

Phase III: 2017-18 School Year

Throughout winter and spring 2018, progress has continued through trainings completed around the department's second improvement strategy of **ensuring special education is the most intensive intervention in a continuum of service model**. As shared in the [fall update](#), this strategy is being coupled with foundation laid in the 2016-17 school year for the first improvement strategy of increasing access to core instruction. The 28 districts in the participating cohort are currently completing their spring trainings for the school year and identifying possible schools/educators to which the activities might be expanded in the coming school year.

Feedback from the trainings has been positive based on survey responses, although there have been some slight declines in the percentages from the fall 2017 surveys to the winter 2018 surveys (see below). The department has identified a possible cause of this decline to be the density and complexity of the trainings for strategy two. Accordingly, moving forward, the improvement strategies will be redesigned to more evenly distribute content and trainings that will ideally alleviate the amount of content in strategy two and improve the scope and depth of content in strategy one.

Survey Questions Regarding Trainings	Fall % Agree (n=409)	Winter % Agree (n=330)
My knowledge of how to make special education the most intensive intervention has increased.	96.9%	94.24%
My ability to make special education the most intensive intervention has increased.	96.43%	92.1%
I understand the next steps I need to take to implement this training.	96.8%	91.8%

As noted in the fall 2017 update, reviews of a sampling of IEPs were conducted in summer and fall 2017. Components of the IEP with the lowest scores, based on a state-established quality rubric for the writing of IEPs, included: narratives, present levels of performance, and measurable annual goals. In response to the scores in these areas, the department has imbedded in trainings for this second strategy elements of writing instructionally appropriate IEPs, which is the focus of strategy three of the SSIP.

Participating districts have continued to hold communities of practice. These more targeted and scripted communities of practice were developed by state personnel in response to concerns expressed in the 2016-17 school year, during which participants reported that the sessions were too frequent with unclear objectives. District-level facilitators also reported that the responsibility of developing content or discussion topics for the communities of practice was overwhelming. In the 2017-18 school year, these communities of practice sessions have transformed into beneficial, focused sessions to assist participants with implementation of the strategies content and provide refresher information for upcoming sessions.

Phase III: 2017-18 School Year – Communication and Report Submission

Over the course of this school year, the department has expanded the modes of communication around the SSIP to a diverse array of stakeholders to share successes and challenges and solicit feedback. Such forums of communication have included: the Partners in Education (PIE) conference, superintendents' study councils, Early Literacy Council, Disability Day on the Hill, Teacher Advisory Council, Governor's Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities, and written updates. A session at the April Governor's Advisory Council meeting was held during which information about both years of SSIP implementation were shared and feedback was requested. The input provided by these stakeholders will be included in reviews of the SSIP moving forward.

The Phase III – 2017-18 school year report was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education's office of special education programs (OSEP) on April 3, 2018. Data was collated from the last two school years to address the evaluation components outlined in the SSIP evaluation plan. In addition, the report provides guidance about updated timelines, revised content structures and strategy content, and establishes the new baseline for assessment data. To that end, **the new baseline percentage of students with specific learning disabilities in grades 3-8 scoring at or above Approaching on the ELA statewide assessment is 36.79 percent for the state. For the participating cohort, this percentage is 36.31 percent.** These data points will be the new baselines for review of the data moving forward, as Tennessee's state-identified measurable result is an increase by three percent annually.

Moving Forward: 2018-19 School Year

In the coming school year, the department will expand implementation efforts for the SSIP to the 20 new districts that have been selected for participation. These districts will have a similar implementation structure to the original 28 participating school districts, with implementation of strategy one – access to core instruction – taking place in the 2018-19 school year, and implementation of strategy two – special education in a continuum of service model – taking place in the 2019-20 school year. Some of these 20 new school districts will also be implementing strategies to address early childhood components of the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG).

The original cohort of participating districts will continue expanding the work of the SSIP across their district with support from department staff, as needed. Some districts have experienced great success and developed internal mechanisms by which the work can be supported. Other districts will require more nuanced and intensive support in their continued implementation efforts. Data for both the original cohort and new cohort will continue being aggregated and reported annually to both the public and OSEP.

For more information or questions about the SSIP, please contact Rachel.Wilkinson@tn.gov.