

Phase III – Trainings on Increasing Access to Core Instruction

Progress has continued throughout the fall of 2016 and winter of 2017 with the trainings relative to increasing access to core instruction for students with disabilities. This training addresses the first coherent improvement strategy of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and will assist in achieving the state-identified measurable result (SiMR) of **increasing by three percent annually the percentage of students in grades 3–8 with a specific learning disability (SLD) scoring at or above basic on the ELA statewide assessment**. Participants in these trainings have been comprised of school team members for each of the 30 participating districts in the SSIP initial cohort. At a minimum, school team members must include: a school administrator, a special education teacher, and a general education teacher.

Based on responses to surveys sent subsequent to the fall and winter trainings, there has been a positive trajectory in increased knowledge in this strategy of increasing access for students with disabilities. As shown below, for all but two of the survey questions, there was an increase in the percentage of respondents agreeing with the survey questions posited.

| Survey Questions Regarding Trainings | Fall % Agree (n=448) | Winter % Agree (n=353) |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| My knowledge of how to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom has increased. | 92.6% | 92.3% |
| My ability to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom has increased. | 89.7% | 92.0% |
| My knowledge of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has increased. | 96.0% | 96.0% |
| My ability to use UDL in the general education classroom has increased. | 90.2% | 94.0% |
| I am confident in my ability to use UDL strategies to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom. | 84.2% | 91.2% |
| My knowledge of differentiation has increased. | 90.8% | 92.9% |
| My ability to use differentiated instruction to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom has increased. | 87.9% | 91.2% |
| I am confident in my ability to use differentiated instruction to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom. | 91.3% | 95.8% |
| I understand the next steps I need to take to implement this training. (n=448) | 91.3% | 98.9% |

Monthly community of practice (CoP) meetings for participating districts in the SSIP cohort have continued. These meetings allow district staff from schools implementing the strategy to discuss findings and address questions or concerns. Staff from CORE offices, the department of education, and members of the SSIP/SPDG evaluation team have continued to attend these CoPs to support participants. Due to concerns with attendance at CoPs, which have primarily been a result of scheduling, the department has begun the process of securing alternative methods of communication for districts to alleviate travel burdens.

Phase III – Submission of SSIP Phase III Report

The first report on Phase III implementation will be due April 3, 2017. Currently, the department is collating data to address the 17 process and outcomes-based evaluation questions developed in the Phase II report. These questions will help effectively measure whether intended results are being achieved as result of the plan and where changes may need to be made moving forward. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) will be reviewing the plan and will provide feedback to the department in early July of 2017.

This report will focus not just on the implementation of the increasing access to core instruction for students with disabilities strategy, but will also focus on infrastructure changes within the department, data quality concerns, methods of communication, opportunities for stakeholder feedback, changes to plan outlined in Phase II, and next steps. Data quality concerns around the absence of statewide assessment data for the 2015-16 school year have been noted in this Phase III report, with information on engagement of stakeholders to develop alternate measurements of the data and how to establish a new baseline. Based on responses from internal and external stakeholders, the department decided to utilize the assessment results from the 2016-17 school year as the baseline data for the SiMR. While not a traditional baseline, it will provide the most accurate data while aligning to goals around improving assessment results.

The Phase III report also provided information on changes to timelines for implementation activities for the SSIP. In the 2016-17 school year, only one coherent improvement strategy was implemented, due to challenges with the release of the State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG), a grant which funds much of the SSIP trainings. In the 2017-18 school year, the implementation of the other two coherent improvement strategies will begin. The department will begin the development and refinement of content for each of these strategies in the spring of 2017. Train-the-trainer events for academic coaches in each of the 30 participating school districts will take place in the summer to provide training on the second strategy of ensuring special education is the most intensive intervention in a continuum of service model. These trainings will be supplemented with support from department staff on the third coherent improvement strategy, which focuses on addressing skill deficits through writing instructionally appropriate IEPs.

Further details about the upcoming activities, trainings, and district supports will be a focus of the summer 2017 SSIP Quarterly Update. In addition, results of spring training and fidelity monitoring for this first year of implementation will be relayed and communicated to stakeholders in the summer and fall of 2017.

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