

Arizona Part B

September 12–14, 2017

DMS Area: SSIP	DMS Designation: Intensive
<p>Background:</p> <p>On October 20, 2016, OSEP’s Differentiated Monitoring and Support (DMS) notice was issued to Arizona Department of Education (ADE). The DMS notice indicated OSEP’s level of engagement with the State across five areas: results, compliance, State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), correctional education, and fiscal. The level of engagement for the SSIP was intensive.</p> <p>Since its initial SSIP submission, ADE has experienced turnover and has made multiple changes to its plan resulting in implementation delays. The factors that led to ADE’s level of engagement included its ability to effectively engage stakeholders, identify evidence based practices, and develop and evaluation plan.</p>	
<p>Purpose of Monitoring Activity</p> <p>The purpose of OSEP’s on site visit was to provide ADE with technical assistance and support in the areas of stakeholder engagement, identification of evidence based practices, and the development of its evaluation plan.</p>	
<p>Visit Summary</p> <p>OSEP engaged with representatives of the State to discuss its SSIP and activities ADE has undertaken since its April 2017 submission. In addition, ADE provided further clarification regarding its revised State identified Measurable Results (SiMR), implementation timelines, and how the SSIP is integrated into the State’s revised monitoring system.</p> <p>The State reported revisions to its SiMR, baseline, and targets in its April 2017 submission. The State’s revised SiMR is: “Targeted sites will increase the performance of students with disabilities in grades 3-5 on the English/Language Arts (ELA) state assessment from 6.4% to 12.99%.” ADE staff reported that the revisions to the SiMR were made in response to infrastructure and capacity concerns, and believe that focusing on a targeted group of districts will enable the ADE to implement the SSIP work more effectively. However, at the time of the visit, the target districts had not been selected. The State’s implementation timeline was reviewed and OSEP emphasized that the State is required provided SiMR data, for the identified districts, in its Phase III, Year 2 submission, due April 2018.¹ OSEP also recommended that the State consider identifying additional data sources (i.e. progress monitoring data) to track and report progress toward the SiMR.</p> <p><i>SSIP and the State’s Monitoring Cycle</i></p> <p>The State explained that it has integrated SSIP activities into the newly-revised monitoring cycle which is now being utilized throughout the State. According to ADE, using this model will assist the State in leveraging their resources, both personnel and fiscal, while providing support to improve results for children with disabilities. OSEP encourages the State to provide more specific information regarding</p>	

¹ This submission is currently under review. OSEP will provide feedback to the State later this summer.

alignment of the monitoring elements with required SSIP elements, including identification of evidenced based practices, implementation of coherent improvement strategies, and evaluation.

Stakeholder Engagement

The SSIP Phase III, Year 1 submission included limited references to stakeholder groups and their input into the SSIP revisions. The discussion during OSEP's visit confirmed that stakeholder engagement had been limited. OSEP informed the State that, due to its limited capacity to reach a broader group, it is acceptable for them to use their Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP), which is already in place. However, in its Phase III, Year 2 submission, OSEP encouraged the State to consider providing more detailed information regarding how it engages its stakeholder group including: how input is solicited and used for decision making, the mechanisms for dissemination and evaluation of SSIP activities through the next several years of Phase III.

Next Steps for ADE's SSIP Implementation and Evaluation:

1. According to the revised plan shared by ADE, SSIP activities occur in 20-30 school districts based on the monitoring cycle. In order to achieve successful implementation and evaluation of the SSIP, the State is building capacity to ensure compliance as well as work on outcomes/results. According to ADE, training is currently being provided to designated personnel with a focus on monitoring, compliance, and coaching. The State is also considering the incorporation of specific activities identified in the State Personnel Development Grants (SPDG). ADE is creating a professional development plan and action plan for personnel.
2. The State is developing a menu of assessment tools to address progress monitoring challenges. The State assessment will be a benchmark of progress; however ADE plans to individualize progress and fidelity measures throughout the targeted districts. Under the current plan submitted by ADE, 28 possible interventions were listed to support improvement activities; if utilized, each of these interventions will need to be evaluated and analyzed for fidelity.

Outcome of Engagement Activity

In an SSIP debrief provided to ADE on September 14, 2017, OSEP shared the following:

1. The State needs to more clearly articulate how monitoring and implementation of the current SSIP (April 3, 2017) connect to the Theory of Action, the Logic Model, and improved outcomes on all levels, including improved reading outcomes for students at targeted schools.
2. Additional focus areas for ADE to work on and further clarify including: an implementation timelines, data collection, stakeholder engagement, roles and responsibilities of personnel involved in monitoring and implementation of coherent improvement activities, progress and monitoring data, fidelity measures, and development of workable evaluation plan. Also, consideration should be given to what happens after the monitoring cycle ends for the local educational agencies involved.
3. The State was encouraged to work closely with TA Providers to further develop the evaluation plan and the SSIP Implementation plan. ADE stated (due to time and priority constraints) they will include TA providers in the work once a monitoring coach has been hired.

4. OSEP reminded the State that there are requirements that need to be fulfilled according to the Indicator, and that all areas of the Indicator must be addressed in the April 2018 submission of the SSIP submission. The State needs to include FFY 2016 data and discuss progress in all areas of the SSIP should also be noted.
5. ADE mentioned that the person designated as the current SSIP lead for ADE will be the main contact for further SSIP discussions with OSEP.

Use of Technical Assistance and Professional Development Resources:

National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) technical assistance providers had previously worked with ADE and provided support in SSIP planning, implementation and evaluation activities, however the State has chosen not to access OSEP-funded TA assistance regarding the SSIP at this time. ADE stated at some point they will again request additional support from NCSI to assist in their SSIP efforts.

Next Steps

During FFY 2018, OSEP and ADE will use regular TA calls to discuss resources and materials that may be helpful in supporting Arizona’s efforts to implement and evaluate SSIP infrastructure changes, coherent improvement strategies, evidence-based practices, evaluation activities, and stakeholder engagement that will lead to improved educational outcomes for children with disabilities.