Connecticut State Department of Education

CSDE
CONNECTICUT STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Part B State Systemic Improvement Plan

State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report Indicator 17
April 2016

Phase Two:

- Revisions to Baseline, Targets and SIMR
- Infrastructure Development
- Support for LEA Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs)
- Evaluation

Stakeholder Involvement

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) formed a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) stakeholder group to assist the agency with the development of Phase One of the SSIP. This group (described in the state's SSIP Phase One submission) provided the State with the expertise and diverse perspectives needed for planning and development. Since the submission of Phase One last year, the CSDE has been using the Connecticut State Advisory Council on Special Education (SAC) as its primary stakeholder group for input (including the resetting of targets), feedback and dissemination of information related to the SSIP.

SAC members must be individuals involved in, or concerned with the education of children with disabilities; and representative of the ethnic and racial diversity of, and the types of disabilities found in, the state population. Per Connecticut law, the Council appointments are as follows:

- Seven appointed by the Governor, all of whom shall be (A) the parents of children with disabilities, provided such children are under the age of twenty-seven, or (B) individuals with disabilities.

- Nine appointed by the Commissioner of Education, (A) six of whom shall be (i) the parents of children with disabilities, provided such children are under the age of twenty-seven, or (ii) individuals with disabilities, (B) one of whom shall be an official of the Department of Education, (C) one of whom shall be a state or local official responsible for carrying out activities under Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 USC 11431 et seq., as amended from time to time, and (D) one of whom shall be a representative of an institution of higher education in the state that prepares teacher and related services personnel.

- One appointed by the Commissioner of Developmental Services who shall be an official of the department.

- One appointed by the Commissioner of Children and Families who shall be an official of the department.

- One appointed by the Commissioner of Correction who shall be an official of the department.

- The director of the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, or the director's designee.

- One appointed by the director of the Parent Leadership Training Institute within the Commission on Children who shall be (A) the parent of a child with a disability, provided such child is under the age of twenty-seven, or (B) an individual with a disability.

- A representative from the parent training and information (PTI) center for Connecticut, (the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center [CPAC]), established pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1400 et seq., as amended from time to time.

- The Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services, or the commissioner's designee.

- Five who are members of the General Assembly who shall serve as nonvoting members of the advisory council: one appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, one appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, one appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate and one appointed by the minority leader of the Senate.

- One appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate who shall be a member of the Connecticut Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

- One appointed by the majority leader of the Senate who shall be a public school teacher.

- One appointed by the minority leader of the Senate who shall be a representative of a vocational, community or business organization concerned with the provision of transitional services to children with disabilities.

- One appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives who shall be a member of the Connecticut Council of Special Education Administrators and who is a local education official.

- One appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives who shall be a representative of charter schools.

- One appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives who shall be a member of the Connecticut Association of Private Special Education Facilities.

- One appointed by the Chief Court Administrator of the Judicial Department who shall be an official of such department responsible for the provision of services to adjudicated children and youth.

- Such other members as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 USC 1400 et seq., as amended from time to time, appointed by the Commissioner of Education.

Reported Data

FFY 2013: 33.7 (Baseline)

FFY 2014: 50.1 (New Baseline – see below)

The CSDE is not able to report on progress/slippage due to the adoption of new statewide assessments (standard and alternate) in FFY 2014 that are not comparable to the assessments administered in FFY 2013.

Revisions to Connecticut's Baseline, Targets and State Identified Measureable Result (SIMR)

Connecticut's original SIMR baseline was established using student scores from the 2012-13 administration of the Connecticut Mastery Test. Connecticut is reestablishing the SPP/APR Indicator 17 baseline for FFY 2014 using data from the 2014-15 statewide assessments: Smarter Balanced Assessment and Connecticut's alternate assessment.

ELA Performance Index Baseline (FFY 2014) = 50.1

The targets for SPP/APR Indicator 17 that were submitted as part of the SSIP Phase One requirements were set from the original baseline. As the baseline was reset to align with the current statewide assessments, the targets have also been reset with the input of SSIP stakeholders.

FFY 2015 – FFY 2018 Targets

2015	2016	2017	2018
50.1	50.3	50.7	51.1

NOTE: Connecticut has received permission from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to express its SIMR in a numeric form other than a percentage, to align with the state's accountability system and ELA Performance Index. Connecticut has worked diligently to incorporate the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and SIMR into existing department initiatives, all of which center around our accountability work. It is important to our state to use the same measures of student academic achievement across all monitoring and improvement initiatives, including our work with students with disabilities (SWDs).

Description of Measure

The methodology for calculating the ELA Performance Index starts by taking the scale score on statewide ELA assessment for each third grade SWD and converting that score into an

appropriate index point value that ranges from 0 to 100. The ELA Performance Index is calculated by averaging the index points earned by all participating third grade SWDs.

Also, due to the transition from Connecticut's Approved Flexibility Waiver to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the State has made a minor revision to the wording of its SIMR. Connecticut will now be using the following language for its SIMR:

Increase the reading performance of all third grade students with disabilities statewide, as measured by Connecticut's English/language arts (ELA) Performance Index.

Connecticut's SIMR is aligned to State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicator 3: Participation and Performance of Children with IEPs on Statewide Assessments. While the SIMR is an academic achievement indicator, it is not completely consistent with the measurement and targets for Indicator 3. The SIMR is aligned with Connecticut's Accountability System and only represents the subgroup of *third grade* students with disabilities (SWDs) participating in the state's ELA Assessment (both standard and alternate).

Component 1
Infrastructure Development

During the 2015-16 school year, the State continued to improve its infrastructure to address coordination and monitoring, professional learning (PL) and technical assistance (TA) in order to support SSIP activities. The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) is employing a variety of strategies and actions to improve the State's ability to support local education agencies (LEAs) as they work toward improving the reading performance of third grade students with disabilities (SWDs) – Connecticut's State Identified Measureable Result (SIMR).

The CSDE recognizes that, in order for the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) to be successful, ongoing coordination and collaboration among the Bureau of Special Education (BSE), internal CSDE colleagues and external partners is essential. Therefore, an SSIP Leadership Team has been created, key partners have been identified and corresponding teams are being formed and used to share expertise, research and resources; plan PL opportunities for LEAs; support the State's SSIP tiered-intervention TA model; and build capacity of BSE staff on reading/literacy strategies for SWDs.

Increasing the collaboration between the BSE and the CSDE's Academic Office is a critical component for building BSE staff capacity to deliver TA and developing PL activities designed to support LEAs in using evidence-based practices (EBPs) with SWDs; therefore, this has become a significant area of focus for the agency's infrastructure improvement. There are a variety of existing initiatives in the state that are coordinated by the Academic Office and directly relate to and support the SSIP. While many of the initiatives were originally developed with some attention to specific student subgroups (e.g., English learners (ELs) and SWDs), improving the CSDE's infrastructure by (1) creating a Director of Reading position in the Academic Office, (2) establishing a CSDE Statewide K-3 Reading Project (3) assigning staff to serve on an inter-office SSIP Leadership Team, and (4) having regularly scheduled team meetings between the BSE and the Academic Office to discuss the content, implementation and effectiveness of these initiatives will help to ensure that they continue to evolve in a way that best supports the reading instruction of SWDs in the state. Through this collaborative effort, the following general education initiatives have been prioritized to be leveraged in order to support Connecticut's SSIP by adding and/or revising content specific to SWDs:

Connecticut K-3 Literacy Initiative

The Connecticut K-3 Literacy Initiative (CK-3LI), designed and implemented based on current evidence-based reading research, began in August 2012 with five participating elementary schools selected through a competitive grant process, and to date has expanded to 11 schools. Each school is currently providing intensive reading interventions for students reading below proficiency, participating in job-embedded PL supported by an external literacy coach, and implementing rigorous and improved reading assessment tools. Additionally, each school is receiving opportunities to participate in yearlong training for principals and their school-based literacy team.

Alliance District K-3 Reading Model Expansion

Guidance to Alliance districts and schools for supporting literacy is being provided though an expansion of services provided to the CK-3LI schools. Administrators and literacy teams from twenty-three schools are participating in a PL series that provides guidelines and action steps for refining and sustaining an effective reading program. Specifically, the PL focuses on the following components that are central to reading and school success:

- a cohesive literacy team that implements an scientific research-based intervention (SRBI) process for individualized instruction, potentially resulting in fewer special education referrals;
- a framework that embeds Connecticut Core Standards (CCS) based literacy instruction across content areas;
- a universal screening/progress monitoring assessment tool that is technology-based, teacher-friendly and proven to reduce the achievement gap in reading;
- site-based PL for school leaders, teachers, and paraprofessionals with embedded coaching opportunities for teachers and reading interventionists; and
- a model for engaging families as partners in reading.

Menu of Research-Based Reading Assessments for Grades K-3

The Connecticut State Board of Education has approved a menu of research-based reading assessments for Grades K-3. The menu of research-based reading assessments must be used by LEAs for the purpose of universal screening of the K-3 student population. The intention of this legislative requirement is to identify students who are most at risk of failing to read on grade level by the end of Grade 3 and to provide immediate and ongoing intervention for identified students until they are reading at a level determined to be proficient.

The CSDE expects that SWDs in an academic program will be assessed with all other students. If they are not making sufficient progress toward learning to read, they should have access to targeted interventions. As such, only significantly cognitively impaired students who are participating in the standards-based general education curriculum and require extensive direct individualized instruction and substantial supports should not participate in the universal screening process. The individualized education programs (IEPs) of students in this latter group should reflect how they would be assessed on appropriate developmental skills as determined on the students' IEPs.

Foundations of Reading Survey

Connecticut Public Act 13-245 requires that commencing in the 2014-15 school year, and biennially thereafter, any teacher in Grades K, 1, 2, and 3 who holds an Elementary Education, Integrated Early Childhood N-3 teaching certification, will be required to complete a survey of knowledge and skills. The Foundations of Reading Survey was developed by the CSDE to address this legislative requirement, and serves to identify the strengths and weaknesses in reading instruction practices and knowledge, and to improve reading instruction by developing

student learning objectives and teacher practice goals that will be included in related PL. The survey addresses foundations of reading development, development of reading comprehension, and reading assessment and instruction. Results of the survey are considered formative and are intended to provide information to support the CSDE in the planning of PL at the school level.

Project ReadConn

Informed by the results of the Foundations of Reading Survey, the CSDE is planning a multi-year PL series. Its purpose is to support teachers in their understanding and implementation of the foundational components of effective, comprehensive reading instruction, regardless of the instructional approach used by districts and schools. This series will also build the capacity of Connecticut's K-3 teachers to support the planning and delivery of specific intervention strategies (i.e., Core instructional program supports for ELs, SWDs [including those with dyslexia], and students at risk for reading difficulties) to accelerate learning of all students.

Complementing the general education initiatives listed above is a collection of special education/SSIP focused activities that will also benefit from the improved CSDE infrastructure – namely the increased collaboration between the BSE and Academic Office. These include:

A Webinar Series: Meeting the Needs of All Students

- *Providing Access to the CT Core Standards for Students with Disabilities*
  This webinar is designed to deepen participants' understanding of how to create a positive, rigorous learning environment while meeting the needs of variable learners, including universal design for learning (UDL) principles and guidelines and effective scaffolds.

- *Meeting the Needs of all Learners in Diverse Classrooms*
  This webinar emphasizes the importance of ensuring that SWDs are instructed in the least restrictive environment and is designed to build capacity within schools to address the impact all stakeholders have related to results driven accountability for students with disabilities.

Dyslexia Initiative

The CSDE understands that each child has a different profile of strengths and areas of concern, and that there is no one best method of instruction or intervention for each child with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD)/Dyslexia. However, there is a great deal of evidence-based research supporting structured language programs as successful approaches for working with students with SLD/Dyslexia. These instructional approaches differ in specific techniques and materials, but they all include structured, explicit, systematic, cumulative instruction designed to promote understanding, memory, recall, and use of spoken and written language. They also have multiple components that focus on such areas of instruction as phonological skills, phonics and word analysis, spelling, word recognition and oral reading fluency, grammar and syntax, text comprehension, writing, and study skills.

In addition to the increased collaboration across divisions in the agency, the CSDE has recently improved its infrastructure by creating an SLD/Dyslexia Workgroup. The group's charge is to compile EBPs for the screening, identification, and instruction of students with SLD/Dyslexia. Furthermore, collaboration between the CSDE and one of its external partners, the State Education Resource Center (SERC) has resulted in numerous resources/PL opportunities related to using EBPs targeted specifically to students SLD/Dyslexia, including the following:

- An SLD/Dyslexia Assessment Resource Guide
  IEP Team (in Connecticut a "Planning and Placement Team" [PPT]) members will find this resource useful in planning a comprehensive evaluation for students suspected of having SLD/Dyslexia. The guide merges the aforementioned Research-based K-3 Universal Screening Reading Assessments (developed by the Academic Office) with tests and subtests useful in assessing the component skills of reading, as well as speaking, listening, spelling, and written language.

- Increasing Awareness of SLD/Dyslexia
  An archived online webinar in which Connecticut leaders in SLD/Dyslexia review Connecticut's definition of dyslexia, explore issues surrounding the identification of students, and present EBPs for structured literacy instruction and intervention.

- Identifying Students with SLD/Dyslexia: An Online Course
  This free, self-paced Web-based course offers an early elementary case-study comprehensive approach to understanding reading difficulties and SLD/Dyslexia. Participants are guided through a school team's process for a collaborative decision-making system through SRBI, including examining universal screening data, designing and implementing tiers of reading instruction, monitoring student progress via trend line analysis, and engaging families. The special education eligibility determination process includes designing a comprehensive evaluation and applying Connecticut's 2010 Guidelines for Identifying Children with Learning Disabilities.

- SLD/Dyslexia: Connecting Research to Practice in Connecticut
  This advanced-level PL opportunity is a comprehensive series of Web-based learning modules that address the foundations of reading acquisition and appropriate identification of SLD/Dyslexia. Connecticut content experts and educational leaders will present current research on reading and language development, subtypes of reading difficulties, implementation of core literacy instruction, assessment of SLD/Dyslexia, and the components of structured literacy instruction, including spelling and written expression. Each module will be followed by a reflection segment and professional dialogue led by a literacy expert and a district professional to guide educators through the process of examining and altering current SLD/Dyslexia practices.

Another of the CSDE's external partners, the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) has also developed webinars designed to provide information on identification, research-based intervention, and appropriate instruction for individuals with reading difficulties and SLD/Dyslexia. These include a three-day introductory workshop on the Wilson Reading System®; a two-day workshop on dyslexia, reading disorders and SLD; and a summer institute on structured teaching methods to address language and literacy disorders.

An additional area for improving infrastructure with regards to internal collaboration is increasing the coordination of activities between the BSE and the CSDE's Turnaround Office. The Turnaround Office oversees the state's Alliance District Program, which is used to support the 30 lowest performing districts in the state. Connecticut General Statue Section 10-262u establishes a process for identifying Alliance Districts and allocating increased Education Cost Sharing (ECS) funding to support district strategies to dramatically increase student outcomes and close achievement gaps by pursuing bold and innovative reforms. Each Alliance District's receipt of its designated ECS funding is conditioned upon district submission and the Commissioner of Education's approval of a plan, district progress and performance relative to that plan, and subsequent annual amendments, in the context of the district's overall strategy to improve academic achievement. The CSDE reviews district plans on an annual basis and approves plans aligned to the goals of the program. Annual plan approval is predicated upon district implementation and performance during the prior year.

The CSDE has identified four priorities for Alliance Districts that focus on: (1) the transition to the CCS and the current statewide assessments; (2) educator evaluation and support; (3) interventions in low-performing schools; and (4) K-3 literacy. In addition to addressing district-specific needs and goals, all districts are expected to develop systems, processes, and infrastructure in these critical areas.

If the BSE selects one of the Alliance Districts for SSIP intensive support, a coordination of efforts around monitoring and the provision of TA between the BSE and Turnaround Office would be ideal. Moreover, requiring each Alliance District to include information specific to SWDs in the "K-3 literacy" section of its improvement plan will occur in FFY 2016. To facilitate an increase in collaboration between offices, a representative from the Turnaround Office has been designated as a member of the SSIP Leadership Team.

<u>Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform Grant</u>

State infrastructure development related to the institutions of higher education (IHE) as external partners to the CSDE is primarily being accomplished through the work of the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform (CEEDAR) Grant.

Connecticut's goal for the CEEDAR Grant (2013-2017) is the design and implementation of pre-service curricula for all teacher candidates (special education and general education) in order to provide opportunities to learn and demonstrate competency in EBPs to improve core and specialized instruction to support SWD, ELs and struggling learners in reaching college-and career-ready standards in reading, writing and comprehension skills in argumentation

Working collaboratively with three universities in the state that have an educator preparation programs (EPP), the CSDE has established outcomes for the CEEDAR work that include:

- Advancement of state efforts around UDL and SRBI /multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) so that new teachers come in prepared day 1 around these statewide initiatives;

- Integrated skill sets for teaching diverse learners;

- Use of EBPs in instruction as an expectation for all pre-service and in-service teachers;

- Advance readiness for CCS, disciplinary literacy and writing that leads to student success in argumentation;

- Curriculum reform: Infuse teacher preparation programs with EBP in literacy and writing to lead all students to meet the CCS; and

- Assessment development: Develop, pilot and implement new assessments to provide important feedback and external data about success of programs.

Connecticut's approach to the CEEDAR work is to empower three faculty workgroups to analyze and revise curricula based on CEEDAR priorities in EBP and state goal; implement new curricula and measure impact; scale up workgroup models to all other EPPs based on exemplars of three workgroups; identify other resources, including online webinars on using EBP in teaching students with dyslexia and ELs, to be required for all teacher candidates; and a guidance document for clinical experiences as a resource for candidates, school district educators and EPP faculty.

To date, two of the IHEs have completed their analysis and revision of curricula. Both are moving forward toward implementation of revised curricula that addresses the CEEDAR priorities in EBPs, UDL and culturally responsive pedagogy. During implementation, institutions will measure impact of EBPs on candidate competency and K-12 student performance. Because of significant turnover of faculty, the third IHE is just beginning the process of revising curricula focused on literacy and clinical experiences in literacy, with goal of completing revised curricula in fall of 2016.

The Office of Early Childhood

As indicated on the State's Phase One Theory of Action, the CSDE has engaged Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood (OEC) during Phase Two as part of its infrastructure improvement efforts. The OEC's vision is that young children in Connecticut are safe, healthy, learning and thriving and that each child is surrounded by a strong network of nurturing adults who deeply value the importance of the first years of a child's life and have the skills, knowledge, support and passion to meet the unique needs of every child.

The OEC views children's development through rich experiences and developmentally effective practices that cross all domains of development. The *Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards* (CT ELDS) are designed to be used at home and for instructional planning for preschool programs and contain information about what children birth to age 5 should know and be able to do. The CT ELDS' eight domains are as follows: Cognition, Social and Emotional Development, Physical Development and Health, Language and Literacy, Creative Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

In the domain of Language and Literacy there are specific strands related to pre-reading skills:

- Early learning experiences will support children in gaining book appreciation and knowledge;

- Early learning experiences will support children in gaining knowledge of print and its uses; and

- Early learning experiences will support children in developing phonological awareness.

The CT ELDS will be included as one of the CSDE's Web-based SSIP resources in order to (1) promote its use by entities that work with infants, toddlers and young children (including special education preschool programs) and (2) increase the likelihood that all children enter Kindergarten with age appropriate skills. Additional resources developed by the OEC to support the implementation of a strong curricular approach at home and at the preschool level include the following documents:

- *The Connecticut Office of Early Childhood Curriculum Self-Assessment Tool*

- *Supporting All Children Using the CT ELDS:*
  - *A Guide to the Domains and Strands*
  - *Meeting the Needs of Dual Language Learners*
  - *Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners*
  - *A Guide for Families*

<u>Early Childhood Special Education</u>

The IDEA 619 provisions include the opportunity to utilize federal funds for state level activities, including providing TA to programs that provide services to children with disabilities, ages three through five. A portion of the IDEA 619 funds have been set aside to contribute to the state infrastructure development for the SSIP centered on providing tiered levels of evidence-based PL, including various training and technical assistance opportunities centered on early language and literacy development for children ages three through five receiving special education. PL opportunities will be universal, targeted or intensive based on individual district needs and specific to addressing the early learning and developmental needs of young children with disabilities.

The focus of the PL offerings will be based upon: (a) the CT-ELDS and (b) the Brigance Inventory of Early Learning Development (IED)-III, which serves as the state's assessment measure for Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) with a specific focus on the language and literacy of young learners. The state is currently developing a framework for integrating the CT-ELDS with the Brigance ECO measures in order to assist personnel in understanding the relationship between standards, curriculum, and the use of formative assessment to guide instruction.

Potential Infrastructure Supports

State Personnel Development Grant

The CSDE recently applied for the U.S. Department of Education's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). With the State's focus of improving its infrastructure by coordinating efforts, the proposed project is purposefully aligned to Connecticut's SSIP work and has been designed to increase literacy achievement of elementary students, particularly SWDs, through the use of EBPs. Expected outcomes are to: 1) increase state-level capacity for supporting the sustained and broad-scale implementation of comprehensive literacy instruction within an MTSS framework; 2) enhance LEA capacity for implementing and sustaining a comprehensive literacy approach through an MTSS by providing TA; and 3) improve reading achievement of all students, particularly SWDs in participating schools.

The PL activities provided by this project address two main components: (1) state trainer capacity development and (2) LEA capacity development focusing on evidence-based multi-tiered reading instruction and interventions. If funded, the CSDE will be partnering with a variety of literacy experts to accomplish these components through a series of clearly defined job-embedded training and support activities. State level trainers will receive two years of support; LEAs will receive three years of support. This project will involve a comprehensive evaluation approach to monitor measurable outcomes of identified goals/objectives focusing on qualitative and quantitative indicators of training effectiveness and student growth.

Proposed Legislation

Currently there are two bills being considered by the state legislature that would directly support the work of the SSIP and help to strengthen the state's infrastructure. The CSDE recently provided testimony in favor of the following:

Raised Bill 317, An Act Concerning Dyslexia

This bill requires an individual who is seeking a remedial reading, remedial language arts, or reading consultant certification to have completed a course that includes instruction on the detection of, and intervention for, students with dyslexia.

Early identification of the characteristics of dyslexia is absolutely critical to getting a child the interventions they need to achieve academically.

Raised Bill 5308, An Act Concerning A General Education Multi-tiered System Of Instruction And Supports

This bill would require the CSDE to update the 2008 version of the Department's framework for response to intervention titled *Using Scientific Research-Based Interventions: Improving Education for All Students*, and require LEAs to establish a general education MTSS at each school for students requiring supplemental or intensive assistance.

The CSDE thinks that the benefits of SRBI come from its emphasis on uniting scientific research-based practices with a systems approach to education.

The requirement that the State identify a SIMR has allowed the CSDE to focus its efforts to improve results for SWDs in a specific area. This focus has necessitated improvements to the State's infrastructure (i.e., establishment of an SSIP Leadership Team, increased collaboration with internal and external partners, alignment of initiatives [e.g., SPDG]) in order to have the necessary mechanisms in place to support a coordinated effort around a common goal – increasing the reading performance of all third grade SWDs statewide. The State will (1) continue to examine ways to further develop its infrastructure, (2) evaluate outcomes, and (3) adjust early literacy efforts, as needed, as it works towards meeting its SSIP targets.

Connecticut SSIP Infrastructure Development			
Expected Outcome	Resources Needed	Persons Responsible	Timeline
Sufficient operating support is available to enable the SSIP to be successfully implemented	▪ Sufficient staffing and dedicated time ▪ Collaboration with internal and external partners ▪ Integration of SSIP activities/content within existing initiatives ▪ SSIP team members knowledge on systems change, implementation science, and evidence-based literacy instruction ▪ IDEA Grant	▪ CSDE Administrators ▪ SSIP Leadership Team ▪ SSIP TA Providers	▪ Ongoing (FFY 2014-FFY 2018)
Evidence-based learning structures and TA assistance are embedded in the SSIP work	▪ Analysis of LEA PL needs/current offerings ▪ PL events/modules focused on use of EBPs ▪ BSE collaboration with internal and external partners ▪ Standardized protocols and process for SSIP TA Providers ▪ IDEA Grant	▪ SSIP Leadership Team ▪ CSDE Consultants ▪ External partners	▪ FFY 2015 ▪ FFY 2016

Increased educator awareness and knowledge of evidence-based reading instruction, interventions and supports	▪ Web-based repository of resources and events ▪ Foundations of Reading Survey ▪ PL events/modules focused on the use of EBPs ▪ LET and SRBI Self-Assessment protocols ▪ CEEDAR Grant ▪ Trained TA Providers ▪ LEA improvement plans	▪ CSDE Consultants ▪ CSDE Webmaster ▪ External Partners ▪ PL/TA Providers ▪ LEA Administrators	▪ Ongoing (FFY 2014-FFY 2018)
Educators and families work together to support reading for SWDs	▪ SSIP PL events/modules targeted to families ▪ Dual-capacity Framework ▪ Parent Survey ▪ IDEA Grant	▪ SSIP Leadership Team ▪ CSDE staff ▪ LEA staff ▪ PTI Center	▪ Ongoing (FFY 2014-FFY 2018)

Component 2
Support for LEA Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs)

Connecticut is referencing the following definitions of evidence-based practices (EBPs) for the purposes of its SSIP work:

> "Evidence-based practices (EBPs) are instructional techniques with meaningful research support that represent critical tools in bridging the research-to-practice gap and improving student outcomes" (Cook & Cook, 2011, p.2)

> "An evidence-based special education professional practice is a strategy or intervention designed for use by special educators and intended to support the education of individuals with exceptional learning needs" (Council for Exceptional Children, 2008)

Connecticut's SSIP work in promoting the use of EBPs exists within the context of the CSDE's *Systems for Effective Reading Instruction* that includes the following components:

The implementation of a school-wide comprehensive literacy assessment system to include:

- School-wide assessment procedures scheduled and organized to increase efficiency and reduce the loss of instructional time;
- Universal screening using research-based predictors of reading risk, selected from the CSDE's approved menu of assessments;
- Progress-monitoring following established protocols and schedules (e.g., monthly, weekly) that identify responders/non-responders and inform instructional decisions regarding the focus and intensity of intervention;
- Web-based data system for entering and storing assessment data, generating reports, providing instructional recommendations and enabling comprehensive data analyses; and
- Analysis of data to identify (a) common area of difficulty across students to inform Tier I classroom instructional practices, (b) students who require supplemental reading intervention.

Implementation of a comprehensive core classroom reading instructional program to include:

- Emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension;
- Alignment with the CT Core Standards (CCS);
- Grade level reading curriculum with scope, sequence, and pacing to ensure consistent progression over each school year;

- Training and implementation guides to ensure the use of daily instructional activities and formative assessment that focus on the critical components of reading;

- Materials and procedures for providing frequent differentiated small group instruction based on foundational reading skills;

- Materials that are motivating and allow students to appreciate, understand, and value their own cultural backgrounds and the cultural backgrounds of others;

- Instruction that teaches students the relevance of reading to their lives and instills in them a sense of ownership of their own learning; and

- The design and implementation of literacy instruction incorporates language norms used in students' primary, home culture.

Implementation of small group interventions that supplement core instruction for students experiencing reading difficulties to include:

- Evidence-based intervention programs selected to best meet the common reading needs of the greatest number of students;

- Intervention schedules that ensure that all students receiving intervention participate in core classroom instruction and allow for flexible cross-class/cross-grade groupings;
- Implementation guides to ensure quality implementation of key instructional activities and critical components of activities; and

- Grade level scheduling/dosage guidelines to ensure adequate time dedicated to supplemental reading intervention.

Development and implementation of a parent engagement program to build parents' awareness of:

- The building blocks of reading;

- Reading instruction and assessment; and

- The family's role as a partner in reading success.

Connecticut's data analysis, conducted during Phase One, revealed variability across the state's 170 local education agencies (LEAs) with regard to the reading achievement of third grade students with disabilities, including differences related to district socioeconomic status, placement in least restrictive environment (LRE), attendance rates, and removal from class for disciplinary sanctions. As a result of its data analysis, it was the consensus of stakeholders that the state's framework for intervention allow for the ability to differentiate improvement

strategies and selection of EBPs to employ at the LEA level according to each LEAs' uniquely identified needs, through:

- a tiered system of supports/interventions; and
- the development of individualized district improvement plans.

The concept of proposing a tiered framework of interventions and supports and its potential for "scaling up" intervention was generated through stakeholder discussion of lessons learned regarding Connecticut's implementation of the *P.J. et al. v. State of Connecticut, Board of Education, et al. Settlement Agreement,* and is described more fully in the State's Phase One submission.

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) has designed its SSIP technical assistance (TA) and support model based on a three-year cycle, whereby approximately one third of the state's LEAs (that have been assigned to one of three cohorts as described in Phase One) are reviewed annually for consideration and "assignment" across three tiers of intervention. Those tiers of support and the means by which LEAs will be assigned are as follows:

Tier 1 of the intervention model will include universal resources and supports relative to early literacy that will be made available to all of the state's LEAs throughout the three-year cycle, with a plan to add/expand resources each year. Among those resources:

- best practice documents;
- professional learning (PL) modules;
- evidence-based practices (EBPs);
- links to state/national resources, and
- an LEA self-study protocol for the purpose of conducting data, infrastructure and root cause analyses in order to develop an LEA-specific theory of action and improvement plan.

Tier 2 of the intervention framework will include approximately 25 LEAs from the Tier 1 cohort, through analysis of the LEAs' annual state identified measurable result (SIMR) data. LEAs receiving Tier 2 targeted support will be required to complete a District Profile, providing additional data and a description of existing LEA-level initiatives aimed at early literacy and SWDs. District Profiles will be evaluated by CSDE staff, according to an established set of criteria. Tier 2 LEAs will also be required to submit progress reports on their early literacy improvement efforts and/or selected to receive additional supports and PL by the CSDE, in collaboration with its external partners.

Tier 3 of the State's SSIP intervention framework will include approximately six LEAs selected from Tier 2 for intensive intervention, based upon District Profile evaluation results. LEAs identified for this level of intervention are required to assemble a diverse team of professionals (i.e., administration, special education staff, general education staff, data and subject area expertise) for the purpose of conducting the analyses below and developing an implementation plan. Tier 3 LEAs will benefit from targeted TA and related PL activities provided by the CSDE and its external partners. Districts will be visited for a minimum of three days, by a CSDE team, potentially comprised of BSE, Academic Office, and/or Turnaround Office consultants as well

as one/more external partners for the purpose of further data, infrastructure and root cause analysis through the use of the following tools:

- The Infrastructure Analysis Tool: This tool provides a structure for facilitating and guiding discussion for the purpose of assisting the LEA in its own infrastructure analysis (governance, fiscal, quality standards and data) by identifying both opportunities and challenges in improving the early literacy skills of SWDs.

- The Literacy Evaluation Tool (LET): The LET is a self-assessment intended to assess educators' general perceptions of their school's literacy program. The tool is an outgrowth of the Analyzing Literacy Data for Tiers of Instruction project which was part of Connecticut's first State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). The self-assessment asks educators to consider their school's current level of implementation of 30 items across four areas: Assessing Students; Curriculum and Intervention; Response to Intervention; and Systems in Place.

- The Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) Self-Assessment: Originally designed for use as part of Connecticut's SPDG initiative, this self-assessment is being leveraged for SSIP purposes as a tool to measure progress of implementation of SRBI/MTSS at all selected schools. It has been utilized as both a baseline assessment and a post-assessment.

The use of state-developed systems-based self-assessments is intended to result in the development of district-specific improvement plans that match the appropriate supports to identified district needs. Within the context of each district's individual plan, EBPs will be selected that align to the district's unique needs. Those practices will be verified as evidence-based by using independent research review platforms such as The Institute of Education Sciences' *What Works Clearinghouse* and The American Institutes for Research's *National Center on Intensive Intervention*. Through the processes of data and infrastructure analysis, self-assessment and development of the District Profile, such matters as LEA readiness and capacity will be revealed, which may require an LEA to consider the need for systems change as a component of its plan and further inform the identification of EBPs and improvement activities.

As a result of the analyses described above, each LEA receiving Tier 3 intervention will receive onsite TA to assist in the development of a plan to address the identified needs of that LEA. The components related to literacy that must be considered in the development of a plan are as follows:

- the effective use of a universal screening measure, selected from the CSDE's menu of research-based universal screening reading assessments as well as the identification of one/multiple measures for assessing progress in reading for SWDs;

- an established/functional process for the analysis of data for the purpose of instructional planning;

- a review of the district's MTSS/SRBI framework to include: the identification of current evidence-based practices being used in the district; ensuring that core instruction is

implemented with fidelity (collaboratively between general and special education); and a determination of the need to make changes in the process;

- the writing of IEP goals and objectives in alignment with CCS;

- the development of student-specific intervention plans that match each student's profile (i.e, learning/language/literacy strengths and weaknesses) and include the implementation of EBPs and the monitoring of each student's progress frequently in order to individualize and adjust instruction; and

- a plan for parent engagement in supporting student reading.

To support LEAs in the implementation of their improvement plans, training will be provided for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 LEAs. Based on a model developed under the federally funded State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) in 2007-2008, training will be aimed at establishing the systems and practices of a three-tiered literacy instruction model, with particular focus on the needs of SWDs. In follow-up to the training, school-based teams in Tier 3 LEAs will utilize a coaching model to provide job-embedded, collaborative PL in their schools. The objective is to build the capacity of the entire staff to develop and implement a "response to intervention" approach to addressing early literacy. The SSIP Leadership Team, in collaboration with its external partners, will work to plan, schedule and deliver the training as well as establish the structure for LEA and school-based coaching.

Connecticut SSIP Implementation of EBPs			
Activity	Resources Needed	Persons Responsible	Timeline
Compilation/posting of resources: ▪ best practice documents ▪ professional learning (PL) modules ▪ evidence-based practices (EBPs) ▪ links to state/national resources ▪ LEA self-study protocol	▪ Assigned BSE staff ▪ CSDE/SSIP web page ▪ Related online resources ▪ IDEA Grant	▪ CSDE Staff ▪ SSIP Leadership Team ▪ External Partners	▪ FFY 2015 ▪ FFY 2016

Review, revision and development of forms and protocols	▪ Assigned BSE staff ▪ LEA self-study protocol ▪ District Profile and evaluation rubric ▪ Infrastructure analysis tool ▪ LET ▪ SRBI self-assessment	▪ SSIP Leadership Team ▪ CSDE Consultants ▪ SERC Consultants	▪ FFY 2015 ▪ FFY 2016
Building TA provider capacity in systems change, implementation science and evidence-based literacy instruction	▪ OSEP TA providers ▪ NCSI ▪ Internal partners ▪ External partners ▪ Related online resources	▪ SSIP Leadership Team ▪ CSDE Consultants ▪ PL/TA Providers	▪ Ongoing (FFY 2014-FFY 2018)
Development of PL and TA resources	▪ Assigned BSE staff ▪ Academic office ▪ Literature review ▪ External partners ▪ IDEA Grant	▪ SSIP Leadership Team ▪ CSDE staff ▪ External partners	▪ Ongoing (FFY 2014-FFY 2018)

As the CSDE is in the process of redesigning its Web site, the SSIP Leadership Team will take advantage of the opportunity to build a page devoted specifically to the SSIP, its related activities, and to serve as a repository for its resources. This web page will act not only as a resource but as a means to communicate to the field and to families about the work the State has undertaken to improve the reading performance of SWDs. In addition, the BSE will continue to use its annual "Back to School" event as a means of sharing information with LEA representatives and engaging the support of the Connecticut Council of Administrators of Special Education (ConnCASE), the Regional Education Service Centers (RESC) Alliance, and the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) as further means of soliciting stakeholder input and disseminating information.

Component 3
Evaluation

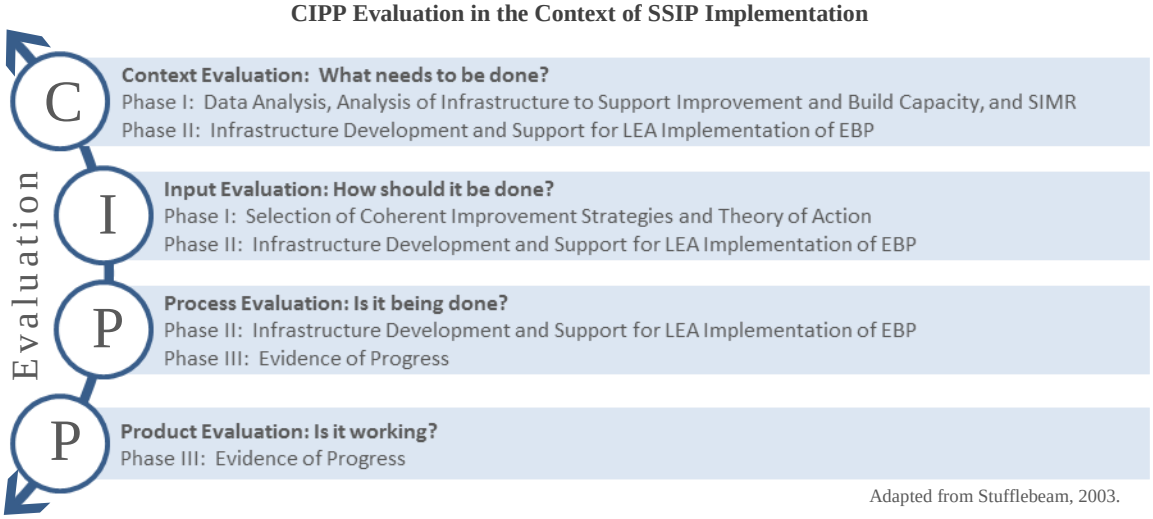
The proposed evaluation plan is designed as a mixed methods approach to evaluating the impact of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) on reading outcomes for students with disabilities (SWDs) in Connecticut schools, as well as changes to the state infrastructure and local education agencies' (LEAs) capacity to effectively implement evidence-based practices (EBPs). At this time, it is expected that the plan will be implemented collaboratively, as a hybrid model of internal and external evaluation, with the specific distribution of responsibilities and tasks to be determined by the end of the current school year.

Evaluation Model

The evaluation plan detailed in this submission relies on the widely utilized Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) evaluation model put forth by Daniel Stufflebeam.[1] In addition, a Utilization Focused Evaluation (UFE) approach has been integrated throughout to facilitate evaluation use within each component of the CIPP model.[2] By alternately focusing on program context, inputs, process, and products, the CIPP model addresses all phases of an education program: needs assessment, planning, implementation, and outcomes. The first three components are useful for formative (improvement-focused) evaluation, while the final component provides summative (outcome-focused) information.

As is briefly depicted in the following figure (and as is further detailed in section c), there are clear parallels between the CIPP evaluation model and SSIP implementation, making this particular model a good fit for this work. The CIPP model emphasizes "learning-by-doing" to identify corrections to implementation, and is thus uniquely suited for evaluating an emergent program such as the SSIP. In addition, its systems approach, where each component is viewed in relation to the others, supports careful attention to educational context, multiple and variable inputs, and the subsequent assessment of intended (as well as unintended) outcomes.

CIPP Evaluation in the Context of SSIP Implementation



Adapted from Stufflebeam, 2003.

[1] Stufflebeam, D. L. (2003). The CIPP Model for Evaluation. In D. L. Stufflebeam, & T. Kellaghan, (Eds.), *The International Handbook of Educational Evaluation* (Chapter 2). Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

[2] Patton, M. Q. (2008). *Utilization-Focused Evaluation* (4th edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Evaluation Objectives

The intended purpose or short- and long-term objectives of the SSIP evaluation are as follows:

Formative: To document the improvement strategies, activities, and outputs of the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) SSIP work in order to:

- Provide formative feedback as to whether the program is sufficiently responsive to the assessed needs (context evaluation);
- Facilitate refinements and inform decisions regarding future planning (input evaluation);
- Assist in maintaining integrity to the intended design, including implementation fidelity at the LEA and school level (process evaluation); and
- Identify factors or unique occurrences that influence positively or negatively the SSIP's progress and intended outcomes (context, input, and process evaluation).

Summative: To investigate the extent to which the CSDE achieved its objectives and goals as evidenced by:

- Improved state-level capacity for supporting LEAs and schools in implementing and scaling-up EBPs to improve reading for students with disabilities (SWDs) (product evaluation);
- Enhanced LEA and school-level capacity for implementing and sustaining EBPs to improve reading for SWDs (product evaluation); and
- Increased reading performance of all third grade SWDs statewide (product evaluation).

Evaluation Logic Model

During Phase II, a logic model was constructed to illustrate in more detail how the state would fulfill its theory of action. The Connecticut SSIP Logic Model (see the following page) provides the road map or the tactical approach the CSDE will take to make change happen, as well as the framework from which the evaluation will operate. It provides a snapshot view of the Connecticut SSIP, clearly distinguishing between:

Inputs: Key resources such as staff, aligned initiatives, data systems, and external partners that will be leveraged in the SSIP work;

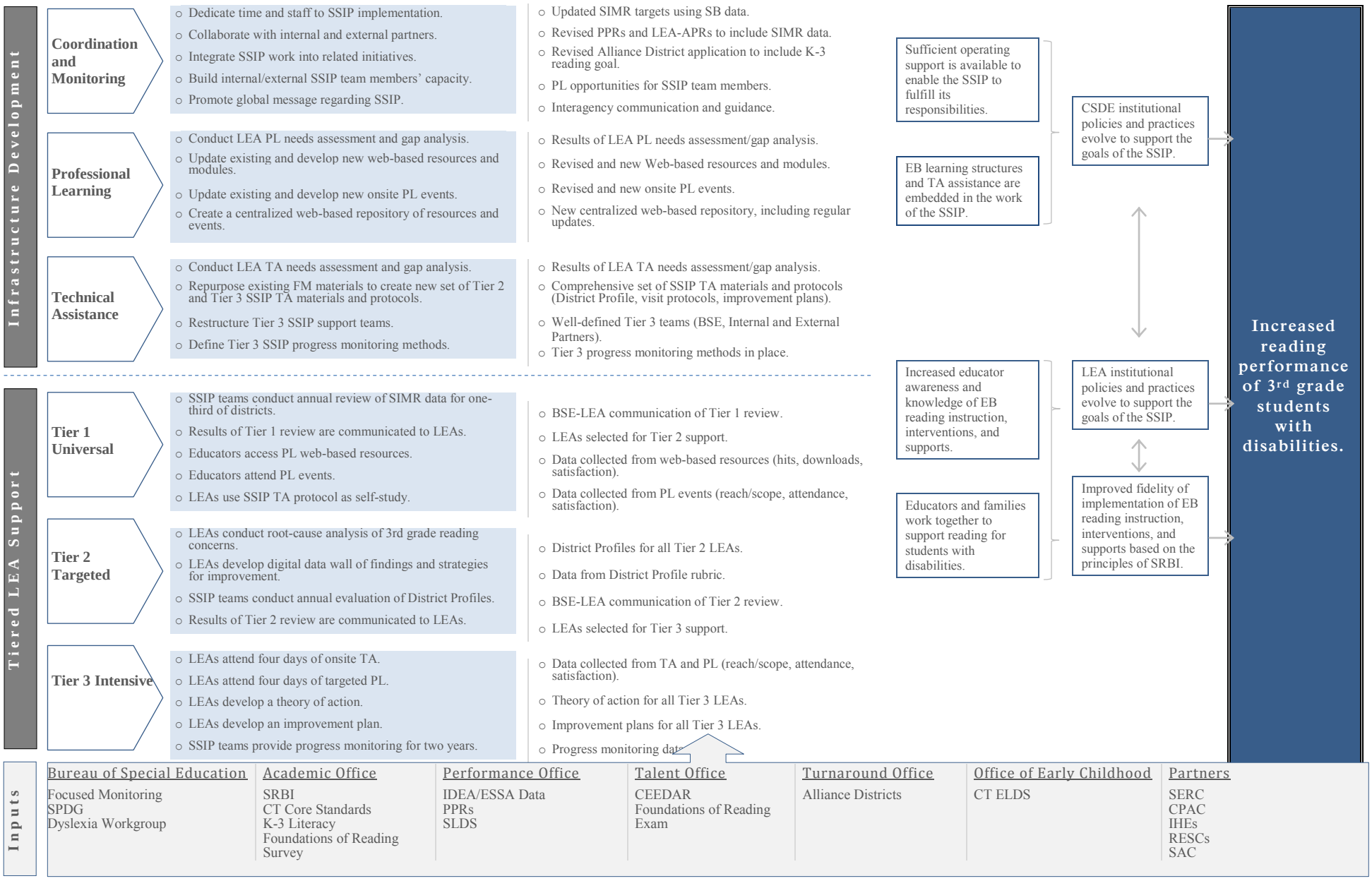
Strategies and Activities: Those that support infrastructure development (coordination and monitoring, professional learning [PL], and technical assistance [TA]) and those that support districts' implementation of EBPs (tier 1 universal, tier 2 targeted, and tier 3 intensive supports);

Outputs: Tangible by-products, such as new or revised CSDE protocols, PL events, and TA resources; as well as district-developed profiles, theory of actions, and improvement plans;

Short- and Mid-Term Outcomes: Defined by changes in learning and practice, including increased educator awareness and knowledge of evidence-based reading instruction, interventions, and supports; improved fidelity of implementation of evidence-based reading instruction, interventions, and supports; and improved policies and practices at both the CSDE and LEA level in order to better support the overall goals of the SSIP; and ultimately the

Long-Term Outcome: The increased reading performance of third grade SWDs in Connecticut schools (SIMR).

Connecticut State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP): LOGIC MODEL



In fall 2015, the CSDE formed a stakeholder group of Bureau of Special Education (BSE) and State Education Resource Center (SERC) staff to spearhead the SSIP evaluation. The immediate purpose of the group was to "operationalize" the theory of action, or flesh out sufficient details about implementation such that decisions about the scope and nature of the evaluation could be made. The group used the IDC IDEA Data Center template, "SSIP Worksheet: Evaluation Summary Chart" to think about, plan, and focus the SSIP's strategies, activities, and intended impacts. The result of this work was a comprehensive 12-page document outlining critical components of the SSIP design, and thus the evaluation.

At that point in time, the CSDE sought external evaluation guidance from the state's current evaluator for the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), School Climate Transformation Grant (SCTG), and State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) Indicator 8. The external evaluator worked collaboratively with the stakeholder group to synthesize the information in the Summary Chart and draft a one-page logic model. The draft was subsequently shared with the State Advisory Council on Special Education (SAC) and then finalized as the Connecticut SSIP Logic Model presented on the prior page. In addition to the logic model, the external evaluator also assisted the CSDE in developing the evaluation component of this Phase II submission.

The evaluation questions and methods the CSDE will use to collect and analyze data to evaluate implementation and outcomes of the SSIP, including progress toward intended improvements in the SIMR are included in the table on the following page. The information is organized by the four components of the CIPP model, with internal-formative and external-summative distinctions provided for the first three components. Although the information is presented sequentially, in practice, the components could be employed in a different order, as well as simultaneously or selectively, depending on the information needs present in each year of implementation. In brief, each component of the evaluation model will include as its focus:

The context evaluation will assess needs and assets within the defined boundaries of the SSIP work. While the CSDE initiated this evaluation effort during Phase I of the SSIP (e.g., data analysis, infrastructure analysis, and selection of the SIMR), the contextual issues inherent to individual LEAs vary. As such, and as part of the targeted and intensive support provided to individual districts, the CSDE will help LEA leaders conduct root cause analyses specific to the LEA's SIMR data. In addition, the CSDE will conduct a needs assessment of the PL and TA it offers to LEAs statewide. External evaluators will provide a holistic assessment of this component using the six factors of the Hexagon Tool as their framework.

The input evaluation will assess the procedural design, educational strategies, and work plan of the CSDE's SSIP approach. This evaluation effort was also initiated by the CSDE during Phase I (e.g., selection of coherent improvement strategies, theory of action), and has continued during the development of this Phase II submission. It is also very similar to the context component in that the evaluation effort will evolve as part of the CSDE's targeted support provided to Tier 2 and Tier 3 districts (e.g., assistance with District Profile, theories of action, and improvement plans related to district's SIMR data). Also similar to above, information from this component will be included in the external evaluator's assessment using the Hexagon Tool framework.

Using the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) Evaluation Model to Guide the Connecticut State Improvement Plan (SSIP)

CIPP Evaluation Model Component (And Overarching Evaluation Questions)	**SIPP Evaluation Methods** (Preliminary Instruments, Data, and Analyses)
Context Evaluation: What needs to be done?	
Internal: What are the most critical educational needs of students with disabilities in CT, as well as the most immediate information and support needs of the adults (at the state, district, and school level) who are responsible for their learning?	• *Phase I data analysis, infrastructure analysis, and selection of the SIMR.* • *LEA professional learning and technical assistance needs assessment and gap analysis.* • *Root cause analysis with Tier 2 and Tier 3 districts.*
External: What needs were addressed and to what extent were the SSIP strategies and activities reflective of the assessed needs?	• *Independent assessment using the Hexagon Discussion and Analysis Tool Framework (including document review, interviews, and/or focus groups).*
Input Evaluation: How should it be done?	
Internal: How can the current state system be leveraged, and what changes will be needed, to meet the identified critical needs? What support must be given to build LEA's capacity to implement and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for students with disabilities?	• *Phase I coherent improvement strategies and theory of action; and Phase II infrastructure development and support for LEA's implementation of EBPs.* • *District Profiles developed with Tier 2 districts.* • *Theory of action and improvement plans developed with Tier 3 districts.*
External: What procedural plans were adopted to address the needs, and to what extent was the approach a reasonable, potentially successful, and cost-effective response to the assessed needs?	• *Independent assessment using the Hexagon Discussion and Analysis Tool Framework (including document review, interviews, and/or focus groups).*
Process Evaluation: Is it being done?	
Internal: Are our SSIP activities on schedule? If not, why not? What barriers/contextual factors are hindering implementation and how do we fix them? Have the core components of our SSIP practices been clearly identified and are they being implemented with fidelity?	• Process data collection (service statistics, outputs). • Implementation Drivers Action Plan. • Practice Profile Planning Tool. • Progress monitoring of Tier 2 and Tier 3 district improvement plans.
External: To what extent was the SSIP implemented as planned, specifically with respect to the strategies, activities, and outputs listed in the logic model under both infrastructure development and tiered LEA support?	• *Independent assessment using the Implementation Drivers Framework (including document review, interviews, and/or focus groups).*
Product Evaluation: Is it working?	

External: To what extent did the CSDE achieve its objectives and goals as evidenced by:
1) Improved state-level capacity for supporting districts and schools in implementing and scaling-up evidence-based practices to improve reading for students with disabilities?
2) Enhanced district and school-level capacity for implementing and sustaining evidence-based practices to improve reading for students with disabilities?
3) Increased reading performance of all third grade students with disabilities statewide?
	• Mixed methods summative review of attainment of short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes listed in the logic model, including data from:
	  • Interviews/focus groups with state- and LEA-level stakeholders and participants.
	  • State Capacity Assessment, or a similar collaboration instrument (e.g., Partner Tool).
	  • Measures of educator learning (e.g., PD evaluation forms, Foundations of Reading Survey).
	  • Measures of intervention fidelity (Literacy Evaluation Tool, SRBI Self-Assessment).
	  • Measures of family engagement (e.g., parent survey).
	  • Universal screens conducted by Tier 3 districts.
	  • Smarter Balanced and Alternate Assessment
	  • (i.e., ELA Performance Index) and the state's progress in meeting its annual SIMR targets.

The process evaluation will monitor, document, and assess the strategies, activities, and outputs of the Connecticut SSIP in order to track milestones and progress against project expectations. A process data collection plan will ensure adequate output data (e.g., information on the scale and intensity of activities) and implementation outcome data (e.g., information on the extent to which activities have been implemented as originally intended) are collected. Additional measures, such as various instruments to self-assess implementation readiness developed by the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center will be leveraged at both the state- and LEA-level; as well as part of both internal and external evaluation efforts.

And lastly, the product evaluation will document and assess the extent to which the CSDE achieved its objectives and goals as evidenced by: 1) improved state-level capacity for supporting LEAs and schools in implementing and scaling-up EBPs to improve reading for SWDs; 2) enhanced LEA and school-level capacity for implementing and sustaining EBPs to improve reading for SWDs; and 3) increased reading performance for all third grade students with disabilities statewide. An outcome data collection plan - inclusive of the multiple instruments outlined in the table on the previous page (e.g., measures of educator learning, intervention fidelity instruments, reading assessments) – will ensure valid and reliable data are collected at regular intervals. These outcome data will be analyzed, interpreted, and reported externally in order to provide a comprehensive and objective view of SSIP progress.

The CSDE expects data collected from internal evaluation activities to be used formatively to inform improvement cycles of purposeful change (e.g., Plan, Do, Study, Act cycles). This will help address immediate issues and allow us to make quick incremental improvements to our implementation processes on a continuous basis. The CSDE will also ask internal staff and external evaluators to provide specific feedback about emergent findings both informally (e.g., status updates, internal memos) and more formally (e.g., interim reports, focus group summaries, survey briefs) throughout the year. This will allow the CSDE to easily and regularly report the SSIP's progress to both internal and external stakeholders. Lastly, the CSDE will ask external evaluators to produce an annual evaluation report. This report will be a compilation of all data gathered and will delineate the SSIP's progress towards intended outcomes; the strategies and activities that were most effective in meeting these outcomes; significant successes and lessons learned; and suggestions for improving and sustaining the best practices of the SSIP.

As was noted at the outset, this evaluation plan has been developed with a utilization-focused approach to evaluation in mind. Planning to date has been an iterative process of collaboration and negotiation wherein the external evaluator (or the evaluation expert) has helped the CSDE and external partners (or the program experts) select from a menu of evaluation possibilities within the framework of established evaluation standards and principles. As the CSDE moves into Phase III of SSIP implementation, we expect this process to continue, as we operationalize our logic model, evaluation questions, and evaluation methods into well-defined process and outcome data collection plans, develop an evaluation report schedule, and construct a dissemination and communication plan. With a strong conceptual plan in place, the CSDE feels it is well positioned to use evaluation data to examine the effectiveness of our SSIP implementation, assess progress towards achieving intended improvements, and make modifications to the plan if necessary.