

**Arkansas Special Education State Advisory Council Report  
State Systemic Improvement Plan and State Personnel Development Grant  
May 2, 2018**

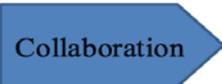
**Summary of Phase III Year 2 Submission**

In Phase III of the State Systemic Improvement Plan, the Arkansas Department of Education has implemented a plan for two coherent strategies to improve ADE’s infrastructure and increase the State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR). Arkansas’s SIMR is focused on improving the literacy achievement of students with disabilities in grades 3-5. Arkansas’s Theory of Action is illustrated in Exhibit I-17.10.

**Exhibit I-17.10: Arkansas’s Theory of Action**

Arkansas Theory of Action

Vision: To provide an innovative, comprehensive education system focused on outcomes that ensures every student in Arkansas is prepared to succeed in post-secondary education and careers.

Strands of Action	If ADE	Then	Then	Then
 <b>Collaboration</b>	... aligns and coordinates existing resources, systems and initiatives	... ADE will more effectively leverage resources to improve services for SWD ... ADE will increase the reach and impact of its work with LEAs	<b>... LEAs will have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide high quality, evidence based services and supports for SWD by accessing resources, PD, and TA from the ADE</b>	<b>...All children with disabilities will receive individualized services in the least restrictive environment and demonstrate improved educational results and functional outcomes</b>
 <b>PD and TA Development And Dissemination</b>	... creates a system of PD and TA that is aligned with other ADE Units and is differentiated based on LEAs needs ... designs and implements evidence based PD and TA for educators of SWD ... restructures Arkansas’s RTI model using evidence based PD and TA to implement a multi-tiered system of supports for behavior and academics	... ADE will increased its ability to support LEAs capacity to implement evidence based systems and practices  ... ADE will have aligned and effective resources available to support LEAs in differentiated and individualized evidence based practices for all SWD		

The two improvement strategies that are being implemented are

Strategy One: Create a system of support that is aligned with other ADE Units and is differentiated based on LEAs’ needs as evidenced by data.

Strategy Two: In collaboration with other ADE Units, restructure Arkansas’ Response to Intervention (RTI) model using evidence-based personnel development to implement a multi-tiered system of support for behavior and academics, with a focus on literacy.

Strategy One focuses on creating a coordinated system of support that outlines the necessary organizational structures for the way in which LEA services and supports will be identified, managed, and differentiated at the state-level. This Strategy focuses on building the

infrastructure needed for the ADE to be more effective in leveraging resources that will improve services for all students (including students with disabilities) and increasing the reach and impact of its work with LEAs. A Cross Unit ADE Team, including members from the Special Education, School Improvement, Title I, Curriculum Supports, and Assessment Units, along with the Divisions of Research and Technology and Educator Effectiveness, meets regularly to support the building and development of this system. This team's vision is to support the implementation of an aligned system within the ADE that is responsive to LEAs in personalizing student learning. The team goals are explicitly outlined in the ADE Strategic Plan, which provides a foundation for Arkansas's ESSA plan. Formal evaluation tools are being developed with the support of the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) to assess the knowledge and skills gained by the team through this process

Strategy Two focuses on RTI. This evidence-based practice is being implemented in SSIP targeted districts and intensively supported by the State through the RTI Arkansas initiative. The Arkansas SPDG was written to directly align and support the State Systemic Improvement Plan. The SPDG functions as the "boots on the ground" for the RTI implementation in targeted SSIP LEAs.

#### The SPDG Goals

- Develop statewide RTI resources and tools in the areas of behavior and literacy.
- Increase the capacity of regional and district teams to deliver high quality RTI professional development.
- Improve educators' ability to implement RTI with a focus on evidence-based literacy and behavior support practices.
- Improve literacy and behavior outcomes for all students, especially students with disabilities.

Within the RTI Arkansas framework, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) are used to support the reduction of incidences of bullying and harassment and student removal from classrooms. Through the support of the State Personnel Development Grant, the ADE is currently developing behavioral interventions and supports throughout the state. Students who need additional services will have access through developed school-based mental health service programs and the state Behavior Support Specialists. Online RTI Arkansas includes PBIS modules that have been built in partnership with Arkansas's Internet Delivered Education for Arkansas Schools (IDEAS). The online modules are designed to be facilitated in professional learning communities and/or LEA staff meetings and include a facilitation guide that can be used by educational specialists at regional education service cooperatives to reinforce PBIS work. PBIS and classroom management resources are also provided at <http://www.arkansased.gov/divisions/learning-services/curriculum-and-instruction/rti>.

ADE's Reading Initiative for Student Excellence (R.I.S.E) has been aligned with the RTI Arkansas literacy supports and is being leveraged to support RTI Arkansas in targeted SSIP Districts. R.I.S.E. establishes a culture of reading, promotes collaboration with community partners and institutions of higher education, and provides professional development for teachers on the science of reading.

In January of 2017, Arkansas launched the R.I.S.E. initiative with three main goals: 1) strengthening instruction; 2) creating community collaboration; and 3) building a culture of reading. To address the first goal, the R.I.S.E Academies model was created to provide specialized training in the science of reading, improve overall reading instruction in the classroom, and give support for implementation at the local level. Using Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) as the foundational basis, over eighty Arkansas literacy specialists received LETRS certification to serve as trainers for the R.I.S.E. R.I.S.E. Academy trainers also provided coaching support and reinforcement for implementation. The first cohort of R.I.S.E. Academies was held in the summer of 2017 and consisted of six face-to-face training days and online support for nearly one thousand K-2 teachers and administrators. As part of the training, teachers were exposed to screening and assessment tools to assist with early identification of struggling students as well as instructional strategies to use in the classroom that emphasize the science of reading and how students learn to read. As additional cohorts of K-2 teachers continue to be trained, the R.I.S.E. Academy for intermediate grades is being developed to address reading instruction in grades 3 - 6 and will roll out in the summer of 2018. R.I.S.E for grades 3 - 6 is focusing on the research-based work of David Kilpatrick, Mark Seidenberg, Louisa Moats, Mary Dahlgren, Isabel Beck, and Marilyn Adams.

### **Summary of Phase III State Level RTI Work**

A State Implementation Team has been formed that consists of SPDG Staff and ADE leadership across School Improvement, Curricular Supports and Special Education. The evaluation tool utilized by the State Implementation Team is the State Implementation of Scaling-up Evidence-based Practices Center (SISEP) State Capacity Assessment (SCA). Conducted in July 2017, the SCA was used to assess the State's capacity to support RTI statewide. As a result of that assessment, the State Implementation Team built an action plan around the systems alignment section of the assessment.

An RTI State Advisory Team has been developed to elicit stakeholder input on how to more effectively address statewide RTI Implementation including identifying strengths and barriers, guiding implementation, and supporting effective communication. The Advisory Team has provided feedback on implementation challenges, professional development, and guidance documents.

### **Summary of Phase III Regional Level RTI Work**

The State Implementation Team has supported RTI work at the regional level through the creation and dissemination of online RTI modules. A total of eight modules have been built. All modules are divided into short segments and include a facilitation guide accessible to regional Education Services Cooperatives (ESCs) for RTI work. The ESC content specialists have received training in how to facilitate the modules. For a full description of the modules see the Progress of Implementation Section.

### **Summary of Phase III District and School Level RTI Work**

The SPDG has partnered with a total of five targeted SSIP LEAs. Within these five LEAs, 26 elementary schools have been selected for RTI Implementation. The SPDG has contracted with the American Institutes of Research (AIR), Arkansas State University Center for Community

Engagement, and the Center for Exceptional Families to support the LEAs. The SPDG's partnership with the ADE School Improvement Unit has led to RTI becoming the school improvement model for these schools. A three-year professional development and coaching scope and sequence has been developed and is differentiated based on district and school needs, fit, readiness, capacity, and resources. The SPDG began the implementation process by forming a teaming infrastructure to support RTI work. The infrastructure includes District Implementation Teams and School Leadership Teams that have been formed and meet monthly. Additionally, district and school coaches have been identified and are currently being trained to support the RTI work in the areas of literacy and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The SPDG provides professional development and coaching in RTI infrastructure, a comprehensive literacy tiered system of support, and PBIS.

### **Evaluation Overview**

Arkansas has changed the growth measurement of the SIMR to align more closely with the ESSA growth model. This revision of the measurement has resulted in a new baseline and targets. In January 2018, Arkansas's ESSA plan was approved. The plan includes the use of an individual student growth model. The growth model does not set projection scores, rather prediction scores for each student. Arkansas's ESSA plan states the "student longitudinal growth model is a simple value-added model that conditions students' expected growth based on students' score histories" (Arkansas ESSA Plan, p. 44).

The SPDG utilizes a comprehensive evaluation system. District Implementation Teams complete the SISEP District Capacity Assessment (DCA) to measure their capacity to support RTI. The SPDG works with the teams to develop an action plan based on the DCA results and every action plan is tailored to that district's needs and timeline. The SPDG has developed district professional development modules that align with the DCA.

To assess the fidelity of their PBIS implementation, schools are using the PBIS - Tiered Fidelity Inventory (PBIS-TFI). Seventy-five percent of the schools that implemented the Tier One PBIS practices have reported a score of at least 70% or have increased their score by 10% from the previous year's assessment.

The Reading: Tiered Fidelity Inventory (R-TFI) tool is being used to help schools assess the implementation of a school-wide reading model. This tool was developed by the Michigan Department of Education's Integrated Behavior and Literacy Support Initiative (MIBLSI) and reviewed by national experts. This fidelity tool was first used in the 2017 – 2018 school year. Based on baseline data, all schools chose to focus on core literacy instruction (Tier One).

A research-based, national-normed literacy screener is used to identify students' literacy needs and to monitor their progress (e.g. DIBELS, STAR). Baseline scores for 2016 – 2017 End of Year results will be reported and compared to the 2017 – 2018 in the 2019 report. The goal is that schools will have at least a 6 percentage point increase on the grade level literacy benchmarks.

Office discipline referrals are being collected as a student outcome measure. There was a total of 6705 state reportable office discipline referral for the 2016 – 2017 in the 26 schools. The goal is

to reduce the referrals from year to year in order to increase the instructional time for teachers and students. The percentage of schools that had a reduction in office discipline referrals will be reported in the 2019 report.

Overall the activities that have taken place in Phase III include building an infrastructure and modeling implementation science frameworks that support sustainability and scale-up. Strategy One is focusing on building the infrastructure within the ADE to better serve LEAs. The goals of the Cross Unit Team are directly embedded in the ADE Strategic Plan and will complement the State's ESSA Plan. Strategy Two has utilized implementation science frameworks by intentionally building RTI state, district, and school implementation teams and stages of implementation. An RTI training and coaching scope and sequence is being utilized to support intensive RTI training at the district and school level in the areas of literacy and behavior. The State RTI Advisory Team has provided feedback on RTI modules and implementation processes that have helped the state create and disseminate RTI resources. The use of capacity and fidelity assessments and student outcomes data is providing the evaluation feedback needed to make changes in implementation supports.