

Iowa's SSIP Phase III
Progress Report
FFY18

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Iowa Department of Education

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Iowa's SSIP Phase III FFY18 Report

(January 1, 2019 – February 29, 2020)

A. Summary of Phase III

The measurable result identified by Iowa stakeholders for the purposes of the SSIP is to increase the percentage of learners with IEPs who are proficient readers by the end of third grade, as measured by the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST). To achieve this outcome, the Iowa Department of Education (Department), in partnership with Area Education Agencies (AEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), Iowa's Parent Training Information center (ASK Resource), and institutions of higher education, has completed and validated learning materials, developed coaching and professional learning infrastructures, and begun initial scale-up activities in all nine AEAs. The benefits of these efforts are beginning to show in the data, demonstrating change in teacher behavior and related student outcomes. These data will be described in detail later in this report. First, however, the steps that have led to this progress are chronicled here.

FFY15 – Iowa actually began development work during Phase II of the SSIP by developing literacy materials and professional learning strategies in Summer 2015 and testing them with twelve usability sites beginning Fall 2015. This early work helped to determine that Iowa was not ready to implement Cohort I. Instead, more work was needed to refine professional learning materials and supports. This included the need to design and test a coaching platform. At this point, it was anticipated to start a cohort

of up to 70 schools for implementation during the 2017–2018 school year and an additional cohort during the 2019–2020 school year.

FFY16 – Activities during the first year of Phase III focused on the development of infrastructure supports and tools to build the capacity of Iowa’s networks to train, coach, and support the delivery of effective specially designed instruction. During this time, infrastructure supports were established, including four Design Teams and a Core Team. Tools, materials, and professional learning modules were developed in partnership with twelve usability sites. Usability sites differ from pilot sites as the districts partner with the Department to use and refine materials rather than “test” a completed set of materials. This distinction is important as the Department modified two major plans based on usability findings, including the following:

1. Usability site participation needed to be longer than a year and was extended to three years.
2. Implementation with a cohort was still premature and needed to be delayed until FFY18 and would also be a three-year commitment instead of the anticipated one year.

FFY17 – This year saw a ramp-up of infrastructure development and refinement of tools, including coaching supports and fidelity implementation measures. A statewide team with members from every AEA began to meet monthly to develop processes and materials for statewide scale-up. As a result of their work and other contextual variables (e.g., ESSA designations), the original plan to scale in one AEA was revised to

scale in all nine AEAs and two years sooner than originally planned. One hundred one (101) individual schools participated in usability testing during this reporting period.

The activities of the past year have continued to strengthen infrastructure supports and build capacity of Iowa's technical assistance system to ensure quality professional learning opportunities. Usability sites entered their second or third year of participation, resulting in the completion of many professional learning tools and materials and 45 new cohort sites across areas of focus were added.

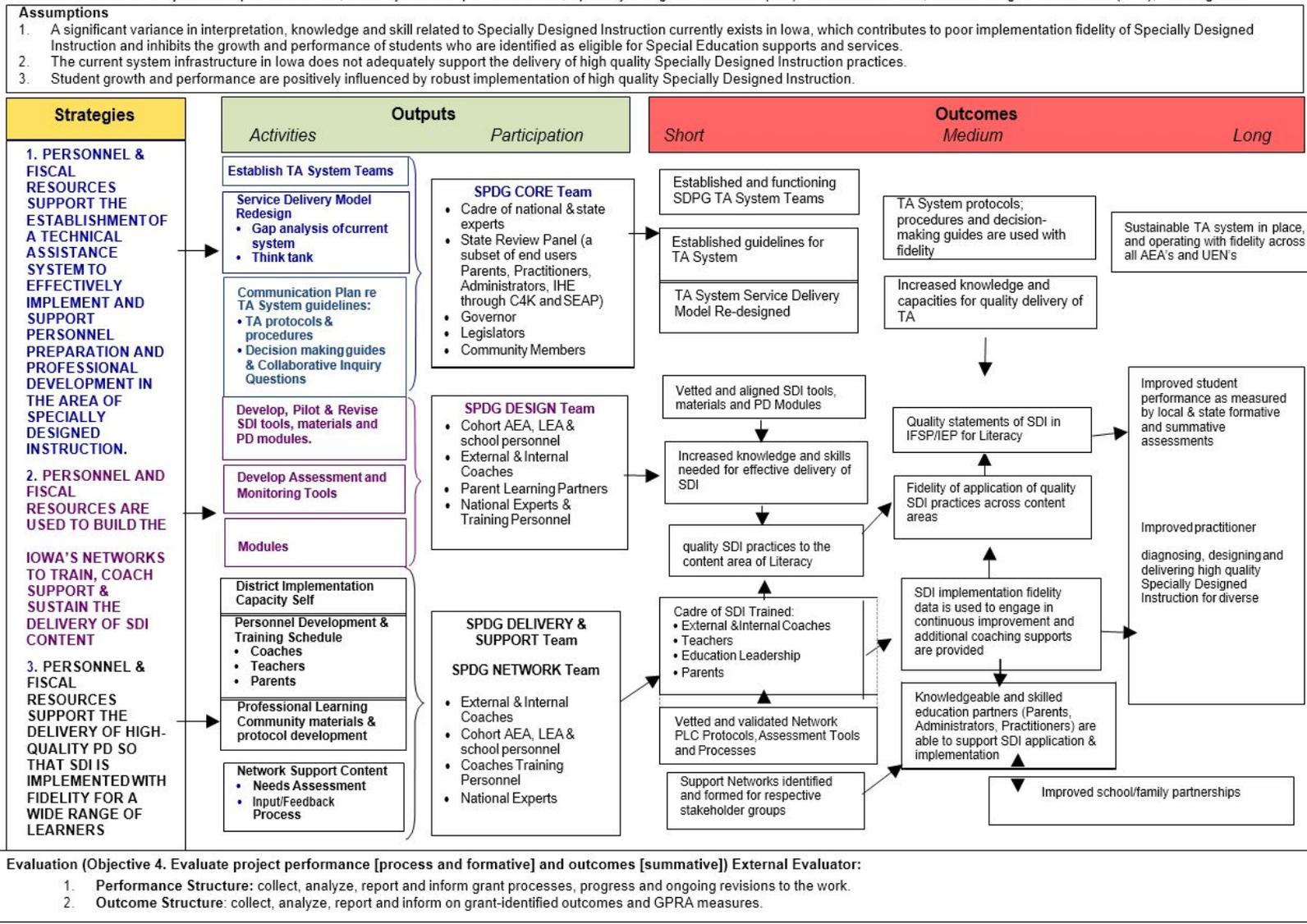
The activities and results described here align directly with Iowa's *Logic Model* (see **Figure 1** on the following page) and *Theory of Action* (see **Figure 2** on page 5).

Figure 1
IA SSIP 15 Logic Model

Program: IA SSIP 15 Logic Model (uses text boxes: add/change boxes and arrows as needed)

Situation: To develop and improve the capacities of education partners to effectively deliver and support the implementation fidelity of Specially Designed Instruction to improve student outcomes as measured by local and state formative and summative assessments.

External Factors: Iowa Systemic Improvement Plan, State Systemic Improvement Plan, Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) Administrative Rule, Collaborating for Iowa's Kids (C4K), Reading Data

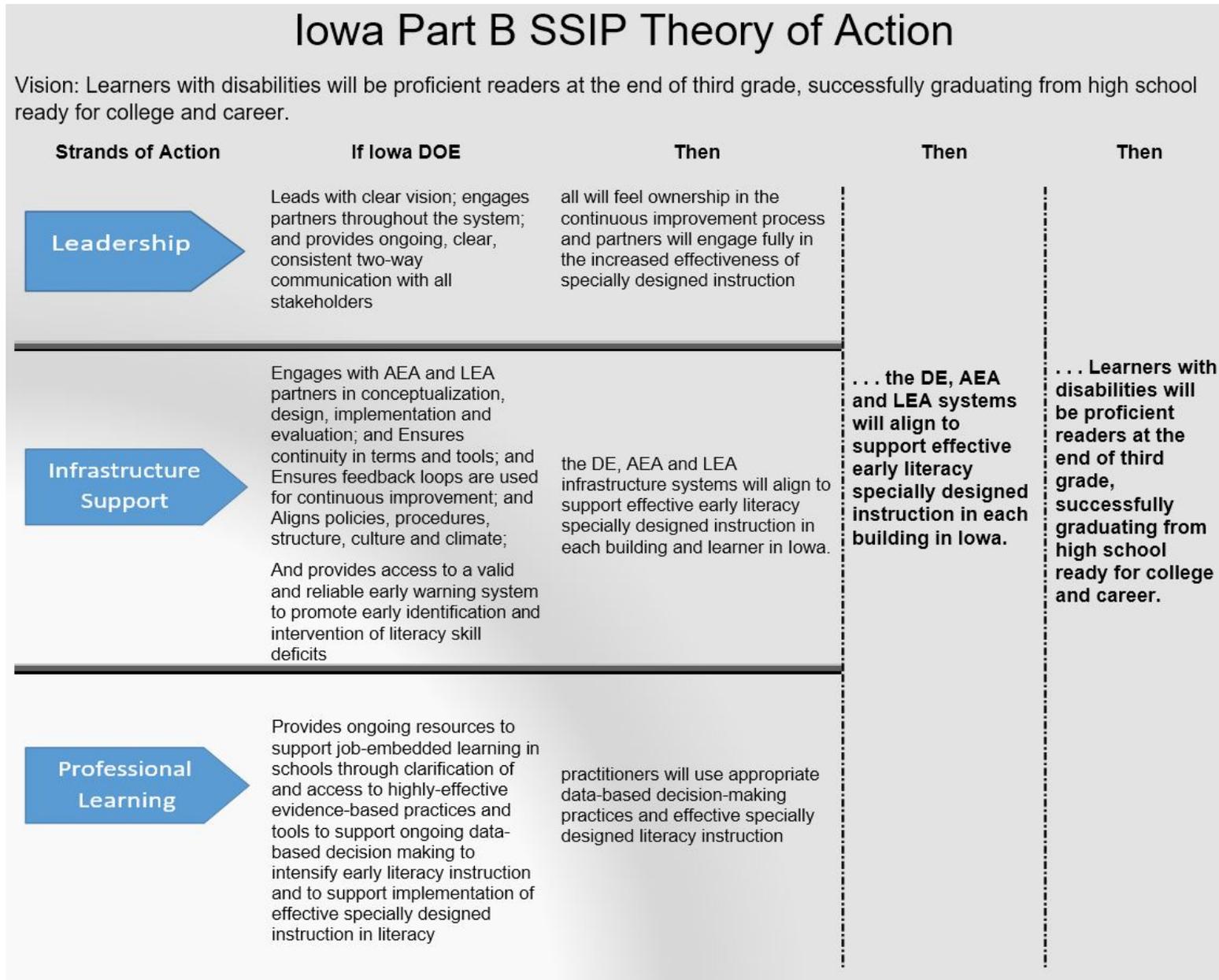


Evaluation (Objective 4. Evaluate project performance [process and formative] and outcomes [summative]) External Evaluator:

- Performance Structure:** collect, analyze, report and inform grant processes, progress and ongoing revisions to the work.
- Outcome Structure:** collect, analyze, report and inform on grant-identified outcomes and GPRA measures.

Figure 2

Iowa Part B SSIP Theory of Action



1. Principal activities that have been employed during the year (including infrastructure improvement strategies). Specific evidence-based practices that have been implemented to date.

Iowa continues to emphasize effective specially designed instruction in order to accomplish the SIMR of increased reading proficiency of third graders with IEPs. The activities described here occurred during Year 4 of the SSIP. Key to the success of the work is the infrastructure addition of the IDEA Support Team. As part of Iowa's SDI project, the IDEA Support Team continues to be used as a conduit of communication for the project. This team has members from each AEA, the Iowa Department of Education, and leads for each of the areas of focus (Preschool, K-6 Literacy, Significant Disabilities). In addition to being a communication link between project decisions made statewide, they also assist with scale-up activities within their AEA.

In Spring 2019, AEA Leadership Teams from all AEAs came together for facilitated conversations focused on planning for scale-up activities to begin Fall 2019.

Membership of each AEA leadership team included special education staff, general education staff, the chief administrator for the AEA, the special education director, the educational services director, and AEA school improvement consultants. (Previous SSIPs indicated that there would be a partnership with one AEA. That was changed to partnering with all AEAs.) Leadership Teams had initial conversations about personnel they might need to tap in each of their agencies to be a professional learning lead in each of the areas of focus (Preschool, K-6 Literacy, Significant Disabilities), system

coaching for Leadership Teams, and instructional coaching for teachers implementing their classrooms.

As a result of the AEA Leadership Team scale-up conversations, professional learning leads (trained to deliver and support content in the areas of focus), and IDEA Support Team members were able to coordinate professional learning delivery with selected schools. Regional delivery of the professional learning packages for K-6, Preschool and Significant Disabilities began Fall 2019.

A subset of the IDEA Support Team began developing coaching professional learning materials to support system coaching and instructional practices coaching of SDI implementation. These materials were developed in collaboration with educators throughout the state who currently support coaching networks through the TLC (Teacher Leadership Compensation) program. The pilot delivery of this content was conducted this current school year via face-to-face and video conferencing methods to accommodate the coaching staff.

Plans are to continue the data collection using the Framework Implementation Tool (FIT) and Coach Self-Assessment (CSA) into the future, post grant. The FIT is a teacher self-assessment focused on implementation of the SDI Framework; the CSA is a coach self-assessment focused on the ability to coach teachers to implement the SDI Framework. We are planning to use internal resources in Iowa to be able to continue collecting this implementation data.

2. Overview of year's evaluation activities, measures, and outcomes

As part of the project, data continued to be collected from participating teachers, AEA or LEA coaches, and teams that support implementation of SDI. Evaluation activities and measures that teachers and/or coaches complete include the following:

Framework Implementation Tool (FIT)

- Completed by SDI project teachers in the fall and spring of the year
- Self-assessment of implementation of the key components and critical features of the SDI Framework

Coach Self-Assessment Tool (CSA)

- Completed by SDI Coaches in the fall and spring of the year
- Self-assessment of the ability to coach teachers to implement the SDI Framework

Coach Log Tool

- Coaches complete a log of coaching activities coaches utilize with teachers implementing SDI
- Expectations are to complete a log twice monthly throughout the school year

Post Professional Development Feedback Form Tool

- Participants in SDI professional learning complete post professional development feedback form after each session they attend
- Questions related to planning, delivery and their own next steps as a result of the learning are collected

Student outcome data is also collected through the project. CBMR data from Fastbridge Learning is utilized to determine progress in achieving the SIMR. Although the SIMR data indicated a slight decrease in the percentage of students with IEPs who were proficient readers at the end of third grade, evaluation data indicate SSIP activities influenced teacher behavior and show growth on more sensitive student measures. More complete evaluation data and outcome data is included later in this SSIP.

3. Highlights of changes to implementation and improvement strategies

The major change that occurred to implementation and improvement strategies was identifying and training professional learning leads to deliver SDI professional learning regionally. Initial work of the SPDG grant included having usability sites (districts/buildings from across the state) attend professional learning in a central location. The training was delivered by members of the design team from each of the areas of focus. Teacher teams would then go back to their district to implement their learning with instructional coaching support typically provided by their AEA.

In an effort to scale the project to be more regionally delivered and supported, the design teams for each of the areas of focus provided initial training for identified AEA staff (known as professional learning leads) to deliver the professional learning packages. Ongoing communities of practice for those professional learning leads were also held monthly to provide support to those professional learning leads as they worked with implementation districts.

B. Progress in Implementing the SSIP

1. Description of Iowa’s Implementation Process

As can be seen in **Table 1** (below), implementation of Iowa’s SSIP has been accomplished according to the established timeline and is poised to exceed original scope for implementation. The complexity of Iowa’s SSIP work across four primary areas (SDI Literacy for Preschool, SDI Literacy for students with Significant Disabilities, SDI Literacy for K-6, and Family-School Partnerships) prohibits detailed description in each focus area. Instead, this section will highlight overall implementation progress for each of the three project strategies.

Table 1
SSIP Objectives, Tasks, Activities, and Timelines

Strategy 1. Establish a technical assistance system to effectively implement and support personnel preparation and professional development in the area of specially designed instruction.	
Milestone Activities and Tasks	Status
1.1 Establish a Coaching Platform	
1.1.1 Establish competencies, aptitudes, and skills for SDI content and system coaching.	Completed
1.1.2 Develop coaching readiness materials.	Completed
1.1.3 Test coaching structures with minimum of 12 usability sites.	Completed
1.1.4 Implement coaching structures with Cohort Group in all nine (9) AEAs	Completed
1.1.5 Design and conduct evaluation	Ongoing
1.1.6 Develop and use data management system	Ongoing
1.2 Develop innovative organizational processes and structures for technical assistance delivery.	
1.2.1 Develop and conduct gap analysis.	Completed
1.2.2 Convene a think-tank of state stakeholders to develop recommendations.	Completed
1.2.3 Gather feedback and refine recommendations.	Ongoing

1.2.4 Develop protocols and procedures to identify status of need, readiness for change and appropriate change strategies.	Ongoing
1.2.5 Partner with 1 AEA to implement organizational changes in process and structure. NOTE: This original milestone has been changed to implement in all AEAs.	Ongoing
1.3 Establish and Maintain Communications	
1.3.1 Convene Core Team	Completed
1.3.2 Develop participant criteria and convene Design Team	Completed
1.3.3 Establish and maintain communication feedback loops across all teams and participants.	Ongoing

Strategy 2. Build capacity of Iowa’s coaching network so that network participants have capacity to train, coach and support delivery of specially designed instruction with integrity.	
Milestone Activities and Tasks	Status
2.1 Develop quality tools, materials and professional development	
2.1.1 Assess current state of knowledge and skills of parents, educators, leaders and AEA personnel	Ongoing
2.1.2 Develop SDI tools, materials and professional learning modules	Completed
2.1.3 Pilot tools, materials and professional learning modules	Completed
2.1.4 Revise tools, materials and professional learning modules	Ongoing
2.2 Develop and support Delivery and Support Team	
2.2.1 Develop coaching roles / responsibilities / criteria and convene Delivery and Support Team	Completed
2.2.2 Provide professional development and ongoing support at least monthly to Delivery and Support Team members including AEA coaches, parents and educational leaders	Ongoing
2.2.3 Evaluate and refine training and support as needed.	Ongoing

Strategy 3. Delivery high quality professional development so that specially designed instruction is implemented with fidelity and effectively improves learning for a wide range of learners.	
Milestone Activities and Tasks	Status
3.1 Develop and support Network Teams	
3.1.1 Develop coaching roles / responsibilities / criteria and convene Network Teams	Completed
3.1.2 Provide professional development and ongoing support at least monthly to Network Team members including AEA coaches, parents, and educational leaders	Ongoing

3.1.3 Evaluate and refine training and support as needed.	Ongoing
3.2 Provide quality professional development and ongoing support to building participants	
3.2.1 Assess current state of knowledge and skills of parents, educators, leaders and AEA personnel	Ongoing
3.2.2 Provide professional development and ongoing support at least monthly to Network Team members including AEA coaches, parents and educational leaders	Ongoing
3.2.3 Evaluate and refine training and support as needed	Ongoing

Strategy 1: Establish a technical assistance system to effectively implement and support personnel preparation and professional development in the area of specially designed instruction.

Implementation of Iowa’s framework for specially designed instruction moved into Phase I of statewide scale-up during the 2019–2020 school year. This scale-up work is occurring in all nine (9) AEAs (as indicated in Activity 1.2.5). MTSS / SDI Leadership Teams from each of the AEAs met in April 2019 to discuss the infrastructure development needs to support districts and schools invited to implement SDI Literacy beginning Fall 2019. (Membership of the AEA leadership team included special education staff, general education staff, the chief administrator for the AEA, the special education director, the educational services director, and AEA school improvement consultants.)

Discussions included (a) how the agency would identify and support professional learning leads to deliver the contents to districts, (b) identifying instructional practices coaches to follow up with site teachers following the professional learning, and (c) identification of staff who would coach site Leadership Teams to examine system data to support SDI implementation. Action plans were developed by each of the

agencies to be ready to support regional delivery and support of SDI Literacy professional learning, coaching, and technical assistance in the fall. The result of this process was a scale-up plan specific to each AEA.

The IDEA Support Team (membership from each AEA) continues to be the glue that is ensuring that SDI Literacy is being implemented and supported regionally with fidelity to what evaluation data indicated was working. This team also functions as a communication link between statewide decisions and leadership back in their respective agencies. The team meets monthly to compare feedback and implementation issues from each of the AEAs and drafts a consistent message to communicate in response.

Strategy 2: Build capacity of Iowa's coaching network.

In addition to the accomplished milestones of regular administration of the SDI Framework Coach Self-Assessment Tool for SDI Coaches (CSA) and the Iowa Coaching Field Guide, work to develop common professional learning for coaches will be completed by June 2020. The coaching professional learning modules are focused on the service delivery plans for instructional practices and system coaching. Many educators who are coaching SDI are functioning as both an instructional practices and system coach for sites implementing SDI. The modules incorporate learning and strategies to implement across both types of coaching. The creation of the modules was done by a subcommittee of the IDEA Support Team. The Team identified a need for a

common set of materials to be available for those agencies who are supporting coaching networks within their agency. The materials incorporate the activities from the Iowa Coaching Field Guide (included self-assessments and associated tools), data from the Framework Implementation Tool (teachers self-assess on SDI Framework implementation), and topics from the coaching service delivery plans (instructional practices and system).

These coaching modules have been implemented in two AEAs through monthly SDI coaching networks that are in place in those agencies. Feedback has been gathered from participants and IDEA Support Team members on each of the professional learning modules. Finalized coaching modules will be available for use across Iowa in Fall 2020.

Strategy 3: Deliver high quality professional development.

Professional learning the past year has been delivered to a combination of usability sites and new sites (172 sites in 84 districts total). Those usability sites that had participated in Preschool SDI and Significant Disabilities continued to attend face-to-face professional learning, webinars, and receive on-site support with the Department for a third and final year of state support (Preschool and Significant Disabilities). (As a reminder, Usability sites differ from pilot sites as the districts partner with the Department to use and refine materials rather than “test” a completed set of materials.) Professional learning for the new sites was provided regionally by each of the nine AEAs during the 2019–2020 school year. Each of the AEAs invited districts to partner

with them as the recently-trained professional learning leads delivered the training in their region. Each of the AEAs provided staff to coach teachers to implement the SDI professional learning as well.

Statewide communities of practice (CoP) were instituted to support the cadre of professional learning leads in each of the areas of focus (Preschool, K-6 Literacy, Significant Disabilities). Coaching communities of practice were also available for instructional practices coaches to engage in for ongoing professional learning and support.

As mentioned earlier, coaching professional learning modules have been used with coaching networks in partnership with agency staff who already support teacher leadership coaching networks. The ongoing professional learning has assisted in bridging the gap between special education and general education coaching in sites.

2. Stakeholder Involvement in SSIP Implementation

Stakeholders are involved in the development and the implementation of the SSIP in multiple ways. An Alignment and Expansion Team (AET) was established for the purpose of advising statewide leadership related to implementation of SDI. Initially, the group assisted with giving suggestions for initial implementation; later, the membership of this group changed and the focus of discussions with the group was on how to align SDI with statewide school improvement initiatives as well as suggestions of how we might consider scaling the work statewide.

Other stakeholders who continue to be involved include ASK Resource Center (Iowa's PTI), Iowa's Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP), and the AEA Special Education Directors. The Family and School Partnership component of SDI has engaged many educators, families, national experts, and others to design systemic work that will engage families and educators with implementation of SDI.

Regular communication with each of the stakeholder groups listed above has been ongoing throughout the school year(s).

C. Data on Implementation and Outcomes

1. State Monitoring and Measured Outputs to Assess Effectiveness of the Implementation Plan

Iowa's SSIP is built around two types of activities: development and validation.

Development activities were the primary focus of the first three years of the SSIP (FFY15, FFY16, and FFY17), including the development of infrastructure and professional learning materials and tools. Validation activities this year (FFY18) will measure fidelity of implementation and effects of implementation.

This report will focus on data that have been collected related to implementation of the SDI Framework (Framework Implementation Tool – FIT), ability of coaches to coach to teachers to implement the SDI Framework (Coach Self-Assessment – CSA), and student outcome data.

As scale-up has occurred during the past year; data continues to be collected from teachers and coaches related to SDI implementation. Collection activities include SDI Teacher FIT data, SDI Coach Log, SDI Coach Self-Assessment, Post Professional Development surveys, and group interviews. Findings from all sites related to coaching and teacher use of the SDI Framework are provided below.

Annual studies conducted by Measurement Incorporated (MI) have documented numerous successes of the SDI initiative. Chief among them are educators' increased capacity to effectively implement SDI practices that are adapted as appropriate to the

needs of students with disabilities. To add, SDI-related coaching supports have been instrumental in helping teachers improve their use of SDI practices. Most noteworthy, the initiative has resulted in significant improvements in literacy outcomes for students with disabilities, particularly in schools where teachers increased their use of practices outlined by the SDI Framework.

In its most recent study, MI completed a longitudinal examination of SDI implementation.¹ The three-year study found continued growth in teachers' use of SDI practices with each additional year of participation in the initiative. Similarly, the study documented increases in SDI Coaches' knowledge and capacity to support teachers. Lastly, the initiative was effective in reducing barriers to SDI implementation at participating schools.

All of these findings are summarized in this edition of the SPDG Spotlight. They were derived from analyses conducted on data from the SDI Framework Implementation Tool (SDI FIT) and Coach Self-Assessment Tool (CSA). Both tools have been utilized by the grant since Fall 2017. Teachers² and SDI Coaches³ who participated in the grant since 2017 and completed the tools in the fall of each year were included in the sample for the study.

¹ In prior studies, the evaluation used a cross-sectional design that involved comparing SDI implementation at a single point in time by different teacher cohorts based on their years of participation in the grant.

² The findings are based on 32 teachers who completed the SDI FIT in the fall of each year. The teachers came from 30 schools (15 districts) located across Iowa. They participated in one of three grant content areas including: Preschool (22%), K-6 Literacy (34%), and Significant Disabilities (44%).

³ The findings are based on 27 SDI Coaches who completed the CSA in the fall of each year. They worked in 17 districts located across the state. Content areas included Preschool (26%), K-6 Literacy (44%) and Significant Disabilities (30%).

Teachers' Implementation of the SDI Framework

The SDI FIT is designed to assess teachers' implementation of the nine critical features associated with the Diagnose, Design, and Deliver components of the SDI Framework.

Teachers complete the assessment in the fall and again in the spring by rating their level of implementation using a five-point scale that ranges from *not at all* to *sustained*.

Teachers use their SDI FIT scores in collaboration with the school-designated SDI Coach to develop professional growth goals and action plans that will help them increase their capability to implement SDI effectively. The SDI FIT also enables teachers and coaches to monitor changes in implementation levels from the beginning to the end of the school year.

Figure 3 (following page) summarizes teachers' mean scores on the Diagnose, Design, and Deliver components from 2017 to 2019.⁴ Seen in the figure, teachers steadily increased their implementation of all three components from the partial implementation level in Fall 2017 to the routine implementation level in Fall 2019. The largest gain was seen in the Design component, where teachers improved 3.06 points over the three years.

⁴ For ease of interpretation, ratings on the critical features were aggregated up to the component level.

Figure 3
Fall Mean Scores on the SDI FIT
3-year comparison and gains⁵



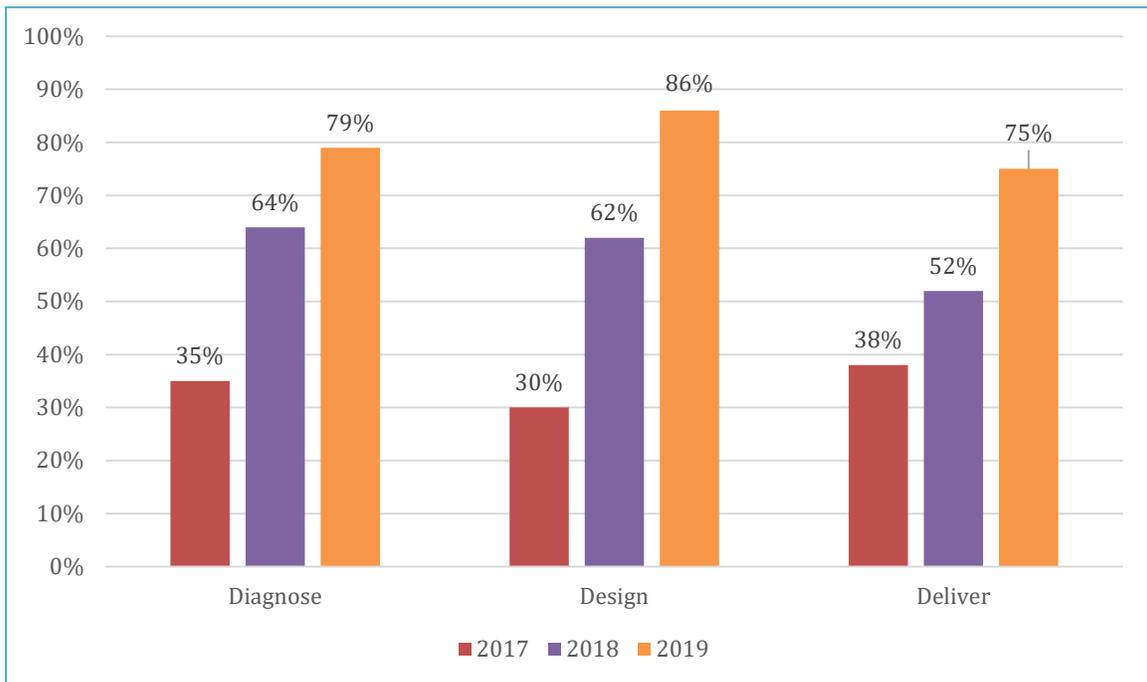
Put differently, **Figure 4** (following page) outlines the percentage of teachers who were at the highest levels of implementation (i.e., *routine* or *sustained* for each of the components during the same three-year period). From the figure, one can see that after three years of participation, the majority (75% +) of teachers were at the highest levels of implementation. The 3-year gains ranged from 37 to 56 percentage points and were statistically significant. Also noteworthy are the large gains posted from 2017 to 2018 on the Diagnose and Design components. Several factors can be attributed to these gains. One, professional development content was focused on these components during the first couple of years of grant participation. Two, additional schools and teachers began participation in 2017 but not in 2018. Teachers who were new would

⁵ All gains were statistically significant.

have participated in professional development that was focused on the Diagnose and Design components in 2017, resulting in increases seen in Fall 2018.

Figure 4
Percentage of Teachers at the *Routine* or *Sustained* Levels of Implementation on the SDI FIT

3-year comparison and gains⁶



SDI Coaches Knowledge and Skills to Support Use of the SDI Framework

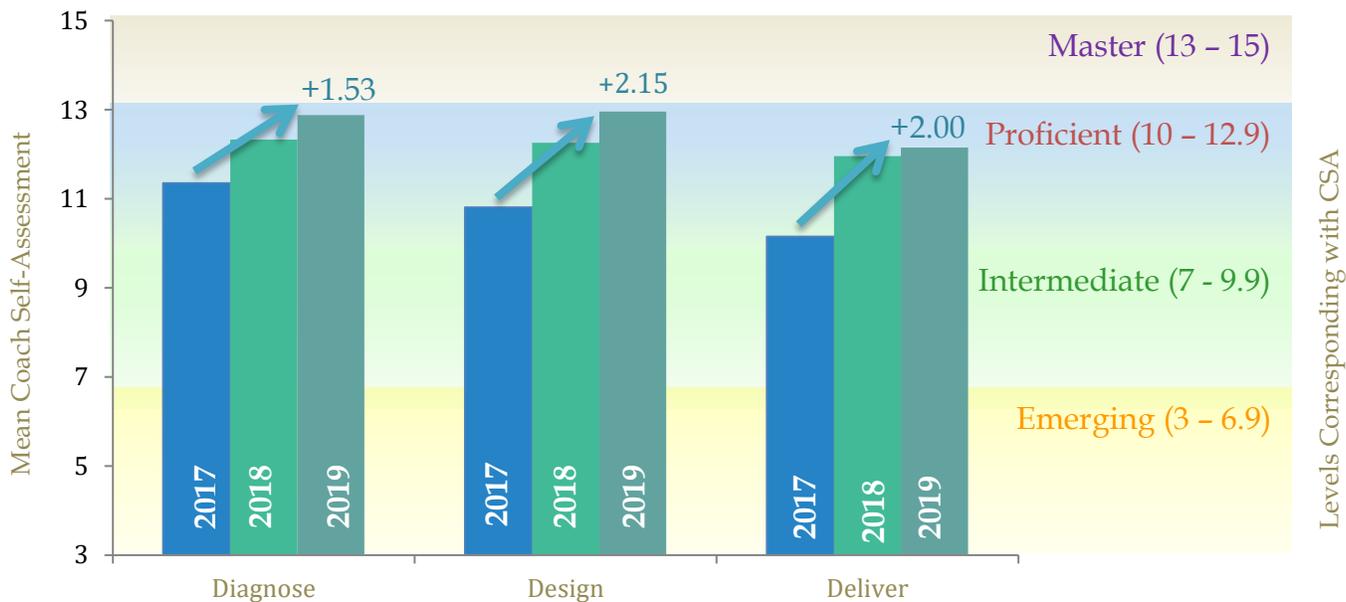
The Coaching Self-Assessment (CSA) is designed to measure changes in SDI Coaches' knowledge about SDI practices and their ability to support others in the use of these practices. Coaches measure their knowledge and support skills for each of the critical features of the SDI Framework using a scale that ranges from *novice* to *master*. Similar to

⁶ Gains were statistically significant.

teachers, SDI Coaches complete the tool in the fall and spring and are encouraged to develop professional growth goals and track their progress on the CSA.

Figure 5 (below) summarizes SDI Coaches’ mean scores on the Diagnose, Design, and Deliver components from 2017 to 2019. The figure shows that SDI Coaches increased their knowledge and skills from the *proficient* level in 2017 to the *master* level in 2019 on all three components. In other words, in 2017, Coaches were knowledgeable about how and when to implement the SDI Framework but needed refresher training. Three years later, SDI Coaches were very knowledgeable about the framework and felt comfortable coaching educators.

Figure 5
Fall Mean Scores on the Coach Self-Assessment
3-year comparison and gains⁷



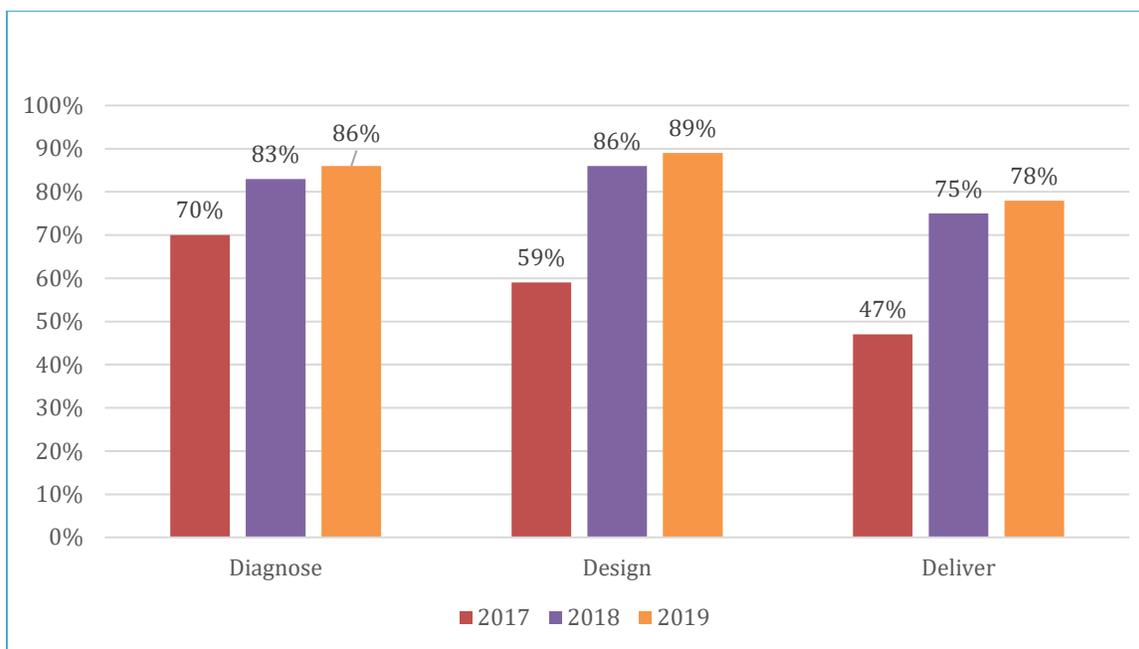
⁷ Gains were statistically significant.

Figure 6 (following page) shows the percentage of SDI Coaches who were at the higher knowledge and skill levels (i.e., *master* and *proficient* for each year of the study).

Looking at the data in this way reveals that many SDI Coaches had prior knowledge and skills in the use of critical features associated with the Diagnose and Design components in particular. For example, in 2017, 70% of SDI Coaches were at the higher knowledge/skill levels for the Diagnose component of the SDI Framework and almost 60% were at the higher levels for the Design component. In fact, many of the SDI Coaches came from positions and backgrounds where they would have received prior training in these areas. Specifically, 52% were Special Education and/or Literacy consultants, 15% served as Instructional Coaches, and 11% were also School Psychologists at their district and/or AEA.

Figure 6
Percentage of SDI Coaches at the *Proficient or Master* Knowledge and Skill Levels on the CSA

3-year comparison and gains⁸



Reduced Barriers to SDI implementation

Finally, barriers to SDI implementation and the extent to which they were reduced were examined. **Table 2** (following page) shows the percentage of teachers who identified various barriers to SDI implementation at their school in 2017 and in 2019. The table shows that nearly all of the barriers decreased over time. For instance, in 2017, over half of the teachers reported that their school didn't have adequate supports to help teachers implement SDI and that general education teachers didn't have sufficient knowledge of SDI practices. Three years later, the percentages decreased to 22% and 37%,

⁸ Gains were statistically significant.

respectively. The reductions in these barriers are a likely outcome of the professional development and resources that were provided to school-based teams, which often (though not always) included both special and general education teachers.

Table 2
Barriers to SDI Implementation

Percentage of Teachers Reporting Barriers in 2017 and 2019

	2017	2019
Our school doesn't have adequate supports to help teachers implement effective SDI practices.	53%	22%
Our school doesn't have adequate or appropriate intervention materials and resources to address the needs of learners with disabilities.	47%	22%
General education teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding of SDI practices to support special education.	53%	37%
Our school doesn't have sufficient opportunities for special and general education teachers to collaborate on Diagnose, Design and Deliver SDI.	44%	56%

Moreover, compared to 2017, fewer teachers in 2019 reported that their school didn't have adequate intervention materials and resources to address the needs of learners with disabilities. This reduction resulted from the grant monies that were allocated to participating schools to enable the purchase of additional materials and resources.

Lastly, *more* teachers reported a lack of sufficient opportunities for special and general education teachers to collaborate on the SDI Framework in 2019 compared to 2017.

Nevertheless, this finding is most likely a result of their growing awareness of the *need* for more opportunities to collaborate. This conclusion is based on anecdotal evidence

suggesting that SDI teams were working to build more accommodations in the general education setting. To be more successful in their efforts, both special and general education teachers have expressed a desire for more opportunities to collaborate. Unfortunately, school schedules often prevent teachers from having common planning time.

2. How the State has demonstrated progress and made modifications to the SSIP as necessary.

Iowa's progress towards implementation of effective specially designed instruction in the area of literacy is evident through the completion and validation of learning materials, the development of coaching and professional learning infrastructures, initial scale-up activities in all nine AEAs, and most of all, in the data demonstrating change in teacher behavior and related student outcomes.

As mentioned in the Summary, AEA Leadership Teams from all AEAs came together for facilitated conversations focused on planning for scale-up activities to begin Fall 2019. Membership of the AEA Leadership Team included special education staff, general education staff, the chief administrator for the AEA, the special education director, the educational services director, and AEA school improvement consultants. (Having all AEAs engage in the scale-up conversation is a change from original plans that were outlined in previous SSIPs.) AEA Leadership Teams had initial conversations about personnel they might need to tap in each of their agencies to be a professional learning lead in each of the areas of focus (Preschool, K-6 Literacy, Significant

Disabilities), system coaching for Leadership Teams, and instructional coaching for teachers implementing their classrooms.

Each agency, based on available resources and ability to build background with internal staff to deliver and coach SDI professional learning, determined which districts they would be partnering with for SDI implementation. Each AEA also determined which areas of focus (Preschool, K-6 Literacy, Significant Disabilities) they would be supporting for the current school year.

At the time of this writing, Iowa schools are closed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and the majority of professional learning targeted to building teams has been suspended. It is unknown when schools will reopen and begin the business of ensuring FAPE and potential need for compensatory services. If schools remain closed until next fall, it is anticipated that professional learning will continue to be suspended as IEP teams meet to determine what, if any, additional supports students need and provide those supports. Modifications, therefore, may be very necessary for next year.

3. Stakeholder Involvement in the SSIP Evaluation

As previously mentioned, stakeholders are active participants in the development, implementation and revision of SSIP activities based on evaluation data. IDEA Support Team members, the AEA Directors of Special Education, SDI Coordination Team members, districts throughout Iowa via Each and Every Child publication, SEAP, and the A&E Team are apprised regularly of implementation issues and results. These

stakeholder groups provide critical feedback and suggestions for next steps that inform changes to be made to the state improvement plan.

D. Data Quality Issues

1. Data Limitations that Affected Reports of Progress in Implementing the SSIP

Iowa uses the Formative Assessment System for Teachers (FAST) as the valid and reliable screening assessment to set and achieve targets. FAST is a suite of assessments, including computer-based and curriculum-based measures. For the purposes of statewide improvement of Specially Designed Instruction, Iowa monitors growth using the adaptive Reading (aReading) measure. This measure is administered as early as the winter of kindergarten and through high school. It is a computer-adapted test that allows for the individualization of the assessment based on student skills. Therefore, if a third grader is reading two years below grade level, the test will pinpoint skills at that level. Additionally, because FAST aReading is administered via computer, accommodations are readily available for learners who need them. Reliability and validity data for FAST aReading indicate that it is highly predictive of reading outcomes and results are correlated with other standardized reading assessments. Additionally, reliability and validity in administration and scoring of the assessment is assured via built in online training, practice, and certification on both administration and scoring components of the assessments.

The largest data limitation for interpreting the effects of SSIP is the SIMR itself. At the conclusion of the 2018–2019 school year, the student assessments conducted by the Iowa Department of Education determined that 17.91%, or 657 of 3,669 third grade students on an IEP, were found to be proficient readers (see [Table 3](#) on the following page).

Table 3
Reading Proficiency: Percent Proficient 3rd Grade Students on IEP.

FFY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Target \geq		26.00%	30.00%	34.00%	38.00%	42.00%	26.00%
% Proficient	25.38%	33.78%	18.60%	21.82%	19.09%	17.91%	

This is a drop from the previous year. In fact, there is no stable trend line for SIMR data collected since 2013. Some of this inconsistency is due to the measure itself. Iowa had just passed an early literacy requirement for a universal screener for all children grades K-6 when the SSIP was originally written. Stakeholders encouraged the use of the universal screener at third grade for use of Iowa’s SIMR. The difficulty in using this measure is that the general education system has been in the process of establishing it statewide. This has meant changes every year including the number of districts using the assessment, the process for collecting and reporting the data, and even versions of the assessment itself. In addition, the data represents every district in the state, not only the ones who have participated in Usability Testing for the SSIP. Finally, because the measure is a universal screener, it is established to identify those students at risk. It is not intended to be a sensitive measure of growth.

Stakeholders including AEA and LEA staff, AEA Directors of Special Education, representatives of Higher Education, Department staff and Iowa’s Special Education Advisory Panel are currently discussing whether to change Iowa’s SIMR to a measure

that is more sensitive and may more accurately reflect progress. Data measures under consideration include those that are described more fully in the next section. Until consensus is reached on a better measure for the SIMR, stakeholders recommended staying with the FAST measure and resetting the target to the first-year target of 26%.

E. Progress Toward Achieving Intended Improvements

Although the SIMR data indicated a slight decrease in the percentage of students with IEPs who were proficient readers at the end of third grade, evaluation data indicate SSIP activities influenced teacher behavior and show growth on more sensitive student measures. Those data are further described below.

1. Assessment of progress toward achieving intended improvements

Iowa's SSIP project personnel has begun to collect, disaggregate, and analyze student outcome data relevant to teacher implementation of the SDI Framework. The most recent findings from the external evaluation of Iowa's SPDG, summarized in this report, revealed that teachers' use of SDI produced significant improvements in literacy outcomes for students with disabilities. These outcomes included increased numbers of students with disabilities who met grade-level benchmarks over time as well as increased rates of growth (in reading). Improvements were most prevalent in schools where teachers expanded their use of specially designed instruction from Fall 2017 to Spring 2018. Specifically, teachers who gained 1 point or higher on a measure of SDI use (i.e., SDI Framework Implementation Tool) saw significantly higher rates of improvement in their students in grades 2, 3, and 6.⁹ Remarkably, some students exhibited growth at or above the 50th percentile, hence putting them on the path

⁹ Grades 4 and 5 were nonsignificant.

towards achieving grade-level reading proficiency and closing the achievement gap with their same-aged peers.

Student performance in grades 2 through 6 was assessed using the universal literacy screening assessment, the Curriculum-Based Measurement for reading (CBMr) from FastBridge Learning. The CBMr provides an index for word reading efficiency – a predictor of reading comprehension – by measuring the number of words read correctly (WRC) in a 1-minute timed test. The study measured changes in (1) the percentage of students who met grade-level benchmarks for the number of WRC, (2) the average rate of improvement, and (3) the percentage of students who made expected and ambitious growth gains from the 2016–2017 to the 2017–2018 school year.

It employed a quasi-experimental design to determine the relationship between SDI implementation and student outcomes. Schools were designated into high and low SDI implementation groups based on the average change in teachers' using of SDI as measured by the SDI Framework Tool (SDI FIT). The SDI FIT assesses implementation of the nine critical features associated with the Diagnose, Design, and Deliver components of the SDI Framework. Teachers complete the assessment in the fall and spring by rating their level of implementation using a five-point scale that ranges from *not at all* to *sustained*. Schools were designated into the high group if teachers made gains of 1 point or higher from Fall 2017 to Spring 2018 for each of the three components. Conversely, schools were designated into the low group if teachers' use

decreased at least 1 point or lower. **Table 4** (below) outlines the average gains or losses and the number of schools in each group.

Table 4
High and Low SDI Groups
Mean Gains/Losses and Number of Schools in each Group

	High Group Mean Gain (n)	Low Group Mean Loss (n)
Diagnose	+2.39 (13 schools)	-1.30 (9 schools)
Design	+2.55 (11 schools)	-1.54 (11 schools)
Deliver	+2.68 (8 schools)	-1.69 (16 schools)

Benchmark Findings

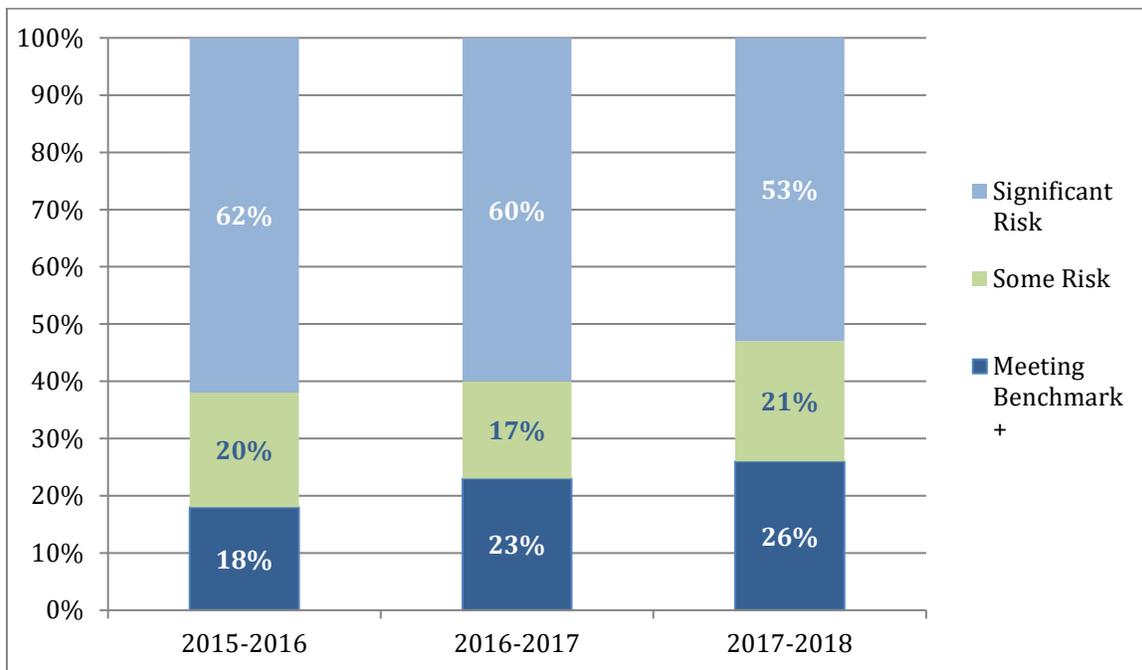
As noted above, the CBMr includes a 1-minute test of WRC, with benchmarks established for each grade level. The benchmarks inform educators about students’ progress towards successful reading and help them to identify students who may be at some risk or significant risk for reading deficiencies. For example, a 2nd grade student should be able to correctly read 106 words per minute by spring in order to meet the benchmark. Students with disabilities typically have difficulty meeting benchmarks; however, SDI is intended to address these deficiencies by matching instruction to individual learner needs. The SDI Framework facilitates this process by guiding teachers in diagnosing, designing, and delivering instruction better aligned to students’ unique reading needs.

The CBMr results showed that Iowa SPDG schools evidenced an increase in the percentage of students with IEPs in grades 2 through 6 who met benchmarks from Year

1 to Year 3 of grant implementation. Differences between the high and low implementation groups were not statistically significant; however, it trended in favor of the high group. **Figure 7** (below), which contains averages across all schools, shows an 8-point gain in the percentage of students meeting benchmarks over the 3-year period (from 18% to 26%) and a corresponding 11-point decline in the percentage of students who were at significant risk (62% to 53%). The differences were statistically significant.

Figure 7
Percentage of Students with IEPs at Meeting Benchmark, Some Risk, and Significant Risk¹⁰

Across 3 Years of the Iowa SPDG grant¹¹



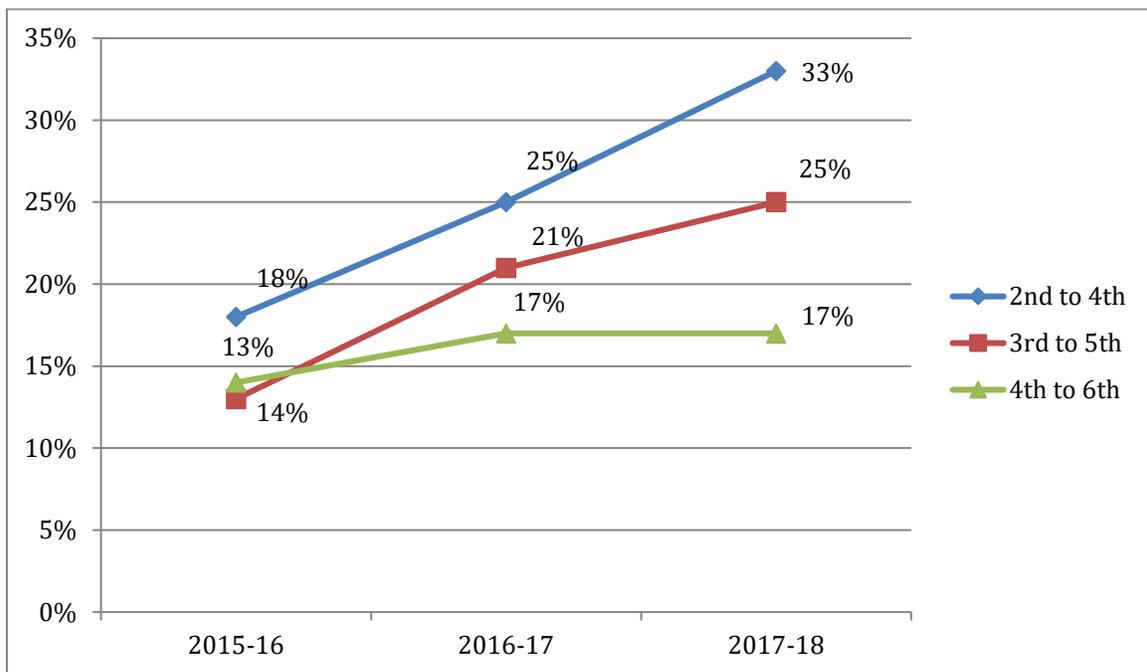
Examining the 3-year trajectory by grade level (see **Figure 8** on the following page), it is evident that students in the lower grades achieved more striking outcomes. For

¹⁰ Averaged across grades.

¹¹ Includes student with matched data for 2- and 3-years.

example, the percentage of 2nd graders who met the benchmarks nearly doubled from 18% to 33%, likewise for the percentage of 3rd graders (14% to 25%). In contrast, students in the 4th grade during Year 1 of the grant improved only 3 percentage points by Year 3. The better performance of lower grade students is consistent with research on the benefits of early intervention.

Figure 8
Percentage of Students Meeting Benchmarks
3-year Longitudinal Comparison¹²



¹² Includes students from the 2015 and 2016 Cohorts (n=143 students, 17 schools).

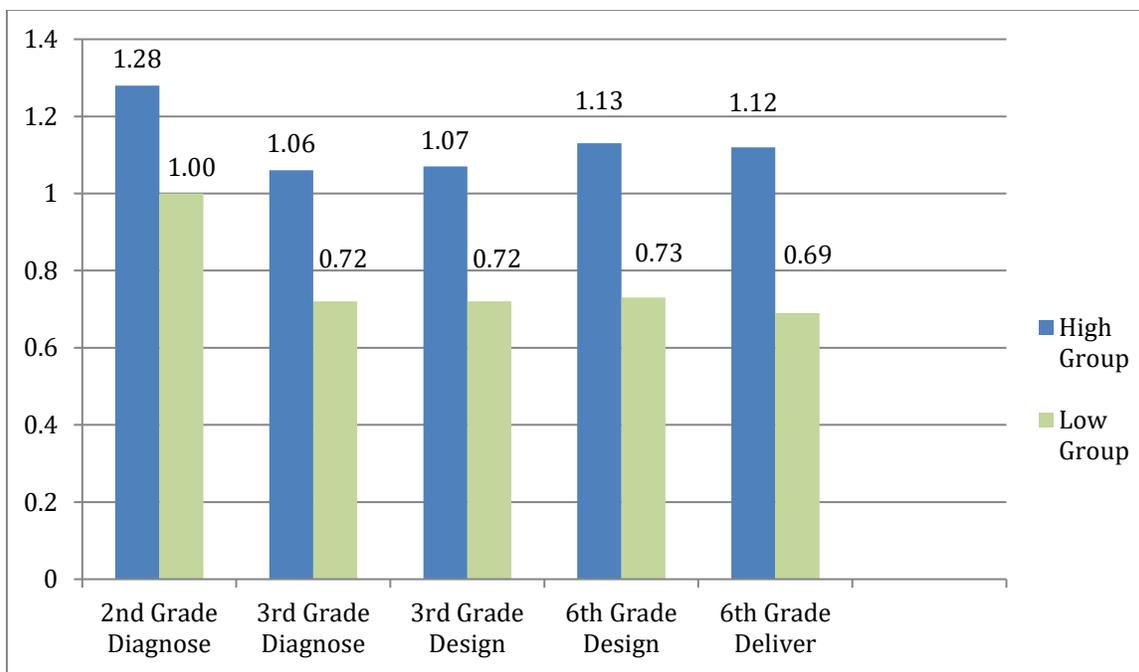
Growth Score Findings

In addition to meeting grade-level benchmarks for WRC, students' rate of reading improvement is another important indicator of reading development and comprehension. This is represented as a growth rate score on the CBMr, which is the average number of newly acquired words between fall and spring testing. Using the 2nd grade as an example, students who are making expected progress typically gain an average of 1.41 words a week. Doing so will keep them on the path towards reading proficiency and ensure that they will meet the spring benchmark for their grade level.

The evaluation found that here is where the increased use of SDI had its biggest impact on students' reading. For example, in schools where teachers increased their use of SDI practices related to diagnose for instructional design (e.g., defining areas of concern and determining critical supports needed for learner success), 2nd and 3rd grade students had higher growth rate scores compared to teachers from schools that decreased their use of SDI to diagnose.¹³ The differences between the two groups are listed in [Figure 9](#) (following page). Differences between groups were statistically significant and independent of students' prior growth rate scores.

¹³ Other grade levels were not significant.

Figure 9
Spring 2018 Average Growth Rate Score¹⁴
Comparison Between High and Low SDI Group



More specific, in the high group, 2nd grade students gained about 1.28 words a week, and 3rd grade students gained about 1.06 words a week, both of which put them just short of the 50th percentile (i.e., 1.34 for grade 2 and 1.15 for grade 3). Conversely, in the low group, 2nd and 3rd grade students' growth scores were well below the rate of expected progress for each grade.

Similar patterns were seen at the 3rd and 6th grade¹⁵ in schools where teachers increased their implementation of design for instructional delivery, which involves determining the intensity and frequency of alterable variables using high leverage instructional

¹⁴ Estimated marginal mean score after factoring out spring 2017 growth score in ANOVA analyses.

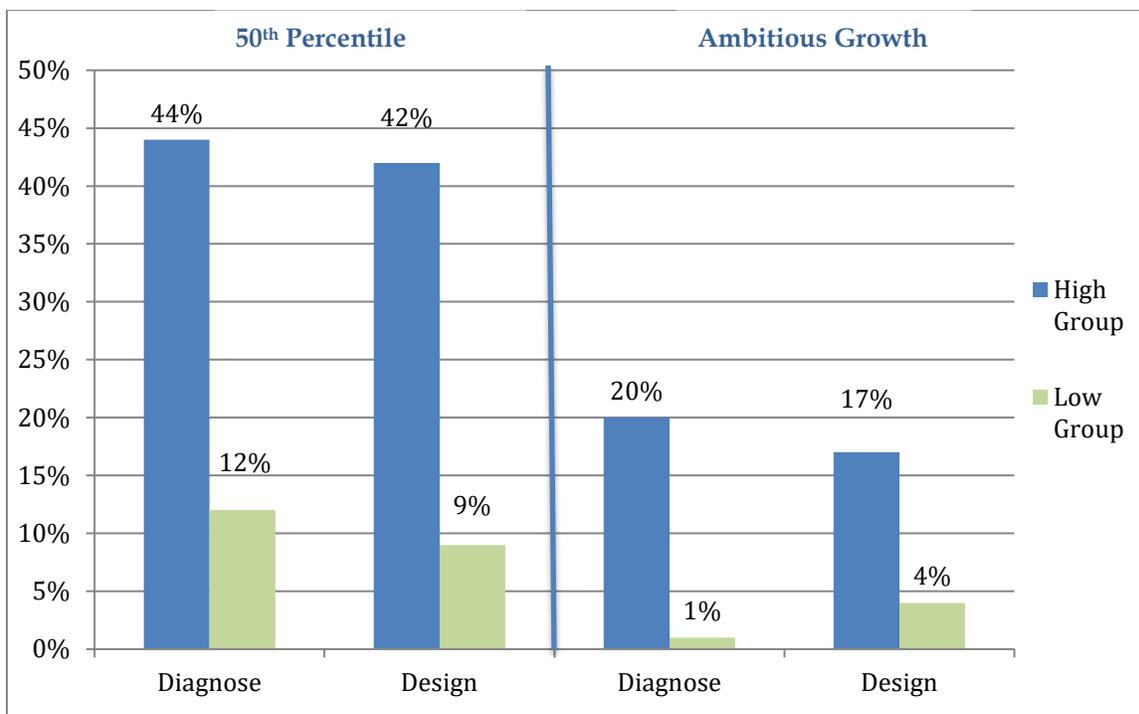
¹⁵ Other grade levels were not significant.

practices aligned to learner needs and maximizing opportunities for access and engagement through appropriate accommodations and modifications, to name a few. Indeed, the rate of growth demonstrated at the 6th grade in the high group (i.e., 1.13 words weekly) was above the 50th percentile of 0.88 words (see [Figure 9](#) on the previous page). Unfortunately, 6th grade students in the low group had a growth rate of 0.73 words, which is below the rate of expected progress.

Significantly higher growth scores at the 6th grade were also confirmed in schools where teachers increased their implementation of deliver for learner engagement.¹⁶ Related practices include monitoring fidelity of instructional practices and learner progress and adjusting instruction as necessary. Here the rate of growth was 1.12 in the high group compared to 0.69 in the low group. Again, the rate of growth in the high group was above the 50th percentile.

¹⁶ Other grade levels were not significant.

Figure 10
Percentage of 3rd Grade Students at 50th Percentile and Ambitious Growth Level
Comparison Between High and Low SDI Group



All told, higher growth scores for students in schools where teachers increased SDI practices helped to put these students on a trajectory towards meeting or exceeding benchmarks for successful reading proficiency, examples of which are provided in **Figure 10** (above). As seen in the figure, between 42% and 44% of 3rd graders in the high group had rates of improvement that put them at the 50th percentile compared to only 9-12% of 3rd graders in the low group.¹⁷ Equally impressive is that 17% to 20% of 3rd graders in the high groups were at the ambitious growth level compared to only 1-4% in the low group. In essence, students at the ambitious growth level are making

¹⁷ There was a positive trend at the other grades, favoring the high group; however, the differences were not statistically significant.

more than expected progress, which means that they are “beating the odds” and closing the gap. Differences between the groups at both levels were statistically significant and independent of students’ prior growth rates.

Summary

The findings reported in this issue of the *SPDG Spotlight* extend the evidence for the impact of Iowa’s SPDG on teaching and learning outcomes. In the previous edition, the *SPDG Spotlight* revealed significant improvements in teachers’ implementation of SDI practices, particularly in schools where there was coaching support that included action planning, regular meetings or PLCs, and ongoing coaching conversations related to SDI and the application of the SDI Framework. This report adds to these findings by showcasing the connection between teacher implementation of SDI and positive student literacy outcomes. Specifically, in participating schools, more students met grade level benchmarks over time and increased their rate of growth, latter was seen in schools where teachers increased their use of SDI. Taken together, the reports provide valuable information about how to build the capacity of educators to effectively implement SDI and improve literacy outcomes for learners with disabilities.

F. Plans for Next Year

1. Additional Activities to be Implemented Next Year

At the time of this writing, Iowa schools are closed to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and the majority of professional learning targeted to building teams has been suspended. It is unknown when schools will reopen and begin the business of ensuring FAPE and potential need for compensatory services. If schools remain closed until next fall, it is anticipated that professional learning will continue to be suspended as IEP teams meet to determine what, if any, additional supports students need and provide those supports. Modifications, therefore, may be very necessary for next year. It is, however, hard to project exactly what those modifications may need to be. This uncertainty and a review of previous SIMR data has resulted in Iowa resetting the SIMR target to 26%, the first target set when the SSIP was first submitted. In lieu of the ability to plan with any confidence, the Department is committed to continuing support to AEAs as they continue to provide technical assistance and professional learning to improve the effective delivery of specially designed instruction, including as appropriate:

- Extension of contracting with an external evaluator to a sixth year
- Continued support to AEAs to implement the three SSIP strategies of the SSIP Logic Model related to continued implementation and scale-up of SDI Literacy
- Ensuring fidelity of AEA-provided professional development delivery and coaching support to new districts
- Use of the professional learning materials and supports for instructional practices and system coaches across the system

- Utilizing developed materials and supports to ensure strong family-school partnerships

2. Planned evaluation activities

The Department is committed to the statewide implementation of Iowa’s SDI Framework and the improved effectiveness of specially designed instruction in the area of literacy. The use of data to determine fidelity of implementation and effects of those efforts is critical to ensuring full implementation. The Department, therefore, will continue to contract with an external evaluator for another year, using the same evaluation methods and procedures that were described in this report.

3. Anticipated barriers and steps to address those barriers

There are two primary barriers that could challenge continued scale-up activities planned for next year. Evaluation data from implementation of the SDI project has shown that by implementing the professional learning as designed, coupled with SDI coaching of classroom teachers, has shown improvement in teacher practice and student outcomes. AEAs have taken on the responsibility of providing the SDI professional learning to partner districts in each of the areas of focus. They have also provided the coaching and technical assistance to those districts as well. We need to ensure that the “package” for SDI (professional learning with the already-developed materials; providing coaching of teachers for classroom implantation) is implemented across the state with fidelity. This could prove to be a barrier to getting the same results that were gained during usability testing.

The second possible barrier, district resources, refers to providing financial incentives to districts participating in the SDI Literacy work. During usability testing and the initial year of scale-up, districts received some financial support to pay for substitute teachers, student materials, travel, etc. Those resources are no longer available. This might be a barrier that agencies may encounter as they work to scale-up this work at their agencies.

4. Needs for Additional Support and / or Technical Assistance

Resources provided through the SigNetwork continue to be highly-valued components of technical assistance received by the state. It is anticipated that supports in the form of waivers may be necessary as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect students, parents, and the entire education system.

Accessibility Report

Filename: SSIP 2018.March 31 (1).pdf

Report created by: [Enter personal and organization information through the Preferences > Identity dialog.]

Organization:

Summary

The checker found no problems in this document.

- Needs manual check: 0
- Passed manually: 2
- Failed manually: 0
- Skipped: 2
- Passed: 28
- Failed: 0

Detailed Report

Document

Rule Name	Status	Description
Accessibility permission flag	Passed	Accessibility permission flag must be set
Image-only PDF	Passed	Document is not image-only PDF
Tagged PDF	Passed	Document is tagged PDF
Logical Reading Order	Passed manually	Document structure provides a logical reading order
Primary language	Passed	Text language is specified
Title	Passed	Document title is showing in title bar
Bookmarks	Passed	Bookmarks are present in large documents
Color contrast	Passed manually	Document has appropriate color contrast

Page Content

Rule Name	Status	Description
Tagged content	Skipped	All page content is tagged
Tagged annotations	Passed	All annotations are tagged
Tab order	Passed	Tab order is consistent with structure order
Character encoding	Passed	Reliable character encoding is provided
Tagged multimedia	Passed	All multimedia objects are tagged
Screen flicker	Passed	Page will not cause screen flicker
Scripts	Passed	No inaccessible scripts
Timed responses	Passed	Page does not require timed responses
Navigation links	Passed	Navigation links are not repetitive

Forms

Rule Name	Status	Description
Tagged form fields	Passed	All form fields are tagged
Field descriptions	Passed	All form fields have description

Alternate Text

Rule Name	Status	Description
Figures alternate text	Passed	Figures require alternate text
Nested alternate text	Passed	Alternate text that will never be read
Associated with content	Passed	Alternate text must be associated with some content
Hides annotation	Passed	Alternate text should not hide annotation
Other elements alternate text	Passed	Other elements that require alternate text

Tables

Rule Name	Status	Description
Rows	Passed	TR must be a child of Table, THead, TBody, or TFoot
TH and TD	Passed	TH and TD must be children of TR
Headers	Passed	Tables should have headers
Regularity	Passed	Tables must contain the same number of columns in each row and rows in each column
Summary	Skipped	Tables must have a summary

Lists

Rule Name	Status	Description
List items	Passed	LI must be a child of L
Lbl and LBody	Passed	Lbl and LBody must be children of LI

Headings

Rule Name	Status	Description
Appropriate nesting	Passed	Appropriate nesting