

PENNSYLVANIA
Part B

State Systemic Improvement Plan
Phase I

April 1, 2015



Pennsylvania State Systemic Improvement Plan Phase I

Executive Summary

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires states to develop a State Performance Plan (SPP) describing how the state will implement the requirements and purposes of the Act and improve outcomes for students with disabilities. In addition to the sixteen indicators currently included in the plan, states are now also required to develop a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) that has been designated as Indicator 17. This is a new requirement that is part of the US Department of Education's (USDE) implementation of a revised accountability system under the IDEA.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education's Bureau of Special Education (BSE) has collaborated with multiple stakeholders to select a focus for its SSIP. This focus area is called a State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR). Pennsylvania has selected increasing the graduation rate for students with disabilities as its SIMR.

To achieve results for students, the USDE expects states to adopt and implement innovative, evidence-based practices, otherwise referred to as Coherent Improvement Strategies. The BSE, in collaboration with stakeholders and the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities, has identified seven coherent improvement strategies that lead to higher graduation rates. Selected strategies will be implemented by schools following a comprehensive assessment of needs.

The BSE will be partnering with a number of Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to implement its SSIP. High quality training and technical assistance will be offered to schools through this partnership and lessons learned will be shared with all LEAs in the commonwealth to promote statewide improvement in graduation rates for students with disabilities. BSE will also partner with the federally funded Community Parent Resource Center *Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales* (HUNE). Community and mentoring materials and resources developed through this partnership will be shared with other organizations.

The SSIP is a comprehensive, ambitious, yet achievable multi-year plan for improving results for students with disabilities. This document represents Phase I of the plan and includes information regarding (1) data analysis, (2) state infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity, (3) the state-identified SIMR, (4) Coherent Improvement Strategies, and a (5) Theory of Action.

Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan

Monitoring Priority: General Supervision

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

Measurement

The State's SPP/APR includes an SSIP that is a comprehensive, ambitious, yet achievable multi-year plan for improving results for children with disabilities. The SSIP includes the components described below.

Instructions

Baseline Data: In its FFY 2013 SPP/APR, due April 1, 2015, the State must provide FFY 2013 baseline data that must be expressed as a percentage and which is aligned with the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities.

Targets: In its FFY 2013 SPP/APR, due April 1, 2015, the State must provide measurable and rigorous targets (expressed as percentages) for each of the five years from FFY 2014 through FFY 2018. The State's FFY 2018 target must demonstrate improvement over the State's FFY 2013 baseline data.

Updated Data: In its FFYs 2014 through FFY 2018 SPPs/APRs, due February 2016 through February 2020, the State must provide updated data for that specific FFY (expressed as percentages) and that data must be aligned with the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities. In its FFYs 2014 through FFY 2018 SPPs/APRs, the State must report on whether it met its target.

Baseline and Targets

Baseline Data

FFY	2013
Data	63.5%

FFY 2013 – FFY 2018 Targets

FFY	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target	63.5%	63.5%	63.5%	65.0%	66.5%

Description of Measure

Pennsylvania uses the 4-year cohort graduation rate calculation for federal accountability purposes. This rate is the number of students that graduate in a given year with a regular education diploma, divided by the number of high school students who entered four years earlier, with adjustment each year for students who transfer in and out. Graduation data are lagged one year. These data are collected through the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS), the state's longitudinal data system for all students, including students with disabilities.

Like most states, Pennsylvania received approval from the USDE to also calculate an extended year cohort rate to account for those students who need additional time to meet graduation requirements. Federal and state regulations guarantee that a student with disabilities can stay in school until graduation or age 21; in Pennsylvania over 5,000 students remain in school and are not reported in the 4-year rate. Many of them go on to graduate.

The baseline is derived from a subset of 12 LEAs in Pennsylvania that were selected to serve as learning sites (see the *Data Analysis* section of this SSIP for a description of the selection process). For the 4-year cohort that graduated in 2012-13, the number of students with disabilities that graduated is divided by the number of students with disabilities in the cohort to obtain the baseline calculation ($503/792 = 63.5\%$).

Targets: Description of Stakeholder Input

BSE and the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) reviewed state and national data regarding graduation outcomes for students with disabilities. BSE also shared information from the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) about the Center's experience in achieving results from similar initiatives in other states and LEAs. SEAP recommended the targets for this indicator at its February 2015 meeting.

Data Analysis

A description of how the State identified and analyzed key data, including data from SPP/APR indicators, 618 data collections, and other available data as applicable, to: (1) select the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities, and (2) identify root causes contributing to low performance. The description must include information about how the data were disaggregated by multiple variables (e.g., LEA, region, race/ethnicity, gender, disability category, placement, etc.). As part of its data analysis, the State should also consider compliance data and whether those data present potential barriers to improvement. In addition, if the State identifies any concerns about the quality of the data, the description must include how the State will address these concerns. Finally, if additional data are needed, the description should include the methods and timelines to collect and analyze the additional data.

DATA ANALYSIS

1(a) How the State identified and analyzed key data, including data from SPP/APR indicators, 618 data collections, and other data as applicable to determine the SIMR and the root causes contributing to low performance.

To begin the work of identifying a focus area for its SSIP, Pennsylvania's SPP/APR team (Part B Data Manager, the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) and BSE program leads, and research and evaluation consultant) analyzed key data from SPP/APR results indicators, with particular emphasis on graduation/dropout, performance on state assessments and post school outcomes. These data are readily accessible through PIMS, the Pennsylvania Department of Education's (PDE) Division of Data Quality, IDEA Section 618 data and SPP/APR submissions. Additional internal data sources were identified and pertinent data were examined, including ED Facts submissions, Pennsylvania School Performance Profiles, Consolidated State Performance Reports, and the Required Federal Reporting Measures, which report accountability, achievement, teacher quality data and National Assessment of Educational Progress data at the school, district and state levels. External sources of data were also examined, e.g., Annual Reports to Congress, research reports, and national Section 618 data.

To select its SIMR, Pennsylvania conducted extensive analyses of the above referenced data and assigned results indicators into groupings based on a number of different factors. These included whether high or moderate progress from baseline was observed and whether there were intervening variables that may be influencing progress and/or trends, e.g., significant changes in state assessments. Once these variables were examined, the state also considered opportunities for coordination with current general education initiatives, and the potential impact on other child-level outcomes. The results of the data analysis decision making process for results indicators and other considerations are displayed in the following four charts.

**SSIP/SPP/APR Analysis- Results Indicators
HIGH PROGRESS***

<p>Indicator 3: <i>Participation and Performance on Statewide Assessments</i></p>	<p>LEAs meeting AYP (3A)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% growth (grade span 3-5) • 43% growth (grade span 6-8) • 33% growth (grade span 9-12) <p>Participation in Statewide Assessments (3B)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent performance above 95% <p>Percent proficient or advanced (3C)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% growth reading • 15% growth math
<p>Indicator 4A: <i>Rates of Suspensions and Expulsions</i></p>	<p>Substantial decline in state suspension rate and the number of LEAs with a significant discrepancy</p>
<p>Indicator 5A: <i>Educational Settings inside the regular class 80% or more of the day;</i></p>	<p>5A - 18.5% growth</p>
<p>Indicator 5B: <i>Educational Settings inside the regular class less than 40% of the day</i></p>	<p>5B - 7.3% growth</p>
<p>Indicator 8: <i>School-Facilitated Parent Involvement</i></p>	<p>9% growth (using NCSEAM standard & Rasch Model analysis)</p>
<p>Indicator 14B: <i>Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school</i></p>	<p>11% growth</p>

*Growth is measured from the baseline of each Indicator

SSIP/SPP/APR Analysis- Results Indicators MODERATE PERFORMANCE*	
Indicator 1: <i>Graduation Rates</i>	3 years of data, relatively stable
Indicator 2: <i>Dropout Rates</i>	10-12% range
Indicator 5C: <i>Educational Settings in separate schools, residential facilities, or homebound/hospital placements</i>	4-5% range
Indicator 14A: <i>Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school</i>	Mixed, no steady trend
Indicator 14C: <i>Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school</i>	Mixed, no steady trend

*Growth is measured from the baseline of each Indicator

SSIP/SPP/APR Analysis- Results Indicators OTHER	
Indicator 15: <i>Resolution Session Outcomes</i>	State data consistent with CADRE analysis; limited influence by SEA
Indicator 16: <i>Mediation Outcomes</i>	State data consistent with CADRE analysis; limited influence by SEA
Results indicators 2, 4, 5, 8, 15 and 16 are not child-level outcomes, and therefore do not meet OSEP requirements to serve as a SIMR.	

Further Considerations for Selection of Graduation as SIMR

4-year adjusted cohort graduation rates for students with disabilities have not exceeded 75%; discrepancy observed between the graduation rates of the All Student Group and Students with Disabilities, and among certain race/ethnicity groups and disability categories

Strong consensus from stakeholders to improve school completion rates

Coordinates with general education initiatives under Pennsylvania's ESEA Flexibility Waiver

Focusing resources on school completion may impact other results indicators, such as Indicator 14

1(b) How data were disaggregated by multiple variables such as LEA, region, race/ethnicity, disability category, and placement.

Pennsylvania's 4-year cohort graduation rates for students with disabilities since 2010-11 are displayed below.

4-Year Cohort Rates for Students with Disabilities, 2010-11 through 2012-13	
2010-11	71%
2011-12	70%
2012-13	75%

Since the 2012-13 rate was substantially higher than the prior two years, additional analyses were conducted to gather insight. There were 3,801 more students in the 2012-13 cohort than there were in the 2011-12 cohort. Two school districts accounted for an increase of approximately 500 graduates, while 61 LEAs accounted for more than 1,450 additional graduates. A review of preliminary 2013-14 graduation data suggests a return to the levels observed in the first two years of cohort rate reporting, approximately 70%.

Pennsylvania's 4-year graduation rate for students with disabilities compares favorably with many other states. According to an April 2014 Report, *Public High School Four -Year On-Time Graduation Rates and Event Dropout Rates: School Years 2010-11 and 2011-12*, (Stetser & Stillwell, 2014), Pennsylvania's graduation rate for students with disabilities ranked among the top five states in 2010-11 and the top 15 states in 2011-12. However, while Pennsylvania's graduation rate for students with disabilities is high compared to many states, in-depth analyses revealed important patterns in the data.

There is a large gap in graduation rates between the All Student Group and Students with Disabilities; this gap has ranged from 11 to 14% over the past three years, is persistent, and preliminary 2013-14 data suggests that the gap may be widening.

4-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate Comparison			
Year	All Students	Students with Disabilities	Discrepancy
2010-11	83%	71%	12%
2011-12	84%	70%	14%
2012-13	86%	75%	11%

Graduation rates for Hispanic and Black students are much lower than the All Student graduation rate each year.

4-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates for Selected Racial/Ethnic Groups			
Race/Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Hispanic	65%	68%	71%
Black	65%	68%	73%
White	88%	89%	90%
All Student Group	83%	84%	86%

Dropout rates for Hispanic and Black students with disabilities are generally higher than the overall dropout rates for all students with disabilities each year.

Dropout Rates for Selected Race/Ethnic Groups			
Race/Year*	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Hispanic	19%	23%	19%
Black	12%	13%	10%
White	10%	11%	10%
Overall rate for all disabilities	11%	12%	11%

*618 data using the OSEP dropout formula

Students with emotional disturbance have the highest dropout rates, approximately double the overall rates for students with disabilities.

Dropout Rates for Selected Disability Categories			
Disability/Year*	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Intellectual Disability	8%	8%	8%
Emotional Disturbance	22%	24%	23%
Other Health Impairment	7%	8%	9%
Specific Learning Disability	10%	5%	10%
Autism	2%	2%	2%
Overall rate for all disabilities	11%	12%	11%

*618 data using the OSEP dropout formula

Females in the All Student Group consistently graduate at a rate at least 4% higher than males.

4-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates by Gender, 2010-11 through 2012-13			
Gender	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Males	81%	81%	83%
Females	85%	86%	88%

Important recent research findings reinforce that the data patterns observed above are fairly universal. The 2014 monograph, *Decreasing Dropout Rates for Minority Male Youth with Disabilities from Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Backgrounds* (Faircloth, Toldson and Lucio, 2014) reported that while graduation rates have risen in the nation, Latino students have the highest dropout rates of any racial or ethnic group, and Latino males with disabilities drop out at an even higher rate. Identified causal factors include poverty, health issues, emotional/behavioral disorders, English fluency and cultural factors. For African American males, school experiences such as grade retention, suspensions and expulsion, low grades, truancy, numerous transfers from one school to another and unsupported transition, especially to the ninth grade, are all strong risk factors that mark a child as more likely to drop out of school.

The findings of another 2014 report, *School Mobility, Dropout, and Graduation Rates Across Student Disability Categories in Utah* (Barrat, et al., 2014) coincide with Pennsylvania's conclusion that among students with disabilities, those with emotional disturbance having the highest dropout rates.

After the state selected its SIMR, it completed additional data analyses to identify a group of LEAs to serve as learning sites for the SSIP. In order to impact graduation rates at learning sites, the state considered the number of students eligible to graduate, the most recent two years of cohort graduation data, and other student demographics, including race/ethnicity. Additional parameters for selection of sites included whether the LEA was already engaged in other general education and/or special education graduation-related initiatives and geographic alignment with PaTTAN regions (to maximize the deployment of educational consultants and facilitate local sharing of expertise). Learning sites are located in the two largest school districts in the state, in a cyber charter school as well as suburban and rural areas. Learning sites are also geographically distributed so that there is an equal distribution in the western, central and eastern areas of the commonwealth.

Twelve LEAs will serve as learning sites for the SSIP. As described in the Theory of Action section of this SSIP, Pennsylvania is adopting the NDPC-SD's five-phase Intervention Framework to implement its SSIP work with these learning sites. The first three phases of the framework, i.e., developing local leadership teams, analyzing data, and identifying target areas for intervention, will identify root causes for low graduation rates for students with disabilities.

Improving performance in the 12 LEAs is expected to improve overall performance on SPP/APR Indicator 1 (graduation rates for students with disabilities) because scaling up activity, as described in the infrastructure and coherent improvement strategies sections of this SSIP, will be implemented statewide, leading LEAs to focus resources on graduation outcomes.

1(c) Concerns about the quality of the data and if so, how the State will address these concerns.

Pennsylvania has identified no specific concerns about the quality of data used in these analyses.

1(d) How the State considered compliance data and whether those data present potential barriers to improvement.

An additional analysis was conducted to determine whether compliance data presented barriers to improvement in graduation rates at the state level and within the 12 LEAs that will serve as learning sites. The state examined its monitoring data and determined that all noncompliance findings were corrected within timelines and did not present barriers to improvement. In a small number of LEAs, a relationship was observed between lower graduation rates and monitoring findings for Indicator 13 (IEP requirements for secondary transition) or Indicators 4A and B (suspension rates). However, while a relationship was observed and will be further considered when conducting LEA's root cause analyses, these compliance data do not present a barrier to improvement.

In addition to examining compliance data, BSE also analyzed graduation outcomes/results data from its monitoring system. LEAs participating in cyclical monitoring complete a Facilitated Self Assessment that includes the topical area of graduation and dropout. LEAs disaggregate and reflect upon their general and special education graduation and dropout data. Other considerations such as ensuring data accuracy, services for highly mobile students, incentives for graduation, and comparison of trends in general education and special education graduation rates are addressed. If an LEA does not meet the SPP/APR target for graduation and/or dropout, it is required to submit an improvement plan to the BSE. The BSE monitors implementation of the improvement plan until closure is achieved.

A number of LEAs have engaged in improvement planning for graduation and/or dropout prevention over the past several years. Positive outcomes have been achieved; however, in some cases gains

were not robust and/or sustained. Previous improvement plans will be considered when conducting root cause analyses with the 12 learning sites.

1(e) If additional data are needed, a description of the methods and timelines to collect and analyze the additional data.

None identified.

1(f) Description of stakeholder involvement in the data analysis.

The SPP/APR team meets with the SEAP on an ongoing basis, to discuss data collections and data analysis, and receive recommendations for the SPP/APR, including the SSIP. An initial draft of SSIP data was presented to SEAP in fall 2014, and the final data analyses included in this SSIP were shared with the panel at its February 2015 meeting. In addition to SEAP, BSE involved multiple stakeholders during the Phase I SSIP process, including conducting statewide input sessions and presentations at statewide conferences.

Data were also shared and discussed among various PDE bureaus and offices, as described in the *State Infrastructure Analysis* section of this SSIP.

SSIP Core Workgroup Members and Functions

The SSIP Core Workgroup was identified to lead the development of the SSIP. This team was responsible for completion of all steps of the SSIP Phase I process including: (1) data analysis, (2) state infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity, (3) state-identified SIMR, (4) coherent improvement strategies, and (5) Theory of Action. The SSIP Core Workgroup was also vital in planning and implementation of OSEP’s onsite technical assistance visit to Pennsylvania in September 2014. The SSIP Core Workgroup has begun many Phase II activities, including: infrastructure development, support for LEA implementation of evidence-based practices, and evaluation plan.

Role in Workgroup	Title/Agency
SSIP Team Lead	Director, PDE Bureau of Special Education
PennData/PIMS Data Specialist	Part B Data Manager, PDE Bureau of Special Education
IDEA, Chapter 14, Monitoring, SPP/APR Specialist	Consultant, PDE Bureau of Special Education
Evaluation Specialist	Research and Evaluation Consultant, PDE Bureau of Special Education
TA Support Staff, Evidence-Based Strategies Specialist	Assistant Director, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network

Internal Stakeholders Members and Functions

The internal stakeholder groups that participated in Phase I of the SSIP are listed below. The internal stakeholders assisted with the identification and analysis of key student outcome data, analysis of current state infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity, identification of the SIMR, identification and selection of coherent improvement strategies, and development of the Theory of Action.

Internal Stakeholders	Role in SSIP Development	Membership
PDE Bureau of Special Education Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with OSEP TA visit • Review of progress in implementing all activities within Phase 1 of SSIP • Assist in the data analysis, infrastructure, SIMR, coherent improvement strategies, and Theory of Action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSE Director • BSE Assistant Director • BSE Policy Adviser • BSE Fiscal Chief • BSE Regional Division Chiefs • BSE Part B Data Manager
Other PDE bureaus, offices, and initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with OSEP TA visit • Analysis of state infrastructure • Identification of SIMR • Identification of improvement strategies • Review of Theory of Action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction • Bureau of Career and Technical Education • ESEA Title I office • ESEA Title III office • Division of Migrant Education - Diploma Project • Corrections Education • Homeless Education • Early Warning System Dashboard Initiative
Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with OSEP TA visit • Review of progress in implementing all activities within Phase 1 of SSIP • Assist in the data analysis, infrastructure, SIMR, coherent improvement strategies, and Theory of Action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PaTTAN Assistant Director • PaTTAN consultants

Internal	Role in SSIP Development	Membership
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Stakeholders		
SPP/APR team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist with data collection and analyses for PA's SPP/APR Ensure that data for each indicator are accurately collected, analyzed, and reported within timelines Meet on an ongoing basis with the SEAP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See SSIP Core Workgroup
PDE Data Governance Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure collaboration among all required state and federal data collections Meet on an ongoing basis and makes recommendations for improving data collections, analyses, and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSE's Part B Data Manager Representatives PDE multiple bureaus, offices, and initiatives
BSE and IU Data Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing trainings, technical assistance, and face-to-face meetings are coordinated by the BSE to ensure data are collected, analyzed, and accurately reported within timelines at the regional level IUs work with LEAs to collect, analyze, and report the data to the PDE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSE staff, including Part B Data Manager PennData/PIMS managers representing 29 regional Intermediate Units

External Stakeholders Members and Functions

In addition to the SSIP Core Workgroup and the Internal Stakeholders, Pennsylvania relied on the input from a number of different external stakeholder groups. The membership of these groups and their roles in the SSIP development are described in the table below. The external stakeholders supported the review of data, analysis of infrastructure, selection of SIMR, coherent improvement strategies, and Theory of Action in multiple ways. Other members were added at different points when specific content expertise was needed.

External Stakeholders	Role in SSIP Development	Membership
Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSE and the SEAP reviewed state and national data regarding graduation outcomes for students with disabilities • BSE also shared information from the NDPC-SD about the Center’s experience in achieving results from similar initiatives in other states and LEAs • SEAP recommended the targets for this indicator at its February 2015 meeting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/Individual w/ Disability • Transition Services administrator • Director of Corrections and Alternative Education • Public, private and charter school community • Administrator of Programs for Students with Disabilities • PA State Education Association • Bureau of Special Education • Classroom teacher of children with disabilities • Higher education faculty • Provider of professional development services
National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD)	<p>Supported Pennsylvania through the development of the SSIP, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome data analysis • Analysis of state infrastructure • Identification of SIMR • Identification of coherent improvement strategies • Development of Theory of Action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDPC-SD Director • NDPC-SD Project Coordinator

External Stakeholders	Role in SSIP Development	Membership
North East Regional Resource Center (NERRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NERRC participated in OSEP TA visit • PA team attended the NERRC Regional SSIP Planning Meeting in Springfield Massachusetts • PA team included the Chairperson of the SEAP • PA Team discussed potential SIMRs under consideration and state infrastructure 	PA team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDE BSE Director • PDE Part B Data Manager • PDE BSE Advisers • SEAP Chairperson • PDE BSE Policy Adviser • SPP/APR Specialists • Research and Evaluation Consultant • Evidence-based Strategies Specialist
Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales (HUNE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSE is also collaborating with <i>HUNE (CPRC)</i> to support the SSIP • HUNE is working to expand its after school and summer programs to help Hispanic students with disabilities remain in school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HUNE Director • HUNE Staff

In addition to ongoing work with stakeholders, Pennsylvania’s early intervention and school age Part B programs jointly convened a series of Stakeholders Input Sessions. The goal of the sessions was to provide an opportunity for the general public, including both internal and external stakeholders, to review data on the SPP indicators, including Indicators 11 and 17, and discuss potential targets.

Information was gathered on the identification of potential SIMRs and coherent improvement strategies. The Stakeholders Input Sessions were held in the major population areas of the state: Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, and Philadelphia. General public included local early intervention program leadership, school-age local education agencies, intermediate units, service delivery staff, parents, advocacy groups (PTI and CPRC), and TA providers.

Commitment of Stakeholders to Participate in Phase II of the SSIP

The SSIP Core Workgroup has already begun work on the activities in Phase II of the SSIP process. A work plan for Phase II has been developed to ensure that all tasks are completed within timelines for submission in 2016. BSE leadership continues to support the ongoing work of the SSIP, including the development of Phase II activities and the implementation of coherent improvement strategies. BSE leadership also supports the continued involvement of all internal and external stakeholder groups in Phase II activities. Pennsylvania will continue to reach out to stakeholders as Phase II SSIP activities are implemented.

Analysis of State Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity

A description of how the State analyzed the capacity of its current infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity in LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for children with disabilities. State systems that make up its infrastructure include, at a minimum: governance, fiscal, quality standards, professional development, data, technical assistance, and accountability/monitoring. The description must include current strengths of the systems, the extent the systems are coordinated, and areas for improvement of functioning within and across the systems. The State must also identify current State-level improvement plans and initiatives, including special and general education improvement plans and initiatives, and describe the extent that these initiatives are aligned, and how they are, or could be, integrated with, the SSIP. Finally, the State should identify representatives (e.g., offices, agencies, positions, individuals, and other stakeholders) that were involved in developing Phase I of the SSIP and that will be involved in developing and implementing Phase II of the SSIP.

ANALYSIS OF STATE INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT AND BUILD CAPACITY

2(a) How the State analyzed the capacity of its current infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity in LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for children with disabilities.

Pennsylvania Statewide System of Support

The Pennsylvania Statewide System of Support consists of PaTTAN and Intermediate Unit Training and Consultation (IU TaCs) personnel. The system is designed to directly support the efforts and initiatives of the BSE and build the capacity of LEAs and other providers to serve students receiving special education.

PaTTAN provides a full array of professional development and technical assistance targeted to improving student results. It also provides support to schools, parents, educators, students, and administrators through statewide initiatives. There are three PaTTAN locations, one in each of the eastern, central and western regions of the commonwealth. In addition to PaTTAN, BSE funds five full-time TaCs at each of Pennsylvania's 29 IUs. The system is supported with federal IDEA funds.

PaTTAN staff and IU TaCs support the improvement work of the SPP/APR and also provide technical assistance needed by LEAs as the result of state monitoring. For the SSIP, these personnel will provide the onsite technical assistance needed by LEAs to increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities.

Following are two examples that demonstrate Pennsylvania's successful implementation, scaling up, and sustainability of statewide initiatives. These initiatives will serve as the model for scaling up the SSIP graduation initiative.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Initiative – Example 1

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtII) has been supported as a statewide initiative by the PDE's Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction and the BSE since 2005. In Pennsylvania, RtII continues to be defined as (1) a standards-aligned, comprehensive school improvement framework, and (2) an alternative method for identifying students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD).

The initial focus of RtII training and technical assistance was to assist LEAs with conceptualizing, prioritizing and operationalizing the technical structures associated with PA's RtII framework (i.e., standards-aligned high quality core instruction, shared ownership, universal screening, tiered intervention, data-based decision-making, professional development, eligibility determination, and parent engagement), while simultaneously supporting five elementary school pilot sites with implementation and formal evaluation of site-based outcomes following several years of implementation.

Capacity-building occurred through Pennsylvania's layered technical assistance system (i.e., PaTTAN regional offices, 29 IUs, stakeholders and work groups, model RtII sites, training modules, print products, research analyses, college and university regional forums, and collaboration with RtII national experts and centers). The RtII initiative was subsequently expanded to include a focus on implementation at the secondary level, and on culturally responsive instruction with diverse and/or English Language Learners (ELLs) using similar approaches (e.g., work groups, print products, webinars, PA's Middle School Learning Site Project, and research analyses).

Pennsylvania has funded numerous research studies that have found positive longitudinal outcomes among RtII adopters relative to elementary and secondary literacy outcomes, reduced rates of identification for SLD and qualitative improvements in the areas of shared leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration and job satisfaction among personnel with unique roles and functions. In addition, Pennsylvania has refined its RtII/SLD approval process, whereby interested schools must submit evidence of appropriate implementation of the RtII framework.

Pennsylvania's LEA application for SLD determination has received national attention, and is being formally assessed by a prominent Advisory Panel for its technical adequacy. The RtII initiative has recently been rebranded under the broader umbrella of MTSS and conceptually expanded as a standard protocol and problem-solving process (hybrid model).

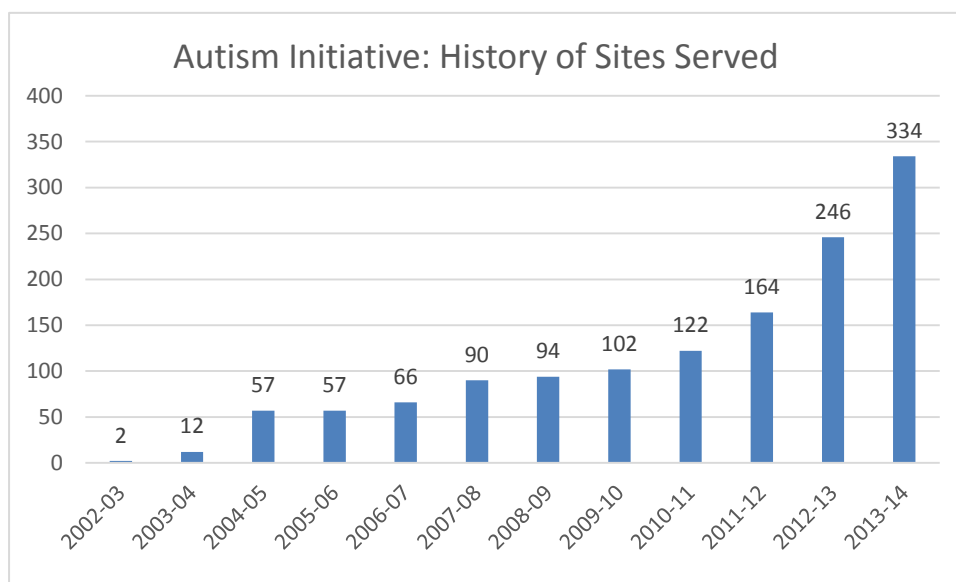
In order to help schools sustain MTSS, Pennsylvania's training and technical assistance plan:

- facilitates coherence between Pennsylvania Core Standards (the what), MTSS (the how) and Educator Effectiveness (the measure of bridging the what and the how);
- prioritizes facilitation skills and the implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) as a recommended structure for advancing context-embedded learning, research to practice efforts, peer coaching, and interdisciplinary collaboration;
- expands educator expertise in the area of common assessments (i.e., formative and summative) to include the development of reliable and valid performance tasks and rubrics (Student Learning Objectives) aligned to Pennsylvania Core Standards;
- expands the use of RtII for SLD determination to include reading, writing and mathematics K-12;
- rebrands RtII as MTSS Academic and Behavior;
- provides for research using the Pennsylvania Value Added Assessment System (PVAAS), the Pennsylvania State System of Assessment (PSSA) and SLD outcomes to determine if there are differences in student, grade, and building level outcomes between MTSS and non-MTSS schools;
- establishes technical adequacy of PA's RtII/SLD application tool;
- establishes regional forums with administrative stakeholders regarding the use of RtII for SLD determination;

- expands the expertise of Tier 3 problem-solving teams to include decision-making, alignment of instructional intensity across tiered providers, and implementation of evidence-based methodologies; and
- offers a continuum of training and technical assistance that includes virtual support, onsite support, full-day workshops, summer institute, webinars, print products, training modules, and PLCs.

Autism Initiative - Example 2

The increased prevalence and evidence base for treatment suggested the need for school-based programs for students with autism that are well-structured and based on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). During the past 12 years, the PaTTAN Autism Initiative has provided ABA-focused training and onsite technical support to a wide range of public school autism support programs. The chart below demonstrates the successful scale up of this initiative.



Technical Assistance

The technical assistance provided by Pennsylvania’s Statewide System of Support is aligned with the principles of OSEP’s Results Driven Accountability (RDA). All technical assistance provided by PaTTAN and IU TaCs is based upon current research and best practice in the field. Data are collected before, during, and after the implementation and delivery of technical assistance to ensure direct benefit for students with disabilities. Each year, statewide training and technical assistance plans associated with each broad initiative are informed by data and outcomes, LEA needs, and stakeholder input. Collaboration continues to be one of the most important mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of technical assistance in Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Statewide System of Support is designed to provide a continuum of timely technical assistance to LEAs including, but not limited to:

- educational consultants with expertise in every aspect of special education;
- onsite guided practice technical assistance at the LEA, building and classroom levels;

- collaboration with other agencies and institutions of higher education;
- summer institutes, e.g., National Autism Conference, Secondary Transition Conference;
- webinars and face-to-face training sessions;
- federal and state regulations training and consultation; and
- website resources (SSIP trainings, publications, and lessons learned will be featured on the PaTTAN website).

Professional Development

Each BSE/PaTTAN initiative is required to develop a multi-year professional development plan aligned with the principles of OSEP's RDA, and must demonstrate how the professional development activities will equip service providers with the skills needed to improve results for students with disabilities. Collaboration among the PaTTAN offices, IU TaCs, and stakeholders continues to be one of the most important mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of professional development in Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Statewide System of Support provides a full array of training and professional development opportunities targeted at improving outcomes for students with disabilities. Current professional development opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- PA Standards Aligned System (SAS) available to all LEAs;
- Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project for students with deaf-blindness and their families;
- State Professional Development Grant (SPDG) Project MAX for students with complex support needs;
- Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Program (PIL) for administrators;
- Comprehensive Planning Tools for LEAs;
- National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) Training;
- training opportunities for service providers;
- ongoing federal and state regulations technical assistance;
- training on assistive technology and accessible instructional materials for students with disabilities; and
- website resources.

2(b) Description of the State's systems infrastructure (at a minimum the governance, fiscal, quality standards, professional development, data, technical assistance, and accountability/monitoring).

Governance

PDE is comprised of an Executive Office with a Secretary of Education, Office of Chief Counsel, Office of Government Relations, and the State Board of Education. Under the Executive Office, there are five deputies: Office of Administration, Office of Child Development and Early Learning, Office of Postsecondary Education and Higher Education, Office of Commonwealth Libraries, and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). The OESE is responsible for statewide development, administration and improvement of public and nonpublic schools that serve students in

kindergarten through the 12th grade. The major components are general education, career and technical education, special education, community and student support services and school services.

The current organization of PDE facilitates collaboration and coordination among the various bureaus, offices, and initiatives that work on increasing graduation rates for all students, including students with disabilities and diverse learners.

Located within the OESE, the BSE provides effective general supervision through a comprehensive system that encompasses planning, monitoring, complaint management, dispute resolution, professional development, and technical assistance. BSE staff is organized with one professional Special Education Adviser serving a designated geographical area. This individual reviews special education plans and also serves as the chairperson for monitoring teams in the assigned area; this structure supports acquisition of a strong knowledge base with expertise in regional issues and needs.

Fiscal

Pennsylvania has a long history of solid financial support for special education, as evidenced by increased state revenue, even during challenging financial conditions. In addition to the 2014-15 Basic Education funding of \$5,730,079,000, Special Education funding has grown from \$1,026,815,000 in 2012-13 and 2013-14 to \$1,046,815,000 in 2014-15.

LEAs participating as learning sites in this SSIP will receive, at no cost, ongoing onsite professional development and technical assistance from highly qualified experts in MTSS, behavior, secondary transition, parental engagement, early warning systems, attendance strategies, alternative programming, and culturally responsive instruction. In addition, BSE will provide financial support to each LEA for multiple years to ensure implementation of the coherent improvement strategies and increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities.

Quality Standards

Pennsylvania Core Standards offer a set of rigorous, high-quality college and career ready expectations in English/language arts and mathematics that all students, including students with disabilities, should master by the end of each grade level. Pennsylvania Core Standards are robust and relevant to the real world and reflect the knowledge and skills young people need to succeed in life after high school, in both post-secondary education and a globally competitive workforce.

Data

Throughout the span of the SPP/APR, Pennsylvania has maintained 100% compliance with timely and accurate submission of required federal data. To sustain this high level of performance, the following measures will continue to be utilized:

- analyzing data at the IU and state levels, addressing and correcting all flags within timelines before submission to ED Facts;
- conducting statewide trainings for all IU Data Managers and Special Education Directors;
- posting all training materials online, including trainings and FAQs; and
- reporting LEA and statewide data to the public, including LEA Special Education Data Reports that reflect the performance of each LEA in meeting SPP/APR targets.

Accountability

PDE has a number of accountability measures to ensure that its current infrastructure supports improvement and builds capacity of LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for students with disabilities. Components of the accountability system include:

- *Special Education Plans:* Every school district submits a special education plan to BSE describing the local Board of School Director's commitment to ensure that a quality education will be provided to students with disabilities. The plan describes how the district will comply with requirements of the IDEA and achieve positive outcomes for students. The special education plan reflects ongoing programs and services and also incorporates anticipated changes during the upcoming three years. It also addresses any improvement planning needs identified through cyclical monitoring.
- *Special Education Monitoring:* BSE monitors programs for school-age students on a cyclical basis. Monitoring encompasses both procedural requirements and performance outcomes. Monitoring teams, chaired by a BSE Adviser, use a variety of on-site review processes to gain an overall understanding of LEA programs, identify non-compliance and assist the LEA in corrective action and improvement planning activities. A number of parents and other stakeholders have been trained as peer monitors and serve on monitoring teams. In addition, the Local Task Force for Right to Education that serves the IU where the entity to be monitored is located is notified of the monitoring and invited to submit input to the chairperson. The BSE monitors approximately 150 sites per year, including school districts, charter schools, juvenile detention centers, adult correctional facilities, county prisons, private residential rehabilitation institutes, and residential treatment facilities.
- *School Performance Profile:* The School Performance Profile provides the public with a comprehensive overview of student academic performance in every Pennsylvania public school, including traditional public schools, charter schools, cyber charter schools, and career and technology centers. The School Performance Profile contains indicators of closing the achievement gap for Historically Underperforming Students, including students with disabilities.
- *ESEA Accountability Reporting:* Pennsylvania's ESEA Flexibility Waiver explicitly addresses the structures that need to be in place to support all students to graduate on time and ready for college and career success. The commonwealth is committed to accountability systems that hold LEAs responsible for all students, including students with disabilities, and educator evaluations which require that all teachers and related service providers be evaluated on instruments that reflect their roles and function, including student achievement as a measure of effectiveness. PDE annually posts all Required Federal Reporting Measures.
- *Special Education Data Reports (SEDRs):* To comply with annual federal reporting requirements, states must report to the public on the performance of each LEA in the state on several SPP/APR indicators. In Pennsylvania, this is done through annually published SEDRs.

Additional information about infrastructure for professional development and technical assistance can be found in section 2(a) of this plan.

2(c) The current strengths, the extent the systems are coordinated, and areas for improvement within and across the systems.

As a result of analysis of the state's infrastructure, the following strengths were identified: (1) the current PDE/BSE organization, including the Pennsylvania Statewide System of Support, promotes coordination of all infrastructure components of the SSIP; (2) collaboration between the PaTTAN offices and the IUs allows for implementation, scaling up, and sustainability at the regional level; (3) each PaTTAN initiative is guided by multi-year training plans that are evaluated on a regular basis to ensure alignment with RDA and (4) BSE/PaTTAN online training materials, modules, and videos promote positive support practices for LEAs. Current strengths are described below in greater detail.

Strengths of General Supervision

The current organizational structure of the BSE promotes development of local, regional and statewide expertise within its staff. BSE systems are aligned with the Statewide System of Support to facilitate effective targeting of technical assistance to improve local results.

Strengths of Pennsylvania's Statewide System of Support

- The Pennsylvania Statewide System of Support has demonstrated its capacity to make a difference in the education of students with disabilities. The current system has expertise in data driven decision making and has the personnel needed to effectively support the SSIP. In addition, the system has the advantage of a long history of collaboration with the SEAP and various agencies to support effective practices that impact the education of students with disabilities.
- The MTSS and autism examples described above demonstrate PaTTAN's expertise in scaling up major special education initiatives during the past two decades.
- The onsite technical assistance to support Pennsylvania's SIMR will be provided within the MTSS initiative to ensure sustainability. Educational consultants have the expertise to implement the selected coherent improvement strategies and continue to receive ongoing professional development to support LEAs partnering with BSE. Outcomes from this partnership will be shared with all other LEAs in the commonwealth.

Strengths of Quality Standards

Three of the coherent improvement strategies selected for the SSIP are directly aligned to the Pennsylvania Core Standards: MTSS Academic, Culturally Responsive Instruction, and Alternative Programming. The other four coherent improvement strategies are aligned to College and Career Ready Standards since they are designed to support students with disabilities to remain engaged and complete high school.

Strengths of Data

- The PIMS statewide longitudinal data system upgrades data capabilities on an ongoing basis and provides robust decision support tools. Data are reviewed and analyzed throughout the year.
- Pennsylvania's SEDRs include current and historical reporting for every LEA and are comprehensive and easily accessed by parents and other constituents

- Various data teams have been established by PDE to ensure timely and accurate data submissions. These include:
 - *SPP/APR team*: this team oversees data collection and analyses for Pennsylvania's SPP/APR. The team is responsible for ensuring that data for each OSEP indicator are accurately collected, analyzed, and reported within timelines. This team also meets on an ongoing basis with the SEAP.
 - *PDE Data Governance Committee*: the PDE established this committee to ensure collaboration among all required state and federal data collections. The committee, which includes BSE's Part B Data Manager, meets on an ongoing basis and makes recommendations for improving data collections, analyses, and reporting.
 - *BSE and IU Data Managers*: Ongoing trainings, technical assistance, and face-to-face meetings are coordinated by the BSE to ensure data are collected, analyzed, and accurately reported within timelines at the regional level. IUs work with LEAs to collect, analyze, and report the data to the PDE.

Strengths of Technical Assistance

The Pennsylvania Statewide System of Support works in collaboration with each IU in the commonwealth to provide regional technical assistance, based on evidence-based practices and specific LEA needs aligned to OSEP's RDA. This strength will be used to help LEAs implement the selected coherent improvement strategies of the SSIP based on root cause analyses of identified needs to be conducted in Phase II. This implementation will assist LEAs in increasing the graduation rate of students with disabilities.

Strengths of Professional Development

- The system has the personnel needed to effectively support the SIMR and each of the coherent improvement strategies identified with multiple stakeholders.
- The focus of PaTTAN's work is on building capacity of LEAs and service providers to promote effective instructional practices for students with disabilities. In order to do this, PaTTAN educational consultants provide technical assistance and professional development that is framed by Pennsylvania's SAS. The SSIP will be supported by this system.
- The Pennsylvania Statewide System of Support has been coordinating and evaluating the effectiveness of its initiatives, projects, and professional development for over 20 years. The SSIP will be part of the coordination and evaluation of each initiative. Each of the PaTTAN offices has a Director and an Assistant Director to oversee the coordination and implementation of the statewide multi-year technical assistance and professional development plans. In addition, each initiative has a lead consultant and other consultants at each office assigned to coordinate the implementation of the statewide plan, including collaborating with the regional IU TaCs.

Strengths of Accountability

The state has comprehensive and well established systems to document performance and accountability measures at the local and state levels. These systems are integrated, e.g., Pennsylvania's online and publicly accessible School Performance Profiles are aligned and linked with the Special Education Data Reports used by the state to fulfill annual public reporting requirements for the SPP/APR.

Areas for Improvement

The following areas were identified during the infrastructure analysis:

- strengthen collaboration among all PaTTAN initiatives to focus on improving graduation rates of all students, including students with disabilities;
- increase collaboration with Academic Recovery Liaisons working in ESEA Title I priority and focus schools to ensure that the coherent improvement strategies of the SSIP are aligned with improvement efforts for those schools;
- increase technical assistance to LEAs on the coherent improvement strategies;
- provide targeted technical assistance to schools performing below expectations for graduation, and
- develop additional comprehensive publications and documents to support each component of the SSIP.

2(d) Current State-level improvement plans and initiatives, including special and general education improvement plans and initiatives and the extent to which they are aligned, and how they are, or could be, integrated with the SSIP.

A central component of Pennsylvania's initiatives is the PDE's SAS portal (<http://www.pdesas.org/>). The SAS portal was developed by the PDE and became operational in 2009. As of March 2015, there are more than 205,000 registered users of the portal and more than 47 million total page views on the site. A comprehensive, researched-based resource, SAS identifies six elements that improve student achievement: Standards, Assessments, Curriculum Framework, Instruction, Materials & Resources, and Safe and Supportive Schools.

Schools and educators across Pennsylvania are supported in their efforts to implement SAS by this state-of-the-art portal. The SAS portal is designed to organize and deliver educational content carefully aligned to the Pennsylvania Academic and Core Standards and provide educators with integrated classroom tools to enhance teaching effectiveness, including addressing critical issues such as meeting the needs of diverse learners. Synchronous and asynchronous credit bearing professional development courses to support the implementation of educator effectiveness across the commonwealth are housed in the SAS portal and are provided to all Pennsylvania educators at no cost. The portal provides Pennsylvania educators with leading edge networking technologies that create opportunities to communicate and collaborate with peers across the commonwealth.

In addition to the IUs, PaTTAN works in partnership with families and LEAs to support programs and services that improve student learning and achievement. PaTTAN offices are instrumental in supporting learning for all students through such initiatives as MTSS Academic and Behavior, Inclusive Practices, Special Education Leadership, Secondary Transition, Vision, Hearing, Deaf-Blind, Assistive Technology, Autism, English Language Learners support, and Early Intervention. PaTTAN excels in its ability to meet the needs of students with disabilities through on-site technical assistance, guided practice, seminars, statewide conferences, distance learning, videoconferences, and online courses.

Pennsylvania's college and career readiness aspirations extend to all students, including those who are in need of specially designed instruction due to a disability or because English is not their first

language. The PaTTAN support mechanisms to improve student achievement for students with disabilities focus on evidence-based practices. PaTTAN's operational milestones include the development and implementation of a comprehensive MTSS plan utilizing scientifically based approaches in the context of improving student performance.

Other milestones include training and support in the use of PVAAS. PVAAS offers a statistical analysis of state assessment data that provides districts and their schools with growth data to add to achievement data and classroom diagnostic tests (i.e., online assessments, divided by content area) designed to provide diagnostic information to guide instruction and remediation in meeting the standards. PVAAS scores will be attributed to teachers' evaluations, including teachers of students with disabilities, beginning in the 2016-17 school year.

For students with complex support needs, Pennsylvania participates in the National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC). As an NCSC state partner, Pennsylvania is in the process of implementing the materials and resources developed by NCSC as an instructional model, aligned to Pennsylvania Core Standards. These resources will support educators as they design and implement appropriate instruction that addresses content and skill expectations. All NCSC curriculum and instruction assets will be posted in SAS, including content modules and element cards, curriculum resource guides, instructional units and scripted lessons, and core content connectors. These high quality materials will help to prepare students with the most complex support needs for college and career ready opportunities post high school.

The Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction and the BSE will continue collaborating and providing LEAs with targeted training and technical assistance through the PaTTAN and IUs. Training through these systems will focus on implementation of the Pennsylvania Core Standards for diverse learners, including both ELLs and students with disabilities. Specifically, the professional development will utilize the MTSS framework as a school improvement model for ensuring equitable access to college and career ready standards for diverse learners.

Another Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction initiative closely aligned with Pennsylvania's SIMR is the Division of Migrant Education's program, *The Diploma Project Toolkit*. This resource was created to promote success for migrant students in earning a high school diploma and making a smooth transition to postsecondary education. The toolkit includes practical guidelines for setting academic and career goals, planning a course of study based on high school credits and courses required by the LEA, preparing for standardized assessments and finding a suitable postsecondary program. The toolkit also provides guidance for ELLs to access English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and supports while completing required high school courses. *The Diploma Project Toolkit* will be available to all SSIP learning sites.

BSE is working with the ESEA Title I office to coordinate technical assistance efforts for priority and focus schools identified under the state's ESEA Flexibility Waiver. BSE is represented on the state level team revising the waiver. PDE has contracted with experienced professional educators, titled Academic Recovery Liaisons (ARLs), to provide targeted technical assistance to ESEA Title I priority schools. These ARLs work closely with the IUs and PaTTAN to ensure coordinated service delivery based on the needs of the schools. ESEA Title I focus schools are also provided with targeted technical assistance for their specific area of need, including special education and ESL. The IUs and PaTTAN offices are utilized by the PDE to provide assistance to these schools.

BSE is also collaborating with *Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales (HUNE)* to support the SSIP. HUNE is a CPRC that provides free bilingual English and Spanish training, technical assistance and individual assistance to parents of infants, toddlers, children and youth with

disabilities and professionals who work with children. This assistance helps parents participate more effectively with professionals in meeting the educational needs of children and youth with disabilities. HUNE works to improve educational outcomes for children and youth.

HUNE is working to expand its after school and summer programs to help Hispanic students remain in school. Currently serving students ages 13-18, the programs provide academic instruction, skills building, advocacy for students with IEPs, and work with community members. The programs are very successful, with a high graduation rate. HUNE works with another agency named El Centro. This agency receives school district funds to help Hispanic students who have dropped out earn their diploma. An important strategy for this effort is credit recovery. BSE will provide financial support to HUNE to support program expansion. Lessons learned from this BSE and CPRC partnership will be shared with other stakeholders in the commonwealth.

An important initiative with which the SSIP will collaborate is PDE's Early Warning System (EWS). Currently available to all LEAs in Pennsylvania, the PDE Dashboard is offered at no cost. Because special education data can be pre-populated, it offers a less labor intensive alternative for LEAs than some other early warning systems. Training is also available at no cost to LEAs.

The NDPC-SD Data Tools will be available as another EWS for schools participating in the SSIP. This system is an excellent choice for LEAs with some capacity in place, but missing one or more of the predictors of dropout, such as attendance, behavior, and/or course performance.

2(e) Representatives (e.g., offices, positions, individuals, and other stakeholders) who were involved in the development of Phase I and will be involved in the development and implementation of Phase II of the SSIP.

To begin formulating the SSIP, the SPP/APR team met with BSE leadership to identify internal and external infrastructure supports that relate to a potential SIMR. During summer and fall of 2014, meetings were held with OSEP, the NDPC-SD, North East Regional Resource Center (NERRC), the federally mandated SEAP, and multiple PDE bureaus, offices, and initiatives, including:

- Bureau of Special Education – Director, Assistant Director, Policy Adviser, Fiscal Chief, Regional Division Chiefs and Part B Data Manager;
- Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment, and Instruction;
- Bureau of Career and Technical Education;
- ESEA Title I office;
- ESEA Title III office;
- Division of Migrant Education – Coordinator of the Diploma Project;
- Corrections Education;
- Homeless Education, and
- Early Warning System Dashboard Initiative.

In addition, the SPP/APR team coordinated meetings and/or received input from the following stakeholders:

- PaTTAN offices - Directors, Assistant Directors, Educational Consultants;
- Families and family organizations - PTIs and CPRCs;
- LEAs;
- Institutions of Higher Education; and
- PA Safe Schools-Healthy Students Partnership.

The purpose of these discussions was to identify initiatives underway and contemplated, gather status information, share essential information about the SSIP, and explore ways to collaborate in Phase I and Phase II to maximize resources.

2(f) Description of stakeholder involvement in the analysis of the State's infrastructure.

Under the overall supervision of the State Director of Special Education, the SPP/APR team sought input from other PDE offices, including ESEA Title I, ESEA Title III, Migrant Education, Corrections Education, Homeless Education, and the Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction. Decisions are shared among PDE Bureau Directors and OESE executives.

The BSE consulted with SEAP at numerous meetings regarding the SSIP, RDA, potential SIMRs, data and infrastructure analysis, coherent improvement strategies, and theory of action. The BSE solicited recommendations from the panel regarding collaboration with other agencies. Panel members identified additional stakeholders that could be involved in the SSIP.

At the NERRC Regional SSIP Planning Meeting in Springfield Massachusetts, BSE was represented by a team that included the Chairperson of the SEAP. The team took advantage of scheduled planning time to discuss potential SIMRs under consideration and state infrastructure, including opportunities for collaboration with outside agencies.

Pennsylvania's SEAP will provide on-going advice to the SSIP Core Team/BSE regarding implementation of SSIP activity. Examples of the panel's involvement in Phase II include participation at the OSEP Leadership Meeting, in-depth review of the approved SSIP at upcoming panel meetings, review of the state's evaluation plan for the SSIP, and examination of updated data to ensure that benchmarks and targets are being achieved.

CPRC and PTI centers will collaborate with the BSE in development of resource materials and disseminating key information about the SSIP.

Quarterly meetings are planned with internal stakeholders to continue collaboration among PDE's various program offices regarding graduation initiatives in general and special education.

State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities

A statement of the result(s) the State intends to achieve through the implementation of the SSIP.

Pennsylvania will increase the graduation rate for students with disabilities.

A description of the result(s) the State intends to achieve through the implementation of the SSIP. The State-identified result(s) must be aligned to an SPP/APR indicator or a component of an SPP/APR indicator. The State-identified result(s) must be clearly based on the Data and State Infrastructure Analyses and must be a child-level outcome in contrast to a process outcome. The State may select a single result (e.g., increasing the graduation rate for children with disabilities) or a cluster of related results (e.g., increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the dropout rate for children with disabilities).

STATE-IDENTIFIED MEASURABLE RESULT

3(a) The State has a SIMR and the SIMR is aligned to an SPP/APR indicator or a component of an SPP/APR indicator.

The state's SIMR: Pennsylvania will increase the graduation rate for students with disabilities. The focus will be on 12 learning sites across the commonwealth.

This SIMR is aligned to SPP/APR Indicator 1 (graduation rates for students with disabilities).

The SSIP is also aligned with PDE's ongoing commitment to support students through graduation and prepared for college and career readiness and success. Specific examples of alignment with PDE initiatives include, but are not limited to the following: (1) Ongoing collaboration with Focus and Priority Academic Recovery Liasons to ensure lessons learned on-site are generalized throughout the commonwealth (2) Coherent intergration of the PDE early warning system, and (3) Align Career Work Standards (Pa Chapter 339) with PDE's focus on career pathways by increasing accessibility, exposure, and awareness for all students.

3(b) The SIMR is clearly based on the data and State infrastructure analyses.

The SIMR was selected following extensive analysis and systematic review of state data and infrastructure. Like other states, Pennsylvania has been submitting APRs for almost a decade, and has a wealth of compliance and results data available. Data were disaggregated by multiple variables, as described in the Data Analysis section of this SSIP. The infrastructure analysis also revealed that the state is well-positioned for effective implementation of its SIMR.

3(c) The SIMR is a child-level outcome in contrast to a process outcome.

The state's SIMR is a child-level outcome. As discussed in the Data Analysis section of this plan, stakeholder recommendations and data from other states that have collaborated with the NDPC-SD for systems change initiatives resulted in the state projecting 3% growth in the graduation rate of the 12 learning sites over the span of this SSIP. The state also expects to achieve improved results in SPP/APR Indicator 1 during this same time frame. Pennsylvania's PaTTAN system has decades of experience with scaling up major initiatives and has an existing infrastructure to accomplish it. The SSIP will shine the spotlight on the need to improve graduation rates and will focus resources toward that outcome. Improving performance in the 12 learning sites is projected to improve overall performance on SPP/APR Indicator 1 because scaling up activity, as described in the Infrastructure Analysis and Coherent Improvement Strategies sections of this plan, will be conducted statewide.

3(d) Description of stakeholder involvement in the selection of the SIMR.

Pennsylvania engaged in a systematic process to select its SIMR. Stakeholders were deeply involved in discussions and planning meetings leading to the choice of graduation as the focus area for the SSIP. A summary follows.

The state participated in a collaborative process to identify and learn more about major graduation related initiatives within PDE and other agencies. Key leadership personnel from ESEA Title I, ESEA Title III, corrections education and migrant education were consulted, and BSE examined ways to effectively collaborate. Several general education management personnel participated in the OSEP onsite technical assistance visit in September 2014. Multiple meetings with outside agencies, as well as review of resource documents, led to a deeper understanding of opportunities for collaboration as the state implements the various phases of its SSIP. BSE received further technical assistance related to selection of its SIMR from the NDPC-SD, NERRC and OSEP.

The SEAP's Chairperson participated with BSE in the NERRC regional SSIP planning meeting (spring, 2014) and the Chairperson and another panel member participated in OSEP's onsite TA visit. BSE had numerous discussions with SEAP to discuss preferences for a focus area.

A deep collaboration with HUNE, a Philadelphia based CPRC, contributed to BSE's awareness of the need for a SIMR that helps focus resources on improving the graduation rate of Hispanic youth.

For development of the state's SPP/APR covering FFY 2013-18, Pennsylvania implemented a meaningful process to gather additional stakeholder input. Over 200 stakeholders provided input through public forums and focused sessions at large scale meetings.

An electronic mail message was sent through PennLink, the official PDE electronic communication system, in July 2014 and was distributed statewide to parents, advocacy groups, school district superintendents and directors of special education, charter school executives and directors of special education, IU executive directors and directors of special education, Approved Private School executive directors, preschool and infant/toddlers early intervention programs and other interested parties to invite participation in three stakeholder input sessions. These sessions were held in August at Harrisburg (central Pennsylvania), King of Prussia (southeastern Pennsylvania), and Pittsburgh (western Pennsylvania). In addition to the broadly distributed PennLink, notices were posted on the state's special education listserv as well as the PaTTAN and PDE websites. A web-based system was also available to collect written input.

Parents, agency representatives and educators participated in the input sessions. At each session, a structured and facilitated process was followed to solicit input regarding SPP/APR measurable and rigorous targets and prioritizing of improvement activities to reach the targets over six years. Participants viewed a presentation by the State Director of Special Education that included an overview of the SSIP. Following the presentation, participants attended one of four self-selected groups for a facilitated discussion. These groups focused on specific indicators, with all groups addressing the SSIP.

At the Special Education Leadership Summer Academy in July 2014, a session was dedicated to the SPP/APR. Participants were provided information about all 17 indicators, and engaged in discussions about targets, improvement activities and areas of focus for the SSIP. A separate session was also held with the IU Directors of Special Education to provide information and to specifically gain input from this highly informed group about setting targets, setting priorities for

improvement activities and exploring potential areas of focus for the SSIP.

Input from all stakeholders was summarized and carefully considered by the BSE in the selection of an SSIP focus area. The State Director of Special Education consulted with other PDE offices and officials regarding final selection of Pennsylvania's SIMR.

Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies

An explanation of how the improvement strategies were selected, and why they are sound, logical and aligned, and will lead to a measurable improvement in the State-identified result(s). The improvement strategies should include the strategies, identified through the Data and State Infrastructure Analyses, that are needed to improve the State infrastructure and to support LEA implementation of evidence-based practices to improve the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities. The State must describe how implementation of the improvement strategies will address identified root causes for low performance and ultimately build LEA capacity to achieve the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities.

SELECTION OF COHERENT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Introduction

PDE has supported school-level adoption and implementation of MTSS, formerly referred to as RtII, since 2006 within the context of its multi-layered training and technical assistance system. Pennsylvania has identified key framework components that are considered to be implementation priorities if schools desire to establish and sustain a sound MTSS framework. BSE has also developed an RtII/SLD approval process that schools may pursue if they wish to use RtII methodologies for SLD determination.

Pennsylvania has endorsed an MTSS framework that is aligned to a public health model and is intended to provide effective and efficient academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports and services to all students through systematic and systemic triage efforts. In reference to school completion for students with disabilities, tiered supports and services, evidence-based practices, data-based decision-making, and empowerment of all stakeholders, including families, serve as MTSS cornerstones. Therefore, the majority of selected coherent improvement strategies directly or indirectly comprise the MTSS framework.

4(a) How the improvement strategies were selected and will lead to a measurable improvement in the SIMR.

The identification and selection of the coherent improvement strategies for the SSIP involved multiple activities and stakeholders. In March 2014, Pennsylvania sent a team to the NERRC Regional SSIP Meeting to gain knowledge about the requirements of the SSIP and begin planning for a potential focus area. Following the meeting, the focus areas of school completion and dropout prevention for students with disabilities began to emerge as possible areas of interest.

Pennsylvania's SPP/APR team visited the NDPC-SD to identify current research, strategies, protocols, and data tools. A thorough review of current research-based strategies for school completion and dropout prevention was conducted. The review included strategies from the NDPC-SD, the What Works Clearinghouse, NDPC-SD's Monograph, *Decreasing Dropout Rates for Minority Youth with Disabilities from Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Backgrounds*, the Wilkins & Huckabee *Literature Map for Dropout Prevention Interventions for Students with Disabilities* (2005), *The On-Track Indicator as a Predictor of High School Graduation* (Allensworth & Easton, 2005) and *Dropout Prevention: A Practice Guide* (Dynarski, M., et. al. 2008)

Coherent improvement strategies were studied, discussed, and analyzed with multiple stakeholders. SEAP concurred with the BSE's adoption of the coherent improvement strategies described in this plan, and recommended additional strategies for consideration during the SSIP's implementation phases. Pennsylvania conducted statewide stakeholder input sessions and asked stakeholders to

suggest possible SIMRs and strategies. There was strong support for school completion and dropout prevention for students with disabilities as the focus, and multiple research-based strategies, activities, and initiatives were identified.

Once the coherent improvement strategies were identified and selected, the next step was to evaluate correspondence with the state’s existing statewide initiatives (e.g., MTSS Academic, MTSS Behavior, Secondary Transition, Family Engagement, Early Warning Systems) to determine the capacity for implementing these strategies. The conclusion was that Pennsylvania currently possesses the infrastructure and expertise within PaTTAN and IUs to implement the coherent improvement strategies to address identified root causes of low performance and to build capacity to achieve the SIMR for students with disabilities.

Pennsylvania will combine its decades of learning and expertise under one umbrella: the SSIP. The NDPC-SD Intervention Framework will be used when working with LEAs to assist in determining root causes of low graduation rates and to select which of the seven coherent improvement strategies will work best within each LEA to meet the needs of students with disabilities. Even though individual LEAs will have the potential to implement all seven strategies, each local plan will be different based on specific building and student needs. The only state mandated strategy is the use of data systems to identify, inform, monitor and increase graduation rates of students with disabilities. The following two Early Warning Systems have been identified based on the recommendations of the NDPC-SD, stakeholders, and literature review: PDE’s EWS Dashboard and the NDPC-SD Data Tools.

In addition to partnering with LEAs, BSE will partner with HUNE to support its SSIP, specifically using community based experiences to increase graduation rates of Hispanic youth. Lessons learned from this partnership, including materials and resources, will be shared with other CPRCs and PTIs.

4(b) How the improvement strategies are sound, logical and aligned.

The following coherent improvement strategies were identified and selected to address identified LEAs’ root causes for low performance and ultimately build capacity to achieve the SIMR for students with disabilities:

LEAs in Pennsylvania will:	
1.	<p>Utilize data systems to identify, inform, monitor and increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to current initiatives: PDE EWS Dashboard and NDPC-SD Data Tools • Type of intervention: diagnostic
2.	<p>Implement increasingly intensive evidence-based methodologies toward improved academic outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to current initiatives: MTSS academic support, culturally responsive instruction • Type of interventions: schoolwide and targeted

LEAs in Pennsylvania will:	
3.	<p>Implement increasingly intensive evidence-based methodologies toward improved social, emotional and behavioral outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to current initiatives: MTSS behavior support and social skills, school climate, assignment of adult advocates, culturally responsive practices, behavioral health, Check and Connect • Type of interventions: schoolwide and targeted
4.	<p>Promote the implementation of attendance strategies and alternative programming that will increase the likelihood of graduation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to current initiatives: Credit recovery, after school/night school, online learning, school re-entry • Type of interventions: schoolwide and targeted
5.	<p>Ensure culturally responsive learning environments and instructional practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to current initiatives: Culturally responsive instructional practices • Type of interventions: schoolwide and targeted
6.	<p>Embrace a philosophy of partnership that empowers families and communities to become more meaningfully involved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to current initiatives: Family engagement, mentoring, partnering with federally funded centers - PTI and CPRCs • Type of interventions: schoolwide, targeted and community-based
7.	<p>Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and have positive post school outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to current initiatives: Secondary transition, college preparation courses, career and technical training, life skills training, socially related employment skills • Type of interventions: schoolwide and targeted

The selected coherent improvement strategies account for multiple risk factors associated with school completion and dropout, and target many factors to ensure better outcomes. Further, effective approaches often use more than one strategy and often combine personal assets and skill building, academic support, family outreach, and environmental/organizational change. Utilization of early warning systems, adoption and implementation of evidence-based instructional and behavioral methodologies, adult mentoring, culturally responsive instruction, high-quality standards-aligned instruction, and family engagement have been identified as effective (empirically-supported) school completion and dropout prevention strategies. When integrated within a comprehensive approach, these have been identified as effective school completion and dropout prevention strategies by the NDPC-SD, What Works Clearinghouse dropout prevention strategies, 2008; the NDPC-SD

Decreasing Dropout Rates for Minority Male Youth with Disabilities from Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Backgrounds, 2014; and the Wilkins & Huckabee *Literature Map for Dropout Prevention for Students with Disabilities*, 2014.

The selected coherent improvement strategies also serve as core tenets of Pennsylvania's MTSS framework and have resulted in positive findings based upon longitudinal analyses of literacy outcomes at the elementary and middle school levels (Shapiro, 2013 and Shapiro, 2014) and positive behavioral support outcomes at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Once risk factors associated with school completion and dropout are identified at the LEA level, practitioners must select methodologies that will offset those risks. Pennsylvania's selected coherent improvement strategies are logical, as they address a continuum of factors (e.g., individual, family, school, and community) that are strongly correlated with school completion, dropout risk, and dropout prevention. Students with disabilities have been found to have multiple school performance risk factors such as significantly below average performance in reading and mathematics, and a history of retention or failure in one or more courses, disengagement, and high rates of absenteeism.

One strategy, the implementation of an early warning system, serves as a reliable and valid way for schools to identify students with disabilities who are not on-track to complete high school, attend school, and/or do well in their courses (*Minority Male Youth with Disabilities from Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Backgrounds*, 2014). In response, the entire K-12 system can integrate core instructional practices with tiered supports that are aligned to student needs. For example, at the high school level, there may be a schoolwide focus on multi-dimensional vocabulary instruction across content areas, and students with disabilities may also receive targeted instruction in English and intensive reading intervention, in addition to mentoring, goal-setting discussions, and instruction in socially-related employment skills.

The extent to which the selected strategies are sound, logical, and aligned is contingent upon their integration and fidelity of implementation within the context of multi-tiered systems of support. Practitioners must be highly trained, have opportunities for ongoing professional learning and have access to implementation coaching, particularly with respect to data based decision making, intervention matching, and progress monitoring.

Pennsylvania will evaluate whether integrated implementation of the coherent improvement strategies results in measurable improvement in academic, behavioral, and/or social-emotional areas and whether more students remain in school and graduate. Pennsylvania's Phase II SSIP (to be submitted February 2016) will describe its comprehensive evaluation plan.

4(c) How implementation of improvement strategies will address identified root causes for low performance and ultimately build capacity to achieve the SIMR for children with disabilities.

Each coherent improvement strategy is correlated with, and therefore can help identify, root causes associated with risk factors that impact the likelihood of school completion, including: lack of engaging instruction; deficient literacy skills, disengaged families, limited access to culturally responsive and individualized instruction, lack of mentoring, and lack of provision of increasingly intensive, evidence-based supports.

Each of these areas can be directly assessed and targeted for improvement at both the macro and micro levels through implementation of a multi-tiered system of support. Within an MTSS system, interdisciplinary teams, including family members and outside professionals, define the problem and generate precise recommendations likely to lead to success. Relevant data are gathered on an

ongoing basis. Possible contributing factors are explored and diagnostic measures are administered to provide additional data to identify needed skills, whether academic, behavioral, and/or social-emotional. An intervention plan will then be developed that includes duration, progress monitoring tools, frequency of monitoring and goal setting.

The effectiveness of the intervention plan is evaluated based upon the data that are collected at the school, grade, and individual student level. This problem solving process ensures that all levels of the system continuously adapt to diverse needs, as outlined in the examples below.

Supports at Tier 1 are universal and aimed at keeping students, including diverse learners and students with disabilities, engaged. These may include:

- review of discipline and grade retention policies;
- establish schoolwide positive behavioral intervention and support (PBIS) practices;
- enhance literacy and math outcomes;
- establish professional learning communities;
- improve school climate, and
- increase family and community-based involvement.

Supports at Tier 2 are targeted and designed to:

- increase student engagement;
- improve skill deficiencies through small group instruction and intervention;
- support student mental health needs;
- increase family and community-based involvement; and
- assign adult advocates (e.g., *Check and Connect*).

Supports at Tier 3 are highly customized to individual needs and may include:

- vocational training;
- mental health treatment;
- community service;
- socially-related employment skills;
- internships/work programs, and
- family and community based involvement.

4(d) How the selection of coherent improvement strategies includes the strategies, identified through the data and State infrastructure analyses, that are needed to improve the State infrastructure and to support LEA implementation of evidence-based practices to improve the SIMR for children with disabilities.

The coherent improvement strategies reflect state and local needs to continue to expand adoption and implementation of MTSS, K-12, toward sustainable leadership, services, and supports that result in improved outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities and diverse learners, based upon system level indicators, including PSSA outcome data, PVAAS, and post-secondary

status of students with disabilities.

Specifically, systems-level, capacity-building efforts are focused on sustainable practices and structures that support ongoing intervention. At the local level, the coherent improvement strategies are intended to improve school climate, decrease office referrals, improve attendance rates, enhance performance outcomes on statewide assessments and facilitate access to a continuum of behavioral health services. Anticipated individual outcomes include increased coping skills, employability and academic productivity – all contributors to increased graduation rates.

Pennsylvania's goal is to help schools implement MTSS for academics and behavior to improve student achievement. The MTSS initiative focuses on disseminating information, resources, and tools designed to enhance the use of an instructional decision-making model for response to intervention in the areas of reading, mathematics, and behavior as a primary means of building capacity at the state and local levels.

Major training and technical assistance initiatives during the span of the SPP demonstrate Pennsylvania's expertise in implementing, scaling-up and sustaining effective practices. These include:

- establishment of professional development modules, training series and workshops to promote MTSS adoption and fidelity of implementation K-12;
- development of tools and updated resources to enhance the knowledge of educators and school leaders interested in implementing MTSS;
- development of MTSS for ELLs (e.g., training modules, webinars, tools, resources, recommendations for implementation);
- collaboration with IU consultants to disseminate information and provide on-site support to MTSS implementers;
- provision of capacity-building workshops for 29 IUs to deliver to local schools;
- sharing of information regarding evidence-based instructional, behavioral, and social-emotional practices;
- establishment of tools and information for parents/families and MTSS;
- endorsement of MTSS/RtII as a means for comprehensive school improvement, especially in districts that are focusing on culturally responsive instruction;
- establishment of elementary and middle school learning sites and longitudinal research on literacy outcomes;
- establishment of regional forums for university/college personnel;
- support for continued research on outcomes of RtII/SLD approved schools;
- development of RtII/SLD approval from elementary reading to K-12 reading, writing, and mathematics;
- establishment of the PDE EWS Dashboard; and
- establishment of mentoring opportunities and projects.

Website resources address school-level MTSS implementation, scalability, and sustainability and include guidance on conducting a needs assessment, developing an action plan, promoting

interdisciplinary teaming and collaboration, designing differentiated instruction and intervention, establishing professional learning communities, facilitating family involvement, and determining rates of improvement.

The BSE, through the Pennsylvania Statewide System of Support, has demonstrated its capacity to make a difference in the education of students with disabilities as evidenced in the Infrastructure Analysis section of this plan. Please refer to the MTSS and autism examples of successful implementation, scaling up, and sustainability of statewide initiatives and how these initiatives will serve as the model for systemically scaling up the SSIP graduation initiative. Additional analyses and discussion will also be included in greater detail in Phase II of this plan.

4(e) Description of stakeholder involvement in the selection of coherent improvement strategies.

Internal and external stakeholders have been engaged in identifying and selecting the coherent improvement strategies for this SSIP. When Pennsylvania was afforded the opportunity to develop an SSIP with the possibility of focusing on school completion and dropout prevention, the state identified the NDPC-SD as a key resource because of its vast expertise in research, strategies, data tools, and protocols when working with states, LEAs, and buildings. The national center was also selected because of its previous research-based work, success, and focus on RDA. Its 2014 monograph, *Decreasing Dropout Rates for Minority Male Youth with Disabilities from Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Backgrounds*, also provided important guidance with identification of the coherent improvement strategies. Last fall, the NDPC-SD provided training for PaTTAN educational consultants on each of the coherent improvement strategies identified by multiple stakeholders. Center staff has continued to assist Pennsylvania with planning for the SSIP. As an outgrowth of BSE's collaboration with NPDC-SD, the state has contracted for intensive training of PaTTAN educational consultants in the *Check and Connect* model.

Other key stakeholders involved in the identification and selection of the coherent improvement strategies included Pennsylvania's SEAP, multiple offices and bureaus within PDE (i.e., Bureau of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction, ESEA Title I, Migrant Education, ESEA Title III, Homeless Education, PDE EWS Dashboard), Pennsylvania Safe Schools-Healthy Students Partnership Grant, PTIs, CPRCs and LEAs. A member of the SPP/APR team collaborated with HUNE to align its after school and summer programs to the SSIP to increase graduation rates of Hispanic youth. Lessons learned, including materials and resources, will be shared with other CPRCs and PTIs

Pennsylvania also conducted regional stakeholder input sessions across the commonwealth. Participants were able to discuss and recommend strategies to be included in the selection of the coherent improvement strategies. In addition, PDE has identified collaborative opportunities with Mental Health Services, Career and Technical Education, and Corrections Education.

Theory of Action

A graphic illustration that shows the rationale of how implementing the coherent set of improvement strategies selected will increase the State's capacity to lead meaningful change in LEAs, and achieve improvement in the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities.

THEORY OF ACTION

5(a) A graphic illustration that shows the rationale of how implementing a coherent set of improvement strategies will increase the State's capacity to lead meaningful change in LEAs.

In spring 2014, Pennsylvania began gathering information about theory of action models. During the development and design of its Theory of Action, the state collaborated with multiple stakeholders, including the NDPC-SD. Ongoing input was received from SEAP. OSEP provided further guidance during its September 2014 onsite technical assistance visit and in follow-up communications.

Pennsylvania's Theory of Action was developed simultaneously with the coherent improvement strategies because of the interrelationship between strategies and outcomes. For specific details about the process used for identifying and selecting coherent improvement strategies, please refer to the *Coherent Improvement Strategies* section of this plan.

To increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities, students need to be engaged in all levels of school and learning, their performance needs to be monitored, follow-up needs to occur with students and families when warning signs of disengagement emerge, and schools must focus on successful school completion.

The following graphic illustration shows Pennsylvania's SSIP Theory of Action, and the interrelationship between the specific coherent improvement strategies and expected outcomes.

Pennsylvania SSIP Theory of Action

Vision: All students with disabilities will be academically, behaviorally, and socially-emotionally engaged in order to stay in school, graduate, and become contributing members of society.



Strands of Action	If PDE	Then	Then	Then
Leadership	Communicates its vision effectively and provides guidance and general supervision in a timely and responsive manner.	LEAs will have the information, support, and resources necessary to align their efforts to PDE's vision. LEAs will have uniformly high expectations for all students with disabilities.	<p>Local Educational Agencies in Pennsylvania will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize data systems to identify, inform, monitor and increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities. <i>Early Warning System Data Tools. Diagnostic intervention.</i> Implement increasingly intensive evidence-based methodologies toward improved academic outcomes. <i>MTSS academic support, culturally responsive instruction. Schoolwide and targeted interventions.</i> Implement increasingly intensive evidence-based methodologies toward improved social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes. <i>MTSS behavior support and social skills, school climate, assignment of adult advocates, culturally responsive practices, behavioral health, mentors, Check and Connect. Schoolwide and targeted interventions.</i> Promote the implementation of attendance strategies and alternative programming that will increase the likelihood of graduation. <i>Credit recovery, after school/night school, online learning, school re-entry. Schoolwide and targeted interventions.</i> Ensure culturally responsive learning environments and instructional practices. <i>Culturally responsive instructional practices. Schoolwide and targeted interventions.</i> Embrace a philosophy of partnership that empowers families and communities to become more meaningfully involved. <i>Family engagement, mentoring, partnering with federally funded centers - PTIs and CPRCs. Schoolwide, targeted, and community interventions.</i> Provide rigorous and relevant instruction to better engage students in learning and provide the skills needed to graduate and have positive post school outcomes. <i>Transition, college prep courses, career and technical training, life skills training, socially related employment skills. Schoolwide and targeted interventions.</i> 	<p>Pennsylvania will increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities.</p> <p>Pennsylvania will reduce the number of students with risk factors that impact the likelihood of school completion.</p>
Collaboration	Partners with LEAs, federally funded TA providers, PTIs/CPRCs and other state and local agencies that serve students with disabilities and their families.	PDE will leverage resources to improve services for students with disabilities.		
Technical Assistance	Promotes professional learning opportunities to effectively prepare and empower stakeholders to support students with disabilities.	LEAs will facilitate shared leadership toward enhanced collaboration and implementation of evidenced-based practices. CPRC will develop materials and resources to be shared with other community organizations.		
Accountability	Holds LEAs accountable for effectively implementing assessment and evaluation practices to measure outcomes.	LEAs will have systems that lead to improved results for students with disabilities and protect the rights of students and families.		



Evaluation: Data Collection – Data Analysis – Data Interpretation – Reporting

5(b) How the graphic illustration shows the rationale of how implementing a coherent set of improvement strategies will lead to the achievement of improved results for children with disabilities.

Pennsylvania's Theory of Action is the framework for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating its efforts. Developed with stakeholders, it is being utilized for communicating essential information about Pennsylvania's SSIP.

This Theory of Action is an Outcomes Approach Model that focuses on program planning. It displays the interrelationship between the coherent improvement strategies and expected outcomes of the SSIP, and emphasizes the causal linkages thought to exist among program components. The *if/then* statements show which steps and strategies will contribute to the desired outcomes for students with disabilities.

The process of developing the Theory of Action began with agreeing on this vision for students with disabilities: All students with disabilities must be academically, behaviorally, and socially-emotionally engaged in order to stay in school, graduate, and become contributing members of society. In order to accomplish this vision, Pennsylvania will focus on the following long-term and short-term outcomes.

The long-term outcome is: Pennsylvania will increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities. This will be accomplished by implementing the *if/then* statements identified for PDE and LEAs for leadership, collaboration, technical assistance, and accountability.

The short-term outcome is: Pennsylvania will reduce the number of students with risk factors that impact the likelihood of school completion. This will be accomplished by ensuring that LEAs implement the identified research-based coherent improvement strategies with fidelity.

The next step in the development of the Theory of Action was to determine with stakeholders which coherent improvement strategies needed to be available to LEAs in order to accomplish the short-term and the long-term outcomes. Seven strategies were identified in collaboration with the NDPC-SD and stakeholders. Additional information about the selected strategies is found in the *Coherent Improvement Strategies* section of this plan.

Once the outcomes and the strategies were identified, the next step in the process was to determine the specific steps the PDE needed to take to successfully implement its SSIP. Pennsylvania used the *OSEP RDA Theory of Action* as a model to identify the Strands of Action that must be in place for this systemic plan to work.

To understand how Pennsylvania’s Theory of Action works, stakeholders must first review the vision. Then, read the if/then statements from left to right, starting with the strands of action and moving forward. The following is an example of this approach.

Leadership	<i>If PDE communicates its vision effectively and provides guidance and general supervision in a timely and responsive manner,</i>
	<i>Then LEAs will have the information, support, and resources necessary to align their efforts to PDE’s vision. LEAs will have uniformly high expectations for all students with disabilities,</i>
	<i>Then LEAs will be able to implement the identified research-based coherent improvement strategies based upon the LEA’s root cause analysis,</i>
	<i>Then Pennsylvania will increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities, and will reduce the number of students with risk factors that impact the likelihood of school completion.</i>

Collaboration	<i>If PDE partners with LEAs, federally funded TA providers, PTIs/CPRCs and other state and local agencies that serve students with disabilities and their families,</i>
	<i>Then PDE will leverage resources to improve services for students with disabilities,</i>
	<i>Then LEAs will be able to implement the identified research-based coherent improvement strategies based on the LEA’s root cause analysis,</i>
	<i>Then Pennsylvania will reduce the number of students with risk factors that impact the likelihood of school completion, and increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities.</i>

Technical Assistance	<i>If PDE promotes professional learning opportunities to effectively prepare and empower stakeholders to support students with disabilities,</i>
	<i>Then, LEAs will facilitate shared leadership toward enhanced collaboration and implementation of evidence-based practices; the CPRC will develop materials and resources to be shared with other community organizations,</i>
	<i>Then LEAs will be able to implement the identified research-based coherent improvement strategies based on the LEA’s root cause analysis,</i>
	<i>Then Pennsylvania will reduce the number of students with risk factors that impact the likelihood of school completion, and will increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities.</i>

Accountability	<i>If PDE holds LEAs accountable for effectively implementing assessment and evaluation practices to measure outcomes,</i>
	<i>Then LEAs will have systems that lead to improved results for students with disabilities and protect the rights of students and families,</i>
	<i>Then LEAs will be able to implement the identified research-based coherent improvement strategies based on the LEA's root cause analysis,</i>
	<i>Then Pennsylvania will reduce the number of students with risk factors that impact the likelihood of school completion, and will increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities.</i>

Another way to understand the Pennsylvania's Theory of Action is to start with the intended outcomes and then refer to the strategies and then the Strands of Action (from right to left). An example of this approach follows.

Leadership	In order for Pennsylvania to reduce the number of students with risk factors that impact the likelihood of school completion, and increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities (short-term and long term outcomes),
	LEAs must implement, based on the LEA's root cause analysis, some of the identified research-based coherent improvement strategies.
	In order for LEAs to be able to implement the strategies, LEAs need the information, support, and resources to align their efforts to PDE's vision; LEAs will have uniformly high expectations for all students with disabilities.
	In order for LEAs to have the information, support, and resources, PDE needs to communicate its vision effectively and provide guidance and general supervision in a timely and responsive manner.

PDE will communicate, partner, promote professional development, and hold LEAs accountable for implementing the coherent improvement strategies which will increase the graduation rate of students with disabilities. The selection and implementation of the coherent improvement activities will vary among LEAs based on the specific root cause analysis that will be conducted when working with each LEA.

The process to be used to accomplish each LEA's improvement plan will follow the NDPC-SD Intervention Framework. Used and proven effective in multiple states, LEAs, and schools, the framework is divided into five phases:

- Phase 1: Develop local leadership teams
- Phase 2: Analyze data
- Phase 3: Identify target areas for intervention
- Phase 4: Develop improvement plan, and
- Phase 5: Implement, monitor, and evaluate.

The PaTTAN educational consultants that will be facilitating improvement plans at the local level are being trained by the NDPC-SD during the planning phase. Each individual was selected for their expertise in one or more of the identified improvement strategies, such as MTSS Academic, MTSS Behavior, Mentoring, Parental Engagement, Transition, and Culturally Responsive Instruction.

Ongoing communication with the center's staff continues to ensure that Pennsylvania is implementing this framework with validity and reliability. At the local level, root causes will be identified using comprehensive early warning data tools to help identify which of the strategies will be implemented based on each LEA's needs. An improvement plan for each LEA will be developed, implemented, monitored, and evaluated.

Pennsylvania's SSIP is a comprehensive, ambitious, multi-year plan for improving graduation results for students with disabilities. The BSE collaborated with multiple internal and external stakeholders to select the graduation focus area and to establish meaningful targets for the next several years. Under the SSIP, the BSE will provide leadership to LEAs and other partners and will engage in collaboration with local, state and federal agencies as well as expert TA providers to affect positive change and achieve meaningful results for students and families. Initially this will involve a direct partnership with 12 diverse LEAs located throughout Pennsylvania, with scale up activity to be implemented over the span of the SSIP. Financial support, tiered technical assistance and general supervision will be provided by BSE and the PaTTAN system. Accountability is essential and will be required and ensured within the SSIP evaluation design.

5(c) Involvement of multiple internal and external stakeholders in development of the Theory of Action.

Internal and external stakeholders have been engaged in the development and design of the SSIP Theory of Action. BSE worked with in-house experts during the development and design of the graphic illustration. These experts have extensive training in logic models and theory of action and have facilitated multiple sessions to support the development of such graphic illustrations.

BSE sought input from OSEP staff in developing its graphic illustration during OSEP's 2014 technical assistance visit and in follow-up communications. Their guidance was used for the design of the Theory of Action. Another valuable resource shared by OSEP during the onsite visit was its RDA Theory of Action. That format was used as the foundation for the design of the state's work.

Pennsylvania consulted with SEAP in the development and refinement of its Theory of Action. SEAP's chairperson participated with BSE in planning discussions regarding theories of action during the spring 2014 NERRC Regional SSIP Planning Meeting. Draft and final versions of the state's Theory of Action were discussed with the panel during regularly scheduled meetings where input was gathered.

BSE spent a significant amount of time reviewing the research behind the Theory of Action graphic illustrations, and reviewed multiple examples and drafts with stakeholders before, during, and after the design was finalized.

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