

# ARKANSAS

Department of Education  
Division of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Office of Special Education



## PART B

Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan

Phase III Update

FFY 2022-23

Submitted February 1, 2024

## Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan

### Instructions and Measurement

**Monitoring Priority:** General Supervision

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 each of the components described below.

#### Instructions

**Baseline Data:** The State must provide baseline data that must be expressed as a percentage and which is aligned with the State-identified Measurable Result(s) (SiMR) for Children with Disabilities.

**Targets:** In its FFY 2020 SPP/APR, due February 1, 2022, the State must provide measurable and rigorous targets (expressed as percentages) for each of the six years from FFY 2020 through FFY 2025. The State's FFY 2025 target must demonstrate improvement over the State's baseline data.

**Updated Data:** In its FFYs 2020 through FFY 2025 SPPs/APRs, due February 2022 through February 2027, 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) Children with Disabilities. In its FFYs 2020 through FFY 2025 SPPs/APRs, the State must report on whether it met its target.

#### Overview of the Three Phases of the SSIP

It is of the utmost importance to improve results for children with disabilities by improving educational services, including special education and related services. Stakeholders, including parents of children with disabilities, local educational agencies, the State Advisory Panel, and others, are critical participants in improving results for children with disabilities and should be included in developing, implementing, evaluating, and revising the SSIP and included in establishing the State's targets under Indicator 17. The SSIP should include information about stakeholder involvement in all three phases.

##### **Phase I: Analysis:**

- Data Analysis;
- Analysis of State Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity;
- State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities;
- Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies; and
- Theory of Action.

**Phase II: Plan** (which, in addition to the Phase I content (including any updates)) outlined above):

- Infrastructure Development;
- Support for local educational agency (LEA) Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices; and
- Evaluation.

**Phase III: Implementation and Evaluation** (which, in addition to the Phase I and Phase II content (including any updates)) outlined above):

- Results of Ongoing Evaluation and Revisions to the SSIP.

#### Specific Content of Each Phase of the SSIP

Refer to FFY 2013-2015 Measurement Table for detailed requirements of Phase I and Phase II SSIP submissions.

Phase III should only include information from Phase I or Phase II if changes or revisions are being made by the State and/or if information previously required in Phase I or Phase II was not reported.

##### **Phase III: Implementation and Evaluation**

In Phase III, the State must, consistent with its evaluation plan described in Phase II, assess and report on its progress implementing the SSIP. This includes: (A) data and analysis on the extent to which the State has made progress toward and/or met the State-established short-term and long-term outcomes or objectives for implementation of the SSIP and its progress toward achieving the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities (SiMR); (B) the rationale for any revisions that were made, or that the State intends to make, to the SSIP as the result of implementation, analysis, and evaluation; and (C) a description of the meaningful stakeholder engagement. If the State intends to continue implementing the SSIP without modifications, the State must describe how the data from the evaluation support this decision.

##### **A. Data Analysis**

As required in the Instructions for the Indicator/Measurement, in its FFYs 2020 through 2025 SPPs/APRs, the State must report data for that specific FFY (expressed as actual numbers and percentages) that are aligned with the SiMR. The State must report on whether the State met its target. In addition, the State may report on any additional data (e.g., progress monitoring data) that were collected and analyzed that would suggest progress toward the SiMR. States using a subset of the population from the indicator (e.g., a sample, cohort model) should describe how data are collected and analyzed for the SiMR if that was not described in Phase I or Phase II of the SSIP.

##### **B. Phase III Implementation, Analysis and Evaluation**

The State must provide a narrative or graphic representation, (e.g., a logic model) of the principal activities, measures and outcomes that were implemented since the State's last SSIP submission (i.e., February 1, 2023). The evaluation should align with the theory of action described in Phase I and the evaluation plan described in Phase II. The State must describe any changes to the activities, strategies, or timelines described in Phase II and include a rationale or justification for the changes. If the State intends to continue implementing the SSIP without modifications, the State must describe how the data from the evaluation support this decision.

The State must summarize the infrastructure improvement strategies that were implemented, and the short-term outcomes achieved, including the measures or rationale used by the State and stakeholders to assess and communicate achievement. Relate short-term outcomes to one or more areas of a systems framework (e.g., governance, data, finance, accountability/monitoring, quality standards, professional development and/or technical assistance) and explain how these strategies support system change and are necessary for: (a) achievement of the SiMR; (b) sustainability of systems improvement efforts; and/or (c) scale-up. The State must describe the next steps for each infrastructure improvement strategy and the anticipated outcomes to be attained during the next fiscal year (e.g., for the FFY 2022 APR, report on anticipated outcomes to be obtained during FFY 2023, i.e., July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024).

The State must summarize the specific evidence-based practices that were implemented and the strategies or activities that supported their selection and ensured their use with fidelity. Describe how the evidence-based practices, and activities or strategies that support their use, are intended to impact the SiMR by changing program/district policies, procedures, and/or practices, teacher/provider practices (e.g., behaviors), parent/caregiver outcomes,

and/or child outcomes. Describe any additional data (e.g., progress monitoring data) that was collected to support the on-going use of the evidence-based practices and inform decision-making for the next year of SSIP implementation.

C. Stakeholder Engagement

The State must describe the specific strategies implemented to engage stakeholders in key improvement efforts and how the State addressed concerns, if any, raised by stakeholders through its engagement activities.

Additional Implementation Activities

The State should identify any activities not already described that it intends to implement in the next fiscal year (e.g., for the FFY 2022 APR, report on activities it intends to implement in FFY 2023, i.e., July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024) including a timeline, anticipated data collection and measures, and expected outcomes that are related to the SiMR. The State should describe any newly identified barriers and include steps to address these barriers.

17 - Indicator Data

Section A: Data Analysis

What is the State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR)?

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.

Has the SiMR changed since the last SSIP submission? (yes/no)

NO

Is the State using a subset of the population from the indicator (e.g., a sample, cohort model)? (yes/no)

YES

Provide a description of the subset of the population from the indicator.

Historically, Arkansas has interpreted the population for this indicator as the special education population of grades 3-5 in SSIP-supported buildings. All students may be exposed to SSIP activities or the results. The SiMR is comprised of value-added growth scores for students with multiple years of data on the regular assessment. The State selected "yes" to reflect that the data are reflective of a subset of the special education population in SSIP-supported buildings since the SiMR does not include students who participate in the alternate assessment.

Is the State's theory of action new or revised since the previous submission? (yes/no)

NO

Please provide a link to the current theory of action.

<https://arksped.ade.arkansas.gov/documents/ssip/SSIP-SPDG-OSE-TOA-2024.pdf>

Progress toward the SiMR

Please provide the data for the specific FFY listed below (expressed as actual number and percentages).

Select yes if the State uses two targets for measurement. (yes/no)

NO

Historical Data

Baseline Year	Baseline Data
2016	59.53%

Targets

FFY	Current Relationship	2022	2023	2024	2025
Target	Data must be greater than or equal to the target	62.33%	63.16%	63.37%	64.50%

FFY 2022 SPP/APR Data

Number of SWD with a high or moderate VAS in reading at participating schools	Number of SWD with a VAS in reading at participating schools and grade levels	FFY 2021 Data	FFY 2022 Target	FFY 2022 Data	Status	Slippage
1,012	1,529	67.25%	62.33%	66.19%	Met target	No Slippage

**Provide the data source for the FFY 2022 data.**

The data is the RLA value added score based on the State's approved ESSA plan. Upon the receipt of the data file from the Office of Innovation for Education (OIE) at the University of Arkansas (state contractor for accountability), student level records are filtered based on the participating school buildings. Only students with value added scores (VAS) for RLA are included.

**Please describe how data are collected and analyzed for the SiMR.**

The data is the RLA value added score based on the State's approved ESSA plan.

In the first step, a longitudinal individual growth model is used to produce a predicted score for each student. The individual growth model uses as many years of prior scores for each student to maximize the precision of the prediction (best estimate) and accounts for students having different starting points (random intercepts). In the value-added model, each student's prior score history acts as the control/conditioning factor for the expectation of growth for the individual student. In the second step, the student's predicted score is subtracted from his or her actual score to generate the student's value-added score (actual – predicted = value-added score). The magnitude of value-added scores indicates the degree to which students did not meet, met, or exceed expected growth in performance. Student value-added scores are averaged for each school. School value-added scores indicate, on average, the extent to which students in the school grew compared to how much they were expected to grow, based on how the students had achieved in the past. The school value-added scores answer the question, "On average, did students in this school meet, exceed, or not meet expected growth?" (Arkansas ESSA Plan p. 45) While the school average tells us about the building, it does not tell us about how the individual student is doing compared to their peers. Therefore, to look at an individual student's growth in relation to their peers, the Office of Innovation for Education (OIE) at the University of Arkansas (state contractor for accountability) ranked the value-added scores of all students and categorized them into low, moderate, or high based on the percentile rank of students' growth scores, or residuals. This is commonly Percentile Rank of the Residual (PRR). An explanation of each category is as follows:

Low indicates that a student's VAS, based on the PRR, was in the bottom 25% of all student VAS for same subject and grade level in the state

Moderate indicates that a student's VAS, based on the PRR, was between 25% and 75% of all student VAS for the same subject and grade level in the state

High indicates that a student's VAS, based on the PRR, was in the top 25% of all student VAS for the same subject and grade level in the state

**Optional: Has the State collected additional data (i.e., benchmark, CQI, survey) that demonstrates progress toward the SiMR? (yes/no)**

NO

**Did the State identify any general data quality concerns, unrelated to COVID-19, that affected progress toward the SiMR during the reporting period? (yes/no)**

NO

**Did the State identify any data quality concerns directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic during the reporting period? (yes/no)**

NO

**Section B: Implementation, Analysis and Evaluation**

**Please provide a link to the State's current evaluation plan.**

<https://arksped.ade.arkansas.gov/documents/ssip/Arkansas-SSIP-Evaluation-Plan-Infrastructure-Tool-2024.pdf>

**Is the State's evaluation plan new or revised since the previous submission? (yes/no)**

NO

**Provide a summary of each infrastructure improvement strategy implemented in the reporting period:**

Strategy One: Scale a coherent system of support that is aligned with other DESE Units and is differentiated based on LEAs' needs as evidenced by data.

This phase of the SSIP continued with scaling a coordinated system of support that provides the necessary organizational and collaborative structures for the way in which LEA services and supports are identified, managed, and differentiated at the state-level. This strategy is reflected in DESE's Theory of Action. Through intentional alignment and infrastructure expansion, the DESE uses collective knowledge to effectively leverage resources that will improve services for all students, including students with disabilities, and in increasing the reach, impact, and sustainability of the work with LEAs. The State Performance Management Team (SPMT) is directly involved with agency leaders in all initiatives reflected in the theory of action, including frameworks for improvement (High Reliability Schools-HRS), distributive leadership (Inclusive Practices Project-IPP, Effective Practices for Inclusive Education-EPIE, and Inclusive Education Support Specialist Training of Trainers-IESS), inclusive administrator leadership (Advancing Inclusive Principal Leadership-AIPL and Inclusive Education for Beginning Administrators-IEBA), evidence-based instructional practices (Reading Initiative for Student Excellence-R.I.S.E., High-Leverage Practices for Inclusive Classrooms-HLPs, Strategic Instructional Model™-SIM, Universal Design for Learning-UDL), and multi-tiered systems of support (AR THRIVE and RTI Arkansas). The SSIP Theory of Action reflects Arkansas' commitment to ensuring that all students have access to highly reliable schools that are safe, supportive, collaborative, and that provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum with effective teaching in every classroom (HRS). Through multi-tiered systems of support (AR THRIVE and RTI Arkansas), general and special educators, administrators, and related services professionals build collective efficacy via team-based and action-oriented modeling and coaching with intentional focus on student outcomes. These collaborative teams utilize multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and cycles of inquiry guided by four critical questions: 1) What is it we expect students to learn? 2) How will we know when they have learned it? 3) How will we respond when they don't learn? 4) How will we respond when they already know it? (IPP). To drive sustainable change, this system is dependent upon administrators who advance inclusive leadership and practices (AIPL and IEBA) and utilize distributive leadership to champion inclusive education (IPP, EPIE, IESS). The Arkansas SSIP emphasizes the value and impact of UDL and HLPs in a system that promotes inclusive education. This emphasis empowers novice and experienced educators with necessary knowledge and skills, building self and collective efficacy to meet the needs of diverse learners (AR THRIVE, R.I.S.E., HLPs, SIM™, and UDL). In the SSIP, the focus on alignment, scaling, and sustainability of these initiatives reflects a continuous evolution towards a single, coherent and collaborative system where students with disabilities are considered general education students with access to additional supports as determined by data. This system coalesces around DESE's mission to promote inclusive education.

Strategy Two: In collaboration with other DESE Units, advance Arkansas' inclusive education model to include Universal Design for Learning and expand the use of evidence-based personnel development to scale multi-tiered systems of support for behavior and academics, with a focus on literacy.

Implemented and supported in SSIP targeted districts by DESE through the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), this strategy has continuously evolved to focus on scaling MTSS for behavior and academics, with a focus on literacy, and the increased capacity of personnel to proficiently integrate UDL and HLPs within daily instruction. This support strategically aligns with DESE's initiatives of IPP, EPIE, IESS, R.I.S.E., HLPs, SIM™, UDL, AR THRIVE, and RTI Arkansas. In partnership with other DESE Units, the SPDG professional learning design includes multi-year job-embedded training, differentiated coaching, and follow-up supports, to increase the ability of educators to consistently implement UDL and HLPs when teaching all students, especially students with disabilities. To advance Arkansas' inclusive education model, the SPDG project embeds evidence-based practices used to expand the capacity of administrative leadership and instructional coaches to support the scale-up and sustainment of MTSS through collaborative processes and structures. Recognized as an integral part of Arkansas' comprehensive system of professional development, DESE and SPDG continue to increase access to high quality professional learning through the development of micro-credentials (MCs). A MC is a verification of proficiency in a job-embedded discrete skill that an educator demonstrates through the submission of evidence assessed via defined evaluation criteria. MCs allow educators the flexibility to personalize learning experiences that are relevant to the needs of students and are backed by research and best-practices. This form of professional learning has the capacity to assess and recognize an educator's acquisition of skills for the purpose of improving practice, advancing careers, and allowing educators to be acknowledged and rewarded as professionals. The MCs developed by DESE and SPDG provide Arkansas educators with access to professional learning on UDL, HLPs, and other evidence-based instructional practices, and DESE-approved MCs are used in a variety of ways to support educators at all stages of the career continuum. During this reporting cycle, DESE has further championed the development of MCs around UDL and HLPs to allow educators with greater choice and autonomy in the professional learning process. Through the use of MCs, the SPDG works to ensure that every student has access to a high-quality, effective teacher regardless of context resulting in improved outcomes for all, especially students with disabilities. MCs are provided by DESE and SPDG at no cost to Arkansas teachers and administrators, and the SPDG offers stipends to educators who successfully complete the MCs related to the improvement strategies outlined in the SSIP/SPDG Alignment and Evaluation Plan.

AR THRIVE, IPP, EPIE, and IESS are initiatives that are embedded within both of the infrastructure improvement strategies. AR THRIVE is a positive, proactive approach backed by in-depth evidence-based training, existing programs, and peer collaboration to develop LEA's capacity to establish and sustain MTSS in order for students to have access to the personalized academic, behavioral, and mental health supports to best meet the needs of the whole child. To scale DESE's coherent system, IPP, EPIE, and IESS are focused on increasing collective efficacy and advance the implementation of UDL and HLPs for behavior and academics within MTSS in order to maximize learning of all students through a collaborative partnership between general and special educators, administrators, and related services professionals. This systematic approach involves developing capacity at the state, regional, district, building, and classroom levels. LEAs receive differentiated coaching during the stages of planning, implementing, and monitoring of inclusive practices through cycles of continuous improvement to effectively meet the needs of all students, including students with disabilities, within a general education setting. The purposeful selection of these strategies aligns well with stakeholder feedback, the extant evidence base, and with DESE's mission and vision to lead the nation in student-focused learning.

**Describe the short-term or intermediate outcomes achieved for each infrastructure improvement strategy during the reporting period including the measures or rationale used by the State and stakeholders to assess and communicate achievement. Please relate short-term outcomes to one or more areas of a systems framework (e.g., governance, data, finance, accountability/monitoring, quality standards, professional development and/or technical assistance) and explain how these strategies support system change and are necessary for: (a) achievement of the SiMR; (b) sustainability of systems improvement efforts; and/or (c) scale-up.**

Relative to strategy one, the State Performance Management Team (SPMT) met monthly to improve the LEA system of support. This collaboration strategy involves multiple overlapping agency systems, including governance, data, accountability/monitoring, and quality standards. Representatives from the SPMT participated in NCSL's Cross-State Learning Collaboratives focused on scaling evidence-based practices (EBPs), including the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Deep Dive Group, and IDC's SSIP Data Quality Peer Group. To measure change across multiple agency initiatives in the SSIP, Arkansas continued to utilize the SSIP Infrastructure Development Planning and Progress Management Tool: Using Implementation Drivers and Stages of Implementation. Consideration of all initiatives reflected in the SSIP Theory of Action for this improvement strategy resulted in ratings that remained stable. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = pre-exploration and 5 = full implementation) Arkansas SSIP Infrastructure Tool ratings revealed the following implementation scores: Competency drivers of selection (4.5), training (4.0) and coaching (4.0), Organizational drivers of decision support data systems (4.5), facilitative administration (4.5) and systems intervention (4.5). Overall performance assessment of the Arkansas system coherence also remained stable at (4.0) as well as the technical & adaptive leadership drivers at (5.0). The SSIP includes multiple initiatives, each at different stages of implementation. Ratings are indicative of the intentional focus on coherence of initiatives across various stages of implementation. The SPMT continued interdepartmental collaboration and coordination through regular involvement and initiative alignment presentations at DESE Learning Services Unit Leader Meetings, quarterly Regional Content Specialist Meetings, monthly Office of Special Education Meetings, Statewide LEA Monthly Virtual Calls, monthly Arkansas Collaborative Consultants (ACC) Director Meetings, monthly EPIE Leadership and Professional Development Providers Virtual Coaching Calls, an annual convening of the Arkansas Collaborative Consultants, an annual convening of LEA Supervisors called the LEA Academy, an annual School-based Therapy Conference for related service providers, and with The Center for Exceptional Families (TCFEF), Arkansas' PTI Center. By focusing on strand one, DESE is increasingly modeling for LEAs the collaborative accountability and decision making that is needed to meet the needs of all learners. This strand assists the facilitation of information exchange and reduces the organizational silos that may impede sustainable systemic change. Enhanced collaboration through strategy one assists the agency to concentrate efforts on scaling and advancing organizational coherence in order to positively impact the SiMR.

Relative to strategy two, The State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), in partnership with other DESE Units, works to transform and expand the statewide coherent system of support through professional learning and coaching. The SPDG professional learning design includes multi-year job-embedded training, differentiated coaching, and follow-up supports, with a focus on increasing the ability and efficacy of educators to effectively meet the needs of students with disabilities through inclusive education. In addition, the SPDG strives to increase the capacity of leadership and instructional coaches to support the scale-up and sustainment of multi-tiered systems of support and interventions (MTSS) with embedded high-leverage and other evidence-based practices including Universal Design for Learning. These implementation supports directly relate to DESE's professional development and technical assistance system. During this reporting cycle, the State Implementation Team reviewed data from implementation science measures from districts receiving SPDG support, and continued to meet with DESE leaders and a statewide advisory panel to gain stakeholder feedback on systemic implementation strengths and barriers. Serving as a foundational component to support the expansion of the SPDG, the Response to Intervention modules and facilitator guides for academics and behavior were revised during this reporting period. The academic and behavior modules are aligned to DESE initiatives, integrate evidence-based instructional practices, and directly impact the work of the Arkansas Behavior Support Specialists around the implementation of sustainable systems for behavior. This alignment and integration promotes equity in access to high quality professional learning, and the scaling of the ongoing initiatives for inclusive education. The SPDG differentiated coaching model and the revised behavior modules coherently align to the Arkansas THRIVE initiative which is a positive, proactive approach to develop LEA's capacity to establish and sustain MTSS in order for students

to have access to the personalized academic, behavior, and mental health supports to best meet the needs of the whole child. Data from cohorts 1-3 of THRIVE indicated that DESE supported 57 LEAs and 132 buildings. Following a nine-day intensive training, THRIVE participants return to their districts to navigate the implementation of Tier 1 and 2 systems of support for behavior and mental health. Leaders are given a one-year timeframe to apply acquired knowledge and present supporting evidence in portfolio submissions. Of the 132 buildings, 21 also enrolled in the BX3 project with the Arkansas Behavior Support Specialists to receive job-embedded coaching and implementation support. During this reporting period, 67 participants from cohort 1 successfully demonstrated the required evidence to receive the THRIVE Leadership endorsement. Future reporting of indicator 17 will showcase data from submissions of cohorts 1-3.

As the implementation team for strategy two of the SSIP regarding inclusive education, systemic improvements facilitated by the SPDG are measured through the SISEP State Capacity Assessment (SCA) tool. State Capacity Assessment results from the spring of 2023 were as follows: Leadership (78%), Infrastructure and Resources (100%), Communication and Engagement (89%), and SCA Total Score (88%). Percentages represent the number of SCA items in place and mark significant improvement over the previous year's SCA results. Current SCA ratings will serve as a comparison for future SCA administrations. At the regional educational cooperative level, the SPDG Team administers the SISEP Regional Capacity Assessment (RCA) tool to measure systemic change with regional cooperative partners. The average from all RCA assessments revealed the ESCs met the end-of-year one targets with the following results: Leadership (90%), Competency (79%), Organization (75%), Total RCA Score (82%). During this reporting period, the SPDG redefined the structure used to measure the impact of effective innovation. While systems-level work is important and critical for the overall sustenance of the project, the SPDG competency-based professional learning (micro-credentials) were identified as the intervention that has the greatest impact on daily instruction and student outcomes. Therefore, micro-credentials which focus on UDL, HLPs, and other evidence-based instructional practices are the effective innovation that positively impacts the SiMR and improves outcomes for students with disabilities.

**Did the State implement any new (newly identified) infrastructure improvement strategies during the reporting period? (yes/no)**

NO

**Provide a summary of the next steps for each infrastructure improvement strategy and the anticipated outcomes to be attained during the next reporting period.**

Strategy One-

Distributive Leadership Projects:

The distributive leadership projects (IPP, EPIE & IESS) support the SSIP by building a culture of shared responsibility & collective efficacy between general & special educators, administrators, & related service professionals as well as advance the implementation of UDL & HLPs within MTSS. Each project will support additional cohorts during the next reporting cycle. For IPP & EPIE, DESE will continue to partner with contracted vendors for implementation support. DESE liaisons will work alongside the vendor to build capacity & strengthen alignment of projects to systematically scale statewide. The DESE Inclusive Practices Specialist will coordinate all projects to ensure coherence & assist liaisons in capacity building efforts. By increasing access to quality core instruction & intervention, students are expected to demonstrate moderate to high growth in literacy as measured by the statewide assessment as well as improvement in LRE percentages.

High Leverage Practices:

During this phase of SSIP, acquired survey data indicated progress regarding the self-efficacy of novice special educators in Arkansas when implementing HLPs. In ongoing efforts, the SSIP will leverage agency infrastructure & systems to increase state-level capacity of HLPs, with a focus on agency unit leaders, regional content specialists, agency technical assistance providers, IHEs, & The Center for Exceptional Families (TCFEF), the state's parent training center. The SSIP will further the intentional collaboration with DESE Educator Effectiveness & IHEs around efforts to mentor all novice general & special educators with HLPs & align to the Arkansas Special Education Resource Academy, a DESE partnership with IHEs to increase the number of special educators in the state. The anticipated expansion of HLPs is projected to improve the readiness of general & special educators, foster increased efficacy in knowledge & skills to effectively work with diverse learners & result in higher percentages of novice educators who choose to remain in the profession. Additionally, the SSIP will continue to partner with TCFEF to emphasize effective ways for families & educators to meaningfully engage to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. In collaboration with TCFEF, a plan will be developed to learn more from both families & educators centered around the four categories of HLPs. The information learned from families & educators will be used to inform & further advance improvements across both strategies of the SSIP. To advance the State's focus on assistive & instructional technology (HLP17), every student in Arkansas will have access to a suite of web-based accessibility tools accompanied with training & technology integration to support inclusive education & access to high-quality instruction. As students gain access to the suite of universal tools, it is expected that Arkansas' work with HLPs, UDL & AEM will further advance leaderships' commitment to inclusive practices. Additionally, an increase in LRE is anticipated as students with disabilities will have greater access to quality core instruction.

Inclusive Administrator Leadership:

Arkansas recognizes the pivotal role of administrators to drive change for inclusive education. CCSSO will continue to support Arkansas with the Advancing Inclusive Principal Leadership (AIPL) initiative & the SSIP SiMR will remain as the overarching goal for this work. An integral component of AIPL involves incorporating HLPs into statewide professional learning for principals & school leadership teams. DESE & the work of the SSIP will continue to partner with the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA) to provide all administrators involved in the AAEA Beginning Administrators Academy with the ALL IN training on inclusive practices. The DESE Inclusive Practices website & Toolkits will continue to expand by adding resources, research, & implementation supports, aiming to further advance inclusive education & improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Through this expansion, LEAs will recognize that these efforts extend far beyond the scope of special education & hold significance for all stakeholders, including administrators. DESE will further invest in inclusive principal leadership by forming a principal network to advance inclusive education. While improvements to the SiMR are anticipated, DESE also expects a sustained cultural shift led by principals at the build level aimed to promote the Least Dangerous Assumption, ensuring that all students are considered general education students. DESE also anticipates that inclusive leaders will guide buildings towards increasing student access to core instruction, promoting continuous improvement in the LRE for students with disabilities.

Strategic Instructional Model:

Though the SSIP SiMR is focused on literacy value-added growth scores for SWD in grades 3-5, Arkansas recognizes the need to provide support for all students regardless of grade. Arkansas will continue to broaden support for the Strategic Instructional Model, placing a particular emphasis on enhancing digital access to the eight SIM™ Learning Strategies and Content Enhancement Routines. Training sessions & coaching on these strategies & routines will continue to be reinforced through a collaborative partnership with the University of Central Arkansas Mashburn Center for Learning. The next steps for this work will include scaling the reach and sustainability of SIM™ professional learning opportunities via a learning management system, followed by job-embedded coaching. Additionally, the DESE Inclusive Practices Specialists will become certified in multiple strategies and routines to increase statewide access to certified trainers & coaches. The provision of resources & support for strategy instruction & content enhancement is expected to empower educators with the knowledge & skills necessary to help diverse students become self-directed learners. This improvement strategy directly aligns with HLP 14.

Strategy Two -

#### State Personnel Development Grant

Aligned with the SSIP, Arkansas will continue to leverage the SPDG to build upon previous work around RTI/MTSS for academics & behavior and through the incorporation of HLPs & UDL within professional learning. The SPDG & DESE Educator Effectiveness will continue collaborative efforts around the design of competency-based professional learning micro-credentials (MC). Next steps for this improvement strategy includes a MC for each HLP available to educators across the state via DESE's online learning management system. Arkansas will participate in the Micro-Credential Partnership of States with North Carolina, South Carolina, & Wyoming to develop assurance standards as a way to ensure all micro-credentials are of high quality. It is expected that through the use of MCs, educators across the state will gain the knowledge & ability to successfully implement UDL & HLPs within daily instruction which is expected to increase student access to quality, core instruction & improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

To develop self-directed leaders & coaches, the SPDG will continue to offer Cognitive Coaching to scale implementation support of UDL & HLPs. The SPDG & DESE Educator Effectiveness will increase statewide coaching support by continuing to offer monthly Coaching Collaborative meetings & Communities of Practice focused on coaching skills; implementation challenges; & DESE-specific implementation challenges. It is expected that the Cognitive Coaching training & Communities of Practice will support coaches to develop a consistent set of practices used to effectively support classroom educators with the implementation of MCs for UDL & HLPs. An increase in educator self-efficacy for implementing UDL & HLPs is anticipated resulting in improved student outcomes.

#### List the selected evidence-based practices implement in the reporting period:

High Leverage Practices for Inclusive Classrooms (HLPs)

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Collaboration - Distributive Leadership Projects (Inclusive Practices Project-IPP, Effective Practices for Inclusive Education-EPiE, and Inclusive Education Support Specialist-IESS)

Response to Intervention/Multi-tiered Systems of Support - Distributive Leadership Projects

Strategic Instructional Model - Executive Functioning/Content Enhancement Routines/Learning Strategies

Inclusive Administrator Leadership - Advancing Inclusive Principal Leadership (AIPL) and ALL IN for Beginning Administrators

#### Provide a summary of each evidence-based practices.

High Leverage Practices for Inclusive Classrooms, as defined by the Council for Exceptional Children, encompass a set of essential practices vital for supporting student learning. These practices are designed to be systematically taught, learned, and implemented by both novice and experienced educators. Supported by research, HLPs demonstrate significant potential for improving academic and behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities and other learners. To maximize their effectiveness, these practices are best utilized within a tiered system of support, where decision-making is informed by data to address individual student needs.

According to ESSA, Universal Design for Learning is recognized as a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice. UDL offers flexibility in presenting information, allowing varied ways for students to respond or demonstrate learning, and promoting diverse student engagement in the learning process. Additionally, UDL aims to eliminate barriers to instruction, provide appropriate accommodations and supports, and uphold high achievement expectations for all students.

The Distributive Leadership Projects, including the Inclusive Practices Project, Effective Practices for Inclusive Education, and Inclusive Education Support Specialist, intentionally focus on promoting inclusive practices. The goal is to ensure that students who are IEP eligible, as well as other groups of struggling learners, have meaningful access to core instruction and established systems of intervention. By implementing collaborative structures and maintaining a relentless focus on learning, these projects will improve student outcomes, including achievement and growth performance as measured by district and state assessments. Collaboration fosters and leads to collective teacher efficacy, a highly influential factor in improving student outcomes.

Response to Intervention/Multi-tiered Systems of Support (RTI/MTSS) is a comprehensive general education model designed to identify students who may be at risk for learning and/or behavioral challenges. This model involves multiple components and aims to provide timely support and closely monitor the progress of students to ensure effective intervention.

The Strategic Instructional Model (SIM) is a formal model of cognitive and metacognitive interventions for struggling learners designed to focus on the following three broad areas of learning: acquisition, storage, and/or expression/demonstration. The goal of SIM is for students to grow in executive functioning skills for self-directed learning.

The Inclusive Administrator Leadership Projects (Advancing Inclusive Principal Leadership in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers and ALL IN for Beginning Administrators in partnership with the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators) are DESE initiatives strategically designed to develop inclusive principals and administrators. The goal is to equip them with the necessary skills to effectively serve students with disabilities and provide support to teachers across general and special education, ultimately leading to improved outcomes. Inclusive leaders strive to create learning environments where all students can excel at high levels. Additionally, they champion distributive leadership to enhance support and retention of effective teachers working with students with disabilities.

#### Provide a summary of how each evidence-based practice and activities or strategies that support its use, is intended to impact the SiMR by changing program/district policies, procedures, and/or practices, teacher/provider practices (e.g. behaviors), parent/caregiver outcomes, and/or child outcomes.

Arkansas recognizes the imperative to improve access for students with disabilities to receive instruction in the least restrictive environments. The evidence-based practices outlined in the SSIP support systemic change, with the overarching goal of improving students' access to high-quality core instruction in the least restrictive environments. By providing educators with robust support and empowering them through quality professional learning that deepens their knowledge and skills to serve diverse learners, coupled with collaborative efforts between general and special educators as well as related services professionals around student data, students will demonstrate significant growth in literacy scores, which is the Arkansas SSIP SiMR. The intended impact has been evident in SSIP targeted schools, as the SiMR target has been exceeded in the past three reporting cycles. As reflected in the SSIP Logic Model, outputs and changes to LEA systems include the following:

\*SSIP schools reflect a collaboratively designed multi-tiered system of supports for academics and behavior

\*SSIP school-level leadership teams build and increase capacity as measured by the Inclusive Practices Needs Assessment

\*Educators in SSIP schools build and increase their capacity to implement UDL, HLPs, and other evidence-based practices, as measured by the Self-Efficacy Inventory

\*Principals in SSIP schools build and increase their capacity to establish and cultivate a culture of high expectations and inclusivity for diverse learners

\*SSIP schools evidence an increase in students with disabilities demonstrating moderate or high growth as measured by the DESE and as reflected in

the SiMR

\*SSIP schools actively and collaboratively involve families in meaningful ways to improve outcomes for students with disabilities

The evidence-based practices that will enable and implement the above-listed changes include:

High Leverage Practices for Inclusive Classrooms, as defined by the Council for Exceptional Children, encompass a set of essential practices vital for supporting student learning. These practices are designed to be systematically taught, learned, and implemented by both novice and experienced educators. Supported by research, HLPs demonstrate significant potential for improving academic and behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities and other learners. To maximize their effectiveness, these practices are best utilized within a tiered system of support, where decision-making is informed by data to address individual student needs.

Universal Design for Learning is recognized as a scientifically valid framework for guiding educational practice. UDL offers flexibility in presenting information, allowing varied ways for students to respond or demonstrate learning, and promoting diverse student engagement in the learning process. Additionally, UDL aims to eliminate barriers to instruction, provide appropriate accommodations and supports, and uphold high achievement expectations for all students.

The Distributive Leadership Projects, including the Inclusive Practices Project, Effective Practices for Inclusive Education, and Inclusive Education Support Specialist, intentionally focus on promoting inclusive practices. The goal is to ensure that students who are IEP eligible, as well as other groups of struggling learners, have meaningful access to core instruction and established systems of intervention. By implementing collaborative structures and maintaining a relentless focus on learning, these projects will improve student outcomes, including achievement and growth performance as measured by district and state assessments. Collaboration fosters and leads to collective teacher efficacy, a highly influential factor in improving student outcomes.

Response to Intervention/Multi-tiered Systems of Support (RTI/MTSS) is a comprehensive general education model designed to identify students who may be at risk for learning and/or behavioral challenges. This model involves multiple components and aims to provide timely support and closely monitor the progress of students to ensure effective intervention. By identifying essential standards and engaging in frequent collaborative review of students' data through common formative and summative assessments, the process of matching interventions to specific student needs will be established, ensuring high levels of learning for all students.

The Strategic Instructional Model (SIM) is a formal model of cognitive and metacognitive interventions for struggling learners designed to focus on the following three broad areas of learning: acquisition, storage, and/or expression/demonstration. The goal of SIM is for students to increase self-direction in learning how to learn.

The Inclusive Administrator Leadership Projects (Advancing Inclusive Principal Leadership in partnership with the Council of Chief State School Officers and ALL IN for Beginning Administrators in partnership with the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators) are DESE initiatives strategically designed to develop inclusive principals and administrators. The goal is to develop leaders who are well prepared to serve students with disabilities and support teachers across general and special education to improve outcomes. Inclusive leaders create learning environments where all students can excel at high levels and promote distributive leadership to support and retain effective teachers of students with disabilities. Effective inclusive leaders will demonstrate increased efficacy in the support and feedback provided to educators, and as a result, improve the quality of instruction at the building level.

Micro-credentialing for UDL and HLPs will further transform the approach to lifelong learning for educators in Arkansas. Integrating micro-credentials into the state's professional development system will empower educators with increased autonomy in identifying and developing new competencies. Additionally, it offers educators to measure competency in newly acquired skills and potentially earn recognition along DESE's career continuum. This shift towards greater educator ownership and agency is expected to result in the implementation of rigorous and high-quality instructional and assessment practices for the benefit of Arkansas students.

#### **Describe the data collected to monitor fidelity of implementation and to assess practice change.**

To measure change across multiple agency initiatives in the SSIP, Arkansas continued to utilize the SSIP Infrastructure Development Planning and Progress Management Tool: Using Implementation Drivers and Stages of Implementation. Consideration of all initiatives reflected in the SSIP Theory of Action for this improvement strategy resulted in ratings that remained stable. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = pre-exploration and 5 = full implementation) Arkansas SSIP Infrastructure Tool ratings revealed the following implementation scores: Competency drivers of selection (4.5), training (4.0) and coaching (4.0), Organizational drivers of decision support data systems (4.5), facilitative administration (4.5) and systems intervention (4.5). Overall performance assessment of the Arkansas system coherence also remained stable at (4.0) as well as the technical & adaptive leadership drivers at (5.0). The SSIP includes multiple initiatives, each at different stages of implementation. Ratings are indicative of the intentional focus on coherence of initiatives across various stages of implementation.

The evaluation of improvement for the SSIP aligns with the SPDG evaluation plan. As the work has evolved over reporting cycles, tools to measure implementation fidelity have undergone modifications. The SPDG's comprehensive evaluation system measures the state system of support for growing educator capacity to proficiently implement UDL and HLP within daily instruction for academics and behavior. In addition, the SPDG evaluation plan monitors educator self-efficacy, impact of professional learning, and student outcomes, including value-added literacy scores. As the implementation team for strategy two of the SSIP, systemic improvements at the state level are measured through the SISEP State Capacity Assessment (SCA) tool. The SCA is designed to support scaling up of evidence-based practices by providing a regular measure of state capacity, a structured process for completing a state action plan, information on progress towards goals, and a common infrastructure for implementation.

To promote high quality coaching, the SPDG utilizes the Coaching Fidelity of Implementation Rubric. In the Arkansas coaching model, coaches are defined as educational leaders who build the collective capacity and efficacy of a school system based on educators' self-identified needs to improve student outcomes. This is achieved by: demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy; displaying professional flexibility and responsiveness; formulating a comprehensive coaching plan; fostering a culture for learning and engagement; creating an environment of respect and rapport; and communicating effectively in the coaching relationship. To further support coaching capacity, the SPDG hosts Collaborative Coaching sessions to build relationships among coaches across the network, increase coaches' skills and tools based on coaching practices, support inclusive practices and establish a community where coaches receive assistance with ongoing implementation needs, problem-solve challenges, and share positive experiences and successful strategies. A Principal and Educator Self-Efficacy Survey is utilized to measure perceived acquisition, growth, knowledge, skill, and implementation of HLPs, UDL, and other evidence-based practices that promote inclusive education. The Micro-credential Professional Learning Evaluation Criteria assists the team in ensuring high-quality standards in the development and implementation of micro-credentials for UDL and HLPs. All training performed by the State team or coaching affiliates follows the Observation Checklist for High-Quality Professional Development (HQPD) Version 3.



**Describe any additional data (e.g. progress monitoring) that was collected that supports the decision to continue the ongoing use of each evidence-based practice.**

An important systemic data point to consider in the ongoing efforts to address evidence-based practices is the continued interest expressed in the DESE Special Education Resource Teacher Academies. The purpose of the Special Education Resource Teacher Academies is to provide current licensed public school educators in Elementary K-6, 4-8, or 7-12 ELA, Math, or Science the opportunity to earn an additional Special Education Resource Endorsement and participate in job-embedded professional development while receiving graduate school credit hours, at no cost to them. Educators obtaining this endorsement are able to provide special education services within the general education classroom, as supplementary supports, or in special education classrooms. One goal of the academies is to expand LEAs' ability to consider and offer a variety of special education service delivery models. With the increasing emphasis on inclusive practices, this opportunity supports Arkansas school districts by providing the skilled staff needed to lead the nation in student-focused inclusive education. Participating educators are part of the Novice Special Education Teacher Mentoring Program at their local education service cooperative where they will receive additional coaching, professional development, regional networking opportunities, and support throughout the school year. DESE and all partnering higher education programs provide programs that:

- Include 12-15 hours of graduate coursework

- Lead to a Special Education Resource Teacher Endorsement

- Include some summer instruction to prepare teachers for the fall semester

- Include ongoing supports throughout the school year

- Are designed for completion of the Academy in one year

- Cover Tuition, fees, and assessment costs

In the 2021-2022 academic year, 174 educators participated in the initial cohort. Two hundred and ninety four participants (294) will participate in the 2022-2023 academic year. Each educator preparation program agrees to promote HLPs and UDL within the coursework for the academies, and interest to participate continues to exceed expectations. Survey data indicating the numbers of participants interested in continuing learning on high-leverage and inclusive practices, UDL, and executive functioning, supports the sustained use of the evidence-based practices outlined in the SSIP.

Qualitative survey feedback gathered from inclusive practices trainings, which involved over 3,000 educators, administrators, and families representing districts from every Arkansas Regional Education Service Cooperative in 2022-2023, highlighted a strong desire among district and school teams for more support in implementing inclusive practices, including UDL, HLPs, and RTI/MTSS. There is an increasing trend where LEAs are seeking DESE support specifically for the practical implementation of inclusive practices. Notably, each evidence-based practice and improvement strategy outlined in the SSIP aligns with and supports this identified need. As a result, multiple statewide trainings focusing on UDL, HLPs, and executive functioning were introduced in the summer of 2022 and continue to be offered.

**Provide a summary of the next steps for each evidence-based practices and the anticipated outcomes to be attained during the next reporting period.**

**Strategy One-**

**Distributive Leadership Projects:** The distributive leadership projects (IPP, EPIE & IESS) support the SSIP by building a culture of shared responsibility & collective efficacy between general & special educators, administrators, & related service professionals as well as advance the implementation of UDL & HLPs within MTSS. Each project will support additional cohorts during the next reporting cycle. For IPP & EPIE, DESE will continue to partner with national technical assistance (TA) providers for implementation support. DESE liaisons will work with the TA to build capacity & strengthen alignment of projects to systematically scale statewide. The DESE Inclusive Practices Specialist will coordinate all projects to ensure coherence & assist liaisons in capacity building efforts. By increasing access to quality core instruction & intervention, students are expected to demonstrate moderate to high growth in literacy as measured by the statewide assessment as well as improvement in LRE percentages.

**High Leverage Practices:** During this phase of SSIP, acquired survey data indicated progress regarding the self-efficacy of novice special educators in Arkansas (AR) when implementing HLPs. In ongoing efforts, the SSIP will leverage agency infrastructure & systems to increase state-level capacity of HLPs, with a focus on agency unit leaders, regional specialists, agency technical assistance providers, IHEs, & The Center for Exceptional Families (TCFEF), the state's parent training center. The SSIP will further the intentional collaboration with DESE Educator Effectiveness & IHEs around efforts to mentor all novice general & special educators with HLPs & align to the AR Special Education Resource Academy, a DESE partnership with IHEs to increase the number of special educators in the state. The anticipated expansion of HLPs is projected to improve the readiness of general & special educators, foster increased efficacy in knowledge & skills to effectively work with diverse learners & result in higher percentages of novice educators who choose to remain in the profession. Additionally, the SSIP will continue to partner with TCFEF to emphasize effective ways for families & educators to engage to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. In collaboration with TCFEF, a plan will be developed to learn more from both families & educators centered around the four categories of HLPs. The information learned from families & educators will be used to inform & further advance improvements across both strategies of the SSIP. To advance AR's focus on assistive & instructional technology (HLP17), every student in AR will have access to a suite of web-based accessibility tools accompanied with training & technology integration to support inclusive education & access to high-quality instruction. As students gain access to the suite of universal tools, it is expected that this work with HLPs, UDL & AEM will further advance leaderships' commitment to inclusive practices. Additionally, an increase in LRE is anticipated as students with disabilities will have greater access to quality core instruction.

**Inclusive Administrator Leadership:** AR recognizes the pivotal role of administrators to drive change for inclusive education. CCSSO will continue to support AR with the Advancing Inclusive Principal Leadership (AIPL) initiative & the SSIP SiMR will remain as the overarching goal for this work. An integral component of AIPL involves incorporating HLPs into statewide professional learning for principals & school leadership teams. DESE & the work of the SSIP will continue to partner with the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA) to provide all administrators involved in the AAEA Beginning Administrators Academy with the ALL IN training on inclusive practices. The DESE Inclusive Practices website & Toolkits will continue to expand by adding resources, research, & implementation supports, aiming to further advance inclusive education & improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Through this expansion, LEAs will recognize that these efforts extend far beyond the scope of special education & hold significance for all stakeholders, including administrators. DESE will further invest in inclusive principal leadership by forming a principal network to advance inclusive education. While improvements to the SiMR are anticipated, DESE also expects a sustained cultural shift led by principals at the build level aimed to promote the Least Dangerous Assumption, ensuring that all students are considered general education students. DESE also anticipates that inclusive leaders will guide buildings towards increasing student access to core instruction, promoting continuous improvement in the LRE for students with disabilities.

**Strategic Instructional Model:** Though the SSIP SiMR is focused on literacy value-added growth scores for SWD in grades 3-5, Arkansas recognizes the need to provide support for all students regardless of grade. Arkansas will continue to broaden support for the Strategic Instructional Model, placing a particular emphasis on enhancing digital access to the eight SIM™ Learning Strategies and Content Enhancement Routines. Training sessions & coaching on these strategies & routines will continue to be reinforced through a collaborative partnership with the University of Central Arkansas Mashburn Center for Learning. The next steps for this work will include scaling the reach and sustainability of SIM™ professional learning opportunities

via a learning management system, followed by job-embedded coaching. Additionally, the DESE Inclusive Practices Specialists will become certified in multiple strategies and routines to increase statewide access to certified trainers & coaches. The provision of resources & support for strategy instruction & content enhancement is expected to empower educators with the knowledge & skills necessary to help diverse students become self-directed learners. This improvement strategy directly aligns with HLP 14.

#### Strategy Two -

State Personnel Development Grant: Aligned with the SSIP, Arkansas will continue to leverage the SPDG to build upon previous work around RTI/MTSS for academics & behavior and through the incorporation of HLPs & UDL within professional learning. The SPDG & DESE Educator Effectiveness will continue collaborative efforts around the design of competency-based professional learning micro-credentials (MC). Next steps for this improvement strategy includes a MC for each HLP available to educators across the state via DESE's online learning management system. Arkansas will participate in the Micro-Credential Partnership of States with North Carolina, South Carolina, & Wyoming to develop assurance standards as a way to ensure all micro-credentials are of high quality. It is expected that through the use of MCs, educators across the state will gain the knowledge & ability to successfully implement UDL & HLPs within daily instruction which is expected to increase student access to quality, core instruction & improve outcomes for students with disabilities. To develop self-directed leaders & coaches, the SPDG will continue to offer Cognitive Coaching to scale implementation support of UDL & HLPs. The SPDG & DESE Educator Effectiveness will increase statewide coaching support by continuing to offer monthly Coaching Collaborative meetings & Communities of Practice focused on coaching skills; implementation challenges; & DESE-specific implementation challenges. It is expected that the Cognitive Coaching training & Communities of Practice will support coaches to develop a consistent set of practices used to effectively support classroom educators with the implementation of MCs for UDL & HLPs. An increase in educator self-efficacy for implementing UDL & HLPs is anticipated resulting in improved student outcomes.

#### **Does the State intend to continue implementing the SSIP without modifications? (yes/no)**

YES

#### **If yes, describe how evaluation data support the decision to implement without any modifications to the SSIP.**

The above-listed SiMR data indicates that Arkansas has exceeded the target across three reporting cycles in SSIP-supported LEAs implementing the coherent improvement strategies. Stakeholder feedback from novice special educators, beginning administrators, educators seeking resource endorsement in the Special Education Resource Academies and from parent engagement sessions indicate that the SSIP is well-calibrated to the needs of Arkansas LEAs. Results from the SSIP Infrastructure Tool, and the State Capacity Assessment indicate that systemic change is occurring throughout the cascade of supports from the SEA to the classroom.

### **Section C: Stakeholder Engagement**

#### **Description of Stakeholder Input**

Following the submission of the new targets for the FFY 2020-2025 SPP/APR cycle, the OSE has continued to collaborate closely with numerous partners and through various initiatives to obtain authentic engagement and reciprocal exchange of information regarding the targets, including Indicator 17. These partners and/or initiatives include:

The State Special Education Advisory Council is an integral group of stakeholders who provide input on target setting and improvement activities. The State Special Education Advisory Council meetings are held in April, July, October and January. Each meeting provides a forum for solicitation of feedback regarding SPP/APR targets and the SSIP Theory of Action. The Advisory Council representation includes: Parents (10), Adult Corrections, Advocates (2), AR Rehabilitation Services (2), Career & Technical Education (2), Center for Exceptional Families (PTI), Foster Care, Higher Education, Juvenile Corrections, LEA Special Education Supervisors, McKinney-Vento Administrator, Teachers (4), Private School, and Public Charter Schools. During these meetings, the council members and public participants are provided updates on the previously held stakeholder input sessions, compliance indicators, dispute resolution indicators, and the SSIP.

The Center for Exceptional Families (TCFEF) is a Parent Training and Information (PTI) center for the state with the mission of improving educational opportunities for students with disabilities, including students transitioning to adult life beyond high school. TCFEF maintains a large database of families of students with disabilities, and engages with them via social media, virtual and in-person meetings and through email. The OSE partnered with TCFEF during the target setting for the FFY 2020-2025 SPP/APR cycle and maintains ongoing collaboration to solicit stakeholder feedback regarding indicator target updates and the SSIP. TCFEF is also a contracted partner of the State Personnel Development Grant which directly aligns with the SSIP Theory of Action.

The Inclusive Practices Project has an intentional focus on inclusive practices, ensuring that students who are IEP eligible, as well as other groups of struggling learners, have meaningful access to quality core instruction and established systems of intervention. Participating schools engage in a collaborative evaluation process that gathers data regarding student achievement, teacher practices, and effective professional development. This project directly aligns with several key indicators, but is especially integral to supporting Indicator 5 (LRE) and Indicator 17 (SSIP). Schools supported by this initiative are factored into the Arkansas State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR). These LEAs form a key constituency group for ongoing input on targets and revisions. More information about this project can be found at this website: <https://dese.ade.arkansas.gov/Offices/special-projects/inclusive-practices-project>

The Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators (AAEA) is an agency of diverse school leaders that promotes quality public education for all children in Arkansas. AAEA's mission is to ensure high standards of leadership by providing quality professional development, influencing education legislation and policy, stimulating and fostering support and building successful coalitions. The OSE maintains a close partnership with AAEA, and particularly the constituent groups of Beginning Administrators (BA) and Special Education Administrators (AASEA). These partnerships provide avenues for broad stakeholder input on all targets in the SPP/APR, and any need for subsequent revisions to the targets. The BA subgroup has had increasing input over the past year through the OSE and AAEA's Advancing Inclusive Principal Leadership (AIPL) initiative.

The ALL IN Initiative of the OSE promotes equitable access to core instruction to foster greater opportunities for students to reach college, career, and life goals. The Inclusive Practices website includes an Inclusive Education Toolkit and provides important information for stakeholders in the areas of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), High-Leverage Practices (HLPs), Inclusive Principal Leadership, Inclusive Related Services, Parent Resources, Flexible Service Delivery, Scheduling, IEP Documentation and Videos for Implementation Support. Additional information on this initiative can be found on the following website <https://sites.google.com/view/inclusive-practices/home>. As part of the ALL IN Initiative, the Learning for All statewide training was continued across the state with over 3000 attendees. Learning for All emphasizes two key considerations for achieving inclusive education: Universal Design for Learning and Executive Functioning. Learning for All emphasizes two key considerations for achieving inclusive education: Universal Design for Learning and Executive Functioning. These statewide trainings provide an avenue for broad

stakeholder feedback regarding Indicator 17. In addition, during this reporting period a meeting occurred with the Arkansas Educator Preparation Program Council of Deans to present the ALL IN message and the SSIP Theory of Action. Input from the Council was requested on the direction of this work and the connectivity between higher education preparation programs. As a result of this collaboration, the Council decided to include high-leverage practices into the curricula.

The Arkansas School-Based Therapy Conference is an opportunity for the constituencies of special education administrators, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and speech-language pathologists to discuss indicator 17 targets and data, and to have meaningful dialogue to connect their roles to the targets when considering flexible service delivery, scheduling, funding, collaborative teaming structures, and high-leverage practices.

The Arkansas Collaborative Consultants (ACC) Convening and ACC Monthly Director Meetings represent key stakeholders from OSE's technical assistance arm and play a vital role in establishing performance measures to meet the targets outlined in the SPP/APR and to prioritize performance measures within discretionary grants. These diverse stakeholders provide leadership, support and service to LEAs in all 75 counties in the state, in alignment with the vision and mission of OSE and the SSIP. Discussions and feedback solicited across the ACC convening and monthly meetings include Indicator 17: SSIP improvement strategies, data, targets, planning, and action steps.

**Describe the specific strategies implemented to engage stakeholders in key improvement efforts.**

The stakeholder engagement strategies primarily utilized for the SSIP include clarifying goals, working with partner organizations, using multiple meeting opportunities, communicating often, using multiple means of submitting feedback and identifying key individuals who will champion the work. The SSIP Coordinator, UALR Data and Research Director and State Implementation Team from DESE have provided regular updates to, and requested feedback from, external stakeholders including the Special Education State Advisory Council, Special Education LEA Supervisors, and The Center for Exceptional Families to keep these groups informed as well as to solicit their feedback.

The SSIP Coordinator is frequently involved with SPDG and SPMT leadership, as well as with the Arkansas Association of Special Education Administrators' meetings. Feedback on the SSIP is regularly solicited through these collaborations. The SSIP Coordinator also serves as a team member on the AIPL initiative to increase the capacity of administrators to be inclusive leaders. As part of the annual DESE monthly LEA technical assistance calls, the SSIP Coordinator and the Associate Director of Special Education provide updates to LEA Special Education Supervisors about the infrastructure work taking place as well as solicit their feedback on the process. Continued intentional collaboration between the DESE and the Arkansas Collaborative Consultants (Professional Development Outreach) to better support LEAs has occurred through monthly meetings and the coordinated application of the SSIP theory of action into professional development, coaching and training support and facilitation.

The OSE partnered with The Center for Exceptional Families (TCFEF) during the target setting for the FFY 2020-2025 SPP/APR cycle & maintains ongoing collaboration to solicit stakeholder feedback regarding indicator targets. TCFEF maintains a large database of families of students with disabilities, & engages with them via social media, virtual and in-person meetings, & through email. As part of the target setting, in December of 2021, TCFEF, the IDEA Data and Research Manager, and the SSIP Coordinator facilitated a statewide virtual event for families to provide feedback on the setting targets, data analysis, & improvement strategies. For families who could not attend the live virtual session, a link to a recording of this event was sent to TCFEF's broad network of families to review and provide input at their convenience. Further, TCFEF is a partner of the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) which directly aligns to the SSIP Theory of Action, and a representative serves on the SPDG Core Management team & functions as the Family and Community Liaison. Additional information can be found on the TCFEF and SPDG webpages at <http://thecenterforexceptionalfamilies.org> & <https://www.arspdg.org/parents-family/>. During the 2022-23 school year TCFEF provided 89 training sessions exclusively for parents on such topics as Understanding the Referral process, Understanding the IEP, and Understanding Behavior Plans. Through these and other interactions, TCFEF collected feedback from parents and families to inform OSE on implementation efforts.

During this reporting cycle, the OSE Inclusive Practices website expanded to include information that describes the systemic change occurring within special education in Arkansas, and provides implementation resources and supports. The website has provided effective and efficient delivery of information for key stakeholders, including individuals with disabilities, families, educators, administrators, institutions of higher education and community members. The website can be accessed here <https://sites.google.com/view/inclusive-practices/home>.

The inclusion of DESE and LEA special education staff in the implementation of state initiatives such as Arkansas THRIVE, ALL IN, and the Inclusive Practices Project directly affect multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) for academics and behavior as well as student access to quality core instruction. The ALL IN initiative and the Inclusive Practices Project place focus on the advancement of inclusive education and includes the collection of participant feedback through engagement activities and survey data. Based on LEA and participant indicated needs, training improvements and revisions were made related to service delivery, scheduling, and data analysis for the purpose of ensuring all students have access to the general education curriculum. With greater access to MTSS and rigorous instruction alongside peers with and without disabilities, the results of these activities should be evident in the future by impacting several indicators and student outcomes.

To collect input for analyzing data, develop improvement strategies, and evaluate progress, the OSE invites stakeholders to attend various meetings, conferences, trainings, and webinars through several methods including direct invitations, emails to LEAs, newsletters, Commissioner Memos (DESE website), placement on the DESE event calendar, and listserv postings. Stakeholder feedback is collected via notetaking, recording of sessions, participant surveys, and direct surveys on specific topics.

Opportunities for stakeholder feedback occurred at several state conferences. The ADE Summit, which is held each summer, provides opportunities for stakeholder input on key improvement strategies including the SSIP. State and national experts present on aspects of UDL, HLPs, master scheduling & collaboration. The sessions focus on the advancement of Arkansas' professional development system that is heavily supported by the SPDG. One combined session, supported by DESE Educator Effectiveness and the SPDG, focused on job-embedded professional learning (i.e., micro-credentials) for UDL and HLPs. This session is in direct alignment with the coherent improvement strategies outlined in the SSIP Theory of Action & solicited feedback on the perceived benefits and potential use of micro-credentials.

Several opportunities in which the OSE solicited stakeholder input and feedback include monthly LEA meetings, monthly meetings with the Arkansas Collaborative Consultants (ACC), yearly ACC Fall Convening, yearly Arkansas School-based Therapy Conference, yearly DESE Summit, monthly OSE meetings, monthly meetings with regional education service cooperatives, cross-agency content meetings, and statewide trainings such as ALL IN, Arkansas THRIVE, and the Inclusive Practices Project.

**Were there any concerns expressed by stakeholders during engagement activities? (yes/no)**

NO

**Additional Implementation Activities**

**List any activities not already described that the State intends to implement in the next fiscal year that are related to the SiMR.**

Provide a timeline, anticipated data collection and measures, and expected outcomes for these activities that are related to the SiMR.

Describe any newly identified barriers and include steps to address these barriers.

Provide additional information about this indicator (optional).

#### **17 - Prior FFY Required Actions**

None

#### **17 - OSEP Response**

#### **17 - Required Actions**