

# SSIP

STATE SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENT PLAN

**APRIL 2015**



DEPARTMENT of  
**EDUCATION**  
Louisiana Believes

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Component #1: Data Analysis .....	2
1A - A description of how Louisiana identified and analyzed key data to determine the State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) and the root causes contributing to low performance. ....	2
1B - A description of how the data were disaggregated by multiple variables such as LEA, region, race/ethnicity, disability category, and placement, etc. ....	15
1C - A description of any concerns about the quality of the data and if so, how Louisiana will address these concerns.....	15
1D - A description of how Louisiana considered compliance data and whether those data present potential barriers to improvement.....	16
1E - If additional data are needed, a description of the methods and timelines to collect and analyze the additional data. ....	17
1F - A description of stakeholder involvement in the data analysis.....	17
1G – Summary: Louisiana’s data analysis process led to a tentative SiMR .....	18
Component #2: Analysis of State Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity.....	20
2A - A description of how Louisiana analyzed the capacity of its current infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity in LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for children with disabilities. ....	20
2B - A description of Louisiana’s systems infrastructure. ....	21
2C - A description of the current strengths, the extent the systems are coordinated, and areas for improvement within and across the systems.....	29
2D - The identification of current State-level improvement plans and initiatives, including special and general education improvement plans and initiatives and the extent to which they are aligned, and how they are, or could be, integrated with the SSIP. ....	33
2E - A list of representatives who were involved in the development of Phase I and will be involved in the development and implementation of Phase II of the SSIP. ....	35
2F - A description of stakeholder involvement in the analysis of the State’s infrastructure.....	37
2G – Summary: Louisiana’s infrastructure analysis process and the SiMR.....	38
Component #3: State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR).....	39
3A – Louisiana has a SiMR and the SiMR is aligned to an SPP/APR indicator or a component of an SPP/APR indicator. ....	39
3B - The SiMR is clearly based on the data and state infrastructure analyses. ....	39

3C - The SiMR is a child-level outcome in contrast to a process outcome. ....	43
3D - A description of stakeholder involvement in the selection of the SiMR. ....	44
3E – Louisiana provided baseline data and targets that are measurable and rigorous (expressed as percentages) for each of the five years from FFY 2014 through FFY 2018, with the FFY 2018 target reflecting measurable improvement over the FFY 2013 baseline data. ....	45
Component #4: Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies .....	47
4A - A description that demonstrates how the improvement strategies were selected and will lead to a measurable improvement in the State-identified result. ....	47
4B - A description that demonstrates how the improvement strategies are sound, logical, and aligned. ....	47
4C - A description of how implementation of improvement strategies will address identified root causes for low performance and ultimately build capacity to achieve the SiMR for children with disabilities. ....	49
4D - A description of how the selection of coherent improvement strategies include the strategies, identified through the data and State infrastructure analyses, that are needed to improve the State infrastructure and to support LEA implementation of evidence-based practices to improve the SiMR for children with disabilities.....	50
4E - A description of stakeholder involvement in the selection of coherent improvement strategies....	51
Component #5: Theory of Action.....	53
5A - A graphic illustration that shows the rationale of how implementing a coherent set of improvement strategies will increase the State’s capacity to lead to meaningful change in LEAs. ....	53
5B - A description of how the graphic illustration shows the rationale of how implementing a coherent set of improvement strategies will lead to the achievement of improved results for children with disabilities. ....	53
5C - The State describes involvement of multiple internal and external stakeholders in development of the Theory of Action.....	54
Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy .....	56
SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group .....	56
Internal Stakeholder Engagement .....	56
SEAP Engagement.....	57

## Executive Summary

*Louisiana's State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) to Improve Student-Focused Outcomes* Louisiana Believes starts with the premise that all children can achieve high expectations and should be prepared for college or a professional career. For this reason, Louisiana is focusing on literacy—a foundational skill necessary for success in all subjects and grades. Louisiana's SiMR is to increase English language arts proficiency (basic and above) rates on statewide assessments for students with disabilities in third through fifth grades, in nine LEAs across the state. Louisiana's selected SiMR is closely aligned with SPP/APR Indicator 3C, which reports the proficiency rate on statewide assessments for students with IEPs against grade level, modified and alternative achievement standards.

*Louisiana's Targets to Measure Progress towards the SiMR* LDOE established targets to measure progress towards the SiMR that set a rigorous standard for improvement on ELA proficiency (basic and above) rates on statewide assessments in the SSIP cohort. Louisiana reviewed a multitude of factors that affect progress towards meeting potential targets, such as historic performance, the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their general education peers, and proficiency distributions across grade ranges and amongst various LEAs. LDOE also sought input on targets from external stakeholders, with tentative targets adjusted based on their feedback. Louisiana set ambitious but attainable targets through this process that will guide SSIP implementation in Phase II.

### BASELINE DATA

FFY	2013
Data	34%

### FFY 2014 – FFY 2018 TARGETS

FFY	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target	34%	34%	36%	38%	40%

*Overview of Stakeholder Involvement* Louisiana believes that the successful implementation of the SSIP relies on the input of both internal and external stakeholders. LDOE meaningfully engaged and solicited input from diverse stakeholders in the development of all components of the SSIP during Phase I, as submitted to the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, on April 1, 2015. In particular, LDOE integrated stakeholder involvement at three levels: 1) LDOE established the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group with participants representing Louisiana's diverse population; 2) LDOE continuously involved internal stakeholders representing LDOE's various offices and divisions; and 3) LDOE updated the Special Education Advisory Panel as the SSIP progressed through each phase.

## Component #1: Data Analysis

### *1A - A description of how Louisiana identified and analyzed key data to determine the State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) and the root causes contributing to low performance.*

Louisiana believes that the successful development and implementation of a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) to improve child-centered outcomes needed to be based on thorough, systemic research and analysis. For this reason, the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) engaged in a rigorous, multi-phased data analysis process. LDOE identified key data available through federal reporting requirements and state databases including State Performance Plan (SPP) / Annual Performance Report (APR) indicators, 618 data collections and other applicable data. The state used this data to conduct multiple data analyses that cross cut this data through multiple lenses to identify critical variables that significantly contributed to various child-focused outcomes. This process resulted in the identification of elementary literacy as Louisiana's SiMR as well as the root causes contributing to low performance on this outcome.

LDOE pursued an iterative review process that began with a broad cohort and then narrowed to a more focused data analysis. Data analysis activities began in the summer of 2014 with internal stakeholders and the external stakeholders of the State Education Advisory Panel (SEAP). Additional external stakeholder engagement was sought early in 2015 through a series of face-to-face meetings.

The large-scale cohort was reviewed on a number of variables, followed by a smaller, more focused cohort review to conduct a detailed analysis of child-focused results-based outcomes. LDOE began the initial broad data analysis process by identifying an initial cohort: students with disabilities who exited school—as a graduate, dropout, etc.—in a three year time frame. LDOE then applied analysis criteria to the cohort that explored the impact of various factors on exit outcomes to identify trends that warranted further study. LDOE's initial findings were used to identify a sub-population cohort: students with specific learning disabilities. Louisiana then applied the same analysis criteria to students with specific learning disabilities. The purpose was to conduct a more detailed, focused analysis in order to isolate the root cause of various child-focused outcomes. Once LDOE developed initial findings for the focused analysis, the agency determined whether they could be generalized to all students with disabilities. LDOE's iterative data analyses started with the broad population of all students, then narrowed to a specific sub-population, and then LDOE determined whether the findings could be generalized to the entire population of students with disabilities.

## DATA SOURCES

LDOE used multiple data sources in its data analysis to identify a SiMR and root causes contributing to areas of low performance. To begin the data analysis process, LDOE assembled an internal group of stakeholders including special education policy, content, and data experts to identify a diverse, but relevant set of variables and data sources to include in the data analyses. These included:

### Data Source 1: SPPs and APRs since 2005

Louisiana examined SPP/APR indicator data since 2005. Each of the indicators in the table below was reviewed for trends over time and its impact on student outcomes.

Table 1.1

Indicator Name	Definition of Data Reviewed and LDOE Performance Over Time
Graduation Rate	<p>1- Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma.</p> <p>Since 2008 when Louisiana began reporting a cohort graduation rate, Louisiana has shown limited improvement in the percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school 35.3% in 2008<sup>1</sup> to 36.7% in 2013.</p>
Dropout Rate	<p>2- Percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school.</p> <p>Since 2011 when Louisiana began reporting a cohort dropout rate, the percent of students dropping out has decreased from 37% in FFY 2011 to 33.9% in FFY 2013.</p>
Participation and Performance on Statewide Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3A- Percent of the districts with a disability subgroup that meets the State's minimum "n" size that meet the State's AYP/AMO targets for the disability subgroup.</li><li>• 3B- Participation rate for children with IEPs.</li><li>• 3C- Proficiency rate for children with IEPs against grade-level, modified and alternate academic achievement standards.</li></ul> <p>Focusing on proficiency rates, Louisiana showed an increase in reading proficiency rates from 33.5% in 2008 to 37% in 2013 and math proficiency rates from 36.5% in FFY 2008 to 40.3% in FFY 2013.</p>
Suspensions/Expulsions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 4A - Percent of districts that have a significant discrepancy in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs.</li><li>• 4B - Percent of districts that have: (a) a significant discrepancy, by race or ethnicity, in the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 days in a school year for children with IEPs; and (b) policies, procedures or practices that contribute to the significant discrepancy and do not comply</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> All years refer to the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY).

	<p>with requirements relating to the development and implementation of IEPs, the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and procedural safeguards.</p> <p>For Indicator 4A, Louisiana saw an increase in the percent of districts with a significant discrepancy in the rate of suspensions and expulsions from 26.5% in 2005 to 31.5% in 2013.</p> <p>For Indicator 4B, Louisiana saw an increase in districts with a significant discrepancy by race or ethnicity and policies, procedure or practice that contribute to the discrepancy from 0% in 2009 to 5.1% in 2013.</p>
Education Environment, ages 6-21	<p>5- Percent of children with IEPs attending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A- Inside the regular class 80% or more of the day;</li> <li>• B- Inside the regular class less than 40% of the day; and</li> <li>• C- In separate schools, residential facilities, or homebound/hospital placements.</li> </ul> <p>In all three education environments, Louisiana saw improvement since 2005. For example, the percent of children with IEPs in the regular class 80% or more of the day increased from 57.6% to 62.4% in 2013.</p>
Education Environment, ages 3-5	<p>6- Percent of children with IEPs attending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A- Regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program; and</li> <li>• B- Separate special education class, separate school or residential facility.</li> </ul> <p>Since 2011, the first year this indicator was reported, Louisiana has shown improvement in both environments. For example, the percent of children with IEPs attending regular early childhood programs and receiving the majority of services there increased from 21.2% to 22.7% in 2013.</p>
Preschool Outcomes, ages 3-5	<p>7- Percent of children who demonstrate improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships);</li> <li>• Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy); and</li> <li>• Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs.</li> </ul> <p>As a result to changes in the survey methodology for this indicator, LDOE re-established the baseline in 2013. However, LDOE still reviewed and analyzed data for this indicator.</p>
Parent Involvement	<p>8- Percent of parents with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.</p> <p>Since 2005, Louisiana has tracked parental involvement through a survey. Over the period, the percent of parents reporting schools facilitated parent involvement ranged from 31-39%.</p>
Disproportionate	Percent of districts with disproportionate representation of racial and ethnic

Representation	<p>groups including those:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9- In special education and related services that is the result of inappropriate identification.</li> <li>• 10- In specific disability categories that is the result of inappropriate identification.</li> </ul> <p>This is a compliance indicator, meaning that states target 0% of districts falling into either category. Since 2005, Louisiana has generally met this target for both indicators, including in 2013.</p>
Child Find	<p>11- Percent of children who were evaluated within 60 days of receiving parental consent for initial evaluation.</p> <p>Since 2005, Louisiana has met this evaluation timeline for at least 99% of students.</p>
Early Childhood Transition	<p>12- Percent of children referred by Part C prior to age 3, who are found eligible for Part B, and who have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthdays.</p> <p>From 2005 to 2013, the percent of Louisiana children who have an IEP developed and implemented by their 3<sup>rd</sup> birth increased significantly from 64.6% to 96.9%, respectively.</p>
Secondary Transition	<p>13- Percent of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals that are annually updated and based upon an age-appropriate transition assessment, transition services, including courses of study, that will reasonably enable the student to meet those postsecondary goals, and annual IEP goals related to the student's transition services needs.</p> <p>From 2005 to 2013, the percent of Louisiana youth whose IEPs include the required components listed above increased from 31% to 100%.</p>
Post School Outcomes	<p>14- Percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school, and were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A- Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school.</li> <li>• B- Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school.</li> <li>• C- Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.</li> </ul> <p>Since 2009 when Louisiana began reporting on this indicator, the state has seen strong, positive growth on all three components. For example, the percent of youth included in group C increased from 73.6% in 2009 to 87.7% in 2013.</p>
Hearing Resolutions and Mediation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of hearing requests that went to resolution sessions that were resolved through resolution session settlement agreements.</li> <li>• Percent of mediations held that resulted in mediation agreements.</li> </ul>



	Louisiana typically does not have enough hearing sessions or mediations to meet the reporting threshold. However, LDOE still analyzed and considered these indicators in its data analysis.
--	---

After conducting thorough reviews of this data source over the course of months, Louisiana narrowed the analysis down to variables related to graduation rate, dropout rate, and statewide assessment proficiency. LDOE chose to focus on these indicators after reviewing improvement or lack of improvement, considering potential alignment to statewide initiatives, and evaluating LDOE's capacity to improve child-focused outcomes.

## **Data Source II - 618 Data Collections**

Louisiana submits IDEA Section 618 data to the US Department of Education. LDOE utilized this rich source of data for the initial and focused data analyses described in this document. The initial selection of the broad cohort of students who exited school (defined as students with disabilities aged 14+) was extracted from the 618 database. It must be noted that even as these data sources and analyses are described in a linear manner, activities of data analysis in Phase I were simultaneous and iterative. LDOE also considered variables that are submitted with 618 data that are also correlated closely with SPP/APR indicators. Below, some of these variables are described with examples of how LDOE's review diverged from variables reviewed in the SPP/APR.

*Table 1.2*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Example(s) of LDOE Review Beyond SPP/APR Data</b>
Assessment	Assessment data are examined in the SPP/APR in indicator 3; however, we further examined various segments of assessment data, such as cohorts of students over time, which is not reported in the SPP/APR.
Child Count	Child Count data are examined in the SPP/APR in indicator 11. In addition to that data, LDOE also examined a count of students with disabilities receiving a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in February of each year under review because this provided data closer to the State's assessment period. The SPP/APR uses a child count date of October 1 <sup>st</sup> .
Discipline	Discipline data are examined in SPP/APR in indicator 4; however, LDOE further evaluated historical discipline data at the student level over time. The SPP/APR aggregates state level data annually.
Educational Environments	Educational Environment data are included in the SPP/APR in indicators 5 and 6. In addition to this data, LDOE extracted information about educational environments, including how they correlate to specific disability categories that are not reported in the SPP/APR.
Exits	Exit data are examined in SPP/APR indicators 1 and 2. To conduct a more rigorous analysis, LDOE also considered exits for students 14+, including exit categories and types across years and disability

	categories, including students beyond the 4-year cohort range. The SPP/APR narrowly defines exits to a 4-year cohort graduation and dropouts.
--	---

### **Data Source III - Louisiana's Special Education Reporting (SER) system, including:**

Louisiana's SER system is the state's database for all students with disabilities. LDOE identified a population of students<sup>2</sup> to include in the initial and focused data analyses from the 618 database, and then cross matched that population to student records stored in the SER database. Those variables are included in the table below.

*Table 1.3*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Example(s) of LDOE Review</b>
Exits Types	LDOE extracted and analyzed data for students with specific learning disabilities exiting special education by date, exit category and exit type.
Age	LDOE extracted and analyzed when students with specific learning disabilities exited special education by age. LDOE included students who would not be included in the cohort graduation or dropout rate reported in the SPP/APR.
Gender	LDOE extracted and analyzed data for students with disabilities by gender.
Race/Ethnicity	LDOE extracted and analyzed data for students with disabilities by race/ethnicity including Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, and Two or More Races, and correlated that data to exit types.
Exceptionality	LDOE extracted and analyzed data for students with disabilities by exceptionality including autism, other health impairment, specific learning disability, emotional disturbance, speech/language impediment, and intellectual disability.
Exit Counts by LEA (Public School Only)	LDOE extracted and analyzed data for students with specific learning disabilities exit counts by local education agency (LEA) and exit category. Exit counts taken on June 30, 2013.

### **Data Source IV - Louisiana's Student Information System (SIS)**

Louisiana's SIS is the state's database for all public school enrollment information, including demographic factors, attendance, and discipline records. LDOE identified a population of students<sup>3</sup> to include in the initial and focused data analyses from the 618 database, and then cross matched that

<sup>2</sup> This population is defined as students with disabilities (aged 14+) who exited school in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

<sup>3</sup> This population is defined as students with disabilities (aged 14+) who exited school in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

population to student records stored in the SIS database. Some of the variables included in the review and analyses can be found in the table below.

*Table 1.4*

Variable	Example(s) of LDOE Review
Free/Reduced Lunch Status	LDOE extracted and analyzed data for students with disabilities who receive free or reduced lunch against various outcomes such as exits.
Disciplinary Incidents	LDOE extracted and analyzed data for disciplinary incidents of students with a specific learning disability exiting special education, including average disciplinary incidents by exit category and exit type.
Average Days Absent	LDOE extracted and analyzed data for absences of students with specific learning disabilities exiting special education, including average days absent by exit category and exit type.

#### **Data Source V – Louisiana’s Assessment Database**

Louisiana maintains a separate database of all current and historical statewide assessment information including the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP), Integrated Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (iLEAP), and LEAP Alternative Assessment Level 2 (LAA2). LDOE identified a population of students<sup>4</sup> to include in the initial and focused data analyses from the 618 database, and then cross matched that population to student records stored in the assessment database. Since this database has historical information for all students with disabilities, LDOE was able to identify a cohort, and then match each student to their test history. LDOE focused on fourth and eighth grade, since those have historically been considered “high stakes”<sup>5</sup> testing years.

*Table 1.5*

Indicator	Example(s) of Data LDOE Reviewed
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade ELA LEAP Results	LDOE extracted and analyzed counts of students with disabilities who scored unsatisfactory, approaching basic, basic, mastery, and advanced.
4 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math LEAP Results	LDOE extracted and analyzed counts of students with disabilities who scored unsatisfactory, approaching basic, basic, mastery, and advanced.
8 <sup>th</sup> Grade ELA LEAP & LAA2 Results	LDOE extracted and analyzed LEAP counts of students with disabilities who scored unsatisfactory, approaching basic, basic, mastery, and advanced.  LDOE extracted and analyzed LAA2 counts of students with disabilities who scored pre-foundational, foundational, approaching basic and basic.

<sup>4</sup> This population is defined as students with disabilities (aged 14+) who exited school in 2011, 2012 and 2013.

<sup>5</sup> High stakes is defined as a grade in which students must pass statewide assessments in order to be promoted, unless they receive a waiver or other exception.

8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Math LEAP & LAA2 Results	<p>LDOE extracted and analyzed LEAP counts of students with disabilities who scored unsatisfactory, approaching basic, basic, mastery, and advanced.</p> <p>LDOE extracted and analyzed LAA2 counts of students with disabilities who scored pre-foundational, foundational, approaching basic and basic.</p>
--	---

## **Data Source VI – Qualitative Data**

In addition to the wealth of quantitative data described in data sources I-V above, Louisiana considered qualitative data. LDOE considered feedback from stakeholders including SEAP, the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group, and internal experts. LDOE also considered historical programs and initiatives as well as institutional knowledge. Further, LDOE considered the qualitative elements of certain SPP/APR indicators. For example, in Louisiana, SPP/APR Indicators 15 and 16, which report on resolution sessions and mediations, respectively, do not traditionally have enough data points to identify clear patterns or trends. However, LDOE reviewed other elements like the hearing resolution process in the state, and its potential effect on the SSIP. This rich information is described in greater detail in the sections below.

## **INITIAL DATA ANALYSIS - A REVIEW OF ALL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ALONG MULTIPLE EDUCATIONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES**

To conduct an initial broad data analysis, Louisiana explored high school exit outcomes for a cohort of students with disabilities by disability category to identify associated trends. After discussion with internal data experts, LDOE identified an initial cohort of students with disabilities who exited school in the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013 school years. This range was extensive enough to identify trends, but limited enough to provide information that was relevant to the current policy and educational environment.

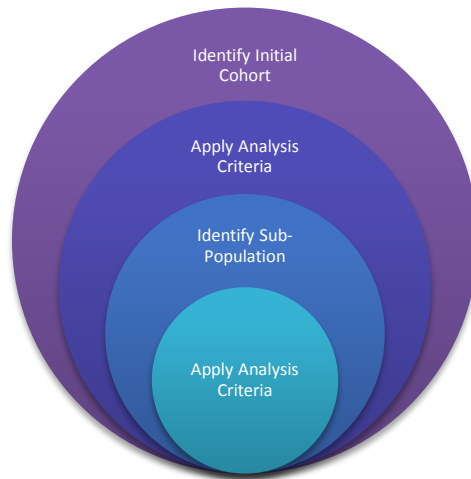
Once the initial cohort was selected, the internal stakeholder team identified critical factors that contribute to different high school outcomes for students with disabilities. The data were identified from state data sources most likely to provide meaningful insights into high school exit trends. LDOE developed a data file for further analysis that disaggregated the data by multiple educational and demographic variables. Please see section 1B for more information on these variables.

Louisiana conducted a detailed review of the data across the educational and demographic factors, involving internal stakeholders including data analysis and special education program experts. Using this methodology, Louisiana was able to deduce the factors that impacted the likelihood that a student with disabilities would graduate high school. Louisiana used this longitudinal approach in order to see the “story” of students’ careers and the impact of various factors on their career over time.

LDOE developed initial findings that were discussed with our internal stakeholders and shared with our external stakeholders for review and input. LDOE believed it was critical to seek this input in order to

make a thoughtful decision about the next phase of data analysis. During the initial data analysis, LDOE identified overall trends. For example, LDOE found that students with specific learning disabilities represent the highest number of students with disabilities who receive diplomas, who dropout, and who exit with non-diploma documents. After presenting this information to external stakeholders, listening to their perspectives and feedback, LDOE decided to conduct a more focused analysis on the subgroup of students who were categorized with a specific learning disability.

*Image 1.1: General Data Analysis Process*



### **FOCUSED DATA ANALYSIS – A REVIEW OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES ALONG MULTIPLE EDUCATIONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC OUTCOMES**

Based on the initial findings, Louisiana then applied the same analysis criteria (see description in section 1B) to students with specific learning disabilities. The purpose was to conduct a more detailed, focused analysis in order to isolate the root cause of various child-focused outcomes.

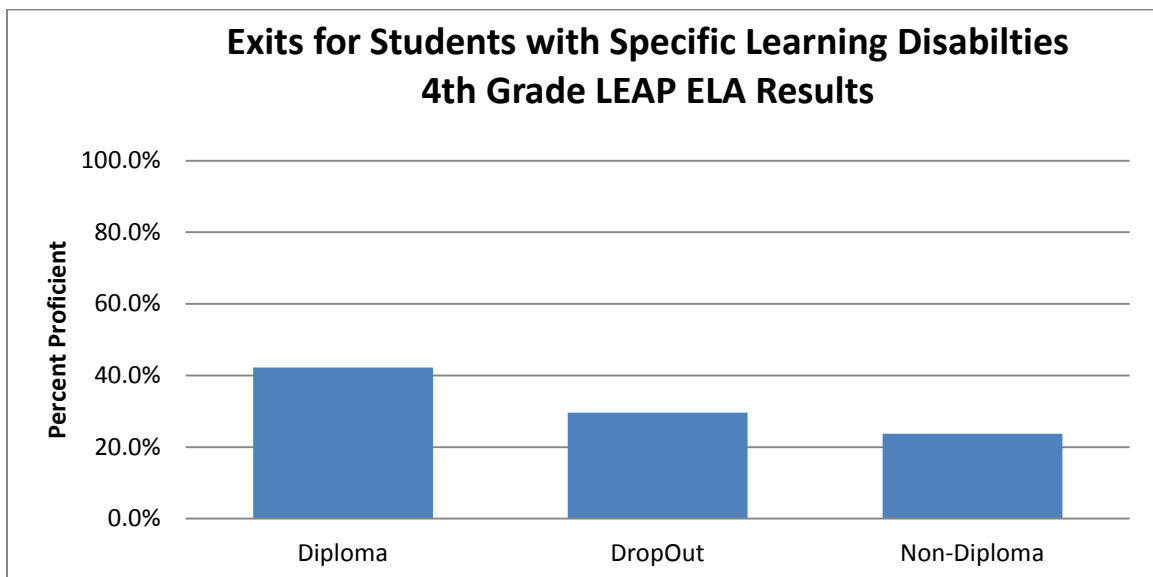
To do this, LDOE conducted a number of additional data review sessions to discuss the outcomes of the data analysis. In the course of these reviews, Louisiana began to identify the factors that most directly impacted whether a student with a specific language disability would graduate from high school. First, Louisiana noted that when we looked at the population of students with a specific learning disability (SLD), students with a *language*-based SLD represented the majority of diploma, dropout and non-diploma exits during the last three school years: 2010 – 2011, 2011 – 2012, and 2012 – 2013. Focusing on language-based SLD, the state reviewed the exit patterns. In the most recent school year, 47% of these students received a diploma, 40% dropped out, and 13% had a non-diploma exit (Certificate of Achievement).

Then, Louisiana looked at the data to see which factors were more prevalent among students with a specific learning disability, whether or not language-based, who dropped out. We noted a few outcomes, including, but not limited to the following:

- Fewer of these students spent 80% or more of their day inside the regular classroom,
- They had a higher average number of disciplinary incidents during their exit year, and
- They had a higher average number of days absent during their exit year than students who received a diploma.

All of these factors were important to understand graduation outcomes, so during the data review process, LDOE considered the degree to which each variable affected the exits of students with disabilities in general, differential impact on specific types and exits, and trends over time. Moreover, throughout the process, LDOE purposefully adjusted the focus of the analysis, ensuring these issues were investigated at both macro and micro levels. Through our data analysis, LDOE discovered that students with a specific learning disability who dropped out had lower proficiency rates on the fourth grade LEAP English language arts (ELA) assessment—Louisiana’s statewide standardized assessment, when compared to students with a specific learning disability who received a high school diploma. In fourth grade, under 30% of students with a specific learning disability who dropped out scored proficient (basic or above) on the fourth grade LEAP ELA assessment, significantly lower than students with a specific learning disability who graduated from high school. The proficiency rate for those graduates on the fourth grade LEAP ELA assessment was approximate 42%. Louisiana firmly believes that we need to increase achievement for all students, including students with disabilities. However, the gap identified during this portion of the data analysis was clearly recognized as an area for further review.

*Figure 1.1*

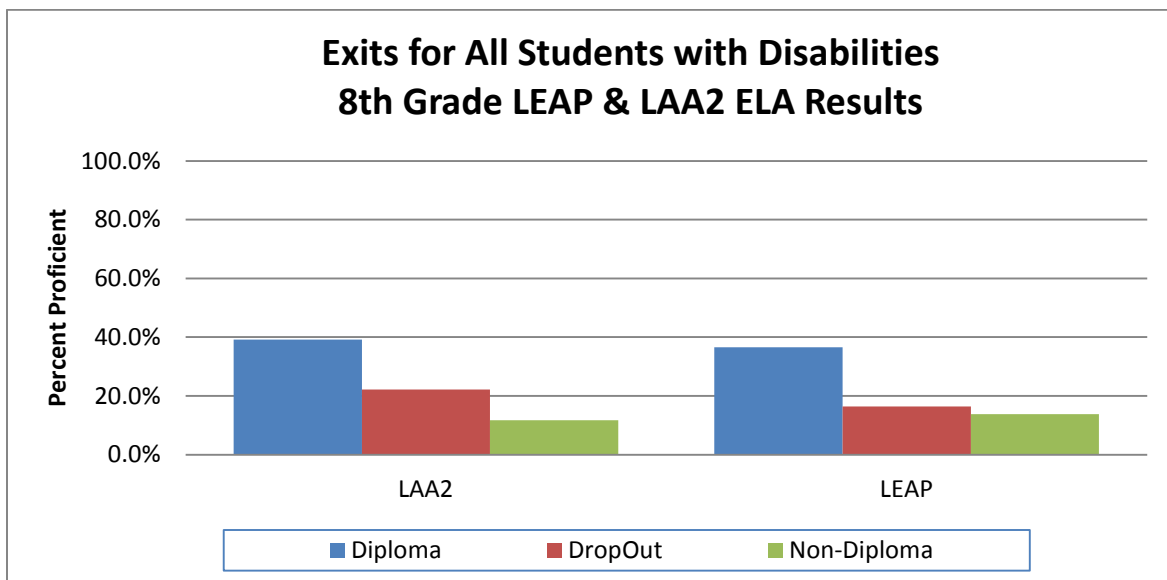


At this point, Louisiana began to tentatively shape a SiMR around literacy. The process of narrowing down the population to students with a specific learning disability uncovered a critical piece of

information. We concluded that there was a correlation between outcomes on ELA assessments in fourth grade and graduation rates in high school for students with a specific learning disability. However, LDOE recognized that in order to identify a meaningful SiMR that would be used to drive coherent improvement strategies with a theory of action throughout the state, including local education agencies with varied geography, student populations, resources, etc., LDOE would have to confirm this finding across all students with disabilities.

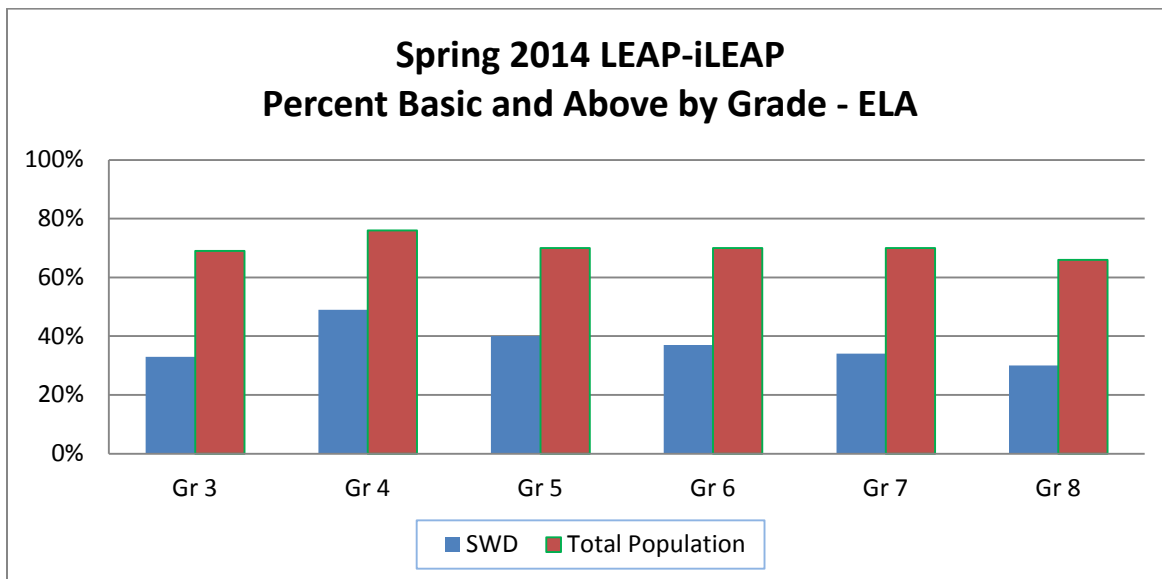
Since Louisiana had identified this significant English language arts proficiency result, Louisiana shifted the data analysis to focus on the last “high stakes” testing year before high school, eighth grade. LDOE conducted further data analyses to determine how all students with disabilities performed on the eighth grade LEAP and LAA2. The results of the analysis showed that students with disabilities in eighth grade who exited school as a dropout had a much lower proficiency rate as compared to students with disabilities who exited with a diploma. On the eighth grade LEAP and LAA2, students with disabilities who exited school as a dropout had a lower proficiency rate as compared to students with disabilities who exited with a diploma. This review confirmed the trend we had identified for students with a specific learning disability in fourth grade with the larger population of all students with disabilities in eighth grade.

*Figure 1.2*



To complete the analysis, Louisiana reviewed the trends in achievement for all students with disabilities and the total general education population on the Spring 2014 LEAP and iLEAP from third through eighth grades. The results showed that the percent of students with disabilities who scored basic and above declined steadily from 49% in fourth grade to just 30% by eighth grade. Further, the achievement gap—the difference between the percent of students with disabilities scoring basic and above versus the total population—grew as well. In fourth grade that achievement gap is 27 points, but by eighth grade it grew to 36 points.

Figure 1.3



LDOE held multiple conversations with both internal and external stakeholders about the factors resulting in this trend over time. In the course of these discussions many potential causes were identified and discussed. One theory attributed declines in proficiency to cumulative decreases in the number of students who are proficient. To explain further, if there are 10 students who do not achieve a proficient score in fourth grade it is unlikely that they will in fifth through eighth grades. If another 10 students drop from proficient to not proficient in fifth grade, we will see overall proficiency rates decline. Another explanation ascribed the decline to the changing standards in late elementary / early middle school, where students switch from learning to read to reading to learn. That combined with more advanced literacy skills means that more students with disabilities will drop from proficient to not proficient on standardized assessment through eighth grade. While LDOE did not endorse any particular theory of cause, these discussions drove the conversation around the data analysis and the selection of the SiMR.

Before finalizing the SiMR, Louisiana completed additional analyses as a result of stakeholder input. Since stakeholders were an integral part of the data analysis work done in the state, some questions warranted additional data analysis and review. For example, Louisiana conducted an additional analysis to identify a cohort of sixth graders in SY 2013-2014, in terms of the percentage of students scoring basic and above, and mastery and above on the ELA LEAP/iLEAP. This allowed the external stakeholder group to identify trends in proficiency rates for a cohort of both students with disabilities and their general education peers over a period of time from the third grade through sixth grade. This answered a key question that was identified during the data process, how does a single group of students perform on English language arts assessments over time? The results of this data analysis confirmed the trends we had seen in aggregated data reviews. The cohort's proficiency rate increased from third to fourth grade then saw a consistent decline from fourth grade through sixth grade. Also as a result of



stakeholder inquiry, LDOE de-identified and ordered all LEAs in the state (including charter schools), based on the percentage of students in the regular class 80% or more of the day, who scored basic and above on the Spring 2014 ELA LEAP and iLEAP assessments. LDOE completed this analysis for grades three through six, separately, and then combined. These additional analyses, made at the behest of our external stakeholder group, further advanced the conversation around the SiMR, and brought additional assurance to the ultimate decision to focus on literacy.

LDOE's special education policy office, along with internal and external stakeholders, agreed upon key findings at the end of the data analysis process:

- By third grade, the first year of statewide testing, there is already an achievement gap on statewide assessments between students with disabilities and their general education peers.
- Between fourth and eighth grade, English language arts proficiency (basic and above) rates on statewide assessments decline for all students with disabilities, and the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their general education peers increases.
- Literacy proficiency in fourth grade affects outcomes for students with disabilities through high school, including graduation. Students with disabilities who do not score proficient (basic and above) on fourth grade ELA statewide assessments are less likely to ultimately graduate from high school.
- In order to positively affect graduation rates, we must focus on literacy and intervene early in students' careers. If schools can successfully intervene as early as third through fifth grades, we expect to see positive outcomes not just on statewide assessments, but ultimately in graduation rates.

## **ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS**

LDOE conducted a root cause analysis, facilitated by an outside expert, with our SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group. LDOE believed it was critical to involve both internal and external stakeholders including parents, educators, administrators, higher education representatives, advocacy groups, and others in order to bring diverse voices with varied experiences to the table. To complete the root cause analysis, the Stakeholder Group was divided into heterogeneous small groups to answer the question: why does proficiency in literacy continuously decline between grades four and eight for students with disabilities? The groups asked this "why" question repeatedly to understand the root causes, and then identified which of those causes were actionable at a state level.

Some actionable root causes, included:

- A need for professional learning and development. The group tentatively identified specific needs such as ensuring students with disabilities are in the correct least restrictive environment (LRE), meaningfully including students with disabilities in the general education classroom and curriculum, and examining the methods teachers are using for literacy instruction.
- A need for additional resources to serve all students with disabilities including staffing levels, time to serve students, and effectively scheduling services.

- A need to tie any targets for literacy performance for students with disabilities to school and / or administrator accountability. There may also be a relationship between accountability and the expectations of educators for students with disabilities.
- A need to improve teacher skills in data-driven instructional decision making.

*1B - A description of how the data were disaggregated by multiple variables such as LEA, region, race/ethnicity, disability category, and placement, etc.*

As described above, Louisiana engaged in a rigorous, multi-phased data analysis beginning with a broad review of a cohort of students with disabilities followed by a more focused review of students with a specific learning disability. LDOE ensured the data were disaggregated by multiple variables including:

Table 1.6

Educational Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special Education designation/ disability classification</li> <li>• Least restrictive environment (LRE), including students with disabilities who were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Inside the regular class 80% or more of the day</li> <li>○ Inside the regular class less than 40% of the day</li> <li>○ Special class, separate school, home/hospital bound, etc.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• High school exit information, including students with disabilities who graduated with a diploma or a certificate, or dropped out.</li> <li>• 4<sup>th</sup> grade LEAP/LAA 2 scores for math and English language arts (ELA)</li> <li>• 8<sup>th</sup> grade LEAP/LAA 2 scores for math and ELA</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade iLEAP scores for ELA</li> <li>• 10<sup>th</sup> grade end of course (EOC) scores</li> <li>• Attendance</li> <li>• Discipline</li> </ul>
Demographic Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race/ethnicity</li> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Free and reduced lunch status</li> <li>• Local education agency (LEA), including traditional LEAs and charter schools</li> </ul>

LDOE used both educational and demographic variables to disaggregate data during all phases of the data analysis, from the initial cohort to the SiMR.

*1C - A description of any concerns about the quality of the data and if so, how Louisiana will address these concerns.*

LDOE is structured to ensure that robust, reliable data is shared with the public. LDOE's data teams are not housed in the special education policy office, they operate independently. These teams have individuals that specialize in special education data. As a result, they understand how special education data fits into the larger agency data ecosystem. LDOE held multiple conversations with data experts to discuss data quality and the SSIP. LDOE did not identify any specific data quality concerns. This is a direct

result of the state's systematic business rules with regard to how data are checked for quality both when received by LDOE and before sharing with other internal offices or external groups.

To ensure data quality LEAs are provided access to error reports and data comparison reports as data are being submitted to data systems. Data are then checked internally for quality, reviewed for alignment with policy and law, and compared to prior releases for consistency. Prior to release, data and reports go through a thorough review process where multiple individuals are checking / reviewing the data.

Further, LDOE is continuously reviewing and improving upon data systems to ensure LDOE is collecting and reporting with reliable data and information. For example, the agency is implementing a system of unique identifiers for each public school student. This will ensure that data entered across data systems is consistent and associated with one individual student.

### *1D - A description of how Louisiana considered compliance data and whether those data present potential barriers to improvement.*

Louisiana considered a variety of compliance data and whether those data present potential barriers to improvement when conducting each round of data analysis, both internally and with external stakeholders. We reviewed and analyzed:

- SPP/APR Indicator 4B: LEAs with Significant Discrepancies in out-of-school suspensions / expulsions by race / ethnicity since SY 2009-2010.
- SPP/APR Indicator 9: LEAs with disproportionate representation in special education since SY 2006-2007.
- SPP/APR Indicator 10: LEAs with disproportionate representation by exceptionality since SY 2006-2007.
- SPP/APR Indicator 11: Evaluation timelines – percent of students evaluated within 60 days of parental consent for initial evaluation since SY 2006 - 2007.
- SPP/APR Indicator 12: Transition from IDEA Part C to IDEA Part B – percent of children referred by Part C prior to age three, who are found eligible for Part B and have an IEP developed and implemented by their third birthday since SY 2005-2006.
- SPP/APR Indicator 13: Postsecondary goals: percent of youth with IEPs aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes appropriate measurable postsecondary goals from SY 2006-2007 and 2007 - 2008, and SY 2009-2010 through SY 2012-2013.

Louisiana gave thoughtful consideration to compliance data and potential barriers to improvement throughout Phase I of the SSIP. This was evident during the root cause analysis when multiple stakeholders noted the impact of suspensions / expulsions, a compliance indicator, on a student's ability to access the general education curriculum, and remain engaged in their school experience. During LDOE's data analysis, we noted the correlation between suspensions / expulsions and dropout rates. Another compliance variable, timely evaluation was also identified as a factor that could impact child-focused outcomes. LDOE reviewed and discussed the grade(s) in which students are likely to be identified under different disability categories. For example, if students are less likely to be identified as

having a specific learning disability until the middle of elementary school, then it may not be prudent to target increased reading proficiency for students with disabilities in first grade. While some of the compliance data may present a barrier to improvement, LDOE believes that having this information, engaging in meaningful conversations around the root causes, and accounting for this information during the SSIP's implementation phases, means LDOE will be able to more effectively target interventions and supports.

*1E - If additional data are needed, a description of the methods and timelines to collect and analyze the additional data.*

LDOE acquired additional data as a result of various analyses and stakeholder input throughout the months-long planning, review, and analysis process. For Phase I of the SSIP, these are now considered complete. Louisiana does not have any additional data needs in order to finalize Phase I of the SSIP. However, LDOE does not believe that data identification and analysis ends with Phase I of the SSIP. As with all of the state's work, data is integrated continuously into our decision making processes. As the state continues to implement the SSIP, including future work on infrastructure development, evaluation, and support for LEA implementation, LDOE expects and plans to identify the need for additional data, and to conduct further analyses. In order to do this effectively, LDOE will further engage internal stakeholders and content experts, as well as external stakeholders.

*1F - A description of stakeholder involvement in the data analysis.*

LDOE must meaningfully engage and solicit input from diverse stakeholders in the development of all phases of the SSIP. Louisiana believes that the successful implementation of the SSIP relies on the input of both internal and external stakeholders. In addition to this subsection, descriptions of stakeholder involvement were incorporated throughout the data analysis section. For additional information on LDOE's overall stakeholder engagement strategy, see Appendix A.

LDOE selected representatives for the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group to reflect a wide variety of constituency groups and geographic locations, balancing that with maintaining a size that would allow thoughtful and robust interactions. This group engaged in meaningful debate around the data analysis, providing new insights, and requested additional data that moved the data analysis forward. For example, the group requested a cohort analysis of ELA assessment results that helped to build consensus around targeting the SiMR at grades three through five. In addition, to maintaining stakeholder engagement, LDOE provided the SSIP Stakeholder Group with a detailed written summary after each meeting and before the next to assure continued involvement, identify ways input was incorporated into the SSIP, and frame future conversations. In addition to the description here, stakeholder input is noted throughout this section. Below, is a list of the representatives from the Stakeholder Group. In addition, please see the infrastructure analysis section and Appendix A for a more detailed account of the stakeholder engagement process.

Table 1.7

SSIP EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT GROUP	
Representative	Organization
Monica Ballay	Louisiana State Personnel Development Grant
Andrea Bond	Charter School - Collegiate Academy
Brenda Cosse	Developmental Disabilities Council / Parent
Alan Coulter	LSU Human Development Center
Nancy Hicks	Louisiana Department of Education
Ashley McReynolds	Parent
Paul Mooney	LSU Special Education Department/ SEAP Rep
Kristi-Jo Preston	Louisiana Department of Education
Jody Purvis	Livingston Parish Schools
Susan Vaughn	Ascension Parish Schools
Regina Washington	Caddo Parish Schools
Keita Rone Wilson	Louisiana Department of Education
Jamie Wong	Louisiana Department of Education

Further, LDOE's special education policy team developed an ongoing, collaborative relationship with internal stakeholders such as the agency's multiple data analysis groups, in order to leverage their expertise into a rigorous data analysis process. The internal stakeholders provided expertise during the entire data analysis process, including framing the initial data analysis, developing the methodology, identifying reliable sources for information, as well as continuous analytic expertise throughout the process.

Table 1.8

LDOE SSIP DATA ANALYSIS TEAM	
Representative	Office / Division
Nancy Hicks	Special Education Policy
Maria Knox	Strategic Research
Kristi-Jo Preston	Special Education Policy
Wanda Trahan	Strategic Research
Keita Rone Wilson	Special Education Policy
Jamie Wong	Special Education Policy

### *1G – Summary: Louisiana's data analysis process led to a tentative SiMR*

LDOE engaged in a thorough, multi-phased data analysis process to systematically review factors impacting student-centered outcomes in order to identify a SiMR. LDOE delved into the data, including root causes of student outcomes with significant input from internal and external stakeholders. The process started at a broad level with a review of students exiting high school for the last three school years, with outcomes reviewed along a number of variables. LDOE used the findings from the initial review to narrow the analysis to focus on students with specific learning disabilities. After this focused

review, LDOE conducted an analysis to understand whether these trends could be generalized to the broader population of students with disabilities. LDOE concluded that the same trends identified amongst students with specific learning disabilities were found with the general population of students with disabilities. In the course of multiple data reviews that resulted in additional analyses, Louisiana identified a significant factor that contributed to whether or not students would ultimately graduate: elementary school English language arts proficiency (basic and above) rates on statewide assessments. With this in mind, LDOE held additional conversations with stakeholders to identify root causes, initiatives across the state and other potential areas for review. LDOE then identified the SiMR, which is to increase ELA proficiency (basic and above) rates on statewide assessments for students with disabilities. This tentative SiMR captured the consensus—made as a direct result of the data analysis—that these conversations generated.

## **Component #2: Analysis of State Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity**

*2A - A description of how Louisiana analyzed the capacity of its current infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity in LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for children with disabilities.*

*2A.1 - The State engaged in a systematic process to analyze the capacity of the State infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity at the local level in relation to the SiMR.*

Louisiana understands that a successful plan to improve child-focused outcomes for student with disabilities will rely on a thorough and systematic analysis of LDOE's infrastructure and capacity. As a result, LDOE engaged in multiple sessions with internal and external stakeholders to analyze the capacity of LDOE's current infrastructure, in order to support improvement and build capacity in LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for children with disabilities.

The infrastructure analysis was conducted in three phases: 1) an initial review by LDOE's special education policy office, 2) a comprehensive review by a group of representatives from internal LDOE offices and divisions, and 3) an external review by the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group.

In the first phase, the special education policy office focused on the overall structure of LDOE. Through this lens, the special education policy office considered their capacity to develop and implement the SSIP. The team identified strengths of the current system and challenges to the team's ability to drive the SSIP effort. Since the data analysis led the agency to potentially focus on literacy, the team identified key internal stakeholders who could provide expertise in various content related areas such as literacy, LEA capacity, professional development and training, and financial resources. These stakeholders were then invited to participate in phase two, the internal LDOE infrastructure analysis.

The last two phases were facilitated by an external technical assistance expert in order to maintain the integrity of the process. The internal and external stakeholder infrastructure analyses followed the same structure. The facilitator identified and explained each component of infrastructure analysis: governance, fiscal, quality standards, professional development, data, technical assistance, and accountability/monitoring. Professional development and technical assistance were considered together since this is the model implemented in the state. Then the group was divided into smaller

heterogeneous groups to complete a SWOT analysis – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats – on each<sup>6</sup> infrastructure component.

### *2B - A description of Louisiana's systems infrastructure.*

LDOE's infrastructure is comprised of various divisions and offices that are structured to encourage, collaborate, and inform the work of one another, and support the Department's mission. Below, LDOE's infrastructure is outlined, focusing on Louisiana's governance, fiscal, quality standards, professional development, data, technical assistance, and accountability / monitoring systems. After a thorough, systematic review of the State's systems, LDOE believes that the systems in place can fully support the successful implementation of the SiMR, leading to improved literacy outcomes for Louisiana's students with disabilities in grades three through five.

## **GOVERNANCE**

### **Overall Louisiana Education Structure**

Louisiana educates approximately 700,000 public school students across the state. Louisiana serves approximately 75,000 public school students with disabilities ages three through 21, representing approximately 11% of the total student population. In the 2014 – 2015 school year, Louisiana had 176 local education agencies (LEAs) including 69 traditional school districts, 100 charter schools, and 7 specially authorized Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) school districts such as laboratory schools and schools for special populations.

### **Louisiana Department of Education**

LDOE is Louisiana's state agency overseeing public education including traditional, charter, and school choice scholarships. LDOE's mission is "Louisiana Believes: Every one of Louisiana's children should be on track to a college degree or a professional career." To this end, LDOE is focused on student success through the adoption and implementation of a numerous transformational policies and initiatives including a robust state accountability system rooted in positive students outcomes, COMPASS—the educator evaluation system focused on student achievement and educator support, the, Jump Start Career Education program, the expansion of quality early childhood education, and more. All of these initiatives have a direct impact on the lives of students with disabilities, moving them closer to achieving the goal of college and career readiness.

### **LDOE's Special Education Policy Office**

LDOE recently established a special education policy office that is concentrating on improving the LDOE IDEA implementation system with a focus on target setting, increasing the prominence of special education specific reporting statewide, working closely within a network structure to deliver targeted support to LEAs and high-need schools, and conducting analyses of special education data to inform the

---

<sup>6</sup> With one exception: the SSIP External Task Force did not directly analyze the fiscal component, since this group does not have technical knowledge of LDOE's budget. Instead, LDOE provided an overview of the SWOT outcome from the internal group's infrastructure analysis, and asked for reactions and feedback.



Department's policies. This office is part of the Executive Committee, which allows the agency to understand and act upon specific special education concerns. The special education policy office manages both the SPP/APR and the ongoing SSIP work.

### **LDOE's Cross Divisional Partners**

LDOE's special education policy office partners with many other LDOE divisions and offices to support Louisiana's students with disabilities. While LDOE has many divisions and offices, a few partners that have particular involvement in the SSIP process and identification of the SiMR are noted below.

- **Data Management.** The special education policy office works closely with the data management office to use data to identify trends in assessment proficiency, demographic and educational information, as well as data needs.
- **Monitoring.** The IDEA monitoring team has developed a new monitoring policy that will integrate SPP/APR indicators. The special education policy team continuously communicates with that team to identify ways to further integrate shared goals to efficiently build upon existing work initiatives.
- **Academic Content.** The special education policy team closely collaborated with the academic content team to identify literacy initiatives and programs around the state and find ways to align their work with the SiMR related efforts.

### **FISCAL / FUNDING**

In Fiscal Year 2012, Louisiana's education budget for kindergarten through high school was \$8.7 billion. More than 99% of the funding goes directly to LEAs. The budget for the Louisiana Department of Education is less than one percent of the state's education budget. Louisiana's K-12 education is funded by a combination of federal, state and local revenue.

- **Federal** tax dollars fund approximately 15% of the total education budget. The majority of federal funding is provided through grants, including grants administered by the state and grants that are awarded directly to LEAs.
- **State** tax dollars fund approximately 38% of the total education budget. The overwhelming majority of state funding is allocated to LEAs based on a formula known as the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP). The MFP is designed to ensure all LEAs have a minimum amount of funding for schools. For Fiscal Year 2012-2013, Louisiana provided an estimated \$3.4 billion for the MFP. The MFP is provided as a block grant; after satisfying all mandated requirements, LEAs have the flexibility to spend the funding to meet the needs of their schools and students.
- **Local** tax dollars fund approximately 47% of the total education budget.

At LDOE, special education funds support a number of projects. Each year Louisiana completes an application for IDEA Part B funds. As part of this application process we consider the funding needs of key initiatives across the state that support the success of students with disabilities. Currently, Louisiana uses IDEA set aside funds to support projects such as the Louisiana Assistive Technology Initiative (LATI),

Teams Intervening Early to Reach all Students (TIERS), and Louisiana's State Professional Development Grant (LaSPDG). These programs provide special education technical assistance to LEAs and present opportunities to align their yearly objectives to our SiMR.

- **LATI** serves seven regional centers across the state. Each provides training and support to LEAs on the use of assistive technology, and provides multiple resources for implementing common core. Two literacy related programs include 1) My On Reader and 2) Expanding Expression Tool (EET) for written and oral communication.
- **TIERS** focus on three main objectives: 1) teaching educators how to use data to improve student outcomes, 2) using response to intervention to target student needs, and 3) compliance with IDEA through focused professional development and coaching. Currently they have multiple on demand professional development sessions specific to reading on their website. They also partner with multiple charter schools in the New Orleans region to provide direct coaching and technical assistance.
- **LaSPDG** is an LDOE grant funded through the Office of Special Education (OSEP). LDOE was awarded the grant in 2011 for five years. The grant addresses four focus areas: inclusive practice, culturally responsive practices, family engagement, and data-based decision-making.

## **QUALITY STANDARDS**

Academic standards define the knowledge and skills that students are expected to learn in a subject in each grade. Academic standards are designed to provide a clear path for students to gain the proficiency that is required to learn increasingly complex material in the next grade. Students who learn the knowledge and skills defined by the academic standards, year after year, are on track to graduate from high school on time and ready to enter college or the workforce.

Louisiana defines academic standards in seven subjects, including English language arts (reading and writing), math, science, social studies, foreign languages, physical education, and health. In 2010, Louisiana adopted Common Core State Standards in English language arts and math and incorporated more rigorous literacy standards in social studies.

Louisiana seeks to promote a culture of high expectations for all students through the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. In order to successfully access the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible, students with disabilities, as appropriate, may be provided additional supports and services. These supports and services may include instructional supports for learning, instructional accommodations, assistive technology devices and related services. With the exception of students with significant cognitive disabilities, student progress on the regular academic content standards is measured through a standardized assessment administered in grades 3-8 and 10. LDOE will align the SiMR, which will track English language arts proficiency, to the results of these assessments. We believe that aligning this initiative to these rigorous learning standards will provide the best assessment of student growth and proficiency over time.

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

LDOE believes that those closest to students, educators and parents, are best positioned to support students and thus the implementation of the standards. LDOE provides educators with resources and training that empower LEAs to make informed decisions to support their students. LDOE's direct-to-educator strategy is building capacity around strong literacy and math content knowledge to fill those structures. Below, LDOE's support structure is described, focusing on three key components of professional development: resources, direct support, and supporting students with disabilities.

### Resources

Teacher Toolbox: This central resource hub houses all of the key resources to set goals, plan and teach, and evaluate student achievement results that teachers need in one location. This toolbox was created with the support of educators from across the state. All resources and tools released from the LDOE are integrated into the state's standards to help teachers take these key actions.

Curriculum Guides: LDOE created a robust set of instructional tools for math and English language arts (ELA). The ELA guidebooks contain a full set of unit plans to build a complete curriculum for educators K-12. In math, the guidebooks are meant to be a supplement to any program. The guidebooks support teachers as they work to provide students instruction and appropriate remediation.

Video Library: This library houses instructional videos that illustrate quality instruction connected to Louisiana's Compass instructional rubric and the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This library is regularly updated and includes guides to help teachers and principals use the videos for instructional improvement.

Assessment Tools: Assessment guides, sample tests, and other tools help teachers understand how students will be assessed on the standards. These tools prepare teachers to set rigorous goals for student mastery of the standards and align their instruction accordingly.

High School Students Planning Guidebook: This guidebook is a series of short documents showing administrators, counselors, and teachers how to use key policies, programs, and resources to help both students and schools achieve their goals.

### Direct Support

Just as with every level, direct support ensures that teachers are able to use the quality resources and implement curriculum standards successfully in their classroom. In Louisiana, our direct support goes directly to the teacher level. While LEAs and principals take on a significant amount of teacher training and support, LDOE provides an intense amount of direct training and support.

Teacher Leaders: The Teacher Leader cadre consists of over 4,000 teachers that represent every LEA and school in the state. This cadre ensures every school has access to experts on the standards and curriculum tools. The Teacher Leaders support LEAs and schools as they work to train and support teachers in their LEAs. All materials are posted publicly so that teacher leaders and others are able to use all training materials for other teachers in their schools and LEAs. This allows principals and LEAs to build capacity.

Blended Training: Louisiana Teacher Leaders receive a significant amount of training throughout the year. The LDOE has learned that teachers need different types of training to support their varied needs. Thus, the LDOE provides intensive, blended training throughout the entire school year. Each layer of training provides support in a different area of need for educators.

- *Content training (in person)*: To support Teacher Leaders, the LDOE hosts over 10,000 seats during the year. In June of each year the entire cadre comes together for a two day ELA and math training. This is followed by content institutes throughout the year.
- *Resource/curricula use (virtual)*: LDOE hosts grade specific math and ELA bi-monthly webinars. These webinars break down upcoming weeks of lessons, help teachers adjust plans based on student needs, and share resources among other teachers.
- *Ongoing improvement (collaboration)*: LDOE hosts in-person regional collaborations led by expert and trained teacher advisers. These regional collaborations provide space throughout the year for teachers to reflect on student work, identify areas for improvement, and share resources.
- *EdModo collaboration*: This online forum provides an immediate place to go to find and share resources across the state. Thousands of teachers use this site weekly to share resources, ask teacher questions, and support others. LDOE monitors this site and pulls high quality resources to key folders to ensure quality for others.

### **Supporting Students with Disabilities**

The resources and support provided by the LDOE described above will enable LEAs and educators to better serve all students; however, to achieve significant gains with this specific population LDOE must execute meaningful college and career readiness initiatives targeted at students with disabilities.

Communication and Assistance: LDOE has multiple mechanisms in place for providing communication and assistance to Louisiana's educators. District staff regularly facilitates special education-focused trainings for staff and educators with updates on LDOE initiatives, in addition to information disseminated in the weekly district newsletter. As Louisiana's recently enacted special education law, which provides alternative pathways to promotion and graduation, is implemented in the 2014-2015 school year, LDOE is utilizing webinars, newsletters, and guidance documents to provide support to educators on the implementation of the new IEP team and LEA responsibilities. The guidance addresses how to accurately identify students eligible for the alternate pathways, set rigorous IEP goals aligned to grade level standards, evaluate student achievement, and create alternate measures of student proficiency.

Special Education Professional Development and Support: The Louisiana State Personnel Development Grant (LaSPDG) is enabling LDOE to develop a system of professional development and support based on state, district, and school needs to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and create sustainable, evidence-based practices. The project has four focus areas related to the use and effectiveness of data-based decision making, inclusive practices, family engagement, and culturally responsive practices. These areas will be addressed through the use of blended professional development, data collection and analysis, implementation measures, and collaboration with state efforts. The grant provides districts with professional development that connects special needs instruction to the Common Core State Standards; collaborative initiatives that link general education and special education teachers; and provides training on the effective utilization of data to make informed decisions.

Planning and Support Materials: LDOE continues to develop and disseminate materials and resources statewide based on strategies found to be most effective. Currently, available resources include the Louisiana Co-Teaching Guide, ParaPros Make the Difference, Equitable Classroom Practices Checklist, and Professional Development Planning Guide for Culturally Responsive Practices. Partnerships with Louisiana State University and Pyramid Community Parent Resource Center are supporting the achievement of the project's goals and objectives.

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

LDOE employs two primary mechanisms to provide technical assistance to ensure timely delivery of high quality evidence-based technical assistance and support to LEAs: field support and planning resources. In the course of the infrastructure analysis, LDOE has identified ways to leverage both of these mechanisms during the SSIP's implementation phase. For example, both mechanisms provide strong existing systems to develop the capacity of LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for students with disabilities.

### **Field Support**

#### Network Structure

The network structure is the primary support vehicle for LEAs, providing immediate, targeted assistance to all of Louisiana's LEAs. Louisiana's parishes are divided into five networks plus a charter school network. Each network has a network support team that includes a Network Leader, District Support Officer, and an NCLB/IDEA Point of Contact. These leaders assess the unique needs and approaches of their districts and build upon those strengths to support implementation of instructional reform. They are also the LEA's primary point of contact, and they answer all programmatic questions—including NCLB and IDEA-related questions. The points of contact are also responsible for reviewing LEA applications for federal and state grants and related funding.

Network leaders and teams facilitate regular meetings with LEAs to discuss what is working in classrooms statewide and what processes need further refinement. Network staff works side by side

with LEA and school-level administrators to regularly observe practices at the school level, fostering alignment on quality instructional practices and effective feedback. Their work will include analyzing student and teacher data on which to base feedback and recommendations; providing technical assistance in determining the best evaluation systems and curriculum; and assisting districts in the transition to new evaluation systems and the Common Core.

### Teacher Leaders

This program supports a cohort of 4,000 LEA-selected educators that receive training and ongoing support from LDOE, and serves as the chief liaisons between the LDOE and the School Implementation Teams. With training and ongoing support from the LDOE and Teacher Leaders, School Implementation Team members, ensure effective implementation within their schools, not only through training and monitoring, but also through modeling lessons and instructional strategies and by encouraging data analysis to inform instruction. In response to feedback received from special education stakeholders and teachers of English language learners, Teacher Leaders, School Implementation teams, and the LDOE District Support Networks also target supports to district and school-level personnel serving students with disabilities and limited English proficiency students to help all students achieve.

### **Planning Resources**

LDOE provides LEAs with robust, forward-focused assistance through a variety of planning resources. These include:

District Planning Guide defines the most important work Louisiana LEAs will take on in the course of the school year. The guide catalogs all the major decisions LEAs will make to plan for the next school year, and it catalogs all the resources the Department will share with districts to support this planning. The guide is divided into six focus areas: school leader and teacher learning targets, assessment and curriculum, school and teacher collaboration, Compass observation and feedback, pathway to college and career, and aligning resources.

District Planning Calls are scheduled throughout the school year to discuss topics and resources in the Planning Guide with district planning teams. These calls provide continuous, ongoing support to LEA superintendents, as well as senior staff in data, assessment and curriculum. During these calls, LDOE provides more in-depth support, fields questions in real time, and integrates high-priority policies and other topics. In FFY 2013, LDOE regularly integrated support for special education professionals including training and policy guidance on Louisiana's new special education law – alternative pathways to promotion and graduation, and new laws related to data privacy.

Empowering Educators: Planning for Success is LDOE's strategic framework for its audit and monitoring process to ensure that LEA's are monitored no more than once a year. LDOE's NCLB and IDEA Point of Contact work with any selected LEA to prepare for monitoring, which may include a review of the LEA's IDEA implementation. For more information on LDOE's IDEA monitoring program, see the monitoring section below.

## **DATA**

LDOE aggregates, analyzes and disseminates data at the federal, state, LEA and school-levels. The data, which acquires and reports on student achievement, amongst other factors, is aimed at giving state staff, administrators, and educators the tools needed to help all students achieve. To accomplish these goals, LDOE has two teams devoted to data, data management and strategic research. The data management team manages all data systems for LDOE, including internal and external data requests, federal reporting, and state reporting. The strategic research team functions as an internal “think tank”, conducting in-depth data analysis research projects. Using the results of these reports and research projects, LDOE is able to make data-driven decisions to improve services for public school students throughout the state. These teams manage data and data systems for the entire state, and they both have individuals that specialize in special education data. As a result, they have developed the unique expertise needed to manage special education data, yet still understand how special education data fits into the larger agency data ecosystem. This robust system ensures that all data reported for special education in the state meets the same high data quality standards. Further, it engenders a close collaborative relationship between the data teams and the special education policy office.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY / MONITORING**

### **Accountability**

Louisiana Believes, LDOE’s mission statement, starts with the premise that all students can achieve high expectations and master rigorous academic standards. When you believe all children can learn, then you must hold schools accountable for the performance of students. The state issues school performance scores and district performance scores for public schools and LEAs, which are based on a formula of indicators of student success and college and career readiness. To clearly communicate the quality of school and district performance to families and the public, letter grades (A-F) are tied to the score and relayed through the use of a public facing report card that includes general information about student performance on assessment and other academic indicators. LDOE also produces a principal report that includes 1) school and teacher performance at a glance, 2) student academic performance, 3) student improvement, 4) high school and / or college and career preparation, 5) teacher effectiveness, and 6) data appendix as a resource for schools to use in making data-driven decisions about their academic programs and staff. These tools provide internal decision making opportunity and public accountability for results.

### **Monitoring**

LDOE is developing a new monitoring program. This data-driven, differentiated system of monitoring will elevate and target areas that directly impact student performance. This system of monitoring will serve as a major component of the state’s overall general supervision structure.

The primary focus of the state’s monitoring activities will be on: 1) improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities; and 2) ensuring that Louisiana meets the program

requirements under IDEA Part B, with a particular emphasis on those requirements that are most closely related to improving educational results for children with disabilities.

Annually, LDOE will engage in a risk-based selection process to determine which LEAs will be monitored and what type of monitoring will occur. Factors considered during the monitoring selection process may include one or more of the following components: LEA Annual Determinations, federally required compliance indicators, performance indicators, parent complaints, fiscal audits, and/or other agency established goals and priorities such as those identified in the SSIP.

### *2C - A description of the current strengths, the extent the systems are coordinated, and areas for improvement within and across the systems.*

LDOE is structured to encourage cross collaboration between offices and divisions, which is integrated in day-to-day operations. This structure naturally supports the cross collaboration necessary to successfully implement the SSIP, and the SiMR, which is to increase the proficiency (basic and above) of students with disabilities in literacy in Grades 3, 4, and 5 on the statewide assessment in nine LEAs in the state.

LDOE engaged in multiple sessions with internal and external stakeholders to analyze the capacity of LDOE's current infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity in LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for children with disabilities. In these sessions, participants collaborated on an in-depth analysis to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the various infrastructure elements: governance, fiscal, quality standards, professional development/technical assistance, data, and accountability/monitoring as they related to the state and the SiMR. The findings of the SWOT analysis can be categorized into overall strengths and opportunities. LDOE will use the results of this analysis to shape the implementation process.

These systems are coordinated through LDOE's organizational structure, which intentionally disperses special education expertise throughout the agency. As a result, LDOE is intentionally structured to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration. For example, data for the entire department is managed through a data management team. The special education policy office has standing, recurring meetings with the data management office to review topics related to the SPP/APR and SSIP, including data requests, federal reporting, discussions around the meaning of data outcomes and quality, etc. Further, IDEA monitoring is part of the consolidated monitoring office, so special education monitoring does not occur in isolation; it is part of a coordinated effort. Monitoring results then inform targeted technical assistance and professional development; LDOE's network teams use the monitoring results to develop plans to support individual LEAs across the state. In this way, each of LDOE's individual divisions and office rely on the work of one another, which support coordinated cross collaboration to deliver services and support throughout the agency and state.



Table 2.1

GOVERNANCE	
Strengths	Opportunities
At LDOE, work is managed by the type of work, not area of focus. This promotes cross collaboration between disciplines. Given the cross cutting nature of the SSIP, LDOE will need to capitalize on this existing infrastructure in order to successfully implement the SSIP, and improve our child-focused outcome.	<p>LDOE is in the process of rebuilding relationships and networks with external stakeholders. The SSIP provides an excellent opportunity to engage stakeholders in this meaningful initiative. LDOE may be able to leverage this work into other initiatives over the years.</p> <p>LDOE can use the upcoming phases of the SSIP to clarify agency and division responsibilities. Clear roles will be essential to ensure the state is efficiently building capacity in LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for children with disabilities.</p>

Table 2.2

FISCAL	
Strengths	Opportunities
<p>LDOE aligns funding with state goals and initiatives.</p> <p>LDOE can identify new sources of funding when an initiative or plan needs financial assistance.</p>	<p>LDOE could braid funding from various sources to ensure the success of new initiatives like the SSIP.</p> <p>LDOE has rich sources of data and planning guides for schools and administrators, including LEA financial dashboards that present information on how the LEA allocates their funds annually. LDOE could use these to support decision making on funding priorities.</p>

Table 2.3

QUALITY STANDARDS	
Strengths	Opportunities
Louisiana adopted the Common Core State Standards, which are fundamental descriptions of reading, writing, and math skills that focus on the ability to think independently. LDOE believes our state must level the playing field for our students so they can compete in our ever changing global economy. CCSS holds students across the country to the same high bar and allows Louisiana students to see how they perform compared to students	<p>LDOE could consider developing an accessibility guide to assist educators with differentiating the state standards. This would provide additional supports to educators in the classroom as they work to implement the standards for students with disabilities, particularly as it relates to our SiMR, literacy.</p> <p>LDOE could work with stakeholders, including</p>

across America.  LDOE has an extensive, active and ongoing communication with LEA leaders regarding the state standards, the aligned statewide assessments, and related resources.	higher education to identify and then to address needs and gaps in implementation of the state standards, such as teacher preparation.
--	--

Table 2.4

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT / TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	
Strengths	Opportunities
In recent years, LDOE transition to a network structure that now serves as the primary support ed vehicle for LEAs as they implement new teacher evaluation systems and standards. LEAs fall into one of five networks statewide that receive assistance in translating educational priorities into outcomes for students.  LDOE has deployed the system for teacher and student advancement (TAP) -- a comprehensive school-reform program that provides powerful opportunities for career advancement, professional growth, performance evaluation, and competitive compensation – at 80 schools serving approximately 2,800 teachers and 38,000 students across Louisiana.	LDOE could research ways to increase collaboration with the academic content office, to include more special education content in the Teacher Leader program. When done successfully, LDOE could leverage a successful professional development program for the SSIP’s student-focused outcomes.  LDOE could investigate potentially merging the parent toolkit and access guide to provide up to date resources to educators and parents.  LDOE could explore utilizing IDEA set-aside funds for the areas targeted for development in the SSIP.

Table 2.5

DATA	
Strengths	Opportunities
LDOE has strict well-vetted business rules for gathering, extracting, analyzing and reporting on data. These business rules minimize concerns with data quality and allow LDOE to make sound data-driven decisions and report reliable information to stakeholders.  LDOE has a wealth of data from the state level, LEA level, school level and student level. These data affords the organization with many opportunities to shape policy and content decisions for students with disabilities.	LDOE is in the process of developing and deploying a cohesive plan for data communications. LDOE is thinking critically about the type of data LEAs receive, how it is communicated / packaged, and how to provide technical assistance so LEAs are empowered to use the data to make local education decisions. Special education data including data related to the SPP/APR are already woven into this approach and LDOE can consider opportunities to further utilize this initiative with regards to the SSIP.  LDOE has a wealth of special education data and

LDOE consistently transmits data to LEAs throughout the state.	<p>the special education policy office could consider opportunities to train LEAs to use the data to drive decisions for students with disabilities. There are opportunities to leverage work being done by existing organizations such as LaSPDG.</p> <p>LDOE can use upcoming phases of the SSIP as an opportunity to proactively analyze data for development outside of accountability and monitoring.</p>
--	--

Table 2.6

ACCOUNTABILITY / MONITORING	
Strengths	Opportunities
<p>LDOE is restructuring the IDEA monitoring process that will be piloted throughout Louisiana in the FY 2015-2016 school year. The monitoring process builds on the work done and the data gathered for the SPP/APR.</p> <p>LDOE's accountability program recognizes schools and administrators not just for overall proficiency, but also for growth. LDOE awards "points" to schools/administrators who demonstrate growth in non-proficient student groups, which can include students with disabilities.</p> <p>LDOE's accountability system provides school-level data through the School Report Cards, including school performance scores. Each school public report card provides a letter grade correlating to a school performance score and it includes general information about student performance on assessments and other academic indicators. These tools provide internal decision making opportunities and public accountability for results.</p>	<p>LDOE can further investigate opportunities to use the wealth of data that the Department gathers through annual monitoring activities to drive decisions.</p> <p>There are opportunities for the special education policy office and the IDEA monitoring office to collaborate on ways to incorporate the SSIP SiMR in monitoring to put added emphasis on our child-focused outcomes.</p>

*2D - The identification of current State-level improvement plans and initiatives, including special and general education improvement plans and initiatives and the extent to which they are aligned, and how they are, or could be, integrated with the SSIP.*

## **STRIVING READERS COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY**

The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) grant is a federal grant aimed at improving the reading and writing skills of students. The SRCL grant was awarded to LDOE to create a comprehensive literacy program to advance literacy skills—including pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing—for students from birth through grade 12, including limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities. The SRCL Grant is built on Louisiana’s Comprehensive Literacy Plan. LDOE, in turn, awarded SRCL grants through a competitive application process to LEAs that developed a comprehensive literacy program. Louisiana is one of only six states selected to benefit from the federal grant, and it is currently in place in 27 LEAs, including three charter schools.

Each LEA developed a plan to: 1) improve school readiness and success from birth to grade 12 in the area of language and literacy development for disadvantaged students, 2) enable data-based decision-making to improve instructional practices, policies, and outcomes for all students, ensuring disadvantaged students receive maximum benefits, and 3) use technology to address student learning challenges, to increase student engagement and achievement, and to increase teacher effectiveness, ensuring the needs of disadvantaged populations are particularly addressed.

For the purposes of the SSIP, LDOE identified the SRCL initiative because it closely aligns with three components of Louisiana’s SiMR: 1) it targets struggling readers, including students with disabilities, 2) includes students in grades three through five, and 3) is focused on literacy proficiency. LDOE reviewed this program and believes that the SRCL program can be closely aligned with the SSIP. Since LEAs receiving SRCL grants self-selected through the competitive application process, LDOE considered these LEAs in the SSIP selection process. We believe that the focus on literacy and commitment to students with disabilities will allow LDOE to support improvement and build capacity in LEAs in the early stages of SSIP implementation.

## **TEACHER LEADERS**

In the 2014-2015 school year, Louisiana’s Teacher Leader program supported a cohort of 4,000 LEA-selected staff that received training and ongoing support from LDOE, and served as the chief liaisons between the LDOE and the School Implementation Teams. Next year, the cohort will grow to 5,000 Teacher Leaders. Through this avenue of professional development, LDOE targets Teacher Leaders who can translate the content they learn at Teacher Leader summits / trainings into practicable outcomes that are tailored to the specific needs of their LEA’s population.

The Teacher Leader program provides LDOE with a unique opportunity to leverage an existing professional development system to build capacity with our LEAs around the SiMR. As part of this infrastructure analysis, LDOE began to explore ways to integrate additional special education content and include additional special education professionals in the Teacher Leaders program. Among its numerous initiatives, the Teacher Leader program has developed English language arts content institutes from grade one through grade eight. This directly aligns with LDOE's SiMR, and there is potential to further align the SSIP with the Teacher Leader program to improve student-level outcomes across the state. One of the immediate outcomes of the SSIP process has been identifying Teacher Leaders as a leverage point where LDOE can apply a successful existing program, with its infrastructure, network and resources to the new SSIP initiative.

### **LITERACY DESIGN COLLABORATIVE**

The literacy design collaborative (LDC) offers educators an instructional design system for developing students' literacy skills to prepare them for the demands of college and career. LDC empowers teachers to build students' literacy skills and understanding of science, history, literature, and other important academic content through meaningful reading and writing assignments that are aligned to College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS). The basic LDC building block is a module—two to four weeks of instruction comprising a “teaching task,” standards, “mini-tasks,” and other instructional elements described below. Using LDC's Framework and tools, teachers develop a literacy-rich task and design instruction to help students complete that task. LDC puts educators in the lead by providing a common framework upon which teachers can individually or collaboratively build literacy-saturated curricula within their content area and for their focus topics.

LDOE identified this general education initiative because LDOE believes that it could impact the capacity of local programs and schools to implement strategies that lead to a measurable improvement in the SiMR. This is considered a general education initiative, because it is not targeted at the special education population, but any special education student in an LDC classroom will receive this program's benefits. LDC is currently being implemented in about 30 LEAs. There is potential to leverage the success of this program, because it aligns to elements of our SiMR. While the LDC program started in grades six through twelve, it has recently expanded to grades three through five. Additionally, it is directly targeting improved literacy results, which is the goal of LDOE's SiMR. For these reasons, LDOE considered LDC LEAs in the SSIP cohortselection process.

### **LOUISIANA'S STATE PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT GRANT**

Louisiana's State Personnel Development Grant (LaSPDG) provides professional development support to a cohort of LEAs serving special education students throughout the state. The grant's specific objectives include, 1) increasing the use and effectiveness of data-based decision-making, 2) increasing the effectiveness of meaningful school-family partnerships, 3) increasing the effectiveness of inclusive practices, and 4) increasing the use and effectiveness of culturally responsive practices.

LDOE identified this special education program since LaSPDG's existing structure and relationships with LEAs can be leveraged as a key method to build LEA capacity around the SiMR. As part of the

infrastructure analysis, LDOE started to explore ways to collaborate with LaSPDG, particularly around their work with improving data-driven decision-making at LEAs. Data-driven decision-making is on the coherent improvement strategies that LDOE is adopting to drive improvements in literacy outcomes for the SSIP. Therefore, LDOE is exploring opportunities to align the SSIP effort with LaSPDG's data-driven decision-making model, and their professional development structure. LDOE has already begun this work by considering LEAs in the current LaSPDG cohort for inclusion in the SSIP. Through this, LDOE can leverage an existing state program, capitalizing on the existing momentum begin the SSIP's implementation.

*2E - A list of representatives who were involved in the development of Phase I and will be involved in the development and implementation of Phase II of the SSIP.*

Below is a list of representatives who were involved in the development of Phase I of the SSIP. At this time, LDOE is in the process of determining in what capacity these representatives will be involved in the development and implementation of Phase II of the SSIP.

The internal infrastructure group includes representatives from relevant LDOE offices / divisions who provided active input into the LDOE's infrastructure analysis. In addition to building internal awareness of this important work, these internal stakeholders may be involved future SSIP work at various points.

*Table 2.7*

INTERNAL INFRASTRUCTURE GROUP	
Representative	LDOE Division / Office
Tikeria Chesley	Consolidated Monitoring
Bridget Devlin	Policy and Governmental Affairs
Sheila Guidry	Grants Management
Nancy Hicks	Special Education Policy
Melissa Manierio	Academic Content
Megan Miron	Assessment and Accountability
Patsy Palmer	Early Childhood
Kristi-Jo Preston	Special Education Policy
Angela Randall	IDEA Monitoring
Bethany Robichaux	District Support
Keita Rone Wilson	Special Education Policy
Kahree Wahid	Head Start Collaboration
Patrick Walsh	Monitoring
Jamie Wong	Special Education Policy

The SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group included individuals representing various regions, constituencies, and interests throughout the state. LDOE thoughtfully selected this group to ensure parents, administrators, special education and general education professionals, teachers, and higher education, and advocacy organizations were represented in this important work. This group met for three half day sessions, including one focused on the infrastructure analysis.

Table 2.8

SSIP EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT GROUP	
Representative	Organization
Monica Ballay	Louisiana State Personnel Development Grant
Andrea Bond	Charter School - Collegiate Academy
Brenda Cosse	Developmental Disabilities Council / Parent
Alan Coulter	LSU Human Development Center
Nancy Hicks	Louisiana Department of Education
Ashley McReynolds	Parent
Paul Mooney	LSU Special Education Department/ SEAP
Kristi-Jo Preston	Louisiana Department of Education
Jody Purvis	Livingston Parish Schools / General Education
Susan Vaughn	Ascension Parish Schools / SEAP
Regina Washington	Caddo Parish Schools
Keita Rone Wilson	Louisiana Department of Education
Jamie Wong	Louisiana Department of Education

LDOE assembled a group internal reading / literacy specialists to inform the identification, review and potential inclusion of various state reading / literacy initiatives in the SSIP. These individuals provided literacy content expertise to Phase I. While their exact role has not been defined, they will inform the implementation of the SSIP during Phase II.

Table 2.9

READING/LITERACY SPECIALIST MEETINGS	
Representative	LDOE Division / Office
Melissa Maniero	Academic Content
Kristi-Jo Preston	Special Education Policy
Jill Slack	Academic Content
Whitney Whealdon	Academic Content
Jamie Wong	Special Education Policy

LDOE updated the Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) members and the public throughout the development of the SSIP. LDOE considered feedback, both from panel members and from the public through public comment opportunities, during the meetings that were then considered as the SSIP progressed. On March 27, 2015 the panel formally endorsed the SSIP without opposition.

Table 2.10

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY PANEL	
Panel Member	Panel Role
Patsy White	Panel Co-Chair
Holly Boffy	Panel Co-Chair
Andrea Bond	Representative of a public charter school
Reginald Browhow	Parent
Bonnie Buckelew	Special Education Supervisor / Parent
Toni Buxton	Representative from the state child welfare agency responsible for foster care (DCFS)
Cindy Champagne	Parent
Lynette Fontenot	Individual with disability
Kimberlee Gazzolo	Representative of a private school
Rebecca Hanberry	Representative of a vocational, community, or business organization concerned with the provision of transition services to children with disabilities
Mark Martin	Representative of a state agency involved in financing or delivery of services to children with disabilities
Paul Mooney	Representative of an institution of higher education that prepares special education and related services personnel
Rana Ottallah	Parent
Melvin Porter	Parent
Trenisha Stanislaas	Representative from the Office of Juvenile Justice
Amanda Trahan	Teacher / Parent
April Taylor	Teacher
Susan Vaughn	Special Education Supervisor
Pittre Walker	An official who carries out activities under subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and a parent of a child with a disability
Bridget Devlin & Jamie Wong	LDOE Staff Coordinators

## *2F - A description of stakeholder involvement in the analysis of the State's infrastructure.*

LDOE has meaningfully engaged and solicited input from diverse stakeholders in the activities of Phase 1 SSIP development. Louisiana believes that the successful implementation of the SSIP relies on the input of both internal and external stakeholders. For this reason, LDOE sought extensive, meaningful and iterative input in the development of the SSIP. As can be noted throughout this section and the data analysis section, as well as subsequent section, the Stakeholder Engagement Group, the SEAP, and the internal stakeholders were integral in supporting the SSIP work. The specific means of involving and soliciting input from the stakeholders included face-to-face meetings and written communications, including summaries of meetings.



## *2G – Summary: Louisiana’s infrastructure analysis process and the SiMR*

Louisiana’s infrastructure analysis process resulted in a thorough review of LDOE’s organizational structure and literacy-based content initiatives. This analysis identified strengths in LDOE’s organizational structure that naturally lend themselves to the type of meaningful cross collaboration that is necessary to successfully improve student-focused outcomes. In the course of focused discussions with internal and external stakeholders, LDOE also identified opportunities to improve LDOE’s approach to increasing results driven accountability and thereby improving the student-focused outcome of increased literacy proficiency. In addition, LDOE was able to identify existing literacy initiatives that we may be able to leverage during the next phases of the SSIP. The outcome of the infrastructure analysis process directly impacted Louisiana’s identification of literacy as a SiMR.

## Component #3: State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR)

### *3A – Louisiana has a SiMR and the SiMR is aligned to an SPP/APR indicator or a component of an SPP/APR indicator.*

Louisiana's SiMR is to increase ELA proficiency (basic and above) rates on statewide assessments for students with disabilities in third through fifth grades, in nine LEAs across the state. Louisiana's selected SiMR is closely aligned with SPP/APR Indicator 3C, which reports the proficiency rate on statewide assessments for students with IEPs against grade level, modified and alternative achievement standards. However, there are key differences that distinguish Louisiana's SiMR from the SPP/APR definition of proficiency on statewide assessments. For example,

- Louisiana's SiMR is focusing specifically on increasing literacy proficiency as assessed through proficiency rates on statewide ELA assessments, while the SPP/APR reports proficiency rates for both the ELA and mathematics assessments.
- Louisiana's SiMR is focusing on grades three through five, a subset of the SPP/APR reporting of grades three through eight, and ten.
- Louisiana's SiMR is focusing on nine LEAs throughout the state that represent a mix of geographic locations, student populations, and other demographic factors.

Louisiana's SiMR is closely aligned to a key SPP/APR indicator, but does not replicate the information. Louisiana believes the targeted focus of the SiMR will enable the state to more closely monitor the fidelity of implementation and effectiveness of evidence-based practices in improving this outcome.

### *3B - The SiMR is clearly based on the data and state infrastructure analyses.*

LDOE used multiple analyses (data, infrastructure, etc.) and information (quantitative, qualitative) to develop the SiMR. While the information below is presented in a linear manner, it must be noted that these phases were not conducted in isolation, the process was continuous and fluid, and many aspects of one phase influenced or occurred during parts of another.

#### *3B.1 - The SiMR is based on the data and infrastructure analyses.*

LDOE engaged in a thorough, multi-phased data analysis process to systematically review factors impacting child-centered outcomes in order to identify a SiMR (see also the data analysis section). LDOE explored the data, including root causes of student outcomes, with significant input from internal and external stakeholders. As noted in the data analysis section, LDOE looked at each of the child or student-focused SPP/APR indicators – graduation rate, dropout rate, proficiency rates on statewide assessments, and post-school outcomes. Through these examinations and analyses, it became apparent that to affect graduation, dropout rate, and successful post-school outcomes, foundational work must begin much earlier. That narrowed consideration of the SiMR to proficiency rates of students with disabilities on statewide assessments. Several activities took place simultaneously to support the specific identification of the SiMR. These activities included meeting with internal and external stakeholders to examine data from various perspectives, meeting with LDOE program leads for initiatives and grant programs being

implemented in the state, and using the data and infrastructure analyses results to consider the capacity of LDOE to support LEAs in improvement strategies.

Louisiana's infrastructure analysis (see also the infrastructure analysis section) focused on six components of state-level infrastructure: 1) governance, 2) fiscal, 3) quality standards, 4) professional development/technical assistance, 5) accountability/monitoring, and 6) data. LDOE and stakeholders initially looked broadly at the LDOE infrastructure. Once the area of focus of the SiMR was identified with stakeholders, the discussion centered on the state's ability to support and build capacity in LEAs to improve literacy proficiency rates for students with disabilities. Louisiana identified a number of strengths and opportunities in each of the six component areas; a few of the opportunities closely connected to the SiMR are noted below:

- Louisiana identified opportunities to leverage funds and utilize innovative funding approaches to build capacity and implement evidence-based practices related to the SiMR.
- Louisiana identified specific collaborative opportunities within LDOE to integrate special education knowledge and expertise into existing initiatives that are already targeted at SiMR related content, but had been previously focused on a general education audience.
- Louisiana identified partners (higher education, LaSPDG, etc.) that have existing relationships with LDOE that can be leveraged to build the capacity of LEAs using evidence-based practices related to the SiMR.

These data and infrastructure activities lead to a focus on three elements as related to the SiMR: content, grade range, and LEA selection.

- **Content Focus.** LDOE conducted an in-depth data analysis process to identify English language arts or literacy as the SiMR's content focus area. Louisiana began to focus on literacy after analyzing data showing that student exit outcomes (e.g. graduation, dropout rate, etc.) were correlated to ELA proficiency rates on statewide assessments as early as fourth grade. Louisiana concluded that the path to graduation or dropping out was laid years earlier, and the state's ability to address this long-term outcome had to start where the path was first laid. LDOE presented literacy as the tentative focus area during an internal stakeholder meeting and an SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group session, and stakeholders agreed that literacy was the most logical focus for the state.
- **Grade Range.** During the data analysis process, LDOE analyzed proficiency rates on statewide assessments for all tested grades: three through eight and ten. Once Louisiana began to focus on literacy, and identified the correlation between fourth grade test results and student outcomes in high school, we began a more detailed analysis of test results for the late elementary and middle school years. At the request of the external stakeholders, LDOE conducted a cohort analysis where LDOE identified a group of students with disabilities from the most recent sixth grade class. LDOE then compiled the historical testing information for this cohort for grades three through six. This allowed Louisiana to analyze testing trends for a discreet group of students over time. It also provided a view of how that specific cohort of students performed on the statewide ELA assessments from year to year. The cohort data

showed the same trend Louisiana saw with the statewide data, low proficiency rates at third grade, followed by an appreciable increase in proficiency rates in fourth grade, followed by a noticeable decrease at fifth grade that then remained at about the same level in sixth grade. After discussion with stakeholders, LDOE narrowed the range of grades to grades three through five. This emphasized the importance of literacy proficiency even in grades (third and fifth) where the test score was not used for purposes of promotion and retention. Louisiana built consensus around these grades, because of the proficiency trends over this time.

- **LEA Selection.** Once the grade range was selected, LDOE again conducted several activities simultaneously, including the infrastructure analysis. This analysis provided the opportunity to thoroughly explore current state initiatives related to literacy. LDOE then used these initiatives as an initial means of compiling a list of LEAs for inclusion in the SiMR cohort. LDOE then extracted and analyzed LEA-level testing data over grades three, four, and five across these LEAs to identify potential LEAs for inclusion in the SiMR. From an initial list of 17 LEAs, Louisiana reviewed demographic information and examined trends in proficiency rates across grades. LDOE also met again with the leads for the various initiatives to learn more about the capacity and potential commitment of these 17 LEAs. The last step was to capture geographic diversity with a variety of LEAs with small, medium and large total student populations. LDOE also wanted to include LEAs that had the identified proficiency trends – lower proficiency rates at third and fifth grade, as well as LEAs whose assessment data followed different patterns.

Louisiana utilized data-driven decision-making to identify the state’s SiMR. The meticulous data analysis process along with a thorough infrastructure analysis resulted in a SiMR that is rigorous and measurable, represents Louisiana’s diverse student population, and has gained the consensus of key stakeholders.

### *3B.2 - The SiMR is aligned with current agency initiatives or priorities.*

LDOE identified four current state programs / initiatives 1) Louisiana State Professional Development Grant (LaSPDG), 2) Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant (SRCL), 3) Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC), and 4) Teacher Leaders that emphasize access to the general education curriculum and incorporate evidence-based literacy practices. The special education policy office held discussions with these program leads which further reinforced the selection of a literacy-focused SiMR, and identified potential LEAs to include in the SSIP cohort. Each of these programs / initiatives has begun their implementation phase; each had cohorts established and operating by the 2012-2013 school year. LDOE used these programs / initiatives to identify a subset of LEAs that were implementing two or three of these programs / initiatives.

LDOE purposefully identified a SiMR that aligned with current agency initiatives and priorities in order to maximize the effect of the SSIP. LDOE selected potential literacy programs based on the premise that evidence-based practices should drive which improvement strategies are implemented. The special education policy office explored how LDOE could leverage these in the selected LEAs with content experts. Some of these evidence-based strategies include extended times for literacy, intensive writing at all grade levels, explicit instruction, data-driven decision-making, and effective questioning. These evidence-based practices are directly aligned with the SiMR, as there is strong evidence of the efficacy of

these practices on literacy outcomes. LDOE expects that these practices, when implemented with fidelity in typical school settings as part of a coherent set of improvement strategies, will produce measurable, sustained benefits to students with disabilities in the SSIP cohort.

### *3B.3 - The State engaged in a systematic process to select the SiMR.*

Louisiana engaged in a thorough, systematic months-long process to select the SiMR. In addition to the descriptions in this section, portions of this process are described in the data and infrastructure analysis sections—components one and two—earlier in the document. The LDOE used a systematic process that allowed for sequencing activities while circling back to critical discussions even as forward momentum was maintained. Specific to the SiMR, LDOE’s process can be generalized into two phases—developing a draft SiMR and finalizing the SiMR.

**Developing the SiMR.** LDOE drafted a SiMR by engaging in a thoughtful, comprehensive process to analyze data, review infrastructure and other factors. Additionally LDOE:

- Assembled an initial group, including the special education policy office and data team officials, to identify the criteria for the analysis that would lead to a SiMR. These individuals remained involved throughout the process in order to provide continuity, attending additional data review sessions, and internal and external stakeholder meetings.
- Engaged in a multi-phased, iterative, detailed data analysis to identify factors impacting student achievement, which lead Louisiana to identify literacy proficiency as the content focus for the SiMR.
- Sought internal and external stakeholder feedback throughout the data and infrastructure analyses to gather additional qualitative evidence, shape additional analyses, and gain consensus around the ultimate SiMR. For example, LDOE held three sessions with the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group in order to identify organizational strengths and opportunities around the tentative SiMR.

**Finalizing the SiMR.** LDOE finalized the SiMR using information gathered during the data analysis process, multiple infrastructure analysis sessions, with continuous feedback from internal and external stakeholders. During this process LDOE:

- Used multiple data points: qualitative information from other offices and divisions, results of the data analysis, and existing programs and initiatives to select the LEAs.
- Identified LEAs currently connected with state programs using evidence-based practices. Selected a subset of these LEAs to include in the SSIP cohort.
- Examined patterns within the SSIP cohort during the data analysis, focusing on the trends in proficiency rates from grades three through six. We noted a pattern: a sharp increase in ELA proficiency rates from grade three to four, and then a marked decline in grade five that was mostly unchanged at grade six. Louisiana used this information to narrow the SiMR to grades three through five. Then Louisiana identified and included LEAs that did and did not fit the pattern in the SSIP cohort.

- Considered geographic distribution to ensure LEAs from the northern, southern, eastern and western parts of the state were including in the SSIP cohort. While a significant amount of the state's population is concentrated in the southeastern section of the state, Louisiana recognizes that in order to scale up capacity, geographic diversity is necessary.
- Considered student population, both special education and general education, including small, mid-sized and larger LEAs, as well as charter LEAs to ensure appropriate population variance.

### *3C - The SiMR is a child-level outcome in contrast to a process outcome.*

Louisiana's SiMR is a student-level outcome (increase ELA proficiency rates) as opposed to a process outcome (improve data collection techniques). As discussed in further detail below, LDOE believes the focus on student-level outcomes is critical to improve results for students with disabilities within the state. The SiMR initially focuses on an SSIP cohort (the nine LEAs selected to participate in the SSIP) in grades three through five. Using this approach, LDOE can focus on building momentum, and developing capacity in the SSIP cohort, with a sample size that is large enough to demonstrate results on a state-wide basis.

#### *3C.1 - Addressing the SiMR will have an impact on improving results for children with disabilities within the State.*

Louisiana's SiMR will increase ELA proficiency (basic and above) rates on statewide assessments for students with disabilities in third through fifth grades, in nine LEAs across the state. *Louisiana Believes* starts with the premise that all children can achieve high expectations and should be prepared for college or career. For this reason, Louisiana is focusing on literacy—a foundational skill necessary for success in all subjects and grades.

LDOE believes that implementing evidence-based interventions and practices can produce sizeable, sustained benefits that will improve results for students with disabilities in the state. By remaining focused on student proficiency in literacy, LDOE believes that we can increase ELA proficiency rates on statewide assessments from 34% (FFY 2013 baseline data) to 40% in FFY 2018. For these students, we believe that addressing the SiMR will impact, not only their proficiency scores in grades three through five, but will have a sustained effect on their performance over time. Ultimately, as the data analysis demonstrated, it should lead to improved graduation outcomes.

#### *3C.2 – An explanation of the State's decision to focus on a subset of districts and grades, and why this will improve results on a State-wide basis.*

Louisiana selected a SiMR that focuses on improving ELA proficiency (basic and above) results for a subset of LEAs. LDOE selected nine LEAs based on the premise that the narrowed focus appropriately balances LDOE's ability to build capacity amongst the LEAs while reaching a large enough sample size to ensure LDOE can identify improvement at the state level.

- The nine LEAs include eight traditional LEAs. This means that eight of 69 (12%) traditional LEAs are included in the SSIP cohort. The ninth LEA is a charter LEA.

- The LEAs are geographically dispersed throughout the state.
- The SSIP cohort represents 16% of all special education students in grades three through five throughout the state.
- The SiMR monitors performance for three (third through fifth) grade levels. SPP/APR Indicator 3C reports ELA proficiency rates for grade three through eight, and ten. The SiMR will therefore monitor three of seven grades. Focusing on these grades, also, means that subsequent grade level improvement is expected. This indicates that sustained improvement will be reflected in statewide assessment rates.

While nine LEAs will be included in the measure in the beginning of the SSIP's implementation, there is an expectation that the evidence-based improvement strategies and practices will be shared and expanded into additional LEAs. LDOE plans to explore strategies to scale up the SSIP to additional LEAs after the initial implementation phase is complete, and after PARCC assessment data has been collected and analyzed. LDOE can then measure further improvement in ELA proficiency (basic and above) rates on statewide assessments. Therefore improvement in the SiMR will ultimately be reflected in improvement on SPP/APR Indicator 3C.

### *3D - A description of stakeholder involvement in the selection of the SiMR.*

LDOE has meaningfully engaged with and solicited input from diverse stakeholders in the development of the SSIP. Louisiana believes that the successful implementation of the SSIP relies on the input of both internal and external stakeholders. For this reason, LDOE sought extensive, meaningful and iterative input in the development of the SSIP. In addition to the description here, stakeholder input is noted throughout this section, as well as in the data analysis and infrastructure analysis sections. In addition, please see Appendix A for a more detailed account of the stakeholder engagement process.

LDOE selected external stakeholders to participate in the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group who reflected a wide variety of constituency groups and geographic locations, balancing that with maintaining a size that would allow thoughtful and robust interactions. This group, with the same members throughout the SSIP development, meaningfully shaped all aspects of the SiMR, including the content focus, grade range, LEA selection, and targets. For example, the group requested a cohort analysis of ELA assessment results that helped to build consensus around targeting the SiMR at grades three through five. In addition, to maintain stakeholder engagement, LDOE provided the Stakeholder Group with a detailed written summary after each meeting and before the next to assure continued involvement during the process of identifying the SiMR and developing the SSIP.

LDOE partnered with internal stakeholders throughout the SSIP process, including design of the SiMR. LDOE's special education policy office collaborated with internal data experts, content experts, and other offices throughout the development of the SiMR. Internal stakeholders provided additional insights into data and infrastructure that LDOE used to finalize the SiMR. For example, LDOE's academic content office provided detailed information on reading and literacy initiatives throughout the state, including their evidence-based practices and the grades these initiatives targeted. LDOE used this information, to align the SiMR's grade range with successful state initiatives in order to maximize the SSIP's impact, including the LDOE's ability to build the capacity of LEAs.

The varied expertise, perspectives, and experiences of the internal and external stakeholders brought a higher level of rigor and heightened analysis to the SiMR selection. LDOE used their input and feedback, to finalize a SiMR that reflected Louisiana's priorities and student-focused values.

*3E – Louisiana provided baseline data and targets that are measurable and rigorous (expressed as percentages) for each of the five years from FFY 2014 through FFY 2018, with the FFY 2018 target reflecting measurable improvement over the FFY 2013 baseline data.*

In past SPPs / APRs, LDOE identified programs that were intended to improve outcomes related to proficiency, but they were generalized to both mathematics and ELA, and did not clearly link improvements to specific outcomes. In the SSIP, LDOE intends to build and improve upon these, by identifying key evidence-based practices, linking them to effective programs, and using those interventions to target measurable improvements in the SSIP cohort.

LDOE identified baseline data and targets that are both measurable and rigorous, starting with identifying baseline data for FFY 2013, and then establishing targets from FFY 2014 -2018. LDOE will measure improvement in ELA proficiency (basic and above) rates on statewide assessments for students with disabilities in third through fifth grades, in nine LEAs across the state.

It is important to note that beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, students will take the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, based on the Common Core State Standards. This new assessment will require future standard setting and establishment of targets and at least two years of assessment data before the LDOE is able to predict trends. The baseline and targets established in the SSIP will require future revision.

LDOE ensured targets set a rigorous standard for improvement on ELA proficiency (basic and above) rates on statewide assessments in the SSIP cohort. Louisiana conducted a review of a multitude of factors that may impact progress towards potential targets including statewide historic performance, cohort historic performance, the achievement gap between students with disabilities and their general education peers, Indicator 3C SPP targets through FFY 2018, performance over the cohort grade range versus the SPP/APR grade range, proficiency distribution amongst cohort LEAs over time, and other factors. LDOE also sought input on targets from external stakeholders, and the tentative targets were adjusted based on their feedback.

LDOE worked with stakeholders to target a six percentage point increase over the five year period. This targets a two percentage point increase each year beginning in FFY 2016. Louisiana chose to maintain targets in the first two years at baseline level, since FFY 2014 is almost over and assessments have occurred. Further, LDOE will need time to install the improvement strategies in a coherent manner in the nine LEAs. The targets allows Louisiana to thoughtfully implement the SSIP, while maintaining high expectations for the ultimate SSIP outcome. Louisiana set ambitious but attainable targets through this process that will help guide the SSIP implementation in Phase II.



BASELINE DATA

*Table 3.1*

<b>FFY</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>Data</b>	34%

FFY 2014 – FFY 2018 TARGETS

*Table 3.2*

<b>FFY</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Target</b>	34%	34%	36%	38%	40%

## Component #4: Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies

### *4A - A description that demonstrates how the improvement strategies were selected and will lead to a measurable improvement in the State-identified result.*

LDOE believes that effective execution of the SSIP relies on the identification and implementation of evidence-based practices. Further, those practices can be categorized into three coherent improvements strategies: leadership development, data-drive decision-making, and professional development / technical assistance. These improvement strategies provide the basis for Louisiana's theory of action.

The data and infrastructure analyses aided LDOE in selecting improvement strategies that will lead to measurable improvement in the SiMR. Through rigorous data analysis, LDOE finalized a SiMR to improve literacy proficiency, because of the correlation between fourth grade ELA proficiency rates on statewide assessments with long term student outcomes, including graduation. The use of evidence-based practices, which are incorporated into Louisiana's coherent improvement strategies, have been tested and proven to improve literacy outcomes.

Louisiana used the infrastructure analysis to identify the agency's capacity to implement the coherent improvement strategies. For example, one of our improvement strategies, data-driven decision-making is closely aligned with the data component of the state's infrastructure analysis. During this analysis, Louisiana noted significant data strengths including LDOE's wealth of data from all levels: state, LEA, school, and student. These data afford the organization opportunities to shape literacy policy and curriculum decisions for students with disabilities. Data-driven decision-making is also a strategy of LaSPDG, one of the state's programs focused on improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

Louisiana also noted opportunities to train LEAs on ways to use the wealth of special education data that is available to drive decisions for students with disabilities. Doing this with fidelity will mean that LDOE successfully utilized the infrastructure analysis to identify key strengths and opportunities, linked them to the state's coherent improvement strategies and evidence-based practices, and executed the theory of action to achieve improvements in ELA proficiency rates on statewide assessments for students with disabilities in grades three through five.

### *4B - A description that demonstrates how the improvement strategies are sound, logical, and aligned.*

#### *4B.1 - Strategies are sound, logical, and aligned with the SiMR and lead to a measurable improvement in the State-identified result.*

Louisiana identified coherent improvement strategies that are sound, logical and aligned to the SiMR. This alignment is essential to implementing the theory of action, which will become Louisiana's testable hypothesis of whether implementing the improvement strategies and evidence-based practices results

in measurable improvements in ELA proficiency rates on statewide assessments. The coherent improvement strategies can be grouped into three categories: leadership development, data-driven decision-making, and professional development / technical assistance.

### **Leadership Development**

Louisiana recognizes the critical role that leaders play at all levels—state, district, school, and advocacy—to execute the evidence-based practices that will lead to measurable improvements in the SiMR. Research indicates that strong leadership development such as coaching improves the extent to which teachers accurately implement evidence-based practices, which can lead to improvements in student achievement<sup>7</sup>. Additionally, to ensure the efficacy of leadership at all levels, Louisiana noted the critical role of accountability in leadership. Leaders who set and maintain high expectations, and create a shared sense of responsibility for *all* students, set a climate of accountability for the performance of students with disabilities. For these reasons, Louisiana understands that effective leadership plays a critical role in enacting systemic change.

### **Data-driven Decision-making**

LDOE relies on data-based decision-making to guide a range of decisions to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. Research shows that sound data-based decision-making involves analyzing multiple types of data to yield information that becomes actionable knowledge that educators use to make decisions—using data that informs, identifies, clarifies, and/ or results in specific actions<sup>8</sup>. During SSIP Phase II, the agency will continue to use this practice by identifying data-based models for decision-making at the state, LEA, school, classroom and student level. Louisiana recognizes that in order to drive sustained improvements in literacy proficiency for students with disabilities, data analysis must be embedded on a continuous basis, resulting in differentiated decisions to support students' individual needs. Further, data-based decision-making must rely on models that use a variety of high-quality accessible data collected at multiple points in time to build staff capacity that ultimately leads to educators having the flexibility to alter instruction<sup>9</sup>. To that end, Louisiana will identify and / or develop a protocol that allows LEAs to disaggregate and analyze data on student achievement. When LEAs are able to effectively analyze students' data, they are positioned to make informed actionable instructional decisions focusing on improving literacy proficiency.

### **Professional Development / Technical Assistance**

LDOE believes that professional development and technical assistance play complementary and essential roles in implementing the SSIP. LDOE must develop its own capacity—both internally and externally—to deliver resources to district leaders and ensure they have the knowledge and skills to

---

<sup>7</sup> Kretlow, Allison G., & Bartholomew, Christina C., (2010) Using Coaching to Improve the Fidelity of Evidence-Based Practices: A Review of Studies. Harrisonburg, VA. Accessed from: <http://tes.sagepub.com/content/early/2010/08/26/0888406410371643.abstract>

<sup>8</sup> Marsh, J., Pane, J., & Hamilton, L. (2006). Making sense of data-driven decision making in education: Evidence from recent RAND research. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, p.1-3. Accessed from: [http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional\\_papers/OP170.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP170.html)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.8-9

then develop their own staff. LDOE has already begun to explore one avenue, Louisiana's successful Teacher Leader program, which brings together exceptional educators from across the state for professional development sessions that they can then put into practice in their own districts. If this is coupled with job-embedded professional development to develop literacy related evidence-based practices such as intensive writing and effective questioning, then Louisiana's educators will have the knowledge and skills needed to enact positive improvements in the classroom. In this way, LDOE can build capacity at all levels, with the goal of improving ELA proficiency rates on statewide assessments.

#### *4B.2 - Current State initiatives were considered in developing the improvement strategies.*

In past SPPs/APRs, LDOE identified state programs and initiatives that were intended to improve outcomes related to proficiency, but they were generalized to both mathematics and ELA, and did not link improvements to specific outcomes. In the SSIP, LDOE intends to build and improve upon these, by identifying key evidence-based practices, linking them to effective programs, and using those interventions to target measurable improvements in literacy for the SSIP cohort.

LDOE intends to leverage current state initiatives with the coherent improvement strategies. In Louisiana's SSIP, one cannot operate without the other. As mentioned above, LDOE is already in the process of incorporating new special education content into the Teacher Leader program. Further, Louisiana plans to leverage LaSPDG to build the capacity of LEAs through professional development and targeted technical assistance in areas such as data-driven decision-making. The agency may also leverage programs that use evidence-based practices such as SRCL and the Literacy Design Collaborative in the SSIP cohort of LEAs.<sup>10</sup> These programs, considered as part of a larger coherent improvement strategy, will be key implementation drivers to improve literacy outcomes.

#### *4C - A description of how implementation of improvement strategies will address identified root causes for low performance and ultimately build capacity to achieve the SiMR for children with disabilities.*

##### *4C.1 - The likelihood that the improvement strategies will address the root causes leading to poor performance.*

LDOE selected coherent improvement strategies—leadership development, data-driven decision-making, professional development / technical assistance—to address identified root causes of low performance in literacy for grades three through five. LDOE will deploy these strategies, aligned with evidence-based practices, to build the capacity of LEAs. This method, which is outlined further in the theory of action, will ultimately drive improved ELA proficiency rates for students with disabilities on statewide assessments; first in the SSIP cohort, then in LEAs across the state—after initial

---

<sup>10</sup> For a more detailed description of these programs / initiatives, refer to Section 2D.

implementation—as LDOE scales up the use of the coherent improvement strategies. LDOE worked with internal and external stakeholders to identify actionable root causes such as:

1. A need for professional learning and development.
2. A need for additional resources to serve all students with disabilities including staffing levels, time to serve students, and effectively scheduling services.
3. A need to adjust the state’s evaluation system school administrators that may not adequately hold administrators accountable for proficiency in literacy for students with disabilities.
4. A need to improve teacher skills in data-driven instructional decision making.

These root causes are not only actionable, but directly correlated to Louisiana’s coherent improvement strategies and evidence-based practices: numbers one and two are directly tied to professional development / technical assistance, number three to leadership, and number four to data-driven decision-making. By implementing the coherent improvement strategies, Louisiana is addressing the root causes of low literacy performance. When these root cause are addressed, Louisiana expects to see a measurable improvement in literacy proficiency for students with disabilities.

#### *4C.2 - The extent to which the improvement strategies are based on an implementation framework and will support systemic change.*

Louisiana will ensure the improvement strategies are based on an implementation framework that will support systemic change. This framework is a continuous, nonlinear process that will involve multiple decisions, actions, and corrections. The process follows the stages of implementation science: exploration, installation, initial implementation and full implementation. Louisiana recognizes that reliable and sound measures of implementation components are essential to planning effective supports and interventions, assessing progress toward building capacity, and evaluating the efficacy of implementation. For this reason, LDOE plans to utilize the three implementation driver categories—competency, organization, and leadership—during each stage of implementation to ensure literacy outcomes for students with disabilities improve.

#### *4D - A description of how the selection of coherent improvement strategies include the strategies, identified through the data and State infrastructure analyses, that are needed to improve the State infrastructure and to support LEA implementation of evidence-based practices to improve the SiMR for children with disabilities.*

##### *4D.1 - The extent to which the improvement strategies will address the areas of need identified within and across systems at multiple levels (e.g. State, LEA, school) and build the capacity of the State, LEA, and school to improve the SiMR.*

LDOE will engage with implementation science to build capacity at the state, LEA, and school levels. Through this framework, LDOE will ensure implementation of the coherent improvement strategies (identified through data and state infrastructure analyses) at every level of education in the state. At the state-level, LDOE will use the coherent improvement strategies to identify evidence-based practices that

can be executed in literacy programs across the state. LDOE will also use the improvement strategies to identify and leverage partnerships with stakeholders such as LaSPDG to implement the SSIP. At the LEA-level, LEAs in the SSIP cohort will use the improvement strategies to consistently implement evidence-based practices across schools, programs, and classrooms. LDOE will work with LEAs to monitor and adjust the implementation. As the state progresses through the implementation phases, we will analyze the effectiveness of the coherent improvement strategies to increase capacity, adjust these strategies if necessary, and implement additional strategies within the implementation framework to improve student outcomes. Finally, individual schools, programs, and classrooms will build capacity through the coherent improvement strategies to implement evidence-based practices during literacy-related instruction with fidelity for students with disabilities. LDOE believes that the coherent improvement strategies will propel the implementation of the SSIP at all levels—state, LEA, school and classroom. The coherent improvement strategies will be tailored to the mission and purpose at each of those levels, and LDOE will continuously review and adjust the strategies to ensure that they remain targeted at improving the SiMR.

#### *4D.2 - The adequacy of the plan to implement and scale up the improvement strategies.*

LDOE will execute the implementation science framework, together with state-identified coherent improvement strategies that draw on evidence-based practices. After initial implementation strategies and evidence-based practices are tested, Louisiana will identify coherent improvement strategies to introduce to additional LEAs across the state. Louisiana believes that this process, which identifies specific steps LDOE will take along with the expected outcomes using a theory of action—which is essentially a testable hypothesis of the implementation steps and their effect on student-focused outcomes—will result in increased proficient performance of students with disabilities in literacy. Through continuous, rigorous analysis of progress and the implementation of improvement strategies and evidence-based practices, Louisiana will use implementation drivers to adjust practices, as necessary to ensure ELA proficiency rates improve. That sound model can then be scaled up to additional LEAs, and ultimately, the state-level.

#### *4E - A description of stakeholder involvement in the selection of coherent improvement strategies.*

LDOE must meaningfully engage and solicit input from diverse stakeholders in the development of all phases of the SSIP. Louisiana believes that the successful implementation of the SSIP relies on the input of both internal and external stakeholders. For this reason, LDOE sought extensive, meaningful and iterative input in the development of the SSIP. In addition to the description here, see Appendix A for a more detailed account of the stakeholder engagement process

LDOE selected the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group by capturing a diverse representation of constituency groups from across the state. The group itself was sized to allow thoughtful and robust interactions. The participants remained the same throughout the development of the SSIP. For a list of participants and their organizations, please see the infrastructure analysis section. The SSIP Stakeholder Group provided invaluable input that shaped the coherent improvement strategies. For example, the group conducted an analysis that identified key actionable root causes of literacy performance for

students with disabilities in grades three through five that were used to shape the coherent improvement strategies. LDOE ensured the coherent improvement strategies addressed the root causes to ensure LEAs targeted the true causes of low proficiency. The theory of action, described in the next section, will allow the state to test the interventions intended to address the root causes and adjust practices as necessary through the implementation plan.

Additionally, LDOE engaged internal stakeholders who represented LDOE's various office and divisions throughout the SSIP process, including the selection of coherent improvement strategies. LDOE's special education policy office worked in partnership with academic content experts who supplied information on reading and literacy initiatives throughout the state, including the evidence-based practices and the grades the initiatives targeted. LDOE used this information to ensure the state's coherent improvement strategies directly addressed the root causes of low levels of literacy proficiency in the grades identified in the SiMR.

Finally, stakeholders were asked to compare the identified strategies to factors in the *Hexagon Tool for Assessing Evidence-Based Practice Readiness of Fit*. They were asked to use questions for four of the six broad factors to assess whether the strategies addressed the Need – SiMR, Fit the current initiatives and priorities, were supported by the infrastructure analysis of Resources and Support, and were Evidence-based. LDOE considered the other two broad factors, 1) Readiness for Replication, and 2) Capacity to Implement, when making the final selection of the SSIP LEAs.

The varied expertise, perspectives, and experiences of the internal and external stakeholders brought a higher level of rigor and scrutiny to the formation of coherent improvement strategies. As a result of their input and feedback, LDOE had the foundation of information needed to develop the theory of action.

## Component #5: Theory of Action

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

See the end of this section for Louisiana's Theory of Action.

*5B - A description of how the graphic illustration shows the rationale of how implementing a coherent set of improvement strategies will lead to the achievement of improved results for children with disabilities.*

Louisiana's theory of action shows how implementing a coherent set of improvement strategies will increase the state's capacity, leading to meaningful improvements in literacy proficiency for students with disabilities. For the purposes of the SSIP, a theory of action is a testable hypothesis of the implementation steps and their effect on the student-focused outcome. Through continuous, rigorous analysis of the implementation, Louisiana will adjust practices and implementation drivers as necessary to ensure literacy proficiency improves. That theory of action, once tested and deemed sound, can then be scaled up to additional LEAs, and ultimately, the statewide.

Louisiana's theory of action starts with a set of coherent improvement strategies grouped into three categories: Leadership, Data-Driven Decision-Making, and Professional Development / Technical Assistance. These strategies, which were a direct outcome of the identified root causes of low performance on ELA assessments, influence the two actions (1 and 2 below) LDOE will take to implement the SSIP to improve literacy outcomes:

1. LDOE will effectively engage with internal and external partners. If LDOE does this with fidelity, then LDOE will be able to leverage resources to effectively deploy evidence-based practices; and
2. LDOE will provide differentiated technical assistance and evidence-based resources to build the capacity of LEAs. If LDOE does this with fidelity, then LEAs can implement evidence-based literacy practices with fidelity for students with disabilities.

If Louisiana is able to implement both of these actions with fidelity, then we expect to see short-term and long-term improvements for students with disabilities. In the short-term, Louisiana expects to see improvements in ELA proficiency rates on statewide assessments for students with disabilities in grades three through five in the SSIP cohort. ELA proficiency rates for students with disabilities in grades three through five in the SSIP cohort will increase from the baseline of 34% to 40% in FFY 2018.

In the long-term, Louisiana will apply lessons from the theory of action to improve ELA proficiency rates on statewide assessments for grades three through five to scale up the SSIP statewide. While the SSIP is focused on these grades, the impact of building a solid literacy foundation early on, will improve proficiency rates on middle school and high school assessments and the graduation rate. The size of the SSIP cohort is large enough to have an impact on the overall statewide ELA proficiency rates measured by statewide assessments. This means that Louisiana will see improvements in the SiMR, and the aligned



SPP/APR Indicator 3C. However, LDOE will explore opportunities to scale up the SSIP's impact beyond the SSIP cohort over time. By testing and adjusting the theory of action, LDOE will identify which evidence-based practices and implementation drivers lead to meaningful improvements in literacy outcomes. After the agency has an opportunity to review PARCC assessment results, then LDOE will evaluate methods to build additional capacity in order to expand those practices to additional LEAs throughout the state.

### *5C - The State describes involvement of multiple internal and external stakeholders in development of the Theory of Action.*

LDOE sought substantive input from diverse stakeholders in the development of all phases of the SSIP. Louisiana believes that the successful implementation of the SSIP relies on the input of both internal and external stakeholders. For this reason, LDOE sought extensive, meaningful and iterative input in the development of the SSIP. In addition to the description here, stakeholder input is noted throughout this section. For a more detailed account of the stakeholder engagement process, please see Appendix A.

LDOE selected external stakeholders to participate in the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group who reflected a wide variety of constituency groups and geographic locations, balancing that with maintaining a size that would allow thoughtful and robust interactions. This group, which remained consistent throughout the development of the SSIP, helped craft the theory of action's language. They provided specific feedback that shaped the rationale and the logic flow from the coherent improvement strategies to the ultimate outcome. They provided input at multiple points including the third Stakeholder Group session and through electronic communication after that session.

In addition, LDOE sought input on the theory of action from internal stakeholders. LDOE'S special education policy office worked in partnership with academic content experts, graphic illustrators and others, to create a clear rationale that adhered to the tenets of implementation science. During multiple internal meetings, LDOE officials drafted the logic progression of actions that answered the question, "If this action is implemented, then what will happen?" LDOE used these sessions shape and structure the theory of action strategies—including the theory of action's alignment with overall LDOE initiatives—that guided the rest of the theory of action.

The varied expertise, perspectives, and experiences of the internal and external stakeholders brought a higher level of meticulousness and care to the theory of action. As a result of their input and feedback, Louisiana is well positioned to begin Phase II of the SSIP.



## What We Know

- By 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, there is an achievement gap on statewide assessments between students with disabilities and their general education peers, and it increases over time.
- Literacy proficiency in 4<sup>th</sup> grade affects outcomes for students with disabilities through high school, including graduation. Students with disabilities who do not score proficient on 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA assessments are less likely to ultimately graduate from high school.
- In order to improve outcomes in high school, we need to begin with literacy achievement in the early grades.

### STRATEGIES

LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT

DATA-DRIVEN  
DECISION-MAKING

PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT  
AND  
TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE

### IF...

**A** LDOE effectively engages with internal and external partners...

**B** LDOE builds the capacity of LEAs by providing differentiated technical assistance and evidence-based resources...

If  
**A** + **B**  
are implemented  
with fidelity...

### THEN...

...LDOE will be able to leverage resources to effectively deploy evidence-based practices.

...LEAs can implement evidence-based practices with fidelity for students with disabilities in literacy.

...ELA proficiency rates for targeted LEAs for grades 3-5 will increase.

...ELA proficiency rates statewide for grades 3-5 will increase.

## Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Louisiana has developed a comprehensive vision for the future of education in our state—*Louisiana Believes*. The driving force of this vision is that every one of Louisiana’s children should be on track to a college degree or a professional career. This inclusive vision and Louisiana’s values are apparent in the development of the SSIP as we solicited and received broad, iterative, and meaningful stakeholder input to inform the entire plan including the data analysis, state infrastructure analysis, SiMR selection, coherent improvements strategies selection, and theory of action development.

### *SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group*

LDOE established the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group with participants who reflected a wide variety of constituency groups and geographic locations, balancing that with maintaining a size that would allow thoughtful and robust interactions. The SSIP Stakeholder Group met for three half-day sessions to aide LDOE in developing each component of the SSIP. In the first session, the SSIP Stakeholder Group addressed the data analysis, SiMR and root causes, and requested additional data for review. During the second session, the group reviewed additional data analyses, revisited the SiMR, discussed how to leverage current literacy strategies, and conducted an infrastructure analysis. At the final session, the group finalized the SiMR, discussed baseline and target data, revisited root causes of low proficiency and strategies to address root causes, and crafted the theory of action. In addition, to maintain stakeholder engagement, LDOE provided the Stakeholder Group with a detailed written summary after each meeting and before the next to assure continued involvement during the process. The group also had virtual interaction for final target setting and theory of action input. This SSIP Stakeholder Group provided indispensable input that shaped each component of the SSIP, including the data analysis, infrastructure analysis, SiMR, coherent improvement strategies, and theory of action.

### *Internal Stakeholder Engagement*

LDOE involved internal stakeholders representing LDOE’s various offices and divisions throughout the SSIP process. LDOE is structured by work flow, not by program area. Therefore, LDOE engages in cross-office collaboration in order to execute the agency’s mission, and the process to develop the SSIP was no different. The SSIP development was led by the special education policy office. The office established multiple long-term working relationships with various offices in order to effectively execute each phase of the SSIP. Internal stakeholders provided ongoing, iterative feedback that was used to shape Phase 1 of the SSIP. For example, during the data and infrastructure analyses, the special education policy office worked closely with the data management office. During the development of the SiMR, the coherent improvement strategies and the theory of action, the office collaborated closely with the academic content office. To visualize the rationale behind the SSIP, the office worked with internal graphic artists to develop the graphic of the theory of action based on internal and external stakeholder discussion and feedback. These and other ongoing collaborative efforts brought additional expertise and rigor to the SSIP’s development.

In addition to the fluid and continuous input throughout the SSIP’s development, the special education policy office engaged internal stakeholders in a half-day infrastructure analysis session. This session brought together over a dozen key internal experts to review all aspects of LDOE’s infrastructure. The

group provided keen insights into the strengths and opportunities at the state-level to enact positive change in literacy proficiency for students with disabilities. The effective cross-collaboration demonstrated in the infrastructure analysis was critical to the successful development of the SSIP. LDOE believes that this approach provides the type of interdisciplinary structure that the agency needs to implement the large scale systemic change that Louisiana's SSIP aims to achieve.

### *SEAP Engagement*

LDOE updated the SEAP on the SSIP as it progressed through each phase at four separate meetings in September 2014, November 2014, January 2015, and March 2015. At the March 2015 meeting, SEAP fully endorsed the SSIP without opposition. SEAP is a critical partner in delivering special education services in Louisiana. SEAP regularly offers advice, consultation, and recommendations to LDOE regarding matters concerning special education services, including the development of the SSIP. At each of the meetings mentioned above, LDOE presented information to SEAP on the progress and direction of the various components of the SSIP including the data analysis, coherent improvements strategies, theory of action, and targets. SEAP members asked clarifying questions and provided input and feedback at each of these meetings. SEAP's structure also allows for public comments, which were exercised at each of these meetings, providing further external stakeholder feedback. In addition, LDOE included SEAP members in the SSIP External Stakeholder Engagement Group to ensure SEAP's interests and priorities were incorporated through the SSIP develop process. LDOE weighed the perspectives offered during these meetings to further shape the development of the SSIP.