

**Division of Elementary and Secondary Education – Office of Special Education
Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities
State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and
State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), July 2023**

State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)

The SPDG completed their Annual Performance Report and submitted May 5, 2023

Arkansas SPDG 2022–2023 Grant Performance Report, Executive Summary

The Arkansas State Personnel Development Grant (AR SPDG) is designed to directly align with and intensely support the Arkansas Department of Education’s State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). As a part of the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Division of Learning Services, the SPDG facilitates the design and implementation of strategic, job-embedded professional learning (PL) and technical assistance (TA) to develop capacity for the implementation and support of high-leverage practices, and other evidence-based instructional practices at the state, regional, district and school levels.

State-Level Implementation

The State Implementation Team (SIT) completed the SISEP State Capacity Assessment (SCA) with a focus on inclusive practices and tiered systems of support. The SCA was administered by SISEP staff and facilitated by SPDG Director, Crystal Bethea and SSIP Coordinator, Dr. Jeff Adams. The Spring 2023 SCA administration resulted in an overall score of 42/48 or 88% of components in place, representing an increase of 15% from components that were in place one year ago (73%). Based on the current data, the SPDG exceeded the 2022-2023 end of year goal of 80%, with the following breakdown by domain:

- Leadership 14/18 (78%) - an 11% increase since 2022
- Infrastructure and Resources 12/12 (100%) - score maintained since 2022
- Communication and Engagement 16/18 (89%) - a 28 % increase since 2022

Over the past year, the SIT continued to work on developing and implementing team protocols, structures, and functions for the state team. While systems alignment was still an area of focus, additional emphasis was placed on the state’s commitment to regional implementation capacity, targeting systems coaching, and increasing knowledge of high-leverage and other evidence-based practices.

In an effort to build capacity for and support the implementation of high-leverage and evidence-based practices in classrooms across the state, micro-credentials are recognized as an integral part of Arkansas’s comprehensive system of professional development. SPDG co-leads a state agency micro-credential team with the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Division of Educator Effectiveness and Licensure to align professional learning standards and build capacity and clarity around micro-credentials. In Arkansas, there are thirteen available competency-based micro-credentials with seven additional in draft form set for publication prior to December 2023. There are currently 242 educators enrolled in micro-credentials who have partially submitted evidence and 31 educators who have submitted all of the required evidence of implementation. Once the educator submits, an assessor scores the evidence against the micro-credential’s defined criteria and provides the educator with valuable feedback, 28 out of 31 educators (90%) demonstrated proficient implementation on their first submission of evidence, exceeding the SPDG target of 80%.

In addition to options for personalized professional learning, stakeholder feedback has also indicated a desire for coaching systems characterized by self-directedness reaching across all disciplines and focusing on personnel development for all. Foundational training in developing trust and rapport, mediating thinking, and navigating support functions is provided and followed by monthly Community of Practice virtual meetings for participants to continue practicing and refining their coaching skills. To date, 153

professionals from ADE-DESE and SPDG partnered regional education service cooperatives (ESCs) and districts have participated in Cognitive Coaching Foundations Seminars® and follow up support.

Regional- District- and School-Level Implementation

Partnerships with Regional Education Service Cooperatives (ESCs) are key to the implementation and sustainment of the SPDG project. In early 2022, the SPDG established additional partnerships with two regional ESCs: Arkansas Rivers Education Service Cooperative (ARESC) and Dawson Education Service Cooperative (DESC). Participating ESCs were provided organizational support by the SPDG CMT for the development of a Regional Implementation Team (RIT) that (1) is supported by the State Implementation Team, and (2) uses the SISEP Regional Capacity Assessment (RCA) to assist the ESCs in action planning to effectively facilitate district-level implementation of high-leverage and evidence-based practices. Additionally, each RIT identified content specialists to attend the Cognitive Coaching Foundations Seminars® and participate on a Cognitive Coaching Team.

The SPDG partnered with Copernicus Solutions to engage District Implementation Teams (DIT) through an improvement journey by leveraging systems thinking and participating in Improvement Science Learning Sprints (i.e., rapid cycles of iteration) to move from theory to implementation. Through this process, the DITs identified problems of practice related to baseline District Capacity Assessment data which were used to develop District Implementation Plans for improvement. Each district included short- and long-term action items focused on professional learning, tiered systems of support, capacity building and implementation of evidence-based practices, developing a comprehensive coaching plan, and increasing student equity and access to high-quality core instruction.

As SPDG supports regional and district-level implementation teams in the development of a coaching service delivery plan, a significant task has been to clarify the components of effective coaching practice as an essential part of a comprehensive coaching system. The Coaching Fidelity of Implementation Rubric has been developed by SPDG to make visible the progression of essential coaching knowledge and skills to support effective implementation of Universal Design for Learning, high-leverage practices, and other evidence-based instructional practices for inclusive classrooms. The rubric serves as a resource for regional and district implementation teams as they develop their coaching service delivery plans, and it informs the on-going professional learning goals and support needed for coaches' continuous improvement.

The Center for Exceptional Families (TCFEF) liaison participates on the SPDG SIT and CMT to assist in the development and delivery of specific training modules (online and onsite) and communication resources for families and community members related to Response to Intervention (RTI). These modules and accompanying resources provide an understanding of the essential components of RTI and ways to support student progress. Families and community stakeholders who attend the training are invited to receive a quarterly newsletter which features informative articles and other resources to support meaningful engagement with the support systems in their local schools.

Ensuring high levels of learning for all students is possible through coordinated and collaborative efforts between state, regional, district, and school level teams who share a common vision for equity and a commitment to effective practices. The SPDG will continue to support improvement in learning for all students in Arkansas, especially students with disabilities, through high-quality professional learning, on-going coaching, and technical assistance for partnering education agencies at every level of the system.

State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires each State Educational Agency (SEA) to develop a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) as part of the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report. Arkansas's multi-year plan outlines strategies to address state capacity for leading change efforts in Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). The Arkansas SSIP is intended to drive innovation in the delivery of services to students, especially students with disabilities in accordance

with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Arkansas SSIP highlights the need for a system of support that is aligned with other units within the Arkansas Department of Education to improve the literacy results in grades 3-5 for students with disabilities. The SSIP is aligned with the Arkansas State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) to support general and special educator collaboration focused on improving tiered systems of support for academics and behavior through the implementation of high-leverage and other evidence-based inclusive practices. The State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) for Arkansas is the percent of students with disabilities in grades 3-5, from targeted schools, whose value-added score in reading is moderate or high for the same subject and grade level in the state.

The SSIP targeted schools have continued receiving support through the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) and through the Inclusive Practices Project. For more information regarding SPDG-supported schools, see the above SPDG section of this report. The following schools were selected for (Cohort 4) of the [Inclusive Practices Project](#) and officially announced in May 2023:

2023-2024 Cohort:

- Bayyari Elementary School (Springdale School District)
- Bearden Elementary School (Bearden School District)
- East End Middle School (Sheridan School District)
- Jacksonville Middle School (Jacksonville North Pulaski School District)
- J.F. Wahl Elementary School (Helena-West Helena School District)
- Osage Creek Elementary School (Bentonville School District)
- Palestine Wheatley High School (Palestine Wheatley School District)
- Sidney Deener Elementary School (Searcy School District)

State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) Indicator 17 State Systemic Improvement Plan Data:

FFY 2021 Target	61.50% of students with moderate to high value-added growth scores in literacy
FFY 2021 Data 877/1304	67.25% of students had moderate to high value-added growth scores in literacy

The State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) is the percent of students with disabilities (SWD) in grades 3-5, from the targeted schools, whose value-added score (VAS) in reading is moderate or high for the same subject and grade level in the state.

[SSIP Logic Model](#)

[SSIP Theory of Action](#)

[SSIP Alignment and Evaluation Plan](#)

National Presentation

The SSIP Coordinator was invited to present on a national panel at the 2023 IDEA Data Center (IDC) Interactive Institute in Charlotte, NC. The presentation title was All Systems Go: Using Indicator 17 to Effectively Drive Systems Change, and focused on the Arkansas story of systems change for supporting students with disabilities.

Arkansas Collaborative Consultants (ACC)

The Arkansas Collaborative Consultants (ACC) serve as the technical assistance arm of the Office of Special Education and are coordinated through the work of the State Systemic Improvement Plan. The ACC continues to provide technical assistance to LEAs across Arkansas for all areas served under IDEA. The following consultant groups comprise the ACC:

- Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) Consultant
- Arkansas Behavior Support Specialists (BSS)
- Arkansas Brain Injury Support
- Arkansas Co-Teaching Project
- Arkansas Public School Resource Center - Special Education Consultant
- Arkansas Transition Services
- Children and Youth with Sensory Impairment (CAYSI)
- Deaf Education Specialist
- Dispute Resolution
- Early Childhood Special Education Support
- Easterseals Outreach Program and Technology Services (esOPTS)
- Educational Audiology/Speech-Language Pathology Resources for Schools (EARS)
- Educational Services for the Visually Impaired (ESVI)
- Office of Coordinated Supports and Services (OCSS)
- Related Services Coordinators Consultant
- State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)

ACC Highlights

Every student in Arkansas, grades 3-12, will have access to three Texthelp tools in the 23-24 academic year - Read&Write, Equatio, and uPar. The goal is to employ these tools as a universal design for all students. Completion of Phase 1 of the deployment of these tools is complete. The IT Coordinators at each regional educational cooperative have been trained in how to deploy these tools in LEAs. For more information on the implementation plan, follow this link: [Accessible Technology Deployment](#)

The Arkansas Behavior Support Specialists have accepted 46 new teams for Cohort 4 of the BX3 Project focused on conducting legally defensible functional behavior assessments that lead to meaningful behavior intervention plans for students. Fourteen BX3 Teams will be returning from Cohort 3 in the 2023-24 academic year. The SPDG and BSS teams continue to support DESE's MTSS plan to build tier 1 and tier 2 behavior supports through the THRIVE initiative.

The Related Services Coordinators have developed and coached 3 districts in inclusive practices for related services. This coaching has occurred in conjunction with a spring learning series on educationally relevant related service provision with state and national experts. In addition, the Related Service Coordinators have completed a Community of Practice series on inclusive physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech-language pathology services.