilities in DE compare to children with disabilities nationally on Early Childhood outcome #2 (knowledge and skills)?
5. How do ELL students with and without disabilities compare in the school age population in DE?

The SSIP Work Group identified state, LEA and student level assessment and demographic data from the state's longitudinal database to respond to these questions. This same data is used for all federal reporting on assessments and for submission of the IDEA APR. Data quality is discussed in section 1.c. Data Quality Concerns.

## Step 3: Evidence, Inferences, Further Needs

Once these data were provided, the SSIP Work Group used the *Data Analysis and Infrastructure Chart* tool for discussions in small groups to articulate the evidence-facts, inferences-interpretations and further needs-questions that arose from the data analysis.

As a result of this analysis, evidence of low performance of SWD across grade levels (i.e., 3, 4, 6 and 8) as compared to general education students was revealed. This trend held for SWD in more restrictive placements and for students that were Black or Hispanic. Additionally, ELL students performed lower than non-ELL students.

Subsequently, this initial work was shared with the SSIP Advisory Council. The SSIP Advisory Council was informed of how the SSIP Work Group had arrived at the decision to focus the SSIP generally on reading achievement for SWD. While the SSIP Advisory Group was informed of this starting point, the DDOE was expecting recommendations from the SSIP Advisory Group for one or more areas of specific focus that the State could consider for the SiMR. The DDOE provided the SSIP Advisory Group with an initial set of data drawn from Indicator #3 (reading achievement grades 3, 5, 8, 10 broken down to a student level along with additional factors from the longitudinal data base); Indicator #5 (LRE) and more specific state placement levels; Indicator #7 (preschool outcomes); Indicator #10 (disproportionate representation by placement); ELL data from the longitudinal data base; and knowledge and skills data of preschool-aged SWD. These data allowed the group to orient to the topic and advise the DDOE in proceeding with a more in-depth examination of data.

The SSIP Advisory Group's data analysis was facilitated similarly to the process conducted by the SSIP Work Group described above. The Council worked in small groups, comprised of mixed roles and agency representation, and responded to the same evidence,

inference and further needs questions for each of the data charts they reviewed. As a result, further questions were asked which lead to a more in-depth data analysis.

During this analysis, the SSIP Work Group identified the following concerning the reading achievement of SWD on the DCAS (DCAS Alt-1 students were not included in this analysis):

- Statewide reading performance data indicated that over a three year period, 74-85% of SWD performed below proficiency (performance levels 1 and 2), with 50-60% scoring at performance level 1.
- Caucasian SWD outperformed Black/African American (AA) and Hispanic students at every grade.
- There were notable performance gains for these latter two race/ethnicity groups of students between 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Most ELL students scored at performance level 1 in all grades.
- SWD of low SES had lower performance level scores than students of higher SES.
- Forty percent (40%) of SWD in the LRE placement A (i.e.,  $\geq$  80% time in general education setting) performed at or above proficiency.
- Eighty-four percent (84%) of students in LRE placement D (i.e., separate schools) performed below proficiency.
- Approximately 80% of 5 year olds receiving existing preschool services demonstrated progress in their knowledge and skills.

### **In-depth Data Analysis**

As a result of an initial review of more general data (as described above), the SSIP Advisory Group identified additional data elements and comparisons of the prior data elements for further analysis to more explicitly define the problem of reading achievement: 1) SES by race/ethnicity, 2) regular education students by SES, 3) cohort of SWD across three years; 4) regular education comparison for all charts; 5) SES by LRE placement and race/ethnicity; 6) regular education to SWD by race/ethnicity.

Following the data reviewed at this stage, the SSIP Advisory Council began to articulate plausible explanations for the trends that were seen in the data. Initial explanations included:

- Accommodations in classrooms may not match those on state assessments thus depressing the scores.
- District decisions on students' LRE vary making data comparability an issue.
- Instructional rigor and highly qualified teachers in placements A and B may improve performance.
- There may be lower expectations in more restrictive placements.
- Instruction provided may not match student need.
- Language acquisition may be influencing student achievement in Hispanic students.
- Phonological awareness prior to phonics instruction may not be occurring for ELL and young children.
- Young child data may be influenced by length of time receiving preschool special education services.

These initial inferences from the broad and in-depth data analyses began to inform the DDOE of potential root causes of the emerging reading achievement problem and informed the DDOE's selection of the next set of quantitative data charts for more in-depth analysis. (For further detail on the identification of root causes, refer to section 4. Coherent Improvement Strategies-Table 3: Issues Defining Root Causes.)

#### Step 4: Understanding the Problem and Narrowing the Focus

The Advisory Group members engaged in a data carousel process (Vulcan Productions, 2010), working within small mixed role groups to examine data charts and provide categories of comments (i.e., evidence, inference, and further needs) similarly to the previous data analysis session. Over 24 different charts were provided within the parameters of their requests from the prior meeting, with guided questions to assist the groups' analysis (e.g., "Within race/ethnicity across the grades, what is the influence of SES?"). The analysis at this stage revealed that the highest risk factors for low reading performance appeared to be SES and race/ethnicity (i.e., AA specifically), in that order. Proficiency of SWD decreased from year to year independent of SES and race/ethnicity (i.e., AA). The greatest decreases in proficiency occurred between grades 5-8, with AA students having the greatest declines across these grades, while Hispanic students gained, although with smaller gains by grade 8. Those SWD in placements A and B (i.e.,  $\geq 40\%$  time in a general education classroom) were more proficient in reading than SWD in placement C (i.e.,  $<40\%$  time in a general education classroom), although students with mild intellectual disabilities and with other health impairment are more proficient in setting C than A. Additionally, 66% of students with learning disabilities performed below proficient in grade 3. Over 70% of SWD in a three year matched cohort from grade 3-5 began at performance level 1 in grade 3 which reduced to 60% of SWD in the matched cohort at performance level 1 by grade 5. Grade 3 general education and special education students of all race/ethnicity groups that are below proficient in reading are both high (i.e., 32-60% and 75-86%, respectively).

The Advisory Group then made observations (see above initial explanations for causes of low achievement) and recommendations to the DDOE regarding a potential SiMR. Essentially, the group concluded that underperformance was occurring in K-3 and middle school, and decreases in performance were notable in transitions from grades 3-4 and 5-6. In light of this data, the SSIP Advisory Council recommended, based on members' knowledge of literacy development and their experiences in schools and early childhood settings, a need to emphasize phonological awareness before grade 3, match interventions to student needs, consider the social/emotional needs of SWD as it impacts reading performance, address cultural competence among educators and language acquisition of ELL students.

#### **Other Data Sources Used in Analysis**

##### Step 5: Iterative Discussions to Finalize a SiMR and Arrive at Targets

Over time, the SSIP Work Group began to review several qualitative data sources to assist in the data analysis process. These sources of data were incorporated into the discussions as the groups further honed in on a SiMR and targets. Several additional state staff, internal and external to the DDOE (e.g., Title I, Assessment and Office of Early Learning), were invited to participate in the appropriate conversations to share their expertise and thoughts about other sources of information that may be helpful to inform the development of a SiMR.

The DDOE identified several qualitative sources and processes to help identify an appropriate SiMR and root causes of low reading performance. Sources included: 1) an examination of existing state initiatives, 2) how data are used with LEAs for evaluation, monitoring and the provision of technical assistance (TA), 3) legislation, 4) measurement tools and processes, and 5) compliance data. Several of these data sources more fully explained in section 3.b. Infrastructure or section 1.d. Considerations of Compliance Data served as other sources for discussion in the data analysis phases of the SSIP and are noteworthy here.

#### Initiatives on Reading



A spreadsheet of all of the initiatives and the LEAs participating in these initiatives was prepared. The SSIP Work Group identified the resources and literacy-related initiatives and discussed the variance by grade level. This group concluded that an early grade literacy focus for the SiMR may be most appropriate as it would be addressing an area that is underserved while building on the strong work that had previously occurred. This would allow for a continuation of the efforts already occurring in birth to five settings, and would not be duplicating more focused work on literacy strategies available at grade 6-8 (refer to section 3. b. Review of Infrastructure-PD).

#### Processes on Data Usage

The SSIP Work Group discussed the DDOE's extensive use of data to determine monitoring priorities both with ESEA and IDEA. Also, the selection of LEAs and topics for TA are based on data received from the state longitudinal data system, and district level data. The process for the approval of fiscal expenditures for LEAs is conducted through a consolidated grant process. This offers opportunities for discussions with LEAs about links between improving reading performance and allocation of federal funds to address the areas of concern. All of the aforementioned processes were found to frequently have a focus on reading improvement.

#### Legislation

The SSIP Work Group identified two specific pieces of legislation that were driving significant focus of state resources and practices, both of which were focused on reading. Senate Bill 51 is the basis for the state's Literacy Campaign focus for all students from which the state's reading initiative, Common Ground for the Common Core was created to support LEAs literacy efforts (refer to section 3.b. Review of Infrastructure-PD for a description). The second piece of legislation, Senate Bill 229, is directed toward SWD and requires IEP teams to identify specific, evidence-based interventions within the IEP and provide extended school year services to SWD who are age seven or older and not beginning to read (not demonstrating phonological awareness and decoding skills). Regulations were recently established to this bill and went into effect within the 2014-15 school year.

#### Measurement Tools and Processes

The SSIP Work Group discussed possible formative and summative measurement tools as well as procedures to inform the specificity of the SiMR. The group discussed the size of the population to be addressed and the degree of influence a change in this population would have on Indicator #3 of the SPP/APR. Additionally, the group discussed potential measures at the preschool and elementary level regarding their availability, commitment to their use, and validity for purposes of the SiMR target and benchmarking.

The DDOE also recognized the impact that the new statewide assessments, DeSSA being implemented in spring, 2015, and the allowable accommodations and modifications will have on the resulting literacy outcome data. The resulting data will not be comparable to the prior assessment, DCAS. For example, national pilot testing of the new assessment identified the possible increase from approximately 39% to 60% of SWD in the DE Performance Level 1 category which is the lowest proficiency rating, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading assessment. The DDOE also recognizes that the identification of appropriate accommodations and modifications will influence the outcomes. Work by Jamal Abedi (Samuels, 2015), a national expert in the field of accommodations, has shown that certain accommodations (e.g., test being read aloud) can significantly boost scores without altering what the test is trying to measure).

### Compliance Data

During the later steps of the data analysis process, the SSIP Work Group examined three previous years' compliance data for Indicators 4 (suspension/expulsion), 9 and 10 (disproportionate representation resulting from inappropriate identification), 11 (evaluation timelines), and 12 (Part C to B transition). These data were examined in light of the relationship to low reading performance by grade 3 (see section 1.d. Considerations of Compliance Data for further detail).

### **Summary of Data Analysis**

The state engaged in a systemic process within and across state and local agencies, both public and private to identify, select, and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data, to determine the SiMR. The process explored student demographic and outcome data, the infrastructures and services of these organizations, legislation, aspects of measurement and compliance data. Throughout this process, the DDOE engaged in responding to questions such as: Where are there gaps? Where are the strengths? What can be leveraged? What will demonstrate growth? What is feasible/doable? What do stakeholders believe and what will they commit to? What are allowable parameters identified by OSEP? During these information-seeking and decision-making discussions, The DDOE staff and representatives of multiple stakeholder groups critically informed the development of the SiMR and identified root causes for low reading performance. The involvement of various organizations, agencies and groups from within the DDOE ensured that an array of voices and perspectives contributed to the SSIP. By engaging local district staff and administration, the DDOE was more assured of identifying data that was of value to LEAs and of developing their commitment to the SiMR. The participation of parents and advocacy organizations also was helpful to assure the DDOE was addressing issues of importance to parents of SWD.

#### **b. Disaggregated Data by Multiple Variables**

During the data analysis process, the SSIP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council examined data across multiple variables. The SSIP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council, independent of each other, reviewed reading performance data statewide and disaggregated across multiple variables: race, disability category, educational environment, language, school buildings/programs, LEAs, location (rural/urban/suburban), and SES. Several questions that drove the staff to identify the initial data for review included:

1. How do students with and without disabilities compare in reading performance within the state and LEAs? Data was reviewed specifically for the eight largest LEAs in the state.
2. What is the reading performance of SWD by racial/ethnic sub-group?
3. What is the reading performance of SWD by placement (LRE)?
4. How do 3-5 year old children with disabilities in DE compare to children with disabilities nationally on Early Childhood (EC) outcome #2?
5. How do ELL students with and without disabilities compare in the school age population in DE?

The members of the SSIP Work Group used their experiences of working with LEAs through their monitoring roles and specific initiative work. These experiences informed the discussions with considerations of the data based on SES of the LEAs, location of the highest number of migratory and ELL, situations within a specific district regarding placement decisions for services, separate programs for SWD and preschool and school-age SED, LEAs participation in

state sponsored initiatives such as Delaware Positive Behavior Support (DE-PBS), writing well-constructed IEPs, and service availability for ELL.

The DDOE then took this information as well as elements of their discussion to the SSIP Advisory Council to explain why reading was selected as the beginning area for focus. In order to help the SSIP Advisory Council recommend a narrower focus, the DDOE provided the SSIP Advisory Council with 7 data charts related to statewide reading performance by grade, race/ethnicity, disability, placement, ELL, and SES. As a result of this initial review of more general data the SSIP Advisory Council identified a) additional data elements, and b) comparisons of the prior data elements, which they desired for further analysis. More detailed information assisted the SSIP Advisory Council in narrowing the area of focus. Over 24 more charts and graphs were provided to the Council for further analysis addressing grades 3, 5 and 8, and disaggregated by disability, LRE placement, SES, race/ethnicity and cohort groups. (Further detail of the specific data analyzed and conclusions drawn is described in section 1. a. Data Analysis-Identification and Analysis of Key Data).

### **c. Data Quality Concerns**

#### **Data Accessibility in the Early Stages**

During the early SSIP Work Group discussions about the availability of data to answer their initial questions, members began to identify whether the data were already collected, and if so, was it collected in a manner that would provide the information needed.

The group was interested in examining student-level progress monitoring data but recognized that it would not be feasible to collect and may not yield necessary information at this stage of the process. These data would be of greater importance when conducting root cause analyses with those LEAs that would be selected for participation in the SSIP work. Thus, the group focused on data that were readily available and broader in nature such as the DDOE data and that which the IDEA 619 coordinator had available through 618 data collections at the state and national levels. For Phase I of the SSIP, the DDOE has no concern about the limitations of access to the data described above as it was not needed to inform Phase I components.

#### **Data Display**

The SSIP Advisory Council had several requests concerning the display of data. They asked for visual interpretations with labeling (other than tables with labeling) to help understand the data. Subsequently, data was displayed on graphs, in larger fonts, in color and with some labeling for ease of view and analysis. With the variety of data display issues identified throughout the analysis process, the DDOE will incorporate this as a strategy in response to infrastructure issues that could support improvement with the SiMR.

#### **Data Definitions**

During the SSIP Work Group review of data, it was recognized that SWD achievement data did not include any of the students identified in the federal Section 618 data as students with speech-language impairments. These students' results have historically been included in the general student population data. The state had various internal discussions about whether or not a change should be made to establishing baseline for the SSIP which would include the students identified under the IDEA as having a speech and language impairment in the disability achievement data rather than in the general population data. The DDOE has decided to delay the incorporation of the scores of students with a speech and language impairment into the SiMR to be consistent

with the FFY 2013 Indicator 3 data that was reported to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the SPP/APR on February 1, 2015.

Another data definition issue that became apparent through the SSIP data analysis was the examination of SWD achievement data in which the achievement data was only reported for those students who participated in the DCAS and did not include those students participating in the DCAS-Alt1, DE's alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards. This did not come to light until later in the review of data, so decisions were made on DCAS achievement data, initially. As a result of these findings, data were subsequently presented to the SSIP Advisory Council during the baseline and target setting stage of the SiMR that included DCAS-Alt and speech data. Additionally, it was shared with the SSIP Advisory Council that resetting of baseline and targets in subsequent years of the SSIP will need to occur as the results of the DeSSA will replace the DCAS for 2015, and revisions to the alternative assessment will be occurring as well. Students with a speech-language impairment will be incorporated into special education reporting data for FFY 2014 to be consistent with DeSSA reporting.

One additional data definition concern was raised by the DDOE SSIP Work Group. Throughout the DDOE, several data sources are utilized which have varying data definitions and business rules. Currently, there is not a set of rules and definitions governing the various DDOE data sources. In recognition of this Infrastructure weakness, the DDOE has established a cross-department Data Work Group, including data managers from existing work groups, to align data across the Department.

#### **d. Consideration of Compliance Data**

Three previous years of compliance data for Indicators 4 (suspension/expulsion), 9 and 10 (disproportionate representation resulting from inappropriate identification), 11 (evaluation timelines), and 12 (Part C to Part B transition) were analyzed by the SSIP Work Group. These data were examined in light of the relationship to low reading performance by grade 3. The SSIP Work Group did not see the types of instances of noncompliance identified in this analysis as impediments to the improvement of students' reading achievement given the small number and individual student nature of the noncompliance. The DDOE also analyzed the results of monitoring file reviews conducted on IEP reading goals. This revealed concerns with placement and appropriate measures of the goals, thus indicating concerns for improving reading performance. These concerns were used to inform the coherent improvement strategies with particular emphasis on LEA level root cause analysis proposed to occur during Phase II of the SSIP.

#### **e. Additional Data Needs**

During the course of the review of student specific data, it became apparent that the combination or dually-identified SWD/ELL students had not been isolated specific to these students' literacy achievement as there is currently no systematic way for this data to be reviewed. A mechanism for providing aggregate state level data for the ELL population of SWD is needed. Timelines and activities for how to address this will be identified during Phase II planning of the SSIP.

Throughout discussions among the groups, comments were raised regarding implementation. This was noted by building level administrators and practitioners, as well as DDOE staff involved in the coordination of the states' literacy initiatives. Data related to this concern and data about interventions to resolve the concern are needed as part of engaging LEAs in the implementation of efforts to address the SiMR during Phase II.

The DDOE believes that additional data, which may contribute to a better understanding of root causes for low reading performance for all SWD, including SWD/ELL, is needed and best collected at the LEA level once the LEA is selected for engagement in the SSIP. These data would include progress monitoring data from the Response to Intervention (RtI) process and/or from IEP goals and objectives related to reading performance. The DDOE expects these data to be collected at the LEA level. Information that would assist the DDOE in understanding how it may want to proceed with this type of expectation would include: 1) Which districts/schools are using a progress monitoring tool? 2) Which tools are being used? By whom? and 3) Which tools on the market would be appropriate for recommendation to LEAs that would address the SiMR? As the DDOE works with the LEAs, this information may be important to have at the local level. As LEAs complete their root cause analysis, data will become available for analysis and decision-making.

#### **f. Stakeholder Involvement**

The DDOE began the SSIP Phase I planning process by bringing together the SSIP Work Group. The SSIP Work Group served as the main planning committee, internal to the DDOE, with the SSIP Advisory Council as the external committee (refer to section 3e and r of Infrastructure for description of each committee). The groups worked in tandem throughout the data analysis and subsequent steps of the Phase I. The planning progression leading to the SiMR was an iterative and non-linear process, although there were five primary steps outlined in the data analysis section of this report, in which stakeholders significantly contributed during the ‘broad’, ‘in-depth’ and ‘other’ data analyses.

#### **Broad Data Analysis**

##### *Step 1: Selecting a Focus*

The SSIP Work Group was instrumental in shaping the beginning area of focus through an iterative process of guiding questions. The focus on reading was determined from this process.

##### *Step 2: Identification of Data Elements and Sources*

As a result of this focus, the SSIP Work Group utilized guiding questions about the reading performance of students with and without disabilities to identify data elements and sources for analysis. The DDOE data manager provided a series of data tables in response to the questions, leading the SSIP Work Group to Step 3.

##### *Step 3: Evidence, Inferences, Further Needs*

During this step, both the SSIP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council engaged in a similar process. First, the SSIP Work Group utilized a planning tool to guide discussions around a variety of data sources. From this discussion, the SSIP Work Group selected several data tables for the SSIP Advisory Council to analyze and provide interpretations based on their experiences and expertise. The DDOE looked to the SSIP Advisory Council to confirm the appropriateness of a SiMR focused on reading for SWD. Then, the SSIP Advisory Council analyzed these data using the same planning tool as the SSIP Work Group. The Council subsequently confirmed the concern of the low reading performance of SWD, but had additional questions to help the DDOE narrow the focus.

#### **In-depth Data Analysis**

##### *Step 4: Understanding Why the Problem is Occurring*

The SSIP Advisory Council’s analyses lead the SSIP Work Group to consider the additional data elements and comparisons that they requested. Subsequently, the DDOE provided the SSIP Advisory Council with a series of over 24 data charts and tables. The SSIP Advisory Council

analyzed the next set of data using the same planning tool that had been utilized previously. From this second analysis, the stakeholders' concluded that the DDOE should consider a focus on reading, regardless of a student's race, SES, or placement. In addition, the SSIP Advisory Council recommended that the SSIP focus on early grades, up to and including grade 3.

### **Other Data Analyses**

#### *Step 5: Iterative Discussions to Finalize a SiMR and Arrive at Targets*

Over time, the data analysis process became iterative with the infrastructure analysis process. Several other sources of data were incorporated as the groups honed in on a SiMR and targets. The SSIP Work Group was instrumental in examining a variety of additional data sources to help shape the decision for the SiMR. During the review of these additional sources (e.g., state and other agency reading initiatives, process on data usage, legislation, measurement tools and processes, and compliance data), the SSIP Work Group invited experts from within the DDOE to participate in discussions to help inform the process.

Chart 2: DDOE Process for SSIP Phase I-Component #1: Data Analysis

DDOE Analysis Question	Response	Decision	Next Step
What currently is the DDOE doing in the state? (SSIP Work Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal College and Career Ready (CCR) planning document</li> <li>ECR leadership and staff working on K-3 CCR</li> </ul>	Focus on READING	What do we know about reading in DE?
What does the DDOE want to know about the reading achievement of students in DE? (SSIP Work Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comparison of SWD and all students</li> <li>State level and district level data</li> <li>Differences across the 4 performance levels</li> <li>Socio-Economic Status (SES), English Language Learners (ELL), Race/Ethnicity, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)</li> </ul>	Narrowed focus to PRE-K-Grade 8	What do others know about reading?
What data do others want to look at to determine the problem? (SSIP Advisory Council) (SSIP Work Group)  How do others understand the data? (SSIP Advisory Council) (SSIP Work Group)  What do they see as the problem? What are the issues creating the problem? (SSIP Advisory Council) (SSIP Work Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SES by Race/Ethnicity</li> <li>Regular Education by SES</li> <li>Cohort across grades</li> <li>Regular Education for all comparisons</li> <li>SES by Performance Level (PL) and Race</li> <li>Regular Education to Special Education by race/ethnicity</li> <li>Disability and PL</li> </ul>	While there are reading gaps for SWD and across subgroups (e.g., ELL, race/ethnicity, SES) and across grade levels as compared to general education, intervention and focus should be pre-k and early grades.	What else can we learn about reading in DE that may help to identify a more specifically focused SIMR?
Who else should we ask? (SSIP Work Group)  What are other data sources to consider? (SSIP Advisory Group)  What else may help identifying a SIMR? (SSIP Advisory Council) (SSIP Work Group) (Other intra and inter departmental sources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Legislation</li> <li>Initiatives –internal</li> <li>Initiatives- external</li> <li>Experiences of others</li> <li>Measurement tools</li> <li>Fiscal resources</li> <li>Expertise</li> <li>Data uses</li> <li>Compliance data</li> <li>Dispute resolution data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senate Bill 229 directs IEP teams to outline specific, evidence-based reading interventions and provide extended school year services for students who have not begun to read by age 7 or older</li> <li>K-12 Common Core initiative provides training on ELA standards</li> <li>RtI supports and professional development (PD) offered through literacy cadre and coalition</li> <li>Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) model project offered through State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) for secondary schools</li> <li>State Board Literacy Campaign for all grades</li> <li>Governor’s Initiative for early childhood literacy</li> <li>Grants written for early childhood \$2 million</li> <li>Head Start grant for \$4 million</li> <li>Prior SPDG focused on early childhood Response to Intervention (RtI) and model literacy-related units for K-12</li> <li>Some but not all preschool programs are using Teaching Strategies Gold as a measurement tool that could be used as a baseline measure.</li> <li>Early Childhood outcomes measure available for SWD 5 yr. olds</li> <li>Concern that the statewide assessment does not begin until grade 3; need for common measure for grades K-2</li> <li>Concern that statewide assessment changing for spring 2015; need for baseline change</li> <li>No areas of concern related to reading with compliance or dispute data</li> </ul>	What should drive our decisions in narrowing the focus within the range of PRE-K to grade 8?
Where are there gaps? Where are the strengths? What can be leveraged? What will demonstrate growth with impact? What is feasible/ doable? What do stakeholders believe and what will they commit to? What is allowable by OSEP?  (SSIP Work Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PRE K Strength of initiatives with TA, money &amp; prior effort</li> <li>Oversight for PRE-K is done through the Office of Learning. The DDOE has limited programming oversight; however, the DDOE provides strong fiscal oversight</li> <li>PRE-K positive working relations with DDOE</li> <li>No current DDOE-sponsored reading initiatives in elementary</li> <li>Stakeholders recommended PRE-K and early grades</li> <li>OSEP recognizes statewide assessment changes will require baseline changes</li> <li>OSEP expects improvement over baseline by end of 5 yrs.</li> </ul>	Current PRE-K work will support changes in children being better prepared in early literacy prior to entering kindergarten. However, there are no DOE-sponsored initiatives that specifically speak to literacy interventions for SWD at the elementary level, although there is some work in general education that would support improved reading for all students in elementary (RtI, Common Core and Literacy Cadre & Coalition). Whatever baseline measure is selected, it will have to be applicable for all those involved so a required or commonly used assessment is best. The statewide assessment is required but does not begin until grade 3	What is DE’s SIMR?
<div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p><b>State Identified Measureable Result</b></p> <p><b>Increase the literacy proficiency of students with disabilities in K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade as measured by a decrease in the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students with disabilities scoring below proficiency on Delaware’s statewide assessment.</b></p> </div>			

### a. Systematic Process for Infrastructure Analysis to Build Capacity

The Regional Resource Center Program (RRCP) Infrastructure Analysis Template served as the tool to guide the analysis of the capacity of the state's infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity at the local level in relation to the SiMR. The process included a broad analysis focusing on how the components of DE's system (i.e., governance, fiscal, quality standards, data system, accountability, PD, TA) contributed to either the high reading performance of children and youth with disabilities or the low reading performance of these students. This broad analysis was conducted through the SSIP Work Group.

A more in-depth analysis followed to assess the capacity of current state systems to support improvement and build capacity in local programs to implement, SWD grades K-3. The SSIP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council utilized the RRCP Infrastructure Template to examine state systems in greater depth. The state's SSIP Work Group completed all questions within the template engaging state agency personnel from other branches and agencies to provide input. Additionally, the SSIP Work Group invited the OSEP visitation team to engage in the discussions using this tool. The SSIP Work Group used facilitated discussions, review of records, and interviews to gather the information specific to reading performance for younger school-aged students to inform this analysis. Once the data was gathered, the SSIP Work Group performed an analysis of the responses to look for strengths, weaknesses and themes. The SSIP Advisory Council was lead through an analysis of these same system components (with the addition of cultural competence), to examine other organizations' infrastructure that was supporting or contributing to improving literacy performance in preschool and elementary aged children throughout the state. The infrastructure analysis also included an analysis for special education early childhood systems.

#### Broad Infrastructure Analysis

The broad analysis was conducted based on the guiding statements, 1) identify the components of the state system (governance, fiscal, quality standards, data system, accountability, PD, TA) that may be contributing to *high* reading performance of SWD by placing a check in the column to the left of the component, and 2) for each checked component, provide a brief description of how the component is contributing to the *high* performance. This same process was repeated for identifying those components that may be contributing to *low* performance and a brief description of how it was contributing to *low* performance was provided. The SSIP Work Group staff completed this material by first responding to the statements individually, then sharing their ideas with others in the SSIP Work Group, and finally agreeing upon those shared ideas that best represented a collective explanation for either high or low reading performance. Initially, the SSIP Work Group focused their responses on the reading performance of *children and youth with disabilities*. Later in the process, the SSIP Work Group, through consensus, narrowed their explanations to factors contributing to high and low reading performance *for just elementary aged children with disabilities*.

#### In-Depth Infrastructure Analysis

The in-depth analysis was conducted with the SSIP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council in a slightly different manner and for a specifically different purpose:

1. The SSIP Work Group utilized the RRCP Infrastructure Template to a) more explicitly describe each system component, b) further clarify the quality of sub-elements of the system components and its influence on student reading performance, c) consider how



each of the components could be leveraged to improve the SiMR focus area of reading performance for elementary aged SWD, and d) suggest improvements to the system that will need to be addressed to improve this result. This was done through pairs and small groups of SSIP Work Group members and OSEP staff to examine state level systems.

2. The SSIP Advisory Council members worked within 6 role-alike groups. Each member was assigned to the group that best described the representative role for her/his participation on the Council: state government; practitioners; families; other organizations and LEA special education directors; and early childhood. Each group responded to questions designed specifically for their role-alike group about the sub-elements of the system components and identified how these influence the reading performance for SWD (SiMR focus) from their group's distinct perspective. From these points of view, the groups identified within each infrastructure category, capacity building factors for LEAs and the State Education Agency (SEA): a) areas for improvement or change, b) existing resources that may compliment or support improving reading achievement in SWD, and c) strengths or things that work in addressing the literacy SiMR that could be used as leverage for change.

## **b. Review of Infrastructure**

The DDOE's systems infrastructure was analyzed within eight area. Seven were identified by OSEP: governance, fiscal, quality standards, PD, data, TA, accountability/ monitoring. An eighth one of importance to the state and stakeholders is cultural competence. Each of these systems was examined in relation to the DDOE's SiMR of literacy achievement for young children in the early elementary grades.

### **Governance**

#### State Priorities, Policies and Procedures

The Delaware State Board of Education's 2011-2015 Strategic Plan envisions, "All of DE students are prepared to lead full and productive lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century global society." This plan calls for high performing schools to improve student learning and proficiency and to narrow the achievement gap. Additionally, the plan also focuses on 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to increase the focus on Early Childhood Education including an emphasis on literacy acquisition and to embrace deeper learning strategies and personalized learning structures.

In January 2014, the Delaware State Board of Education Literacy Campaign was initiated to support this effort. The initiative emphasizes "...that in order to increase the number of students ready for college, career, and citizenship; it is imperative that we focus on the level of literacy necessary to ensure success." (Education Program Research/Policy Brief of Literacy Campaign, 2014). The initiative further states, "In order have each child graduate ready for college, career, citizenship we must provide them a firm foundation in literacy and make sure the educators in our classrooms have the content and pedagogy skills to teach reading, mathematics, and enable students to overcome literacy challenges. (Licensure and Certification Research/Policy Brief of Literacy Campaign, 2014) The DDOE has developed a plan for CCR that integrates all of the facets of the Board's strategic plan, including a focus on literacy achievement throughout the grades.

Legislation specifically to address early reading for SWD was introduced this past session in Senate Bill 229. The bill is intended to promote evidence based reading interventions, eligibility for special education identification and extended school year services if a child is not beginning to read by age 7 or older.

### Operational and Decision-Making Practices

The CCR K-3 group has operated since 2014, chaired by the Director of ECR, with membership from throughout the DDOE to focus the work. This group met periodically to report on progress regarding the implementation of the K-3 CCR which includes literacy. The DDOE implementation of literacy efforts within this plan occur through the collaborative work among staff from across the DDOE. ECR staff are strategically aligned to existing DDOE literacy initiatives such as Common Core, Common Ground for the Common Core (refer to section 3.b. Review of Infrastructure-PD for a description) and RtI. Cross divisional work occurs during implementation of these broad reading initiatives.

DDOE decisions regarding issues of governance stem from the Secretary of Education and the Chief Academic Officer. The SSIP Work Group is within the Teaching and Learning branch of the DDOE. Decisions concerning reading instruction are made within this branch of the DDOE, but cross-branch work is critical to reading success. There also is an Accountability, Performance and Assessment Branch, and Title I services are within the Educational Supports and Innovative Practices Branch.

Decisions to involve LEAs in policy supported reading initiatives (e.g., Common Core planning, Common Ground training), is determined through an examination of statewide literacy achievement data and district self-selection, as DE is a local control state. Therefore, districts are able to opt in/out of literacy initiatives at their discretion, although monitoring activities are not discretionary.

Within the early childhood arena, the infrastructure analysis revealed multiple partnerships supporting literacy. These early childhood partnerships are across and within departments and with non-departmental partners.

### **Fiscal**

The DDOE utilizes IDEA and state funds for its operation of the Exceptional Child Resource unit to oversee the federal and state requirements related to special education for disabilities, including grants/projects to specifically support literacy for SWD. There are limited IDEA resources directed specifically at literacy improvement for SWD. The majority of the resources are utilized for supporting specific training on improving instruction and behavioral supports for students through supporting teacher and administrator PD. Those resources that are more directed to reading improvement have been focused on early childhood (2008-13 SPDG), elementary level, or secondary level (State Personnel Development Grant [SPDG] 2014-19: Strategic Instructional Model [SIMS] for Middle School students). See PD section for further analysis.

The DDOE utilizes a needs-based funding formula pursuant to Title 14 of the Delaware code and the State's special education regulations at 14 DE Administrative Code §§ 701 and 928, to distribute state resources for personnel to LEAs. This formula is placement neutral and is based on intensity of student disability and the unique needs of the child. Additional funds may be levied through local taxes to support a district's programs. Senate Bill 229, recently signed into law, has identified \$500,000 to support extended school year services for students not beginning to read by age 7 or older.

A consolidated grant application process is utilized in DE which includes IDEA funds. During the infrastructure analysis, the DDOE learned that LEAs do utilize a combination of Title I, IDEA, CEIS, Title III, and local funds/tuitions to support literacy. This is the expectation of the consolidated grant application process, although an analysis of how IDEA funds contribute to these goals has not been conducted for purpose of the SSIP.

There are currently 7 staff positions in the ECR SSIP Work Group which are funded, in part, by IDEA funds. While these individuals manage projects that provide TA and PD in areas that impact preschool-grade 3 literacy, none are solely dedicated to directly improving literacy for SWD in preschool- grade 3. While there are no current specific K-3 reading initiatives in the

DDOE, staff members from the ECR Work Group work closely with the Office of K-12 Initiatives. This provides for collaboration between special education and general education staff within the DDOE. Several funding streams that were more specifically addressing literacy efforts are ending or have recently ended including SPDG 2008-13 funds and Race to the Top resources.

## **Quality Standards**

### Curriculum Standards:

The DDOE has adopted the Common Core, Early Childhood, and ELL standards. Common Ground has provided a vehicle for LEAs to participate in ongoing PD and TA (TA) to support the quality of implementation of these standards. In addition, cross-branch CCR groups and plans support the collaborative efforts both on the Common Core implementation and Common Ground initiative. Grade Band Extensions are aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Special educators received training and were provided with the expectations for standards-based IEPs. The state has had a statewide focus on examining text complexity, through Close reading (Fischer & Frey, 2012) and tiered vocabulary (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002, 2008). District staff is reporting improved knowledge of the Common Core due to the work of the DDOE. Communication with families about the CCSS has also occurred through the districts, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Parent Training and Information Center (PTI). Despite the variety of trainings and information offered by these organizations and the DDOE, families report that their knowledge of state standards is inconsistent from district to district.

### Personnel Standards:

Certification requirements are developed by the Delaware Professional Standards Board (PSB) and approved by the State Board of Education. The PSB and State Board have set specific requirements for reading specialists and literacy coursework required by content area educators. Most recently, the PSB has discussed updating certification requirements for special educators to include coursework in literacy instruction and reading interventions. The proposed revisions to the special educator certificate are currently under review internally within the DDOE and PSB. A representative from the ECR SSIP Work Group was involved with the development and recommendations related to the proposed certification requirements for special educators.

In addition to the certification process, educators are evaluated annually through the Delaware Performance Appraisal System II (DPAS II). The DPAS II is based on Charlotte Danielson's framework for teacher evaluation and includes classroom-based components, as well as measures of student growth. The DPAS II may include an early literacy/literacy measure if required as a student growth measure or selected by the educator as a growth goal. The school administrator works with educators individually to set growth goals including literacy-related measures through the DPAS II process.

## **Data**

### Sources

The DDOE utilizes a state-wide centralized longitudinal data system. Through this system, DDOE is able to analyze data state-wide, as well as by LEA, subgroups, etc. This system integrates several systems of data to allow for the examination of student state test performance, as well as registration, attendance, discipline, graduation/dropout, and disability identification (Special Education, 504). Tied into this system is a state-wide centralized IEP system (IEP Plus). Also, the state has a separate ELL database which interfaces with this system allowing for the identification of SWD that are ELL. Specific achievement data on SWD/ELL is not easily obtained. There are other data sources at the district level which are not available, but that are of interest to the DDOE in affecting improvement with reading performance, such as RtI data (refer to section 1.c. Data Quality Concerns for further details).

## Uses

The DDOE utilizes data in numerous ways to assist in improving reading results for SWD. Longitudinal data-based system data is used in the DDOE's development of annual assessment reports, understanding student performance throughout the state, and ESEA Routine meetings (refer to section 3.b. Review of Infrastructure-Accountability/Monitoring for a description). Additionally, districts are rated during ESEA Routines based on an analysis and response to data, particularly achievement data including reading. While data is examined at aggregate levels, the state does not engage in collaborative analysis with districts on data at the child level within the subgroup of SWD for purposes of conducting root cause analyses or improvement planning. District level reading data is examined for purposes of making LEA determinations for the IDEA general supervision system, though. Staff within the SSIP Work Group are assigned as liaisons to LEAs, including Charter Schools, and have intimate knowledge of their LEA's data.

Data from the variety of sources described above are available and currently utilized by district staff as learned through the SSIP Advisory Council infrastructure analysis. The DDOE learned that LEA staff utilizes these data in their professional learning communities and when planning for PD. This data is also presented by LEAs for discussions during the ESEA Routine meetings with the DDOE.

## **Professional Development**

A review of the various DDOE special education PD initiatives indicates that only three are specifically related to reading improvement. First, the WRITES (Writing Rigorous IEPs to Teach Educational Standards) initiative focuses on developing and implementing standards-based IEPs. Second, the Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) initiative is designed to provide text in multiple formats for students with identified print disabilities (e.g., reading learning disabilities, visual impairments) in order to increase students access to grade-level text and overall academic performance. Third, the Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) initiative provides training and coaching focused on content enhancements and learning strategies with implementation by both general and special educators at the middle and high school levels. (SIM is focused on literacy strategies to support the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in order to increase academic performance of SWD.) Only the first two initiatives are specifically supportive of the SiMR of literacy improvement for K-3 students as the third is designed to support literacy instruction for secondary level students.

There are three other vehicles of PD in the area of reading that are available to districts. Literacy Coalition and Literacy Cadre are for district administrators, curriculum leaders and reading specialists, with a focus on literacy strategies and RtI. This work is led by the Office of K-12 Initiatives with support from ECR Work Group staff. Another is Common Ground for the Common Core 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 (i.e., years 1, 2 and 3) which focuses on aligning instruction and assessment with the CCSS. This initiative provides full day trainings for district or building-level leadership teams and on-site coaching to participating schools' staff. On-line modules are available for all districts in the state. The DDOE has provided financial assistance for participating LEAs to include special educators in the Common Ground for the Common Core 3.0 initiative will feature a strand focused on supporting SWD and ELL. In addition, PD is being provided through the Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative (DATI) regarding assistive technology (AT) and selection and implementation of educationally appropriate testing accommodations for reading.

## **Technical Assistance**

The DDOE's TA system serves as the frame for ECR Work Group's TA to LEAs specific to results accountability. The model moves beyond short-term, episodic training to the

development of a community of practice that is sustainable and builds LEA capacity to improve results for SWD. The system focuses on implementation of the Common Core State Standards, as well as a multi-tiered system of academic and behavioral supports. The DDOE engages in an analysis of state-level, as well as LEA level data and in meaningful discussions with LEA leadership to identify LEA and/or individual schools in need of TA. Ratings (ESEA accountability) and determinations (IDEA accountability) are designated for LEAs which indicate a level of TA the LEA is to receive from the State Education Agency (SEA). Once identified, the LEA and the DDOE enter into a Memorandum of Understanding which outlines the roles and responsibilities of both the LEA and the Department.

Each staff within the ECR SSIP Work Group is assigned as a liaison to districts and charters to provide TA via phone, email, or on-site/on-line coaching and consultation. The DDOE also has the technological capacity to provide webinars as a means of providing TA. The extensiveness of the TA provided to LEAs at this time is related to ESEA ratings and IDEA determinations. TA specific to the area of need, is provided to LEAs within the State's Multi-Tiered System of Monitoring and Accountability. ESEA ratings of "Moderate" and "Intensive" are considered when identifying LEAs for state-sponsored PD activities. Coaching is typically available through particular PD opportunities.

### **Accountability/Monitoring**

The DDOE has several methods for monitoring and accountability that can be used to leverage improvement in reading for SWD at the K-3 level. One is the ESEA Routines, its purpose being for the SEA and LEA to engage in meaningful conversation about the LEA's data (e.g., RtI/progress monitoring data; APR indicator data, teacher evaluation data, etc.) and areas in need of improvement. This includes an analysis of the district's literacy achievement, including SWD. These discussions result in the LEA developing an implementation plan. The districts are provided one of 3 ratings (i.e., intensive, moderate and minimal) indicating the degree of further DDOE engagement. This cross-branch activity includes ECR staff along with Title I, Teacher Leader Effectiveness, K-12 Initiatives, and other DDOE staff in dialogue with district-level leadership on a periodic basis throughout the school year. The consolidated grant reviews conducted by the ECR Work Group and other DDOE staff drive implementation plans for the districts which can include early literacy/literacy performance for SWD.

Another monitoring and accountability activity related to reading achievement is that associated with charter schools. ECR Work Group monitors compliance and results issues and works closely with charter school office staff to ensure that charter schools are meeting both compliance and results expectations with follow-up PD.

A third activity is the Multi-Tiered System of Accountability to improve results for children with disabilities and ensure compliance with the IDEA. All LEAs are monitored through data analysis, desk audits, self-assessments, review of student records, on-site visits and/or student observations using multiple sources for compliance and results, including student achievement scores. Indicator 3C of the SPP is analyzed and reported at the level of grades 3-8 and 10, and sets targets for district attainment of reading performance specific to grade 3. This is useful for supporting the SiMR of K-3 literacy improvement. The ECR Work Group incorporates a multi-tiered level of interventions/sanctions and rates each LEA with a determination as described in the DDOE's SPP/APR. Beginning in spring 2015, LEA Annual Determinations will be based on compliance indicators as well as Indicator 3b, 3c, and several other results indicators, including those related to preschool-aged students.

### **Cultural Competence**

Due to an interest in more thoroughly examining this area of the state's work, the ECR Work Group added cultural competence to the infrastructure analysis of the SSIP. The SSIP Work Group conducted a scan of initiatives and policy guidance to identify dedicated efforts or specific

positions regarding the preparedness and responsiveness of professionals in working with constituents of races, ethnicities, languages and cultures that differ from themselves. Additionally, the SSIP Advisory Council was asked to focus on the DDOE's and LEA's responsiveness to addressing educators' awareness and sensitivity to similarities and differences among and between persons and application of this knowledge to educational processes that are unique to their positions.

The DDOE recognizes, as indicated by research, one of the best means to ensure cultural responsiveness is through implementation of positive behavior support systems. The DDOE, through the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project (DE-PBS), supports LEAs' and schools' implementation of multi-tiered systems of support with fidelity through tiered TA including PD and coaching, networking, and provision of resources. The DE-PBS project and its partner LEAs and schools employ a series of evaluation tools, fidelity checks, and data sources to inform and evaluate strategies. Data analysis and related improvement efforts include focus on a variety of student subgroups including gender, race, and ethnicity to address potential disproportionate practices.

Additionally, as DDOE recognizes that family engagement is a critical component of effective school-wide systems, each Delaware school is invited to administer the Student, Staff, and Home Version of the DE School Climate Survey (DSCS) which are currently translated into Spanish to increase access to the state's large population of Spanish speaking families. DSCS data are also disaggregated by gender and each racial or ethnic subgroup.

As a recent recipient of a School Climate Transformation Grant, DDOE, through the DE-PBS Project, will utilize grant resources to further expand and refine work around multi-tiered systems of support to integrate trauma-sensitive practices across all three tiers of implementation. That is, implementers will utilize a trauma informed perspective to design interventions and support positive relationships, belonging, and safety for all students.

Cultural competency workshops for school personnel are necessary to bring awareness of unhealthy attitudes and behaviors that may exist toward certain minority groups with the district. The types of training needed will assist educators with understanding various races/ethnicities' cultures about issues such as decision-makers in the home, the role of gender in educational expectations, the role of parent employment upon career paths for the students, and parent conferences with the school. There are a few initiatives/trainings, in the state that have begun focusing this topic:

1. The Educational Requirements for ELLs Workshops that have been conducted during the last several years. (Migrant Legal Action out of D.C. is contracted for this work.)
2. The Title III Guidebook provides guidance to state LEAs regarding the referral process timeline for SWD/EL students.
3. District/charter ESL coordinators and teachers are provided training and PD related to language development in order to provide strategies to general education teachers.

The rise in immigrant, refugee, and ELL student numbers throughout the state however, with almost 100 languages of origin and the accompanying race/ethnicities, will require more PD related specifically to language acquisition and cultural differences. Training from the Mid-Atlantic Equity Center or other agencies on this topic may help to address the issues with a series of workshops on cultural competency.

EL students are monitored for reading/literacy levels annually on the state's achievement test, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The EL students are also monitored through the English language proficiency assessment, Adapting Curriculum and Classroom Environments for Student Success (ACCESS), for their reading level. The combination or dually-identified SWD/ELL student has not been isolated and reviewed in detail to determine the levels of literacy or root causes of failure for this sub-group of EL students. There is currently no systematic way for this data to be reviewed.

The SSIP Advisory Council identified that school staff attempt to be responsive. In spite of ongoing effort and appreciation for the concept, they require cultural awareness and sensitivity training, as they “just don’t know how.” They indicate cultural responsiveness varies from district to district and by building throughout the state. An additional concern is the inability of many schools’ staff to communicate with families in their native language. It was acknowledged that it was a challenge to recruit a qualified, diverse staff given the compensation differences in adjacent states.

### **c. Strengths, Areas of Improvement and Coordination**

#### **Strengths/Leverage Opportunities**

The Delaware State Board of Education’s 2011-2015 Strategic Plan to narrow the achievement gap with an emphasis on literacy acquisition and to embrace deeper learning strategies and personalized learning structures is a strong base for the SSIP. The resulting Board’s Literacy Campaign, codified in Senate Bill 51, focuses on the level of literacy necessary to ensure success to students by providing educators the content and pedagogy skills to teach reading, and sets the stage for a monitoring, TA and PD system with which the SSIP can align. The CCR plan integrates all of the facets of the State Board’s strategic plan, including a focus on literacy achievement throughout the grades. Additionally, Senate Bill 229 is designed to support SWD not beginning reading by age 7 or older, and provides an added lever for the success of the SSIP.

Another strength of the system is within the early childhood arena. The infrastructure analysis revealed multiple partnerships and resources supporting literacy. These early childhood partnerships and resources, across and within departments, and with non-departmental partners are seen as a strength from which the SSIP can build a seamless, compatible system of interventions for preschool to grade 3 SWD to improve literacy.

The monitoring and accountability systems of the state established through the ESEA Routines and the IDEA monitoring system, offer a focus emphasizing results. The results focus is still in its beginning stages of implementation. Through the ratings or determinations assigned as a result of monitoring, LEAs receive tiers of TA and PD. The collaborative PDwork that occurs through Common Ground for the Common Core among work groups within the DDOE provides an avenue to integrate the needs of the SSIP within an existing system that is established within the state and to which LEAs already have a commitment. Additionally, the consolidated grant application process and allowances of IDEA, affords the state another structure of the system to leverage the work of the SSIP. The grant process is a major fiscal vehicle for the state to encourage LEAs to support literacy efforts directed at monitoring findings and accountability targets.

#### **Areas for Improvement**

Throughout the data and infrastructure analysis, several themes emerged that were identified as the most pressing areas for improvement. These included specific TA and PD directed at K-3 literacy, as the majority of the TA focuses on the general population or in response to IDEA compliance issues, which have not been seen as having significant impact on literacy in these grades. Additionally, IDEA fiscal resources are directed more broadly to existing initiatives (e.g., Delaware PBS; Technology Initiative; Secondary Transition Initiative) and therefore, not currently aligned to meet the specific needs of the SiMR. Thirdly, the use of existing state data systems explicitly to drive instruction are not sufficiently sensitive nor are the data-decision processes for aligning instruction to unique student needs adequate at the LEA level. Additionally, data governance rules and definitions are not consistent across data sources. The DDOE plans to centralize data within the DDOE to strengthen data governance. DDOE staff engages with districts specifically around literacy data for SWD through the current structure of

the ESEA Routines and IDEA monitoring activities. Each is designed to be a broader accountability system to address all aspects of educational programming. Fourthly, an analysis of the system yields limited attention to other factors that support literacy success, such as family engagement, cultural competence and linguistic awareness of students and their families.

#### **d. State-Level Improvement Plans and Initiatives**

During the infrastructure analysis, the SSIP Work Group and SSIP Advisory Council examined initiatives and improvement plans from throughout the state, within the DDOE and at the district level, to determine how these could be leveraged to impact the capacity of local programs and schools to improve the SiMR.

Within the state, the early childhood initiatives were of significant relevance to the SiMR focus of literacy. These initiatives, (e.g., Governor’s Early Childhood Initiative, Head Start grants, Casey Foundation focus on early childhood) and improvement plans associated with these efforts, demonstrated a strong support for literacy upon which the DDOE and schools could align. Other organizations that were supporting literacy included parent trainings through the Delaware PTA and Parent Information Center of Delaware (PIC), Delaware Community Foundation literacy grants to schools, We Give Books donation program for on-line reading, and PAWS for reading (students read to dogs in the schools). Partnering with other organizations and families will contribute to strengthening the SSIP interventions to improve early literacy.

Based on the Literacy Campaign initiative of the State Board of Education, the DDOE developed the CCR priorities which integrates all of the facets of the Board’s strategic plan, by describing four strands of high performing schools: 1) effective teachers and leaders; 2) rigorous standards, curriculum and assessments; 3) sophisticated data systems and practices; and 4) deep support for low performing schools. The DDOE, including staff from the ECR Work Group, holds meetings several times a year with districts depending on their level of need. These plans can be leveraged to address the SSIP expectations. Additionally, the improvement plan that is developed as a result of the IDEA monitoring and accountability process can be utilized to address SSIP expectations. These plans address compliance, as well as quality improvements at the individual district level on compliance and results indicators, including reading performance. The DDOE has also decided to use the four strands mentioned above as the organizing frame for its Theory of Action.

In addition to an analysis statewide and within the DDOE, the SSIP Advisory Council examined what was occurring at the LEA level that could impact the capacity of local programs and schools to improve the SiMR. While in role-alike groups (described fully in section 3.a. Infrastructure-capacity building: in-depth data analysis), the Council members, (particularly the district level special education directors, practitioners and families groups), identified strengths and areas for improvement from their unique role perspectives. These culminated into the 8 prioritized contributing factors and root causes from which the coherent improvement strategies and theory of action emanated: 1) Supports and Services; 2) Fidelity of Implementation; 3) Available Resources; 4) Risk Factors/Social and Emotional Needs; 5) Inclusive Settings; 6) Teacher Standards; 7) Rigor of Instruction; and 8) Partnerships/Families.

#### **e. Representatives Involved in Development: Phases I and II**

##### **Phase I**

The members of two specific groups, the SSIP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council, conducted the intensive work and served to inform the development of the SSIP over the 11 months of its development. Throughout the process, additional members from within the DDOE or other state agencies and other interested parties were added to the original groups to keep them informed, to contribute their expertise to the process or to respond to specific questions that



arose. Finally, a variety of constituent groups were kept abreast of the two stakeholder groups' recommendations and the SSIP's development, and served to inform the DDOE of areas of agreement or suggestions for improvement.

DE has a long and rich history of stakeholder engagement in DDOE work specifically related to special education. In this small state, the voice of DE citizens is strongly recognized in the policies and practices of the DDOE. Therefore, in keeping with this culture and in recognizing the contributions that interested citizens bring to the DDOE work, it was important to provide all existing special education stakeholder committees with an opportunity for participation. It was decided to extend an invitation to each existing group (i.e., GACEC, APR work groups), to send two representatives. This also helped to keep all committees abreast of the SSIP work and provide a vehicle for each committee to inform the SSIP work. Also, these individuals have longstanding interest in special education success in the state, understand how DDOE operates and the initiatives they are providing to LEAs, and they bring a wealth of history and additional expertise to the discussions based on their personal situations. Also, as the DDOE was interested to plan for sustaining whatever changes would come from this work and to heighten attention on SWD, the DDOE invited staff and representatives that linked to the Governor's office and the legislative branch of government to participate. LEA special education administrators were selected to assure regional representation from each of the three counties in the state, and the public schools including charters, that are representative of rural, suburban and urban communities. This county-balanced representation was important given the demographic differences across the three counties that create unique student and school strengths and needs. DDOE asked that LEA directors identify parents of SWD to participate in order to reach parents from these diverse communities and to strengthen LEA/parent partnerships. Practitioners that provided services to SWD, understood the instructional process and RtI efforts at an LEA level were included to bring a data analysis skill set to the work and a knowledge-base at the level of practice. Once these initial parameters were established, the DDOE examined the committee's composition and added members as appropriate to assure several other parameters: 1) representatives from all of the stakeholder groups suggested by OSEP; 2) school professionals of various racial/ethnic groups representative of the students' race/ethnicity in DE; 3) school personnel that serve ELL; and 4) representatives of early childhood services.

### SSIP Work Group

The SSIP Work Group consisted of DDOE staff including the state director for IDEA (referred to as Director of the ECR unit of the DDOE); all of the ECR Work Group staff (as they are collectively responsible for the IDEA general supervision system); the Part B data manager; the 619 coordinator; the Part C interim state director; and the ELL state coordinator. Over the course of the planning process, the director of Early Development Learning Resources SSIP Work Group, the DDOE's director of assessment; several DDOE staff that coordinate the state's reading initiatives, coordinator of Title I, III, Perkins and Career Technology Education, and the Part C data manager. The Mid-South Regional Resource Center provided staff to facilitate throughout the entire process. Representatives from the U.S. Department of Education participated in some portions of the process, as well.

Table 1: Delaware SSIP Work Group		
Delaware Department of Education (DDOE)		
Teaching and Learning		
<u>Exceptional Children Resources Work Group</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• IDEA 619 coordinator</li> <li>• IDEA Data Manager</li> <li>• ESL/Bilingual/Migrant Programs coordinator</li> <li>• General Supervision (2)</li> <li>• Secondary Transition</li> <li>• Unique Alternatives &amp; Instructional Behavior Support</li> <li>• Procedural Safeguards &amp; Monitoring</li> <li>• SPDG (2)</li> </ul>	<u>K-12 Initiatives and Educator Engagement</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• English Language Arts (2)</li> </ul>	<u>Early Development and Learning Resources</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> </ul>
Education Supports & Innovative Practices		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate Secretary (Title I)</li> </ul>		
Assessment, Accountability, Performance and Evaluation		
<u>Office of Assessment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director</li> <li>• Statewide Assessments</li> </ul>		
Delaware Department of Social Services		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part C coordinator</li> <li>• Part C data manager</li> </ul>		
Federal Agencies and Organizations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-South Regional Resource Center/University of Kentucky-TA Service Coordinators (2)</li> <li>• National Center for Systemic Improvement-State facilitator</li> <li>• IDEA Data Center/University of Kentucky-State Liaison</li> <li>• US Department of Education/Office of Special Education Program staff (IDEA, ESEA, SPDG, IDEA group leader) (4)</li> </ul>		

SSIP Advisory Council

The SSIP Advisory Council was selected to be representative of parents of children with disabilities, local education agencies’ administration, district level teaching and related services staff, members of the IDEA State Advisory Panel, (in DE referred to as the Governor’s SSIP Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens), members from the stakeholder groups for each of the SPP/APR indicators, Developmental Disabilities Council, PIC, higher education personnel, the parent/teacher association, Governor’s office, DOE personnel from various branches of the Department, Part C agency staff, State Board of Education, and charter schools. Additionally, U.S. Department of Education staff participated for some portions of the process.

Table 2: Delaware SSIP Phase I SSIP Advisory Council	
Delaware Department of Education	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Academic Officer – Teaching and Learning</li> <li>• Chief Assessment Officer –Assessment, Accountability, Performance and Evaluation</li> </ul>	
LEAs	
<u>Administrators of Special Education and Student Supports</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Clay</li> <li>• Laurel</li> <li>• Colonial</li> <li>• Milford</li> <li>• Capitol</li> <li>• Smyrna</li> <li>• Indian River</li> </ul>	<u>Other School Personnel</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English/Language Learner Educator - Smyrna</li> <li>• English/Language Learner Educator - Indian River School</li> <li>• Special Education/Title I - Kuumba Academy Charter School</li> <li>• Early Childhood Educator - Appoquinimink School District</li> <li>• Early Childhood Educator - Capital School District</li> <li>• Teacher - Christiana School District</li> <li>• Special Education Specialist - Gateway Lab Charter School</li> <li>• School Psychologist - Red Clay School District</li> <li>• School Psychologist - Colonial School District</li> <li>• School Psychologist- Appoquinimink School District</li> <li>• School Psychologist -Caesar Rodney School District</li> <li>• Transition staff-Laurel School District</li> <li>• Transition staff-Caesar Rodney School District</li> </ul>
SPP/APR and Special Education Topical Groups	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPP/APR Committee: Access to the General Education Curriculum Committee</li> <li>• Transition Cadre (2)</li> <li>• Positive Behavior Support Cadre (2)</li> </ul>	
Families and Parent Advocacy Groups	
<u>Families</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Red Clay</li> <li>• Laurel</li> <li>• Capitol</li> <li>• Milford</li> <li>• Smyrna</li> <li>• Appoquinimink</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Information Center of Delaware (IDEA Parent Training Information Center)- Executive Directors (2)</li> </ul>
State Agencies and Councils	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governor’s Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (IDEA State Advisory Panel) (2)</li> <li>• Delaware State Board of Education (2)</li> <li>• Lt. Governor Denn’s Office</li> <li>• Delaware Early Childhood Council (2)</li> <li>• Developmental Disabilities Council</li> </ul>	
State Institutions and Organizations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delaware PTA (2)</li> <li>• Center for Disability Studies/University of Delaware (TA Provider)</li> <li>• Rodel Foundation</li> </ul>	
Federal Agencies and Organizations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-South Regional Resource Center/University of Kentucky-TA Service Coordinators (2)</li> <li>• National Center for Systemic Improvement-State facilitator</li> <li>• IDEA Data Center/University of Kentucky-State Liaison</li> <li>• US Department of Education/Office of Special Education Program staff (IDEA, ESEA, SPDG, IDEA group leader) (4)</li> </ul>	

### Other Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout the process, the DDOE routinely kept others abreast of the work occurring in the two groups and requested feedback. DDOE administration, at all levels of the organization, was routinely updated during internal leadership meetings. Throughout the 11 months of SSIP Work Group and SSIP Advisory Council Meetings, the DDOE posted all of the SSIP Advisory Council work and accompanying materials on the state website specific to the SSIP at <http://dedoe.schoolwires.net/Page/1763>. This provided the field and the public-at-large an opportunity to view the work of the stakeholders, stay abreast of the process, and provide feedback to the DDOE as desired.

Additionally, the ECR leadership conducted multiple presentations and workshops to the Superintendent's Group, the Directors of Special Education Regional Meetings, Teaching and Learning Cadre, the LIFE Conference (conference to address the lifespan of individuals with disabilities and those that advocate and provide services to this population), the Governor's SSIP Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (this group serves as the state's IDEA state advisory panel) and the State Board of Education. During these meetings, the participants engaged in small and large group activities to provide feedback on the SiMR and infrastructure analysis. These groups confirmed the focus on early grade reading and provided confirmation of the results that occurred through the work of the SSIP Advisory Council. Simulation activities were conducted with the superintendents and special education directors to help them understand the data and infrastructure analysis process that was occurring in the creation of the SSIP. LEAs examined their own student data and conducted an abbreviated infrastructure analysis. This activity was helpful to confirm the direction the DDOE was headed in Phase I but also to demonstrate the rigor of the process and to help build commitment to LEAs participation in Phase II of the SSIP.

### **Phase II**

The DDOE intends to continue having the breadth and depth of representation during Phase II as was represented in Phase I. All members of the Phase I SSIP Advisory Council have been invited to participate in Phase II. As of the submission date of this report, no one has indicated that they do not want to participate and the LEA special education directors have all committed to continued involvement. DDOE anticipates that whoever wants to participate will be included in the Phase II process in a meaningful and appropriate way.

The DDOE intends to utilize a variety of additional approaches and expertise or representation to best meet the expectations of Phase II. The DDOE anticipates a broad-based SSIP Advisory Council, similar to Phase I, to serve as the oversight group of Phase II. Throughout Phase II, smaller ad hoc committees of the SSIP Advisory Council will also be formed with invited expertise depending on the topic. These smaller topical groups (e.g., instructional delivery, program evaluation, data-based decision making, family engagement, diagnostics) will be formed with specific charges and membership expertise and will be time limited, with goal-directed agendas and outcomes, to inform Phase II development. Of particular interest is for ad hoc groups to include: persons with program evaluation experience, general and special education practitioners engaged in reading instruction, reading and special education diagnosticians, and parent/teacher and family advocacy organizations. To build commitment to the process, LEA district and building level administration will be critical as LEAs are selected for involvement in SSIP work.

## **f. Description of Stakeholder Engagement in Infrastructure**

As the SSIP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council began narrowing in on a focus during the data analysis process, a broad and in-depth infrastructure analysis process began (see section 3a Infrastructure Analysis-Capacity for more detail on the process in which stakeholders were engaged). The broad analysis was conducted early in the SSIP process through the SSIP Work Group utilizing the RRCP Infrastructure Template. Several months later, the SSIP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council engaged in a more in-depth analysis, utilizing the same template to examine state systems in greater depth. Additional state agency staff, both internal and external to the DDOE with expertise in state systems and the areas of data systems, reading initiatives, and early childhood, were added to the group at this time. During one of the meetings, visiting U.S. DOE staff participated in some of the discussions.

### **Broad Infrastructure Analysis**

During the broad analysis, the SSIP Work Group examined the components of the state system (governance, fiscal, quality standards, data system, accountability, PD, TA) that may be contributing to *high* and to *low* reading performance of children with disabilities. Initially, working individually and in pairs, the SSIP Work Group focused their responses on the reading performance of *children and youth with disabilities*. Later in the process, the SSIP Work Group, through consensus, narrowed their explanations to factors contributing to high and low reading performance *for just elementary aged children with disabilities*.

### **In-Depth Infrastructure Analysis**

The in-depth analysis was facilitated with the SIPP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council using the in-depth analysis sections of the RRCP Infrastructure Template. This process was accomplished during multiple meetings and through small mixed and role-alike groups, during which participants described the state systems and how these systems may be barriers or leverages for improving literacy performance in the early grades for SWD. This process allowed the groups to examine infrastructures of the state, as well as shed light on these systems at the LEA level. It also provided insight into root causes for low achievement and additional resources available from other organization and agencies, external to the DDOE that could or was already supporting literacy efforts for SWD.

## State-identified Measureable Result (SiMR) (Evaluation Tool-Component 2)

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### a. SiMR Alignment to Indicator

#### Baseline Data

Baseline and targets represent percent of SWD in grade 3 who participated in the DCAS and DCAS Alt 1 state assessment and who scored below proficiency in reading (Performance Levels 1 and 2). The recommended targets anticipate a **decrease** over six years in the percentage of students that score below proficiency.

<b>FFY</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Data</b>	66.3%

#### FFY 2014 – FFY 2018 Targets

<b>FFY</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
	66.3%	64.3%	61.3%	56.3%	49.0%

DDOE has identified the following State-identified Measureable Result (SiMR) which is aligned to the SPP/APR Indicator #3C: Proficiency rate for students with IEPs, against grade level and alternate academic achievement standards.

**Increase the literacy proficiency of students with disabilities in K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade as measured by a decrease in the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students with disabilities scoring below proficiency on Delaware’s statewide assessment.**

DE reports 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level proficiency targets for indicator #3C of the SPP/APR as measured by the DCAS and DCAS-Alt 1. As noted in the FFY 2013 SPP/APR submission, DE is currently in the process of an ESEA flexibility waiver renewal, and it is anticipated that 3C targets will be reset after the completion of the renewal process and an analysis of the spring 2015 state assessment data. Beginning with the spring 2015 testing cycle, a new set of statewide assessments are being introduced, the DeSSA. The results from these assessments (which will be reported for FFY 2014) will not be comparable to prior years. Therefore, it is also anticipated that Indicator #17-SSIP targets and baseline will be subsequently reset as a result.

Additionally, DCAS and DCAS-Alt 1 reporting for the FFY 2013 SPP/APR does not include students with speech-language impairments in the disability results as these students’ results are included in the general education population. Therefore, in order to maintain consistency of reporting, for FFY 2013 Indicator #17 (SSIP) baseline and projected targets, students with speech-language impairments are not included. This population of students will be included in the resetting of FFY 2014 Indicator #17 (SSIP) baseline and projected targets as indicated above.

DDOE has four levels of performance: Performance Levels 1 and 2 indicate below proficiency, Performance Level 3 indicates proficient, and Performance level 4 indicates above proficiency. The SiMR is intended to annually **decrease** the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade SWD at performance

levels 1 and 2 on the statewide reading assessment and alternative assessment. There are approximately 1200 SWD that are assessed annually in reading at grade 3.

### **b. SiMR based on Data and State Infrastructure Analysis**

All of the work to identify a SiMR occurred through the engagement of the SSIP Work Group, SSIP Advisory Council and other stakeholder forums (described in section 1f-Stakeholder engagement), culminating in the specific SiMR identified in this report. Throughout the data and infrastructure analysis process, the focus narrowed from reading to elementary reading to preschool-grade 3 literacy through a systematic process depicted in Figure 1 and described in Chart 1 (data analysis section of this report). The process proceeded from a series of questions that determined multiple and varied data sources to be examined. An analysis of this data indicated low reading performance for SWD surfacing in the early grades, with associated factors of race/ethnicity, language and placement.

The infrastructure analysis of several of the state systems, identified particular emphases of policies, resource allocations and initiatives specific to serving the literacy needs of children through age 5. Also, an examination of these systems revealed several specifically addressing special education. It was determined that the focus of resources and effort was at the middle school years; for students with cognitive disabilities; and with efforts in writing standards-based IEPs and adaptations to instructional materials for all ages of students. Yet, there appeared to be limited attention of state systems specifically attentive to literacy in the early grades.

The DDOE has several current initiatives and state policies that can leverage the work of the SiMR for greater commitment by the LEAs and sustained focus by the state. The Delaware State Board of Education's 2011-2015 Strategic Plan focuses on narrowing the achievement gap with an emphasis on literacy acquisition and to embrace deeper learning strategies and personalized learning structures to improve student performance. Senate Bill 51, codified the Board's Literacy Campaign in 2014 to focus on the level of literacy necessary to ensure success to students by providing educators the content and pedagogic skills to teach reading, and sets the stage for a monitoring, TA and PD system with which the SSIP can align.

The CCR internal plan of the DDOE integrates all of the facets of the Board's strategic plan, including a focus on literacy achievement throughout the grades. ESEA Routines were established for monitoring, accountability and TA directed toward supporting the expectations of the CCR which include literacy. PD, specifically as designed in Common Ground for the Common Core 1.0, 2.0 and soon to be developed 3.0, provides training to LEAs on elements of instruction and assessment for success in the Common Core, including the literacy standards. Finally, Senate Bill 229 was recently passed to support SWD not beginning to read by age 7 or older.

### **c. Child Level SiMR to Impact Indicator #3**

The DDOE, SSIP Advisory Council and other stakeholders believe that the SiMR "to decrease the percentage of students performing below proficiency on the statewide SWD within the state. During the discussion on the final wording of the SiMR and target setting, the SSIP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council concluded that if the SiMR was directed at moving students to the levels of proficiency (performance level 3 and 4), perhaps only a small group of students (those on the cusp of performance level 2 in grade 3) would receive the attention of the SSIP. Additionally, the data analysis showed that the percentage of students in performance level 1 has been increasing over time. To address this group, the DDOE decided that the SSIP needs to focus on student instruction in all grades prior to grade 3, and to direct intensive interventions to meet each student's unique needs. This work is intended to impact the performance of all children through grade 3.

#### **d. Stakeholder Involvement in SiMR selection**

Throughout the processes of data and infrastructure analysis, the groups kept more narrowly defining the focus from reading to elementary reading to PRE-K-3 literacy. The DDOE routinely re-introduced the narrowing focus of the SiMR to the SSIP Advisory Council and within other forums of constituents throughout the state. This process allowed for groups with limited involvement in the process and those of the SSIP Advisory Council, to reflect on the appropriateness of the SiMR based on the analyses being conducted. By presenting it to multiple groups, the DDOE was looking to confirm or disconfirm the appropriateness of the SiMR with respect to various constituent's perspectives throughout the state. In all forums, the focus on early literacy, preschool- grade 3, was reaffirmed.

(The Baseline and Targets, Data Analysis and Infrastructure analysis sections specific to stakeholder engagement provide greater details on the steps of the process that were used to actively engage stakeholders in the decision for selecting the SiMR.)

#### **e. Measureable Improvement**

The DDOE has set baseline data for FFY 2013 (66.3%) and targets expressed as percentages for each of the five years from FFY 2014 through FFY 2018. FFY 2018 (49.0%) reflects measureable improvement over the FFY 2013 baseline (66.3%) of 17.3 percentage points using the statewide assessments as the measurement tool.

In setting the baseline and measureable targets, the DDOE held conversations with the stakeholder committee (i.e., SSIP Advisory Council), to discuss: 1) which students to include in the target data; 2) how to address change in statewide assessments occurring for FFY 2014 data; 3) which measures to use in establishing the target data; and 4) the rigor for change anticipated over the 5 year period. The following points were raised during these discussions.

1. For the past three years, the percentage of students performing at performance level 1 has been increasing. Therefore, the trajectory needs to be reversed, before decreases are noted.
2. Third grade had the greatest percentage of students below proficiency than the other elementary grades in 2013-14.
3. The SSIP Advisory Council questioned a 10% change in one year as substantial and wondered if the state had ever made such an impact in the past to expect such a rigorous change.
4. The FFY 2014 data cannot be impacted by any events associated with the SSIP work as these results will be taken from spring 2015 testing which will occur only weeks after submission of the SSIP and therefore, FFY 2014 data will probably reflect little change.
5. The implementation strategies with LEAs will not be in place until the 2015-16 school year, suggesting that the FFY 2015 data may demonstrate minimal impact on performance. Therefore, a minimal change was anticipated for FFY 2015 with greater impact anticipated beginning in FFY 2016 and beyond.
6. The FFY 2014 results will reflect a new assessment and cannot be easily compared to the FFY 2013 baseline. Baseline and targets will need to be reset in the FFY 2014 submission.
7. An examination of national pilot data suggested that approximately 60% of SWD will be scoring at performance level 1, rather than the current state's 39.4% baseline. Thus a FFY 2018 target of 49% for combined performance levels 1 and 2 is substantial, which most likely will need to be revisited once the FFY 2014 data is available for analysis as it may be too unrealistic to have such a substantive change in such a short span of time.



8. Results for students identified with a speech-language impairment have been reported with the general population through the FFY 2013 data. The SSIP Advisory Council supportive of including these students in the disability reporting figures beginning in FFY 2014.
9. The SSIP Advisory Council is interested in all SWD being accounted for in this indicator, not just those taking the DCAS.

The majority of the SSIP Advisory Council was supportive of decreasing performance level 1 on state assessments as the particular measurement, baseline and target of the SiMR. There were mixed opinions as to whether other performance levels should be considered. During these conversations, the DDOE voiced a desire to decrease the percentage of students performing within the below proficiency levels while increasing the percentage of students within the proficient levels. The DDOE, taking this into consideration recognized that Indicator 3C was still being addressed by the state and wanted to impact all students that are not proficient. The resulting decision was based on the above points that were raised during the discussion with the SSIP Advisory Council and through further discussions within the DDOE.

Therefore, a focus for Indicator 17 on decreasing the percent of third graders scoring below proficiency in reading made for a strong compliment to Indicator 3C of increasing reading proficiency levels.

The SSIP has multiple leverage points to support these anticipated improvements:

1. Policy support for literacy education in general (Senate Bill 51) and special education in particular (Senate Bill 229).
2. Cross-branch monitoring for all students in the area of literacy (including SWD) through the ESEA routines and additional special education specific focus through IDEA monitoring.
3. Cross-branch development and implementation of the Common Ground for the Common Core 3.0 to be rolled out in FFY 2014.
4. Consolidated grant application to join fiscal resources to support literacy improvement in schools, generally and for SWD, specifically.

During Phase II of the process, the DDOE anticipates identifying other measurement tools for benchmarking the work done with students in earlier grades and their performance. These measures will assist in evaluating the success of the interventions as they will occur more frequently than annually, and they will be assessing other parts of the system not measured by the SiMR, but which contribute to successfully achieving the annual SiMR targets (e.g., early childhood knowledge and skills outcome, DIBELS data, RtI progress monitoring data-formative assessment measures).

## Coherent Improvement Strategies (Evaluation Tool-Component 4)

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### a. Selection

State staff, with MSRRC assistance, examined: 1) the Evidence/Inference charts of all the data reviews conducted by the SSIP Work Group and SSIP Advisory Council and 2) all of the infrastructure responses for the SSIP Work Group and SSIP Advisory Council's role-alike groups. The SSIP Work Group identified all comments that could be interpreted as contributing factors to addressing a proposed SiMR of: *More SWD age 5 functioning within age expectations and in grades 3, 4, and 5 achieving PL 3 and 4* (See Sections- Data Analysis 1. a. Process and Infrastructure 3. a. Capacity, for details on how the DDOE generated the information described above).

Using an informal application of Constant Comparative Method (Glasser and Strauss, 1967; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) for categorizing the comments, 26 categories were initially identified as factors contributing to low reading performance. The SSIP Work Group collapsed these groups to 21. These 21 factors were presented to the SSIP Advisory Council. The Council was charged with prioritizing them based on their individual professional/personal judgment as to those factors contributing most to low reading achievement in DE.

The SSIP Work Group used the results of the prioritization process and identified the top 8 factors or root causes of low literacy performance in the early grades in DE. The following is the rank order list (from high to low priority): 1) Supports and Services; 2) Fidelity of Implementation; 3) Available Resources; 4) Risk Factors/Social and Emotional Needs; 5) Inclusive Settings; 6) Teacher Standards; 7) Rigor of Instruction and 8) Partnership/Communication with Families.

Using a list of state initiatives examined during the infrastructure analysis (i.e, PD and TA activities), the SSIP Advisory Council and subsequently, the SSIP Work Group aligned those initiatives with the 8 root causes that were either likely or known to be designed to improve literacy achievement. The SSIP Advisory Council also identified additional initiatives within the state that appropriately addressed the root causes. The SSIP Work Group used this information to conduct a gap analysis to determine what was missing or what needed to be strengthened to improve the state's infrastructure or to support LEAs toward improving literacy achievement for preschool-grade 3 students. This led to a theory of action and subsequent improvement strategies. These strategies were shared with the SSIP Advisory Council to gain feedback that would be used to inform revisions to the SSIP prior to submission.

## Coherent Improvement Strategies

### School Leadership

DDOE will utilize **Implementation Science** principles to ensure fidelity of systemic change for the ongoing development of effective preschool-grade 3 ELL with disabilities through:

1. Sharing Implementation Science principles with teachers and leaders to strengthen their understanding of creating sustainable change.
2. Designing a vision, with supporting policies and structures, regarding the **cultural competence and sensitivity** of teachers and leaders specifically to the social/emotional, linguistic and cultural uniqueness of students and their families in the reading process.

3. Supporting and developing **partnerships and effective communication** among the staff of the DDOE, teachers, school administrators, and parent support organizations to provide literacy strategies to parents of children with disabilities, preschool-grade 3.

#### Common Core

The DDOE will enhance the current literacy initiative (Common Ground for the Common Core) for additional focus on improving the literacy achievement of preschool-grade 3 SWD within an educational program of rigorous standards, curriculum and assessments, through a **PD and TA system** that:

1. Addresses the 5 components of effective reading instruction within a balanced literacy structure and the use of progress monitoring, data-based decision-making and evaluation to improve student outcomes in Early Literacy Foundations and the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts.
2. Utilizes a process with school personnel to identify and use appropriate diagnostic tools for assessing literacy needs of SWD.
3. Prepares teachers to examine diagnostic findings, and identify and align appropriate instructional interventions and resources to meet the uniquely identified, diagnosed literacy needs of SWD, preschool-grade 3.
4. Encompasses a capacity-building model that includes multi-modal training to the school personnel engaged in the PD described above and provides them with TA through coaching and feedback.

#### Transparent Data

The DDOE will improve the consistency, sensitivity and flexibility of the **state's data systems** and engage their use:

1. Through creating consistent data governance features to help ensure valid data analysis
2. For targeting reading services for SWD from a variety of school and early childhood program level data (e.g., RtI, IEPs).
3. For aligning diagnostic information on preschool-grade 3 SWD to guide the selection of appropriate reading interventions based on each child's uniquely diagnosed literacy needs.
4. For conducting **monitoring and accountability** activities to specifically support early literacy and reading achievement of preschool-grade 3 SWD by enhancing existing state structures designed for these two purposes.

#### Support for Struggling Schools

The DDOE will develop a model that interfaces with existing DDOE processes for assisting LEAs, schools, and early childhood programs in identifying and addressing root causes of low early literacy and reading achievement of preschool-grade 3 SWD that:

1. Focuses on a small group of first adopter LEAs, schools or early childhood programs and scales up across the state over a five year period.
2. Utilizes evidenced-based strategies, implemented with fidelity, to address root causes.
3. Incorporates Implementation Science principles at the LEA, school and early childhood program level for addressing root causes.
4. Aligns **existing state initiatives and identifies new strategies and resources** to address LEA, school and early childhood program level root causes for low early literacy and reading achievement of preschool- grade 3 SWD.

## **b. Sound, Logical, and Aligned Strategies**

### **Alignment with Current State Initiatives**

The SSIP theory of action focuses on four strands that were selected to shape the expectations for state and LEA capacity building in order to improve literacy achievement of SWD by grade 3. The four pillars of the State's priorities (School Leadership, Common Core, Transparent Data, and Support for Struggling Schools) served as the framework to help symbolically and practically align the improvement activities of the SSIP with existing state efforts. Coherent improvement strategies for each theory of action strand were articulated. They also build upon existing state initiatives.

The state's CCR internal plan established the initiative Common Ground for the Common Core in 2013-14. In this third year of implementation (2015-16) the initiative will expand on the work of the prior 2 years with a focus on ELL and SWD. The SSIP will be aligned with and extend this initiative and concentrate on the specific subgroup of preschool-grade 3 students, which is the target group for the SiMR.

Additionally, the improvement strategies addressing cultural competence and sensitivity of teachers and leaders specifically to the social/emotional, linguistic and cultural uniqueness of students and their families in the reading process will build upon the resources and learnings from the Positive Behavior Supports initiative.

### **Research and Evidence-Based Practices**

The DDOE intends to utilize the principles of Implementation Science to structure the implementation of the SSIP. Research indicates that these principles are essential for building the capacity of systems and sustaining that change over time (Fixsen, Naoom, Blasé, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). This will shape the work of the DDOE with LEAs, and serve as an expectation of LEAs as they build capacity within their schools and throughout their district.

Additionally, the improvement of literacy achievement needs to be grounded in the 5 components of effective reading instruction within a balanced literacy structure (National Institute of Child Health and Development, 2000). These 5 components, identified in the research literature as evidenced-based practice, are: 1) read aloud; 2) guided reading; 3) shared reading 4) independent reading and 5) word study.

In addition, a tiered system to support literacy achievement is necessary. Throughout the systems change literature, a multi-tiered system of support is recognized as supportive of students' improvement in reading (Center on Response to Intervention, 2015). In DE, this system of RtI recognizes the success of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles at Tier I to support student achievement (National Center on Universal Design for Learning, 2014).

The Common Ground training, in which all LEAs and schools selected to participate in the SSIP work will be participating, incorporates the components of effective reading and UDL. Therefore, the focus of the SSIP's PD and TA to LEAs will be grounded in this research.

## **c. Addressing Root Causes and Building Capacity**

The improvement strategies emanated from a process that began with an examination of root causes of low reading achievement in the early grades which were generated throughout the data and infrastructure analysis process with the SSIP Work Group and SSIP Advisory Council. These were condensed from 26 to 21 and then prioritized to 8 root causes that would be

addressed through the SSIP: 1) Supports and Services; 2) Fidelity of Implementation; 3) Available Resources; 4) Risk Factors/Social and Emotional Needs; 5) Inclusive Settings; 6) Teacher Standards; 7) Rigor of Instruction and 8) Partnership/Communication with Families.

A gap analysis of existing initiatives aligned to these root causes was conducted (refer to as section 4. a. Coherent Improvement Strategies-Selection). The discussions that occurred during the gap analysis helped to solidify conclusions drawn from the infrastructure analysis and to identify other areas of need. There appeared to be a lack of initiatives that responded specifically to literacy instruction for SWD in the early grades. Additionally, the gap analysis highlighted the lack of literacy initiatives that addressed sensitivity to culture and the needs of ELL in the reading process. Also, the role of families in the literacy process was not present in existing initiatives and was suggested as an area of need during the infrastructure analysis.

The table below displays several of the issues that defined the root causes which then led to the development of a theory of action and subsequent improvement strategies.

<b>Table 3: Issues Defining Root Causes</b>		
<b>Root Cause</b>	<b>Evidence Supporting Root Cause</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>
<b>1) Supports and Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to make service desirable, student centered work</li> <li>• How to engage students to set goals</li> <li>• What kinds of supports and interventions are students receiving?</li> <li>• Do reading interventions match the need of the students?</li> <li>• Impact of secondary disability category and meeting needs</li> <li>• Instructional match – Is instruction being matched to the skill gaps and unique needs of the individual student?</li> <li>• Impact of scheduling on providing specialized instruction and/or interventions</li> <li>• What reading interventions are available at district level?</li> <li>• Not all preschool children have access to quality standards (public, private, etc.)</li> <li>• Instructional strategies to reduce gap</li> <li>• Practice of RtI (Response to Intervention) strong in some districts inconsistent in others</li> <li>• Inconsistent use of reading supports</li> <li>• PD opportunity-early learning role of Common Core to be defined</li> <li>• How Common Core can impact early learning</li> <li>• Need menu of interventions that are available as well as which should be employed to address specific needs</li> <li>• Be able to choose what meets needs of students</li> <li>• Are educationally appropriate testing accommodations being provided for all SWD</li> <li>• Are high quality assistive technology (AT) evaluations that yield educationally appropriate testing accommodations related to AT provided for all SWD?</li> </ul>	Matching interventions to student needs improves literacy achievement.
<b>2) Fidelity of Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fidelity of implementation of RTI</li> <li>• PD that tends to be stand-alone rather than including coaching or follow up</li> <li>• Coaching models in district</li> <li>• Sometimes RtI not implemented with fidelity</li> <li>• Checks and balances for curriculum implementation follow up – Is proper instruction happening?</li> <li>• Need monitoring (better/consistent) to ensure proper implementation- Monitoring and expectations for monitoring should be established and disseminated</li> </ul>	Fidelity of implementation improves outcomes.

<b>3) Available Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources at district and school level</li> <li>Funding for PD</li> <li>DDOE used to provide funding for reading and math specialists and no longer do</li> <li>Money/funding/time</li> <li>Good literacy coaches and specialists needed</li> <li>Funding for coaches and specialists</li> <li>Lack of resources to address cultural responsiveness</li> </ul>	Resources for coaches and PD directed at literacy will assist in improving literacy achievement.
<b>4) Risk Factors/Social and Emotional Needs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers need PD relating to providing interventions, supports, and services for students with behavioral, social/emotional, and/or mental health needs</li> <li>DSCYF (Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families) working on PD in trauma-informed care</li> <li>% of PL1 students who have more than 1 risk factor</li> <li>Socio-Economic Status (SES) –following risk factor, students in low SES show greater growth than non-low SES; students with disabilities (SWD) who are SES are more likely to score PL1</li> <li>African Americans (AA) perform at a lower rate</li> <li>Disability, SES and race (AA) are risk factors</li> <li>Support for behavioral concerns may take time away from literacy</li> <li>Teacher not prepared to communicate with families who only speak another language</li> <li>How long have the ELLs been in the country? What additional supports are needed?</li> <li>Teachers are not prepared to work with students with linguistic challenges</li> </ul>	Multiple factors, external and internal to a student, influence her/his literacy achievement.
<b>5) Inclusive Settings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rigor of instruction both to inclusion and small group; those included perform better</li> <li>Where are these children being served?</li> <li>Greater time in general education settings increases performance</li> <li>What services are students receiving in general education settings verses those in special schools</li> <li>LEA practices/ comparisons and continuum of services</li> <li>Achievement of students in A and B settings over C, What access do students have to curriculum, rigor?</li> <li>Achievement of A and B setting seems higher</li> <li>Does stigma of placement in a B or C setting lead to lower performance, participation by student?</li> <li>Rigor regarding initial placements, where is the initial placement, more likely to be successful when starting in general education setting?</li> <li>Are students receiving general education curriculum?</li> <li>LRE not uniform across districts</li> <li>Composition of separate classroom? Multi-grade?</li> <li>LEAs with center based programs – differences in curriculum?</li> <li>High numbers of self-contained placement or separate schools</li> <li>Poorly communicated inclusion model– a feeling that you can't stray from the curriculum</li> <li>Need guidance regarding working with students in intensive settings</li> </ul>	The rigor of the instruction needs to be addressed particularly as it relates to the LRE placement of the student.
<b>6) Teacher Standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborative teaching, is everyone Highly Qualified (HQ)?</li> <li>Quality of teachers providing reading instruction</li> <li>Common Core PD and instructional strategies who is involved?</li> <li>Charters with little infrastructure</li> <li>Charter limited depth and breadth of knowledge</li> <li>Need for special education staff to be HQ and have a deep understanding of CCSS and how it connects to students</li> <li>Qualifications of personnel are not good- just because a teacher</li> </ul>	Based on the performance of their students, teachers need on-going PD to keep abreast of effective

	<p>has a “degree” or has passed the Praxis for special education doesn’t mean they are qualified to actually teach that particular child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of qualifications and experience of some teachers- not prepared to work with the vast array of abilities and disabilities</li> <li>• Teacher not prepared to communicate with families who only speak another language</li> <li>• Teachers not prepared to work with students with linguistic challenges</li> <li>• Educate districts/school teams on early learning standards – What skills are our focus?</li> <li>• Need to change: more PD for early learning standards</li> <li>• Inconsistent teacher skills/ knowledge levels of reading interventions/strategies</li> <li>• Reading interventionists- need right people in right places</li> <li>• Appropriate training for those providing interventions</li> <li>• Need cultural awareness training</li> <li>• Focus on Cultural responsiveness has taken back seat to Common Core</li> <li>• Training is needed in spite of ongoing effort and appreciation for the concept</li> <li>• Most teachers attempt to be responsive culturally but some “just don’t know how”</li> </ul>	<p>instructional strategies to improve their students’ literacy achievement.</p>
<p><b>7) Rigor of Instruction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rigor of instruction both for inclusion and small group, those included perform better</li> <li>• Expectation of skills</li> <li>• Complex standards</li> <li>• PRE-K -2 , phonological awareness should come before phonics</li> <li>• What kinds of supports and interventions are they receiving?</li> <li>• Are they receiving general education curriculum?</li> <li>• Rigor and curriculum in more restrictive placements, concern about rigor?</li> <li>• Need more strategies for implementing Common Core State Standards</li> </ul>	<p>The rigor of the instruction needs to be addressed particularly as it relates to the placement of the student.</p> <p>Specific literacy skills are critical for success with complex standards.</p>
<p><b>8) Partnership/ Communication with Families</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership between parents and school needed</li> <li>• Family outreach is critical-Concern about reaching students who are homeless</li> <li>• Parents not sure of expectations of children with disabilities regarding literacy initiatives</li> <li>• District and school level information meetings on literacy initiatives in some districts, not others</li> <li>• Sharing of data with parents not consistent across districts</li> <li>• Parents need information more often than mid-marking period and end of marking period</li> <li>• RtI (Response to Intervention) report means little to parent- should be shared with parents but are not always shared</li> <li>• Teachers may need training in communication with parents</li> <li>• Access to resources</li> <li>• Are we really sending home data with an explanation of what data really means?</li> <li>• Share data more with explanation</li> <li>• Need to do better job sharing data with families including IEP progress reporting</li> <li>• Disconnect between using data within schools and sharing data with parents</li> </ul>	<p>Partnerships and effective communication with families are important components for engaging parents in their child’s literacy education.</p>

Through the root cause and gap analysis process, the DDOE arrived at several conclusions to help in identifying improvement strategies. There was an identified need for additional literacy supports and services for teachers to effectively instruct SWD. The rigor of the instruction needs to be addressed particularly as it relates to the placement of the student. Partnerships and effective communication with families are important components for engaging parents in their child's literacy education. Matching interventions to student needs improves literacy achievement. Fidelity of implementation improves outcomes. Resources for coaches and PD directed at literacy will assist in improving literacy achievement. Multiple factors, external and internal to a student, influence her/his literacy achievement. Based on the performance of their students, teachers need on-going PD to keep abreast of effective instructional strategies to improve their students' literacy achievement. Specific literacy skills are critical for success with complex standards. These root causes, as described as observations, needs and conclusions, informed the identification of improvement strategies.

To support school personnel and students within LEAs, schools and early childhood programs, the DDOE believes that Implementation Science principles must be used to improve literacy support, and in turn, improve student achievement.

#### **d. Strategies to Improve Infrastructure and Support LEAs**

The DDOE anticipates that Phase II of the SSIP process will provide the opportunity for the SSIP Work Group and subsequent stakeholder groups to articulate a plan of action to address the improvement strategies. During Phase I, the SSIP Advisory Council provided feedback to the DDOE on multiple features upon which to select LEAs as first adopters. These features include rural/urban, placement, ELL population, achievement levels, and participation in existing state initiatives. Stakeholders examined these features in small role-alike groups along the dimensions of effort and impact. Each groups' work will be examined by the DDOE to inform their selection of first adopters.

During the spring and summer of 2015, the DDOE anticipates the occurrence of several critical first steps to address the areas of need articulated in this plan. Initially, the DDOE staff will become familiar with and examine how to infuse the components of Implementation Science most appropriately within its design for implementation. Unpacking the theory of action and improvement strategies will be conducted in order to more fully understand the work to be accomplished, as well as to determine how to structure strategies for effective and efficient implementation. This will also include the identification of a budget which will leverage funds that can be reallocated and identify other sources to support any remaining anticipated expenses. The DDOE has already begun to identify the structures for stakeholder engagement and soliciting participation in Phase II work. Within the next several months, the DDOE anticipates engaging the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) and the IDEA Data Center (IDC) to assist in the development of a Request for Proposal for Professional Services (RFP) for the implementation design and services to LEAs and for the evaluation of the SSIP. By fall 2015, the DDOE anticipates identifying a process for scaling up and will select the initial LEAs, schools and/or early childhood programs for involvement in the first year of the SSIP work.

Additionally, the DDOE anticipates that the work of Phase II will include the need to address the capacity of the state and LEAs during the development of the specific activities, timelines and resources.



#### **e. Stakeholder Involvement**

Throughout the data and infrastructure process, the SSIP Work Group and SSIP Advisory Council were asked to identify evidence and inferences of root causes of low reading performance. From this work, multiple categories of root causes were identified that would contribute to the development of the coherent improvement strategies. Over several SSIP Work Group and SSIP Advisory Council meetings, the members identified, grouped and prioritized the root causes which they then linked to DDOE and other known initiatives that were addressing the areas of concern. As a result, the SSIP Work Group arrived at the specific improvement strategies from the categories of root causes that were prioritized by the SSIP Advisory Council: 1) Supports and Services; 2) Fidelity of Implementation; 3) Available Resources; 4) Risk Factors/Social and Emotional Needs; 5) Inclusive Settings; 6) Teacher Standards; 7) Rigor of Instruction; 8) Partnership/Communication with Families. These root causes informed the Theory of Action and led to the articulation of improvement strategies. Both the Theory of Action and the resulting improvement strategies were shared via email with the SSIP Advisory Council. Their written feedback was incorporated into the final SSIP submission.

## **Theory of Action (Evaluation Tool-Component 5)**

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### **a. Graphic Illustration**

Refer to the graphic illustration of the Theory of Action below.

### **b. Description**

During the SSIP Work Group and Advisory Group meetings, contributing factors, root causes and strategies to address low reading performance were identified, categorized and prioritized. A review of existing state plans revealed that the frame for the state Board's strategic plan was an appropriate organizing structure for the identified coherent improvement strategies. The strands from the state Board's strategic plan are: 1) School Leadership; 2) Common Core; 3) Transparent Data; and 4) Support for Struggling Schools.

Each strand leads to improved selection and implementation of evidence-based reading strategies for students who are in preschool through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. By focusing on all children with disabilities from preschool through third grade, the state will have the opportunity to continue to work with students as they enter formal education, build and align with the array of existing early childhood initiatives, ensure that the state and districts have the infrastructure to support strong literacy programs and teachers have the literacy strategies for all students to further ensure improved achievement in reading of all SWD by third grade. The data indicated that in third grade the largest number of students scored at performance level 1 and a greater number of students performed below proficiency (performance level 1 and 2, combined) than proficient (performance level 3) or above (performance level 4), therefore the SiMR measure (as discussed previously) is the reduction of students performing below proficient on statewide assessments. Strategies will: 1) focus on students in preschool through the early grades to reduce the numbers of students that otherwise would perform below proficiency by grade 3, and 2) support those students who continue to-struggle with reading SWD.

Additionally each strand of strategies impacts each of the other strands of strategies so that together they will result in systemic change, stronger infrastructure to support literacy and improved reading outcomes for students by third grade.

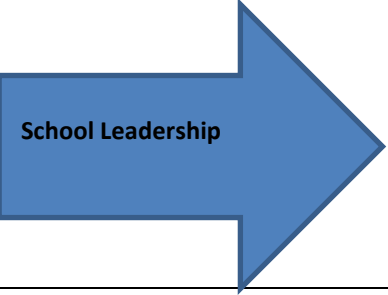
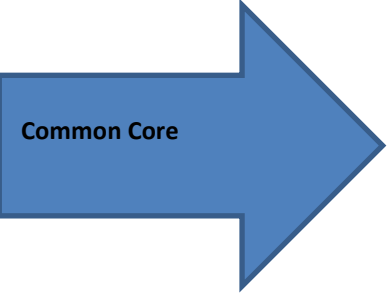


As depicted in the Theory of Action graphic, each strand contains strategies the DDOE will implement to support the changes and implementation at the district and school level. Many of the strategies are designed to build the capacity of the state as well as the capacity of the LEA and at the school level such as a system of PD, data driven decision making, and knowledge and use of Implementation Science principles. Those strategies will influence the broader state system, as well as the subset of LEAs and schools to be selected as first adopters and those in subsequent years of scaling up. The first adopters will be identified from reading achievement data, participation in Common Ground for the Common Core 3.0 and representative of each county in the state as the initial parameters. From this list, selection will be based on stakeholders' input in which they examined impact and effort of factors including, district demographics, LRE placement, ELL population, and race/ethnicity.

### **c. Internal and External Stakeholder Involvement**

Stakeholders, both internal and external to the DDOE, were involved in the development of the theory of action in the general manner as previously described (see section 3.f. Infrastructure-

Stakeholder Involvement). Specifically for Theory of Action, the SSIP Work Group developed some draft “If-then” statements based on the strategies and the contributing factors. The SSIP Work Group organized the strategies around the four organizers cited previously and developed draft statements. At a subsequent SSIP Advisory Council meeting, the Council broke into small groups and worked on the “If-then” statements based on the four organizers. The Council used key words from the SSIP Work Group’s statements for each of the strands and from there developed suggested “If-then” statements. The resulting theory of action is a combination of both the SSIP Work Group and the SSIP Advisory Council recommendations. The SSIP Advisory Council was provided with a written draft of this section for their input prior to final submission of the SSIP.

## Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) SSIP Theory of Action

Strands of Action	If	Then	Then	Then
 <b>School Leadership</b>	<p>If DDOE models and provides information to LEA leaders about principles of Implementation Science to lead change,</p> <p>If effective DDOE and LEA leaders model and expect culturally competent literacy instruction and sensitivity to the needs of students and families,</p> <p>If DDOE develops partnerships and effective communication among the staff of the DDOE, school administrators, teachers and parent support agencies to provide early literacy and literacy strategies for families,</p>	<p>Then LEAs and building leaders will model and provide information to staff about change strategies to improve instruction in schools;</p> <p>Then teachers will demonstrate culturally competent literacy instruction with linguistic awareness and be more sensitive to students' social/emotional needs;</p> <p>Then families will have access to information and training to increase their knowledge and skills to support early literacy and literacy practices;</p>	<p>Then appropriate evidence-based reading strategies will be selected and provided to meet the unique needs of preschool-3<sup>rd</sup> grade SWD.</p>	<p>Then grade 3 SWD will improve reading performance.</p>
 <b>Common Core</b>	<p>If DDOE provides a robust system of PD that supports implementation of literacy instruction in the Early Literacy Foundations and Common Core Standards using multi modal training, coaching, feedback, monitoring, data-based decision-making and evaluation,</p> <p>If DDOE provides training to the LEAs and preschool programs on diagnostic processes and alignment with instructional strategies including assessments and tools for the five components of reading,</p> <p>If DDOE communicates and holds high expectations for the performance of SWD,</p>	<p>Then LEAs will provide ongoing PD using this robust system to support Early Literacy Foundations and Common Core Standards in its schools.</p> <p>Then the LEAs will provide training to assessors and teachers on these diagnostic processes and selection of instructional strategies based on individual student needs;</p> <p>Then LEA and building leadership will be accountable for higher levels of improved performance for SWD in reading;</p>		
 <b>Transparent Data</b>	<p>If the DDOE expects LEAs to use high quality data and data-based decision making,</p>	<p>Then the State and LEA data management systems will be robust, consistent and flexible to accept and adapt for multiple sources of data, internal and external;</p>		
 <b>Support for Struggling Schools</b>	<p>If DDOE identifies a select subset of LEAs as first adopters and collaboratively partners with the LEAs to identify root causes to low reading achievement, and allocates differentiated, resources as appropriate,</p>	<p>Then the LEA partners with selected school(s) to identify root causes of low reading achievement and combines local resources with DDOE's resources to implement evidenced-based strategies with fidelity to address root causes;</p>		

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