

South Carolina Part B Systemic Improvement Plan

Strengthening the Links to Bridge the Gaps in Reading

April 1, 2015

South Carolina Department of Education

**Molly Spearman
State Superintendent of Education**

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Section I: SC Part B SSIP Phase I Activities and Timelines

Beginning in December of 2013, the South Carolina Department of Education's (SCDE) Office of Special Education Services (OSES) formed an internal Part B Core Team to guide the development of the South Carolina State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). The Part B Core Team consisted of the then Interim Director of OSES and several OSES staff members. The Part C Core Team was also established, with the First Steps/BabyNet State Director as the lead. Shortly after they were established, the Part B and Part C Core Teams agreed to work together on the SSIP.

Information about the SSIP was first presented to local education agency (LEA) leaders participating in the Spring 2014 Special Education Administrators Conference (since renamed the Office of Special Education's Leadership Meeting) titled *State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP): Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth with Disabilities and Their Families* on March 20–21, 2014. The SSIP information provided was introductory in scope. During this session, district leaders were told that the OSES would be looking for LEA partners, and several districts volunteered.

With technical assistance from the Mid-South Regional Resource Center (MSRRC) and the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA), a broad stakeholder exploratory group was assembled. Participants were given an overview of the State Performance Plan (SPP) and the SSIP process, and the need for stakeholder involvement in the development plan was emphasized. Participants identified the governance, fiscal, quality standards, professional development, data, technical assistance, and accountability/monitoring aspects of systems in place in the State, as well as other SCDE offices, agencies, advocacy groups, programs, and individuals that should be contacted for additional information, or with an invitation to join the stakeholder group.

Following the meeting, the SSIP Part B Core Team expanded by adding a new data manager and several other staff members. A calendar of weekly team meetings was established from May 21, 2014, through March 2015. The roles and responsibilities of the SSIP teams and stakeholders were based on concepts from the IDEA Partnership's publication *Leading by Convening*.

Two teams were established from the Part B Core Team to analyze the State's data and infrastructure. The lead for each team selected and invited a small group of stakeholders—both internal and external to the SCDE—to participate in a broad data and infrastructure analysis. Broad data analysis was initiated and data for stakeholder review was prepared. The stakeholders' infrastructure analysis included identifying system strengths, obstacles, and/or gaps needing improvement. In addition, stakeholders examined on-going initiatives to determine the capacity of our State infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity in local programs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices. In some instances, individuals who were unable to attend meetings in-person were contacted by phone or e-mail (see Data Analysis and Infrastructure Analysis sections for more information). Through this broad data and infrastructure analysis, several concern areas and potential improvement areas were identified including constancy in reading programs across the State (i.e., reading fluency), opportunities to learn, and the area of secondary transition. Stakeholder input, agency priorities, and legislative concerns helped to narrow the focus from several broad areas for improvement to one broad focus area, with the consensus being that in order to see improvement in secondary outcomes, earlier intervention is needed.

In May 2014, a broader South Carolina State SSIP Team was formed consisting of Part B and Part C State teams. This Team identified internal and external stakeholders to the SCDE. Because Part B and Part C partner with

many of the same state agencies, programs, and advocates, it was evident that whatever focus was selected by either team would impact the children served by both. Regular meetings were scheduled so that both teams could serve as stakeholders for the other, provide feedback on processes, and determine areas of connection. Technical assistance for the two-day meetings was provided by MSRRC and ECTA. Meetings began with an update from the two State Teams, and opportunities for questions, clarifications, and feedback was provided. Information considered essential for both teams was provided in a joint session, and break-out groups followed.

At the May 7–8, 2014, meeting, State Team members representing Family Connection of South Carolina, BabyNet/First Steps, South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind, PRO-Parents, and OSES discussed stakeholder engagement. Participants provided feedback in four areas to reduce stakeholder challenges, including: improving constructive use of feedback; questioning underlying assumptions; ensuring cross-representation; and increasing utilization of available resources. Discussion also included maximizing the use of stakeholders. For example, the State Team decided to pursue opportunities where one person/agency could represent both Part B and Part C stakeholder groups. In addition, it was decided to use as many existing structures and meetings (e.g., State Interagency Coordinating Council (Part C), South Carolina Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities (Part B)) to share information.

Additional face-to-face Part B and Part C State Team meetings were held on June 10–11, 2014; July 30–31, 2014; August 20–21, 2014; September 18–19, 2014; October 29–30, 2014; December 9–10, 2014; January 22–23, 2015, and February 17–18, 2015. Letters of invitation to the State meetings were consistently written on behalf of both Part B and Part C Directors.

Some of the agencies/offices/programs/individuals represented at, or invited to, the State Team meetings included the OSES Director, the SSIP Part B Team Lead, the Part B 619 Coordinator, OSES Data and Finance and SSIP Data Analysis Team Leads, SSIP Infrastructure Analysis Team Lead, OSES Education Associates, SCDE's Office of School Transformation, SCDE's Office of Virtual Education, SCDE's Office of Assessment, Part C Coordinators, Part C Data Manager, Training for Early Childhood Solutions (TECS), USC School of Medicine, CSPD, Training and Technical Assistance for Early Childhood Solutions (TECS), USC School of Medicine, BabyNet Parent Connection State Coordinator, Family Connection of South Carolina, PRO-Parents of SC, BabyNet State SPOE Supervisor, First Steps, Department of Disabilities and Special Needs, State Office Program Associates, SC First Steps/BabyNet, South Carolina School for the Deaf and the Blind, Institute for Child Success, Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), SC Children's Law Center, SCDE's Office of Student Intervention, SCDE's Office of Instruction and Evaluations, and ABLE South Carolina.

In July/August 2014, a video was created about the SC Part B SSIP process using basic non-technical terminology. The video was published on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/OS3ODX-Oll8>) and thus made available for broad stakeholder review. The video explained why reading was chosen as the broad focus of our SSIP and included data used to arrive at that decision. It encouraged viewers to provide feedback to the SCDE through the OSES website. The video was introduced to the entire State Team at the August 20, 2014, meeting (see appendix A: Links).

On September 8–10, 2014, the Part B SSIP Team Lead and Data Analysis Team Lead attended the Improving Data, Improving Outcomes conference, sponsored by DaSy (the Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems), Idea Data Center (IDC), and ECTA (Early Childhood Technical Assistance) Center, to obtain more information about the SSIP process. Information from the conference was forwarded to SSIP Core Team members during and after the conference (see appendix B: Acronyms and Definitions).

2014 Fall Leadership and Stakeholder Meeting

The SSIP State Team held a joint stakeholder meeting during the 2014 Fall Leadership Meeting in an effort to achieve the following: keep a broad stakeholder group informed; narrow the focus to identify root causes contributing to low performance; refine focus for improvement; and identify measureable result(s) to be achieved. In addition to LEA special education directors, teachers, coordinators, psychologists, data managers, Head Start representatives, and representatives of other state-operated programs (SOPs), the invited audience was expanded to include members of the SC Advisory Council, early childhood general and special education teachers and coordinators, Part C participating agencies and staff, parents of infants and toddlers with disabilities, and statewide and local partners (e.g., Family Connection of South Carolina, Able SC, the Federation of Families).

The OSES Director explained the SSIP process to stakeholders. They were told that after data and infrastructure analyses are completed, a State-identified measureable result (SIMR) would be recommended for the plan for Phase II and for evaluation in Phase III, and that the SIMR would be a “statement of the results the State intends to achieve through the implementation of the SSIP.” The following other SIMR parameters were discussed: the importance of developing informed stakeholders; and the value of receiving stakeholder input and suggestions with regard to the direction taken by the State. Later, the SSIP Part B Core Team reviewed all of the responses and grouped them into a few broad categories. The responses guided the analysis of the infrastructure, identified additional data sources, and informed our State SIMR (see section I, Additional Stakeholder and Qualitative Feedback, 2014 Fall Leadership Meeting).

In October/November 2014, the Part B SSIP Core Team refined the focus for improvement and determined a SIMR. In addition, the Team began to draft the infrastructure and data analyses sections of the SSIP. The Core Team examined ways of keeping the broad stakeholder group informed and began work on developing an SSIP web-page for the OSES website. This involved identifying materials for inclusion, reviewing them with the OSES Director, and refining materials for inclusion. It was anticipated that the SSIP web-page launch would occur in January or February 2015; however, changes in SCDE administrative staff and administrative processes have delayed the launch.

Because reading was identified as the focus of the SIMR, the existing stakeholder group was revised to include stakeholders with expertise in the area of reading. Potential district partners were selected based on an in-depth data and infrastructure analysis. Twelve school districts were chosen that met the following three criteria: had either *focus schools* (i.e., those schools that the SCDE identified as having the largest achievement gaps between general education and special education students in subgroup performance or low achievement subgroups), or *priority schools* (i.e., Title 1 schools that are performing in the lowest 5 percent of all schools within the State) for multiple years; did not have major compliance issues in their annual determinations or monitoring visits; and had a local administration that would be available, prepared, and willing to participate in the planning and implementation of the SSIP through Phases II and III. These twelve districts are representative of different geographic and socioeconomic areas of the State. Then, the OSES evaluated the reading proficiency numbers in the twelve districts based on the SC PASS reading assessment exam for third grade for the past four school years (see section II: Additional Stakeholders and Qualitative Feedback—District Partners).

SC SSIP District Partners’ Meeting

Representatives from each of the twelve districts were invited to participate in the initial SSIP District Partners’ Meeting to be held on February 13, 2015, in Columbia, SC. In the letter of invitation, district representatives were informed that “South Carolina proposes to focus its SSIP on improving reading proficiency, particularly in the

beginning grades to address achievement gaps before they become more prevalent in middle school and high school.” The invitees were asked to bring 2–5 essential district staff/administrators (such as the Read to Succeed (R2S) liaison—established in the new State legislative mandate, content specialist, and/or curriculum leadership). Among the twelve invited, eleven districts attended and one requested an alternative meeting date, together with a letter of intent to participate. Two of the districts that attended sent only one staff member and asked if they could come back with a full team at a later date. A make-up meeting date was held on March 26, 2015, for these three school districts.

After introductions and an overview of the data and infrastructure analyses, the SIMR was discussed. The *Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity: Addressing Success Gaps* rubric developed by the IDC Data Center (upon which the SC SSIP District Partners’ Inventory was based) was introduced and fully explained to district attendees. Participants were informed of the expectation to return to their districts and complete the rubric with expanded teams. Next, the SC SSIP District Partners’ Inventory was introduced. The Partners’ Inventory is based on five core areas to address success gaps for reading proficiency including data-based decision making, cultural responsiveness, core instructional programs, assessment (universal screening and progress monitoring), and interventions and supports. Instructions, which were included in the Partners’ Inventory, were explained to all participants as they reviewed their copies. Attendees were instructed, “Think about initiatives that support reading and literacy in your district as you complete the Partners’ Inventory.”

Feedback from the Partners’ Inventory provided a method for the OSES to determine root causes of low performance in reading within the select districts, as well as develop specific strategies that will help determine appropriate plans to improve reading proficiency in each SSIP partner district. Participants agreed they could complete the *Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity: Addressing Success Gaps* rubric with additional personnel in their respective districts and submit the document to OSES by March 27, 2015.

Presentations to the South Carolina Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities

During quarterly Advisory Council meetings, Part B Core Team members have provided presentations on the progress of the SSIP and have received regular feedback. The last update was provided on February 20, 2015.

Presentations to the Literacy Specialists

On March 4, 2015, members of the Part B Core Team made a presentation about the SSIP to the Read to Succeed literacy specialists. The literacy specialists were interested in knowing how best to support reading coaches in schools serving students with disabilities as this plan is implemented. The literacy specialists also provided feedback pertaining to what role school-based reading coaches could play in the implementation of the SSIP.

State Team Meetings

At the January 22–23, 2015, meeting, the State Team developed strategies based on data and infrastructure analysis, and feedback from stakeholders. At the February 17–18, 2015, SSIP State Team meeting, the Part B Core Team developed a logic model and graphic representation of a theory of action for implementing the SIMR. This overview of our process provides context for the work on the State’s SSIP that follows.

Section II: State Systemic Improvement Plan - Data Analysis

Data Analysis: Introduction

The SCDE and the OSES conducted a thorough review of available data from multiple sources, including all 618 and 619 data elements collected from school districts and local education agencies (LEAs), the Annual Performance Report (APR), district and assessment information from the SCDE’s Offices of Assessment and Research and Data Analysis, and additional input from various stakeholder groups. From this review, the OSES identified the following State-identified measurable result (SIMR) for South Carolina’s State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP): *For students with disabilities in grade three, South Carolina will increase the percentage of students who are deemed proficient or higher on the statewide reading accountability assessment in select districts with the largest average achievement gaps as determined by the ESEA waiver (i.e., those districts with “focus” or “priority” schools).* This SIMR is based on Indicator 3C, the proficiency rate for children with IEPs against grade-level and alternate academic achievement standards.

Data Analysis: Data Identification

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Adult Education
- Office of Assessment
- Office of Virtual Education
- Office of Instructional Practices and Evaluation
- Office of Research and Data Analysis
- Office of Special Education Services

Mid-South Regional Resource Center

As the OSES conducted planning of the SSIP, other initiatives in South Carolina were being implemented that helped guide the analysis team to determine a potential focus. An important piece of legislation passed and signed in 2014 was SC Senate Bill 516 “Read to Succeed Act,” which was designed to offer a comprehensive, systematic approach to reading to ensure all students will develop reading and writing skills that prepare them to be college and career ready. As this was a major initiative being promoted by the State Legislature, the Governor, as well as the SCDE’s Superintendent, the OSES felt it would be sensible and prudent to link the SSIP with this effort. Thus, to determine if the focus of reading was warranted, the OSES first had to determine what types of data were available that could be appropriately reviewed and analyzed. In order to do this, the OSES invited multiple SCDE offices to discuss the SSIP’s core goals and overall process. Afterward, the OSES asked the departments to fill out a survey about the types of data that are available and if the data can be used to assist with the core goals of the SSIP. The survey asked the following questions:

Data Survey Questions

What data can my area provide or has access to, if any, that may have a direct result to the focus?

How is this data collected? What methods are used to collect the data? Please be specific.

How can this data be:

- Disaggregated? (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic, LEA)
- Disaggregated to identify high and low performance?

What kinds of factors can contribute or affect this data? (For example, if your area can provide test scores, what factors can you think of that may affect how a student does on a test?)

What data quality issues would this data have? (e.g., sampling errors, small samples, wide variety of data knowledge and collection techniques)

What other stakeholders would need to be involved?

Can the data I have affect infrastructure as well? (e.g., Teacher evaluations; if so, in what way(s)?)

The survey revealed that there was a wealth of data available for consideration. After review of the survey data, the OSES determined that the following data would be most applicable to conduct the data analysis as well as provide applicable information for the infrastructure analysis:

<i>Data</i>	<i>Source(s)</i>
South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SC PASS) for English Language Arts (ELA)	SCDE Office of Assessment SCDE Office of Research and Data Analysis
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)	SCDE Office of Assessment
State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report data, including all performance indicators and required data for EdFacts submissions	SCDE Office of Assessment SCDE Office of Special Education Services IDEA Data Center
Data for disaggregation analysis (e.g., poverty index, information about Focus and Priority Schools)	SCDE Office of Research and Data Analysis

Data Analysis: Quality of the Data

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Research and Data Analysis
- Office of Special Education Services

IDEA Part C Participating Agencies and Stakeholders

Mid-South Regional Resource Center

The SCDE and the OSES worked meticulously to collect, review, analyze, and validate data collected from each LEA and SOP within South Carolina. The SCDE staff collaborated with Nancy O’Hara and Nancy LaCount from the Mid-South Regional Resource Center (MSRRC) and with stakeholders both within and outside of the SCDE to ensure that the assessment information used is valid and reliable. The SCDE also determined data quality via the Data Survey (explained in the Data Identification section) to determine any potential data quality issues.

PowerSchool is the current student information system provided to LEAs by the SCDE and is the main source for student data collections. Data is then transferred electronically to the SCDE via the SIS Web Extract and Export Tool (SWEET) during defined collection periods. The submitted “source” data are ultimately used to fulfill State and/or national data reporting mandates. Only data values that are needed for reporting purposes are included and used by the SCDE PowerSchool team. The OSES also uses a new data management product released in FFY 2013 called Enrich. This system provides a more efficient method of collecting data directly from LEAs. As a result, data are more readily available for the OSES data team to review and analyze, which improves the system of providing technical assistance to LEAs.

The OSES also has a Fiscal and Data Management (FDM) team that is responsible for collecting and managing all financial and programmatic data required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as well as other federal and state laws and regulations relating to the provision of special education services and related services for children and youth with disabilities in the State of South Carolina. FDM prepares and submits the SPP/APR, prepares OSES budget reports, tracks and reports OSES expenditures, performs fiscal monitoring of LEAs and SOPs under IDEA, and manages procurement activities for the OSES.

One main concern is that while the OSES used the SC PASS assessment to conduct the data analysis, the SCDE is replacing this assessment beginning in the 2015–16 school year to align with the new English language arts (ELA) and math standards. Stakeholder feedback (as discussed later in this section) also reiterated concerns of a changing assessment and new standards in determining progress for students with disabilities in South Carolina. In order to address this issue, the SCDE and the OSES approached the data analysis by reviewing all previous data related to reading assessment in South Carolina, discovering the areas of either poor performance or high reading gaps, reviewing the infrastructure (addressed in the Infrastructure section), and then selecting the districts for SSIP implementation. Thus, our SIMR will focus on the percentage of students deemed proficient or above rather than using numbers, percentages, or scale scores from a specific assessment.

Another data quality issue of concern to stakeholders within the SCDE was those relating to human error. Multiple controls have already been established to address human error within submissions. When special education data is prepared for submission to EdFacts, multiple staff at both the LEA and State levels have discussed and reviewed the data to ensure its accuracy. The SCDE has provided written instructions and webinars annually to explain reporting processes as well as provide information to ensure data quality. This ensures

reporting data is consistent from year to year, even if staff turnover occurs. The SCDE developed queries using Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software and Structured Query Language (SQL) software that incorporate business rules to check for errors in all special education data submissions. Finally, both the OSES and other SCDE staff collaborate to do final reviews of the data prior to any EdFacts submissions or data related to the APR.

Data Analysis: Data Disaggregation

(Enlarged versions of each graph in this section are available in appendix C.)

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Research and Data Analysis
- Office of Special Education Services

IDEA Part C Participating Agencies and Stakeholders

University of South Carolina Office of Program Evaluation

LEA Special Education Directors, Coordinators, and Data Managers

State and local partners

Families of students with disabilities

Mid-South Regional Resource Center

Broad Data Analysis

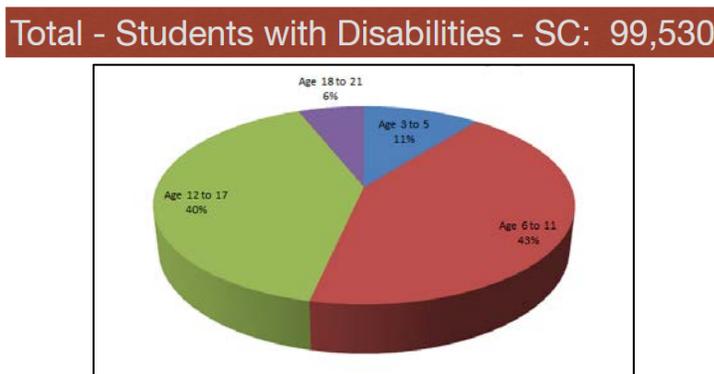


Figure 2.1: Students with Disabilities, South Carolina, by age group

The OSES first completed a broad data analysis using child count data submitted for Tables 1 and 3. In South Carolina in 2012, the number of children age 3–5 receiving services is 10,626, and the number of children age 6–21 is 88,904. With assistance from the SCDE’s Office of Assessment and Office of Research and Data Analysis, performance gaps were calculated for students with disabilities and without disabilities for the South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SC PASS) for English Language Arts (ELA) for Grades 3, 4, 7, and 8 and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for Grades 4 and 8.

This analysis showed that our SC PASS ELA comprised of a 49 point performance gap in third grade, a 56 point gap in fourth grade, a 55 point gap in seventh grade, and a 67 point gap in eighth grade. Similar gaps were identified in the NAEP reading assessment results. In the NAEP sample, there is a 61 point gap for students taking the grade 4 reading assessment, and a 52 point gap for students taking the grade 8 reading assessment. For the NAEP assessment, the State data analysis team identified that during the three most recent assessment years (2009, 2011, and 2013), more students with disabilities were included in the assessment sample. When the number of students with disabilities in the sample increased, the corresponding reading scores dropped. Thus, NAEP reading data indicate that as more students with disabilities are included in sampling calculations, a larger performance gap exists between general education and special education students.

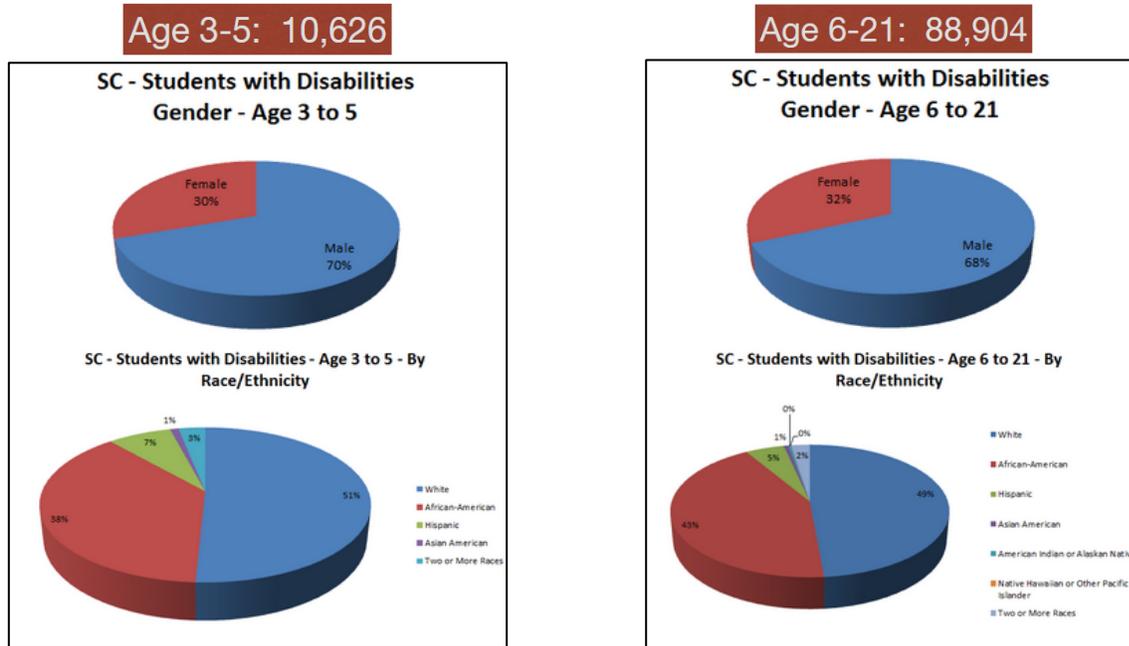


Figure 2.2: Overview of Students with Disabilities in South Carolina, Age 3–5 and 6–21

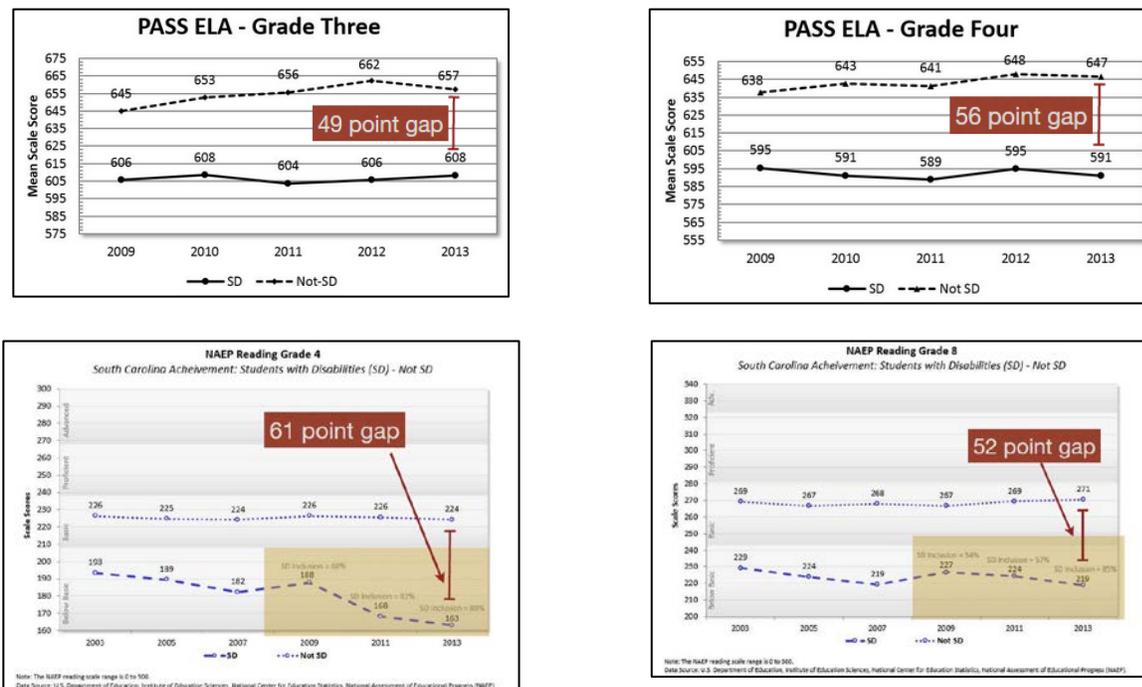


Figure 2.3: Reading performance gaps for the SC PASS ELA Assessment (Grade 3 and 4) and the NAEP Reading Assessment (Grade 4 and 8)

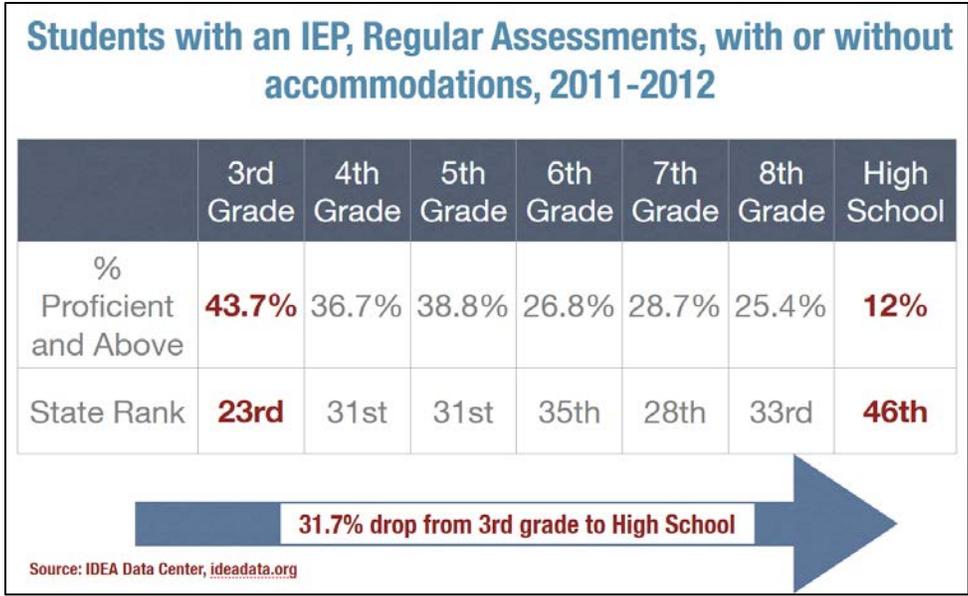


Figure 2.4: Reading proficiency rate for students with an IEP in South Carolina

Further analysis included comparisons with other states; the OSES also looked at reading performance for students with an IEP who took their statewide regular assessment with or without accommodations during the 2011–12 school year. Data indicate that in third grade, 43.7 percent of these students with disabilities scored proficient or above, ranking South Carolina 23rd in the country. Even more alarming was that by the time students were in high school, only 12 percent of students were rated proficient or above, dropping South Carolina to 46th in the country. This reflects a drop of 31 percentage points in reading proficiency from third grade to high school.

In-Depth Data Analysis

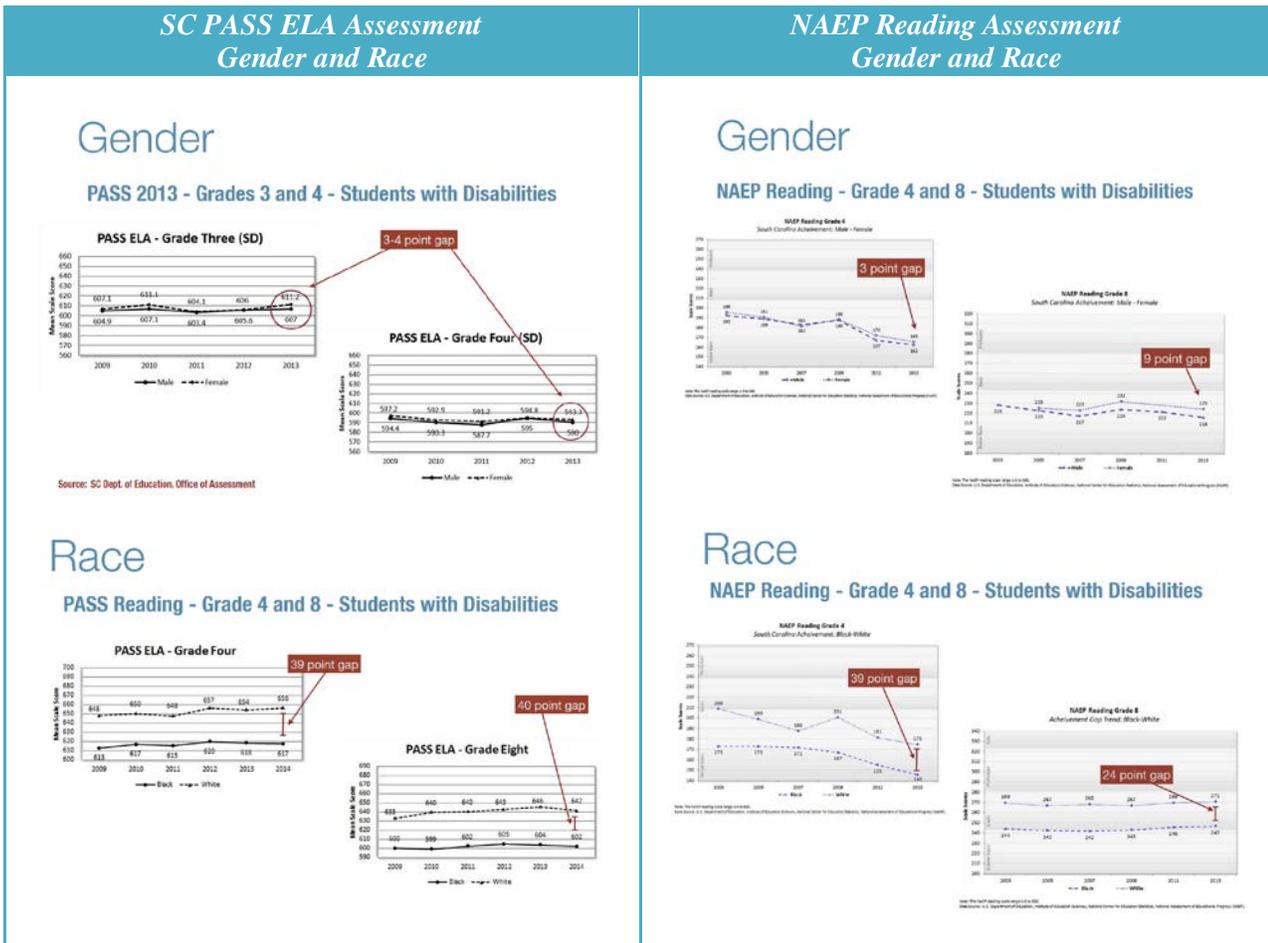


Figure 2.5: Reading performance gaps for students with disabilities for gender and race for students with disabilities on the SC PASS ELA assessment and the NAEP reading assessment

The data was disaggregated by multiple variables, including LEA, geographic location, race/ethnicity, disability category, socioeconomic status, age, and least restrictive environment (LRE). When the State first reviewed the data, it was looking to identify any significant gaps within the disaggregated categories, either among categorical groups or between general education and special education students. When the scores were first disaggregated by gender, there did not appear to be any statistically significant performance gaps between males or females. However, low performance overall among both genders was found for the SC PASS ELA and the NAEP exams. In addition, when the reading assessment data was disaggregated by race, there appeared to be a statistically significant gap between African American and white special education students in fourth and eighth grades on both the SC PASS ELA and the NAEP reading assessments. The analysis showed a 39 point gap on the most recent assessments in fourth grade, a 24 point gap on the NAEP reading assessment in eighth grade, and a 40 point gap on the SC PASS ELA assessment in eighth grade. This analysis is important because stakeholders identified cultural responsiveness as a possible root cause to low performance in reading, and stakeholders requested more professional development in this area (see Root Cause Analysis section on pages 25 and 26).

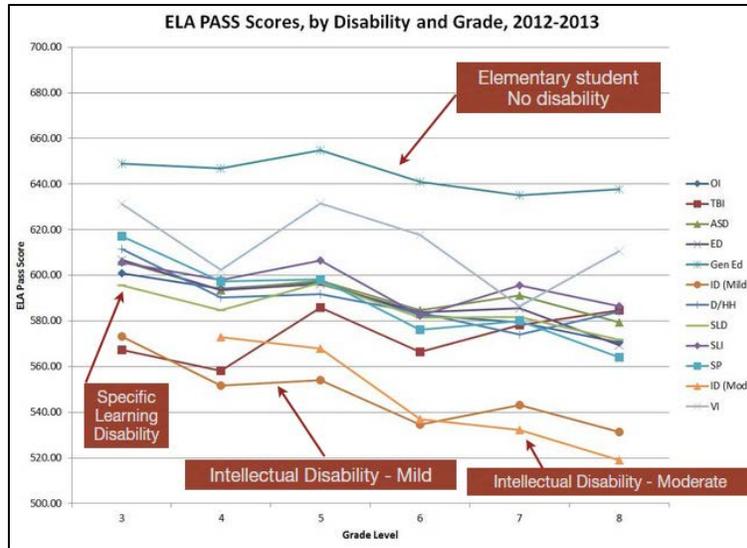


Figure 2.6: SC PASS ELA assessment scores by disability and grade 2012–13 school year

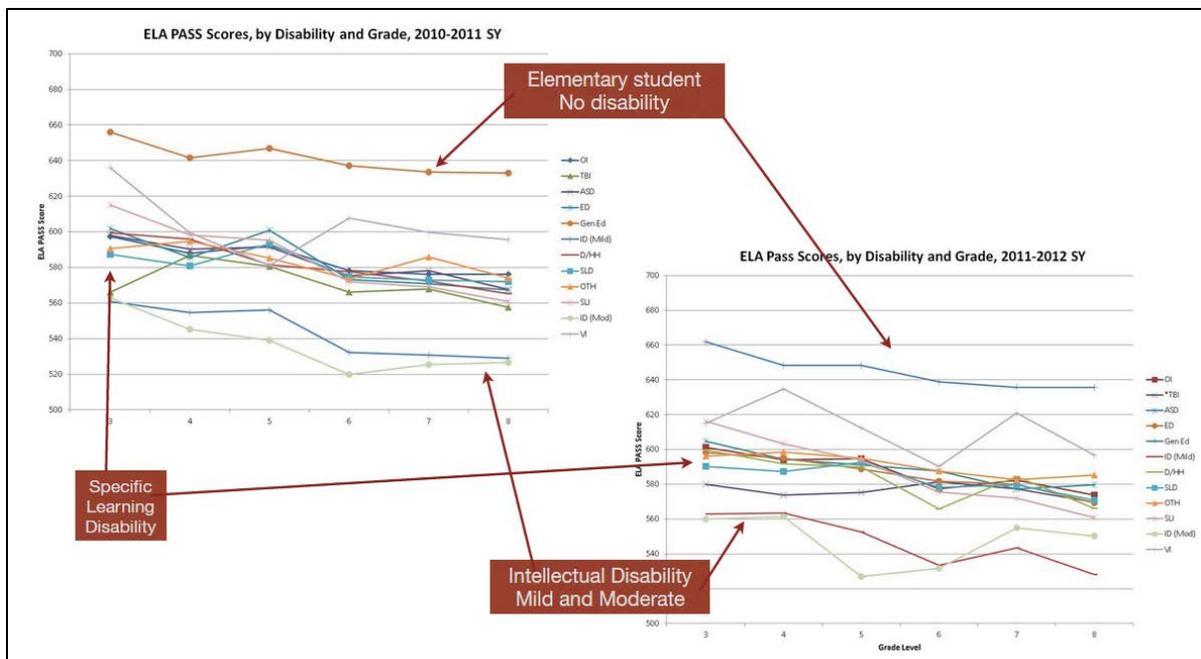


Figure 2.7: SC PASS ELA assessment scores by disability and grade 2010–11 and 2011–12 school years

The OSES further disaggregated SC PASS ELA scores by both disability and grade level across the State. Results of this analysis show that a gap exists between special education students and general education students among all disabilities, but the gap range varies among specific disabilities. The OSES analyzed the disability scores for the previous three school years for the SC PASS ELA assessment. The top lines on all graphs (above) represent elementary school students with no disability. The students who scored the lowest on these exams were students who had intellectual disabilities (mild or moderate). Our largest group of students with disabilities, Specific

Learning Disability (SLD), had an approximately 60–70 point gap depending on grade level. However, regardless of the disability, this analysis appears to show that there is a statistically significant gap between fourth- and eighth-grade general education and special education students in achievement on reading assessments.

This data weighed heavily in determining the SIMR because it demonstrates that a large gap exists from third to eighth grades and does not decrease. Musen (2010) noted in one research study, 74 percent of third graders who read poorly in third grade still struggled to read in ninth grade, and thus, reading skills in third grade are strong predictors of future academic performance. The data analysis shown in Figures 2.6 and 2.7 confirm this for students with disabilities in South Carolina.

	Age 6-9	Age 10-13	Age 14-18
Correctional	0.00%	0.00%	0.10%
Homebound	0.25%	0.53%	1.02%
Regular Class 80% or more	70.11%	56.70%	47.77%
Regular Class 75-80%	14.18%	21.43%	29.62%
Regular Class <40%	14.18%	20.07%	19.94%
Private School	0.78%	0.30%	0.12%
Residential Facility	0.09%	0.28%	0.60%
Separate School	0.41%	0.68%	0.83%

	4 th Grade		8 th Grade	
	Average ELA Performance Gap	Average LRE placement where 80% or more of students time is in the General Ed classroom	Average ELA Performance Gap	Average LRE Placement where 80% or more of the students time is in the General Ed classroom
Top 10 Districts where students with SLD scored the highest	48.81 points	68.4% of all students with SLD	41.56 points	58.4% of all students with SLD
Bottom 10 Districts where students with SLD scored the lowest	73.16 points Gap is higher by 24 pts	61.2% of all students with SLD Placement is 7.1% lower	66.71 points Gap is higher by 22 points	59.6% of all students with SLD Placement is 8.4% lower

Figure 2.8: Age group and LRE percentages

Figure 2.9: SC PASS ELA gaps, fourth and eighth grades, based on LRE for SLD students

When the OSES disaggregated the data by LRE and cross tabulated it by age group, the data indicates that when a student with a disability is age 6 to 9, they are more likely to be in a regular (general education) class 80 percent or more of the time. By the time students reach high school, less than half of students with disabilities are in regular class 80 percent or more of the time. The percentage of students also doubles from the 6–9 age group to the 14–18 age group for those students in the 79–40 percent regular class LRE. To further analyze this data, the OSES analyzed students identified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD), as this group encompasses the largest group of students with disabilities in South Carolina. The results of this analysis showed that in the ten school districts where students with a SLD scored the lowest, there was a gap exceeding 73 points between the SLD students and general education students in fourth grade, and a gap of 67 points in eighth grade. There is also a 23 to 25 point difference from the top 10 districts where students with a SLD scored the highest when compared with the bottom 10 districts. In addition, the OSES noticed that the LRE inclusion rate for the 80 percent or more in regular class LRE was 7 percent lower in fourth grade and 8 percent lower in eighth grade.

3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
46.6	52.3	54.5	57.4	52.6	63.4

Gap increasing from 3rd to 8th grade

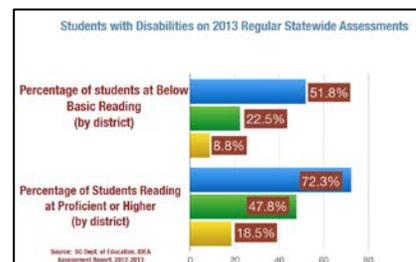


Figure 2.10: Reading performance gap—students with disabilities vs. general education students, 2013

Figure 2.11: SC PASS ELA assessment performance for students with disabilities, 2013

The OSES looked at the reading performance gap over time from third grade to eighth grade using SC PASS reading scores in 2013. This analysis showed that in third grade, the gap was 46.6 points, and in eighth grade, the gap increased to 63.4 points. When the OSES disaggregated reading scores on our statewide assessment for each school district, the OSES discovered that, on average, approximately 22 percent of students scored at the below basic level in reading. The lowest district had over half of their students with disabilities score below basic level in reading. In addition, the OSES found that, on average, 47.8 percent of students in our State’s districts scored at the proficient level or higher in reading. The lowest district on this metric had less than one in five students scoring proficient or higher in reading.

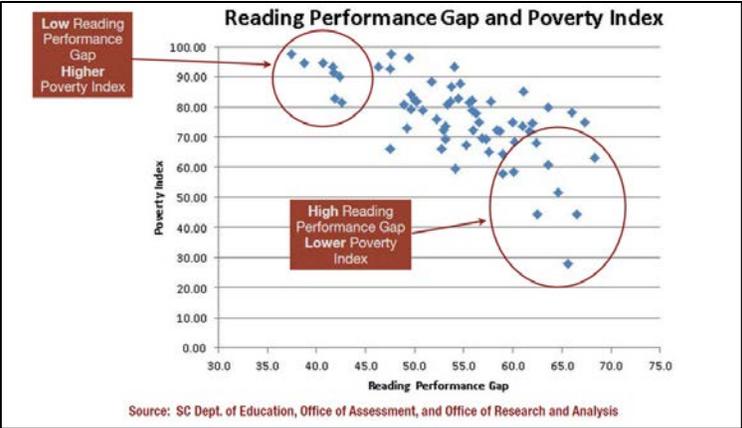


Figure 2.12: District reading performance gaps by poverty index, 2012–13 school year

To address whether there was a possible correlation between reading performance gap and socioeconomic status, the OSES compared the reading performance gap of students with disabilities and the corresponding poverty indexes of the school districts using data from the SCDE’s Office of Research and Data Analysis. This analysis revealed that those districts with a lower reading performance gap were districts with a higher poverty index, and districts with a higher reading performance gap had a lower poverty index.

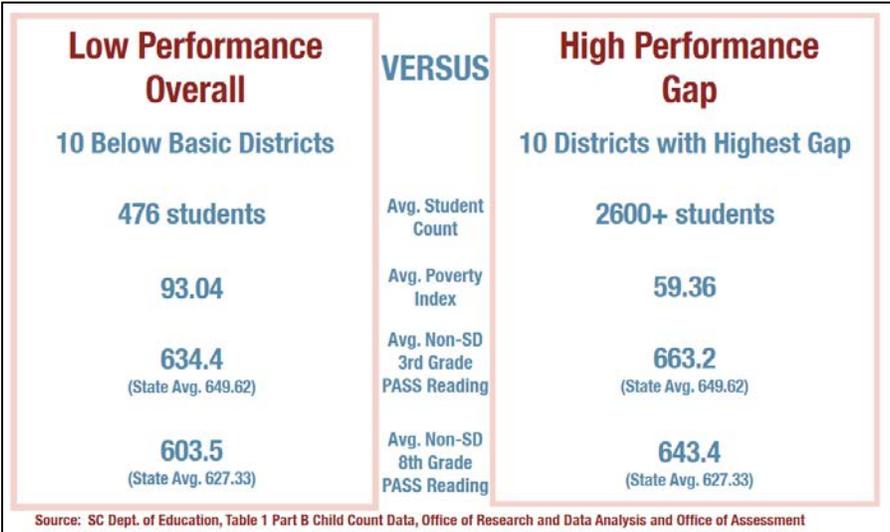


Figure 2.13: Lower performance vs. high performance gap districts, 2012–13 school year

Thus, the OSES determined based on both the broad and in-depth data analysis that there are some key distinctions between two groups of school districts when reading assessment scores are analyzed. There are school districts where both general education and special education students have low reading scores overall. These districts are small in size, have a higher poverty index, and most often have average general education reading scores below the statewide average on reading assessments. In districts where the reading assessment gap between general education and special education students is highest, the districts are significantly larger in size, have a lower poverty index, and have general education reading scores above the statewide average on reading assessments. These findings are consistent with research indicating the majority of low-income elementary students are more likely to not be proficient in reading compared to students in higher income areas (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). These findings were explained to our stakeholders to assist them in determining if there were any particular preferences as to location or school district for SSIP work. This is explained in greater detail in the stakeholder section.

Data Analysis: Compliance Data

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Research and Data Analysis
- Office of Special Education Services

IDEA Part C Participating Agencies and Stakeholders

Mid-South Regional Resource Center

When looking at compliance data, one noteworthy consideration is whether the district has compliance issues and if low reading performance scores are prevalent in those same districts. In reviewing the 2012–13 APR determinations, there does not appear to be a consistent basis for whether a district would achieve low performance and whether that district met the APR compliance indicators. For example, regarding Indicator 11, some districts had all children evaluated properly within the 60-day timeline but had students performing poorly on the SC PASS reading assessment, and vice versa. There does not appear to be any consistent relationship between whether the district met compliance indicators and whether schools within that district would be a *focus* or *priority* school. Instead, statistical analysis of the assessment data indicate that the scores of general education students within districts are significantly better predictors of reading performance for special education students than compliance data.

The OSES completed an analysis of district program compliance monitoring data from the 2013–14 school year and the first half of the 2014–15 school year. The analysis includes data from monitoring activities conducted for twenty-four districts. The OSES completed a correlation analysis to determine whether the district’s compliance rate for developing appropriate present levels and goals was correlated to the reading performance on the statewide reading assessment for students within the district. The analysis did not reveal any clear correlation between current program compliance monitoring results and a district’s reading performance on the statewide reading assessment or a district’s reading performance gap between general education and special education students.

However, the OSES will be exploring amendments to the program compliance monitoring tool for next year to isolate reading goals so that the data can be available for Phases II and III of the SSIP, and to inform future decision making. Finally, the OSES reviewed several years of ombudsman data to determine if any formal

complaints have been filed specific to reading. While the OSES did receive a couple of phone calls annually from parents of students with disabilities with concerns about a student's reading performance, none of these calls resulted in formal complaints or escalated to due process hearings.

Data Analysis: Additional Stakeholder and Qualitative Feedback

Stakeholders have been a key part of the process in determining the SSIP and SIMR. As previously noted, the OSES created a video that detailed why reading was chosen as the focus of our SIMR and explained the data used to arrive at that decision using basic non-technical terminology. In this video, the OSES explained the following:

- what the SSIP is;
- how the OSES arrived at the SSIP focus of reading;
- what the achievement gap is in reading in SC;
- what the difference between the achievement gap and low performing schools is; and
- what questions stakeholders need to think about as they assist the SCDE in reviewing the data.

As shown in the data analysis, South Carolina used multiple data sources to determine if reading was an appropriate focus. The OSES used this information to explain to stakeholders that the identification of root causes was necessary in order to develop appropriate coherent strategies to improve the reading proficiency of students with disabilities in South Carolina. This section includes an explanation of how the OSES identified the root causes based on stakeholder input.

2014 Fall Administrators Meeting

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Research and Data Analysis
- Office of Special Education Services

IDEA Part C Participating Agencies and Stakeholders

LEA Special Education Directors, Teachers, Coordinators, and Data Managers

South Carolina Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities

Statewide and Local Partners (e.g., Family Connection, ABLE SC)

Families and Parents of Students with Disabilities

Mid-South Regional Resource Center

During our 2014 Fall Administrators Meeting, the OSES presented the initial data analysis explained in this submission to SCDE staff, school and special education administrators, special education teachers, and parents in attendance. After presenting this data, the OSES, in partnership with IDEA Part C staff, gave stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on how to improve the data analysis including any additional data sources to consider. Stakeholders were divided into small groups to discuss the three questions below. An overview of the stakeholder responses follow each question:

What do you see that contributes to low reading performance? What additional data would inform root cause analysis?

A total of 209 comments were received from stakeholders concerning 13 broad categories as to the root causes for why South Carolina's students with disabilities have low reading performance. The categories include the

following: Instructional/Programs, Community and Home Environment, Resources, Professional Development, Institutes of Higher Education, Classroom Management/Discipline, Least Restrictive Environment, Assessment, Regulations and Policy, Teachers, RTI, Monitoring, and Standards. A breakdown of the distribution of the specific comments is shown in the next graphic.

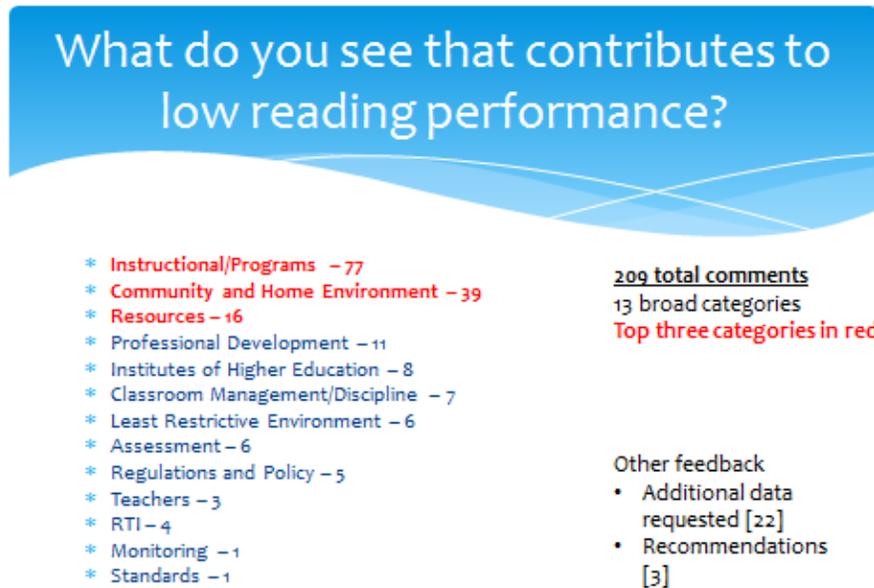


Figure 2.14: Overview of stakeholder feedback concerning root causes

For optimal impact should the OSES focus on low performance overall or high performance gaps; and should the OSES target a specific grade band or grade level? And why?

Most stakeholders advised that the SSIP should select both types of districts (low performance and high performance gap) or districts with low performance overall. In addition, the majority of stakeholders who provided feedback for this question commented that the SSIP should focus on interventions for the elementary grades. In order to incorporate this feedback and partner with other SCDE initiatives, the OSES completed further data analysis on school districts that had either focus schools (i.e., those schools that the SCDE has identified as having the largest achievement gaps in subgroup performance or low achievement subgroups) or priority schools (i.e., Title 1 schools that are performing in the lowest 5 percent of all schools within the State).

The OSES selected twelve districts with schools that met the above criteria for multiple years, did not have major compliance issues in their annual determinations or monitoring visits, and had a local administration that would be available and prepared to participate in the planning and implementation of the SSIP through Phases II and III. These twelve districts are also representative of different geographic and socioeconomic areas of the State. The OSES evaluated the reading proficiency numbers based on the SC PASS reading assessment for third grade for the past four school years. The results of these findings are in the next table. Each number represents the number of students in each district who met or exceeded the definition of proficiency on the SC PASS assessment, with the average proficiency percentage over that four-year period shown in the last column. In the FFY 2012 APR submitted by the SCDE, 53.2 percent of all third-grade students with disabilities statewide were deemed proficient on the statewide reading assessment. The twelve districts shown in the table had a four-year weighted proficiency

average of 43 percent, with district percentages ranging between 31.0 percent and 57.5 percent. The 12 districts also represent approximately 22 percent of all the students with disabilities in third grade in South Carolina.

Figure 2.15: SC PASS Reading Proficiency Percentages

Twelve Selected Districts with Focus or Priority Schools as Identified by the ESEA Waiver
Third-Grade Students with Disabilities

Provided by the SCDE Office of Research and Data Analysis

District	SY 2013– 2014	SY 2012– 2013	SY 2011– 2012	SY 2010– 2011	4 Yr. Avg. Proficiency Percentage	4 Yr. Avg. # of Students
1	38.1	35.2	24.9	25.6	31.0	188
2	38.9	44.0	41.9	40.2	41.3	313
3	34.9	36.4	32.8	28.9	33.3	95
4	37.6	48.8	45.6	28.4	40.1	75
5	53.2	51.5	44.3	39.8	47.2	107
6	47.7	42.4	37.1	34.8	40.5	118
7	49.3	58.6	58.6	63.6	57.5	197
8	21.5	31.5	41.5	61.6	39.0	76
9	46.4	56.9	52.0	44.3	49.9	239
10	30.2	38.6	50.0	32.8	37.9	71
11	46.5	41.8	41.5	46.5	44.1	56
12	37.3	49.7	39.4	46.5	43.2	147

SY = School Year

Highlighted fields = Low and High Proficiency Percentage

Based on the reading data shared today, what should be the State-identified Measureable Result (SIMR) focus for Part B?

This question received the most varied feedback. However, common themes for answers to this question were related to focusing on reading proficiency as well as the preference to use a reading assessment score. There was also a common understanding that it is difficult to select a SIMR due to the changes in both the standards and the reading assessment. To circumvent this issue, the OSES will use the percentage of proficient students as a target rather than an assessment score. This will allow for flexibility as necessary for the assessment used to define proficiency without the need to change the language of the SIMR.

SC SSIP District Partners Inventory

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Special Education Services
- Office of School Transformation (Read to Succeed)

LEA Special Education Directors and Teachers

LEA General Education Partners and Staff

As mentioned in the previous section, twelve districts were selected to participate in the initial SSIP cohort based on various criteria. These twelve districts were invited to a meeting to discuss strategies to improve reading proficiency for students with disabilities by completing an SC SSIP District Partners' Inventory based on the *Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity: Addressing Success Gaps* rubric developed by the IDC Data Center. A presentation of the progress of the SSIP was given along with an introduction to the SIMR. Districts assisted the OSES by completing a Partners' Inventory based on five core areas to address success gaps for reading proficiency: data-based decision making; core instructional programs; cultural responsiveness; assessment (universal screening and progress monitoring; and interventions and supports. This feedback provides a gateway for the OSES to determine root causes within the selected districts as well as develop specific strategies that will help the OSES determine the appropriate plans to improve reading proficiency in each district within the SSIP cohort. Below is an overview of the feedback provided during this meeting.

Data-Based Decision Making

We are missing a systematic process to review/analyze the data. We lack the staff to do this piece. We're data rich, procedurally poor.

Data-driven decision making is a major focus in the general education curriculum; however, data-driven decision making does not trickle down to special education.

Inconsistency of expectations from instructional leadership.

Core Instructional Programs

General education and special education have core instructional programs in place but they are not happening with fidelity.

The majority of students with disabilities are in the general education classes 80 percent of the school day. The district expects that differentiation is not always occurring to accommodate all students' needs. The district asked, 'How do we ensure students with disabilities are being included in instruction?'

Everyone does not have a clear understanding of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), nor is the professional stance that the understanding is needed.

Lack of follow-through at the school level, no value of what is being done, teachers do not have input, teachers are not meeting the needs of all learners.

Special education teachers do not have knowledge or training to provide specific, targeted instruction in all needs.

The district reported that the largest "ah-ha" for them was realizing the difference in general education and special education. Specifically, general education is moving in the right direction in curriculum and implementation, whereas there are some places where instruction is not taking place at all in the special education classroom. The district will be asking the OSES for help with instruction.

Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural responsiveness, communicating to parents at the school level not determined as a priority.

Awareness, but there is room for growth

Preparation to address is currently dependent upon individual knowledge of specific training districtwide.
Not enough PD in multiple diversity areas—poverty, race, gender, & ethnicity

Assessment—Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring

We do not have universal screeners, no districtwide progress monitoring tools. No districtwide support for behavior.

The district reported being a data-rich district with PBIS in all schools (districtwide). However, the RTI and data teams do not talk to the PBIS teams. The district is discussing how to blend them together.

Having a multi-tiered system of support (multiple districts)

We need a common language districtwide for RTI/PBIS aligned with consistent ways to screen students needing academic & behavioral interventions.

Interventions and Supports

We need a districtwide system of support for behavior and academic supports.

We need to define interventions (common definition). This remains a challenge.

Staff has different perspectives on what good RTI is and what is not.

Fidelity of implementation of intervention and supports districtwide is a need; however, we still want to honor each individual schools' autonomy to make decisions for their unique student populations.

Our district has a plan for implementing PBIS. We need more research-based interventions for academics.

Data Analysis: Root Cause Analysis

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Research and Data Analysis
- Office of Special Education Services

IDEA Part C Participating Agencies and Stakeholders

LEA Special Education Directors, Teachers, Coordinators, and Data Managers

South Carolina Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities

State and Local Partners (e.g., Family Connection, ABLE SC)

Families and Parents of Students with Disabilities

Mid-South Regional Resource Center

Based on the information in the data analysis coupled with the qualitative feedback from stakeholders, the OSES attributes the following root causes to low performance in reading for students with disabilities in South Carolina:

A lack of RTI or multi-tiered systems of support within the districts

Based on stakeholder feedback and qualitative data analysis, a common theme among the local school districts is the need for implementation of response to intervention (RTI) and multi-tiered systems of support. This can either be an understanding of how RTI works, or seeking consistency within the district as to determine a feasible RTI process for that district. Stakeholders also commented that the fidelity of implementation of intervention and supports is needed.

Insufficient use of assessment data to determine appropriate instruction

According to the feedback given from stakeholders, there is a lack of use of data when it comes to determining the appropriate instructional practices for reading instruction, or its use is inconsistent from district to district. Stakeholders also commented that there is data available to use but training on its use is lacking, varying among districts, or not an overall priority.

Lack of in-depth knowledge of what is needed for literacy instruction

According to feedback given through surveys, rubrics, and face-to-face meetings, many special education teachers do not have knowledge or training to provide specific, targeted instruction in literacy. It was indicated that teachers need professional development on how to teach literacy with differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students.

A lack of inclusion for students with disabilities in the general education curriculum

In the data analysis, there appeared to be clear evidence that students with disabilities were not being included in the general education curriculum as the students moved into higher grades, and this significantly affected the student's reading performance. This conclusion was validated by the stakeholder and qualitative feedback given by the districts. Some comments from districts centered on the need for cultural diversity and awareness training.

Inconsistent use of evidence-based practices and interventions

Stakeholders have commented about needing more research-based interventions for academics and implementing evidence-based practices districtwide. Some stakeholders mentioned the need to define interventions and gain assistance in the practical application of interventions.

Data Analysis: Conclusion

The summary of the findings of the data analysis conducted by the SCDE and the OSES are shown below, with the root causes discussed in the previous section. The data are conclusive in showing that reading would be an appropriate focus for the SSIP in South Carolina. Based on the available data, the OSES identified that significant gaps in reading proficiency exist between students with disabilities and general education students in South Carolina. Both internal and external stakeholders are in agreement that increasing reading proficiency and closing the performance gaps between students with disabilities and general education students is an appropriate focus for the SSIP. Since reading scores for students with disabilities decline and gaps between general education and special education students widen as they progress through the elementary, middle, and high school grades, it is imperative for the State to focus on the early grades. Stakeholders echoed the sentiment of focusing on the early grades, instead of students in middle or high school, in order for South Carolina to have a better chance at improving reading proficiency. Thus, the State decided to select third grade for the SIMR because Read to Succeed, a recently passed law in South Carolina surrounding reading proficiency, is focused on third grade and is an ample and timely opportunity for the State to partner with general education in improving reading proficiency for all students. (This law and its components are further explained in the infrastructure section.) Stakeholders explained potential reasons why low reading performance exists among students with disabilities. In the infrastructure analysis, these reasons are analyzed in further detail.

Data Analysis Component	Applicable Findings
SC PASS reading assessment	49 to 67 point gap between SWD and General Education students
NAEP reading assessment	52 to 61 point gap between SWD and General Education students
Proficiency vs. other states	23 rd (third grade) to 46 th (High School)
Gender	No statistically significant gap between genders
Race	24 to 40 point gaps between African American and White Special Education students
Disability	Statistically significant gaps shown for students in all disabilities
Age and LRE	23% drop in Regular Class 80%+ LRE from Age 6–9 to Age 14–18
Statewide average reading gap	16.6 point increase in gap from third grade to eighth grade
SC assessment performance	47.8% average percentage of students reading at the proficient level or higher
Socioeconomic status	Smaller reading performance gap—higher poverty index Larger reading performance gap—lower poverty index
Compliance data	No apparent relationship between APR indicator compliance or monitoring compliance and reading performance
Stakeholder feedback	Multiple root causes suggested including a lack of RTI and multi-tiered systems of support, an insufficient use of assessment data to determine appropriate instruction, a lack of in-depth knowledge of what is needed for literacy instruction, lack of inclusion for students with disabilities in the general education curriculum, and an inconsistent use of evidence-based practices and interventions

Section III: Analysis of State Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity

A Description of How the State 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.

Introduction

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. The OSES has the primary responsibility for students with disabilities age 3–21 in South Carolina and takes seriously the charge of identifying, implementing, and evaluating procedures for improving student outcomes. Because of this responsibility, the OSES took the lead on the analysis of the State infrastructure to assist in determining the SIMR to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. The OSES used a systematic approach to conduct the State infrastructure analysis for the SSIP. Initially, an exploratory group was assembled consisting of six SCDE divisions, two non-profit organizations, and representatives from the Part C governmental agency. This group's tasks were to identify the governance, fiscal, quality standards, professional development, data, technical assistance, and accountability/monitoring aspects of systems in place in the State. At this meeting, the participants were given an overview of the State Performance Plan (SPP) and the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) in order for the OSES to establish the importance and the need for stakeholder participation. Teams were set up to take on the work of analyzing both the data and infrastructure within their respective divisions. Over the course of the next few months, team meetings were held in order to bring in other stakeholders, gather more information, review the infrastructure data, and establish how this information relates to the student performance data and the eventual decision of a SIMR.

The OSES regularly engages with stakeholders within the SCDE and with other state agencies and parent groups, including the State Advisory Council. Within the SCDE, the Director of the OSES works collaboratively with members of the SCDE Leadership Team in order to maintain consistent priorities and share information concerning programs and initiatives. SCDE offices providing input for data and infrastructure analysis in Phase I of the SSIP include Assessment, Career and Technology Education, Federal and State Accountability, Student Interventions, Instructional Practices and Evaluation, School Leadership, School Transformation, and Virtual Education. Partnerships formed with other state agencies including the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (SC DDSN), South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH), and South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD). In addition, partnerships have been established with organizations such as PRO-Parents of South Carolina, Family Connection of South Carolina, South Carolina Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), and Able South Carolina. Throughout the infrastructure data-gathering phase of the SSIP, input and feedback has been sought from all of these offices and partners.

In addition to face-to-face meetings, contact was made with other stakeholders by e-mail and/or telephone to gather pertinent information about initiatives and programs that were in place in the State. During the timeframe of meetings, the OSES received assistance and guidance from Mid-South Regional Resource Center (MSRRC) to ensure that the process was effective. The OSES utilized feedback from the multiple divisions and stakeholders to

conduct the following infrastructure analysis. A survey was sent out to those participants invited so that they could bring infrastructure data to the table for discussion. Follow-up e-mail surveys and interviews were conducted with any stakeholder who was unable to attend the face-to-face meetings. The OSES shared the strengths and challenges that the state structure presented at the September 2014 meeting of the Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities, as well as the Fall Leadership Meeting in October 2014. The Fall Leadership Meeting allowed feedback from parents, LEA general and special education administrators, representatives from the South Carolina Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs), and special education organization representatives. In both situations, the OSES solicited stakeholder feedback on areas that merit increased state focus.

Description of the State’s Systems Infrastructure: Governance, Fiscal, Quality Standards, Professional Development, Data, Technical Assistance, and Accountability/Monitoring

Governance

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Career and Technology Education
- Office of Federal and State Accountability
- Office of Student Interventions
- Office of Instructional Practices and Evaluation
- Office of School Leadership
- Office of School Transformation
- Office of Virtual Education
- Office of Special Education Services

There are two major initiatives impacting policy in South Carolina: Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver and the Read to Succeed (R2S) Legislation. Both statewide initiatives are focused on post-graduation success and career and post-secondary education for all students. They both address effective instruction, comprehensive and differentiated support systems, parent and community involvement, and involve technical assistance and strategic support from the State and districts.

The ESEA Flexibility Waiver was approved for implementation by the United States Department of Education (USED) on July 19, 2012. South Carolina's approved waiver was based upon three principles: college- and career-ready expectations for all students; state-developed differentiated recognition, accountability, and support; and support effective instruction and leadership.

Under the Flexibility Waiver, schools and districts receive a letter grade (A–F) for performance and/or progress made on the 2012 South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (SC PASS) test. Schools that do not attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) also receive a letter grade in addition to a designation of *priority* or *focus* school. The priority and focus schools’ designations replace the previous schools’ *in improvement* status. Priority schools are schools that have been identified as being in the lowest five percent of schools based on overall performance. Focus schools are schools that have been identified in the lowest 10 percent within a subgroup(s) where achievement gaps exist. Priority and focus schools are required to work with their districts and the SCDE’s Office of School Transformation to develop school improvement plans. Priority schools are required to work collaboratively with parents, their communities, their districts, and the SCDE to develop turnaround plans which adhere to *turnaround principles* set by USED and respond to the specific needs of the students in the school. Focus schools are required to work collaboratively with parents, their communities, their districts, and the SCDE to develop school improvement plans aimed at improving the performance of their low-performing student subgroups. The plan is locally tailored by the school and district with technical assistance and strategic support from the SCDE.

There are two types of school programs: targeted assistance programs provide supplemental education services (SES) to eligible students with the greatest need; and schoolwide programs are comprehensive programs designed to upgrade the entire educational program in order to improve achievement of the lowest-achieving students in a school.

Schoolwide programs require a comprehensive needs assessment of an entire school that is the basis for a comprehensive schoolwide plan. The plans incorporate whole school reform strategies that strengthen the core academic program; increase the amount of quality learning time to help provide enriched and accelerated curriculum; meet the needs of historically underserved students; provide services that meet the needs of low-achieving students; focus on ensuring highly qualified teachers in schools; incorporate high-quality ongoing professional development; identify strategies to attract highly qualified teachers; incorporate parent engagement strategies; assist pre-school children transition to elementary school; include teachers in data-driven decision-making; provide low-achieving students with effective, timely additional assistance; and focus on the coordination and integration of funds. In addition, schoolwide programs require an annual evaluation, with revisions as necessary, of the coordination and integration of funds.

The Read to Succeed Act was passed by the South Carolina General Assembly and signed into law by the Governor in June 2014, with implementation to begin in the 2014–15 school year. The initiative consists of the following eight components: professional development and leadership; third-grade retention policy; summer reading camps; interventions; literacy competencies and reading endorsements for instructional and non-instructional personnel; teacher preparatory programs; reading coaches; and Child Development Education Program/Early Learning and Literacy (CDEP).

The purpose of R2S is to ensure all students gain reading and writing proficiency in order to prepare them to graduate and have success in careers and postsecondary education. Under the law, students who are unable to comprehend appropriate grade-level texts will be identified as early as possible in order to receive targeted support from their classroom teacher, as well as additional support from a reading interventionist on an as-needed basis. By providing students with a comprehensive support system and intensive interventions, students are expected to attain proficiency in reading by third grade or risk being retained. The policies and initiatives that stem from this law led to the decision for the SIMR and impact the SIMR in the following ways:

- When age appropriate, “classroom teachers use evidence-based reading instruction in prekindergarten through grade 12 to include oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; administer and interpret valid and reliable assessments; analyze data to inform reading instruction; and provide evidence-based interventions as needed so that all students develop proficiency with literacy skills and comprehension.” (S. C. Code Ann. § 59-155-110(1))
- “Each student who cannot yet comprehend grade-level texts is identified as early as possible and at all stages of his or her educational process . . .” (S. C. Code Ann. § 59-155-110(3))
- “Each student and his parent or guardian is continuously informed in writing of:
(a) the student's reading proficiency needs, progress, and ability to comprehend and write grade-level texts; (b) specific actions the classroom teacher and other reading professionals have taken and will take to help the student comprehend and write grade-level texts.” (S. C. Code Ann. § 59-155-110(5))
- Pre-service and in-service coursework is provided to classroom teachers to prepare them to help all students comprehend grade-level texts. (S. C. Code Ann. § 59-155-110(6))

- The development of a comprehensive research-based reading plan by each school district. The plan includes intervention options available to students and funding for these services. It is published annually. (S. C. Code Ann. § 59-155-110(8))

The R2S law aims to promote reading and writing skills across all academic disciplines, requiring the development of reading proficiency plans by both the State and each district. They must include professional development opportunities to increase teachers' capacity to provide reading instruction and foster literacy instruction—centered leadership of coaches and administrators; utilization of a comprehensive assessment system to monitor reading achievement and growth; implementation of effective instructional practices to improve students' reading and writing across disciplines; implementation of effective intervention strategies to support struggling readers and early childhood interventions; support systems for families to assist children with literacy in the home; and preparation of early childhood teachers to design and implement a curriculum that is rich in language and literacy.

A review of the policies related to serving students in these programs and broad stakeholder feedback made the districts in which the ESEA Waiver schools were located highly recommended as potential partners/targets for the SSIP. Stakeholders were highly concerned about the relationship between home/school involvement as well as collaboration and improvement in reading. Culturally responsive practices on the part of staff, participation of parents from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to attend school activities, meetings, etc., and responsive practices that inform outreach to the community including parents and community partners were areas of challenge identified by the majority of the participating district partners in discussion and on their SSIP District Partner Inventory. R2S's three levels of plans—state, district, and school—enables the OSES to assist in state and district planning and evaluation as it pertains to students with disabilities, and linking with district and regional leadership training and professional development to assist local schools.

Internal and external stakeholders pointed to the importance of introducing literacy skills and reading earlier with our younger children, wherever they are—in early childhood, early childhood special education, or child development settings—before they transition to elementary school. The research also bears out the importance of starting early. The need for universal supports on a schoolwide basis has been identified and noted by our stakeholders. Providing evidence-based professional development opportunities that are comprehensive, sustained, intensive, and responsive to the diverse needs of all learners is of great importance. These policies also support the provision of customized support to LEAs to identify, select, and implement evidence-based multi-tiered literacy and behavior interventions to meet the schoolwide and targeted assistance needs of students (see appendix A: Links).

[Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities](#)

The South Carolina Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities (the Advisory Council) has and will continue to review the SCDE's plans involving increasing reading proficiency for children with disabilities in preschool to third grade. The Advisory Council consists of professionals in the special education field, individuals with disabilities and/or parents of children with disabilities whom the State Superintendent of Education has appointed. The OSES and other relevant divisions and agencies provide updates on initiatives, trainings, documentation, and policies. The Council has the opportunity to ask questions and offer suggestions based on these updates. The Council's guidance plays an integral role in shaping and at times reframing the topics discussed. The Council has adopted the following eight goals for their work: promotion of least restrictive environment (LRE); increased participation in the general education curriculum for students with disabilities;

transition from high school to college or career; state assessment; quality of special education teachers; improved use of data; and response to intervention (RtI) implementation. The Council also seeks to continually build its own capacity to provide more informed advisory input to the SCDE and the South Carolina Legislature.

Expansion of the Advisory Council in 1993 was one of the stipulations of the state law requiring LEAs to serve children with disabilities ages three through five. The State mandate represented a downward extension of all the requirements of IDEA, Public Law 101-476. Among the stipulations of the law are the following:

- inclusion of permanent representation by state agencies (listed in S. C. Code Ann. § 59-36-20) that provide services for preschool children with disabilities from birth through age five and the chairperson of the Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) for Public Law 99-457 (S. C. Code Ann. § 59-36-10(3)); and
- provision of assistance by the SCDE to the State Advisory Council in advising the State Board of Education (SBE) on establishing a comprehensive system of special education and related services for preschool children with disabilities, including
 - policies, standards, and procedures necessary to ensure that a smooth transition from early intervention programs or initial entry into preschool programs occurs for children with disabilities (S.C. Code Ann. § 59-36-40);
 - development of memorandums of agreement (MOAs) with agencies providing services to preschool children with disabilities, defining financial responsibilities for services, transition of children from the Part C program under the IDEA to the Part B program, and procedures for resolving disputes (S.C. Code Ann. § 59-36-30); and
 - a coordinated system of personnel development for those serving preschool children with disabilities.

The Advisory Council has and will continue to review SCDE plans involving increasing reading proficiency for children with disabilities, preschool to third grade.

Statewide Issues and Initiatives

Another state priority has been the creation of the new ELA and math standards for the 2015–16 school year and new statewide assessments. Teams of participants that include teachers, IHEs, and SCDE staff met over a period of several months to complete the work on the development of the standards. Selection and development of new assessments for grades 3–8 and 11 is currently in progress.

OSES Issues and Initiatives

The OSES is in the process of reviewing and revising its policies and procedures, as well as issues with special education caseloads and ratios in classrooms, relative to services and intensity of supports. The office has a systematic process for desk and on-site monitoring of LEAs in the State to ensure IEP compliance in terms of development as well as the implementation of services to students with disabilities. As a result of improvements in the monitoring process, the OSES is seeing an increase in the number of IEPs that are not only compliant but also relevant and meaningful. In addition, a new product, Enrich, has been launched to improve the framework of IEPs; this process-driven product will enable LEAs to develop and monitor services more effectively. There are plans to begin monitoring the provision of reading goals on IEPs.

The OSES has established a position for an individual responsible for acting as a liaison between the Office of School Transformation and the OSES. This position will serve as a clearinghouse for information and

professional development related to RtI and PBIS, including multi-tiered systems of support for students with disabilities. Duties include the following:

- Develop a research-based, outcomes-oriented model for R2S Summer Reading Camps which meets requirements of Act 284 and incorporate best practices of the Summer Reading Book Project, which includes students with disabilities; provide technical assistance and support to districts for implementation of Summer Reading Camps, including parent waivers; and monitor, evaluate, and report on district implementation and planned outcomes of R2S Summer Reading Camps at the district and state levels.
- Develop a research-based, outcomes-oriented model for R2S classroom interventions which meets the requirements of Act 284 while limiting the paperwork burden on teachers and providing district flexibility, which includes students with disabilities; provide technical assistance and support to districts for implementation of R2S classroom interventions; collaborate with the SC Reading Recovery Teacher Leader Training Center for professional development that addresses struggling readers and students with disabilities; and monitor, evaluate, and report on district implementation and planned outcomes of R2S classroom interventions at the district and state levels.
- Develop a research-based, outcomes-oriented model for SSIP which meets the requirements of IDEA; provide technical assistance and support to districts for implementation of SSIP activities; collaborate with other SCDE offices, state agencies, and partner organizations to provide professional development that addresses struggling readers and students with disabilities; and monitor, evaluate, and report on district implementation and planned outcomes of the SSIP at the district, and state level, as required by IDEA.

Challenges

The roll-out of new state standards and the selection and development of new assessments will require intense professional development for implementation. For the current school year, LEAs are continuing to use Common Core standards and will test using tools that have been selected for this year only. Beginning in the 2015–16 school year, LEAs will implement the new state standards. The measurements used in spring 2016 will be new to the State. These changes in standards and assessments will likely cause SC to reset baseline and targets multiple times over the next several years.

Governance Analysis

- There is a coordinated system of personnel development serving preschool children with disabilities required by State legislation that can align with R2S’s professional development for CDEP. Preschool children with disabilities in 4K (four-year-old kindergarten) will progress through grade 3 with curriculum and instruction that is evidence-based, consistent, and effective.
- The ESEA statewide waiver initiative supports effective instruction and leadership. The R2S statewide legislated initiative has professional development and leadership as one of its key components. All teachers (including special education teachers) and school leadership will receive professional development on evidence-based, best practices in the area of reading.
- The R2S legislated statewide reading initiative has funded reading coaches in every elementary school in SC with an emphasis on having students reading on grade level by third grade, then students with

disabilities will have access to evidence-based effective strategies for becoming proficient readers and writers.

Fiscal

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Special Education Services
- Office of Federal and State Accountability
- Office of Student Interventions
- Office of Instructional Practices and Evaluation
- Office of School Leadership
- Office of School Transformation

The OSES has a fiscal monitoring system for LEAs that includes on-site visits, submission of documentation of expenditures of funds for all programs, LEA policies and procedures, and grant applications. This process requires more LEA self-monitoring and accountability. The OSES Fiscal and Data Intervention Team provides resources and services available to all LEAs for supporting LEA fiscal accountability and data collection. LEAs have access to online resources and online Technical Assistance (TA) requests (see appendix A: Links). Assistance may be provided in a variety of ways including guidance documents, resources and tools, workshops, and/or direct LEA consultation.

Fiscal Analysis (as it relates to the SIMR)

Funding for Summer Reading Project Books for elementary-age students (including students with disabilities) will come from the Office of Standards and Learning, and the Office of School Transformation. The R2S legislated statewide reading initiative has funded reading coaches in every elementary school in SC with an emphasis on having students reading on grade level by third grade, then students with disabilities will have access to evidence-based effective strategies for becoming proficient readers and writers.

Based on the fiscal analysis review, the OSES will have the available funding to be able to support the selected districts in Phases II and III of implementation of the SSIP. The OSES will maintain a continuous and consistent monitoring effort for all LEAs and SOPs in the State in order to determine that funding is properly expended and services are being provided according to IDEA regulations.

Funding related to Read to Succeed (R2S) will need to be monitored by the offices that have responsibility in that effort. The charge of the OSES will be to see that students with disabilities are included in all aspects of that effort.

Challenges

Maintaining a continuous monitoring effort for all LEAs and SOPs in the state is vital in order to determine that funding is properly expended and that services are being provided according to the IDEA regulations. The current system is enabling the OSES to monitor districts effectively.

Fiscal Analysis

Based on the fiscal analysis review, the OSES will have the available funding to be able to support the selected districts in Phases II and III of implementation of the SSIP strategies. The OSES will maintain a continuous and

consistent monitoring effort for all LEAs and SOPs in the state in order to determine that funding is properly expended and that services are being provided according to the IDEA regulations. Funding related to Read to Succeed will need to be monitored by the offices which have responsibility in that effort. The charge of the OSES will be to see that students with disabilities are included in all aspects of that effort.

Quality Standards

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Career and Technology Education
- Office of Federal and State Accountability
- Office of Student Interventions
- Office of Instructional Practices and Evaluation
- Office of School Leadership
- Office of School Transformation
- Office of Special Education Services

Local Education Agency representatives

South Carolina Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities

Parents of Students with Disabilities

State Agencies

Although South Carolina had originally made the decision to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the State Legislature overturned that decision in 2014. The General Assembly passed a law (Act 200) in 2014 requiring new ELA and mathematics standards in our schools for the 2015–16 school year to replace the Common Core State Standards. SBE unanimously adopted the standards on Wednesday, March 11, 2015. Professional development will be provided to educators statewide throughout Spring 2015 upon adoption by the SBE and EOC. Parents, business, and community leaders played an important role in examining the new standards to ensure they are college and career ready. It was vital that parents of all backgrounds had an opportunity to participate, either through the task force or during the public review/comment period. The OSES was closely involved in the development of the new standards with staff members serving on various committees.

National Center and State Collaborative (NCSC) Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

South Carolina is a member of the NCSC, a project led by five centers and 24 states to build an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards (AA-AAS). Currently, the AA-AAS are linked to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) via Core Content Connectors in ELA and Math for students with significant cognitive disabilities. NCSC has developed a full system of supports for educators to expand knowledge in the utilization of progress monitoring tools and strategies, along with professional development to ensure access to the general curriculum for students with significant cognitive disabilities. There is a research-to-practice focus of the project and the development of a comprehensive model of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and supportive professional development. As a result, South Carolina utilizes alternate achievement standards relative to ELA and Math for students with significant cognitive disabilities. The Office of Assessment in conjunction with the OSES will review the NCSC Assessment in the Spring 2015 to determine if as a State, we will continue membership in the NCSC Consortia with participation in the NCSC Assessment. In addition, with the adoption of the new South Carolina College and Career Readiness Standards, an alignment study of the Core Content Connectors and the new standards may be warranted (see appendix A: Links).

Infant Toddler and Early Childhood Standards

South Carolina is committed to quality early childhood education whether it is in child care, Head Start, or public school programs. These programs provide the foundation for successful education, employment, and life experiences. The South Carolina Early Learning Standards have been developed from current research in the critical areas of early learning and development. They apply to all settings in which children receive care and education. The South Carolina Early Learning Standards define what children should know and be able to do along with a continuum of development. The Standards are grouped around five areas of child development including Approaches to Learning (which addresses diverse learning styles), Social and Emotional Development, Mathematics, Language and Literacy, and Physical Development and Health.

South Carolina embarked on the process of developing Infant & Toddler Guidelines (ITG) for birth to three in September 2008 and adopted developmental characteristics that would be essential for infants and toddlers. At that time, six developmental domains essential for the guidelines were adopted to promote high-quality care and optimal outcomes. These domains included: Physical Health, Cognitive Growth, Motor Development, Language and Communication Growth, Social Development, and Emotional Development.

Personnel Standards

The State provides a continuum of leadership development opportunities and services that are aligned with the SCDE's strategic plan and federal legislation for school administrators. Currently, State statute and regulation 43-165.1 require all principals to be evaluated annually. To guide this task, nine standards with criteria frame the evaluation process. Standard 9, Principal's Professional Development (PPD), requires all principals to develop a plan based on the strengths and needs identified in the previous evaluation in concert with the school's strategic plan.

The State has licensure, evaluation, and professional development requirements for all personnel. There are minimum licensure standards that address required qualifications to serve as an educator in South Carolina for different positions. Standards are also expressed through educator evaluation and the accompanying expectations. The OSES has been closely involved in the development of the new standards being put forth and will continue to be a part of that process as it moves into the training aspect in order to ensure that all students are included in the educational system as standards are being implemented across the State.

ADEPT is South Carolina's system for assisting, developing, and evaluating professional teaching. The ADEPT system forms a seamless continuum for educators throughout the entirety of their careers. In addition to applications for classroom-based teachers, the ADEPT system also includes standards and models for assisting, developing, and evaluating special area educators (i.e., school guidance counselors, library media specialists, and speech-language therapists). An annual report to the public reflects aggregated ADEPT data for all certified teachers in every LEA and public school in the State. LEA and school-level ADEPT data are made available to each respective LEA. Professional growth and development (PGD) plans apply to educators throughout all stages of their careers.

Challenges

The roll-out of new state standards presents one of the greatest challenges to the OSES and the SSIP process at this time. The development of a teacher and administrator evaluation system is also a challenge that the State is facing. In addition, R2S has requirements for all teachers regarding reading. Staff from the OSES have been and will continue to be involved with the process of developing a reliable system that includes guidelines for special education teachers.

Quality Standards Analysis

- Through an interagency collaborative effort from the Office of Special Education Services and Standards and Learning, Professional Development in support of the understanding and implementation of the new SC college- and career-ready standards will ensue for LEA's beginning in April 2015–Summer 2015.
- The Office of Special Education Services will continue a research-to-practice approach to the maintenance and sustainability of a comprehensive model of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and supportive professional development to ensure all students, including students with significant cognitive disabilities, to be college and career ready upon graduation.
- As a result of interagency collaboration with South Carolina Department of Education agencies, the Office of Special Education Services will assist in licensure, evaluation, and professional development relative to personnel standards.

Professional Development

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Career and Technology Education
- Office of Federal and State Accountability
- Office of Student Interventions
- Office of Instructional Practices and Evaluation
- Office of School Leadership
- Office of School Transformation
- Office of Special Education Services

Local Education Agency representatives

South Carolina Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities

Parents of Students with Disabilities

State Agencies

The OSES is responsible for improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities in the State and for ensuring that LEAs and SOPs meet program requirements under IDEA. The OSES is organized into three teams by function and responsibility: Fiscal and Data Management provides professional development and guidance to grant recipients of IDEA Part B formula and discretionary funds; Oversight and Assistance is responsible for developing and implementing a system of general supervision and guidance that assists and supports in meeting the programmatic requirements of federal and state laws and regulations relating to special education and related services for students with disabilities; and Programs and Initiatives creates on-going professional learning opportunities for special educators, administrators, related service providers, early interventionists, and others instructing and supporting children and youth with disabilities. Each team collaborates to provide professional development that focuses on building the capacity of LEAs and SOPs to reduce the achievement gap and enable all students with disabilities to graduate college and career ready.

To meet the professional development and technical assistance needs of individual LEAs and SOPs throughout the State, and to accommodate specific requests from community organizations, the OSES utilizes an electronic request for assistance system. The OSES developed a request for assistance form that is available on the OSES

website. LEAs, SOPs, and community organizations can complete and submit the form online and the information is transmitted electronically to the OSES.

Professional Development and Technical Assistance

The State professional development system entails statewide, regional, targeted training and assistance. The OSES conducts several statewide training initiatives to provide information, updates, resources on new initiatives, laws, regulations, policies, and collects stakeholder feedback on State efforts. The fall and spring Leadership Meetings provide support to education and community leaders responsible for administering programs and services for students with disabilities. The New Directors' Leadership Academy (NDLA) provides support for new directors and coordinators of programs for students with disabilities in LEAs and SOPs, and professional development to stakeholders who serve South Carolina's deaf and hard of hearing, and vision impaired students.

The largest annual statewide initiative is the "Research to Practice" Institute, a week-long professional development opportunity for educators in South Carolina. The OSES, in partnership with other offices and divisions of the SCDE, and with assistance from other state agencies, community partners, and institutions of higher education, delivers this comprehensive professional development institute. Research to Practice offers a selection of sessions on research-proven interventions, promising practices, and program strategies intended to be useful and practical. In 2014, the 12th year of the institute, 138 sessions were offered to more than 1,000 special and general education teachers, schools, LEA administrators, and higher education representatives on an array of subjects, such as instructional practices, standards, technical guidance, behavioral supports, inclusion, learning strategies, preschool, compliance, and transition. The OSES also participates in general education statewide training initiatives, such as the Assistant Principal Program for Leadership Excellence (APPLE), designed to help first-year assistant principals develop and sustain their leadership, management, and instructional leadership skills. The system of statewide trainings and professional development aligns well with the research to evidence-based practice tenants of ESEA and R2S professional development and the emphasis on the preparation of early childhood teachers to provide a curriculum that is rich in language, and literacy.

Regional trainings provide opportunities for smaller group discussion and feedback on focused topics. A few of the regional trainings were examined during the broad infrastructure analysis phase, and stakeholder groups realized that these regional trainings do not tie directly into the SIMR. They do, however, support statewide initiatives which focus on post-graduation and success in careers and post-secondary education for all students.

Adult Education and District Special Education Directors need information to improve their understanding and implementation of special education compliance in Adult Education programs throughout the state. This information is provided at the Adult Education Regional Special Education Training.

Strategic Instruction Model (SIM) Training is a comprehensive approach to adolescent literacy, developed by Kansas University, which addresses the need of students to be able to read and understand large volumes of complex materials as well as their need to be able to express themselves effectively through writing. The model is an integration of research-validated practices that address many of the needs of diverse learners. The model's concept is to promote effective teaching and learning in schools by focusing on critical content. SIM strives to help teachers make decisions about what is of greatest importance, what we can teach students to help them to learn, and how to teach them well. These strategies provide teachers of all grade levels with tools for addressing the needs of students in both reading and writing, which is a major emphasis of the state's SIMR.

Secondary Transition Workshop sessions are conducted in LEAs and during conferences across the state on how to implement an effective transition plan for students with disabilities. The trainings focus on the IEP goals, relevant experiences, support services, specific academic instruction, vocational skills, and functional achievement students need in order to participate in activities that are necessary for achieving post-secondary goals. The OSES presents a week of sessions open to all teachers, administrators, and staff across the state that includes a number of offerings on secondary transition each summer through Research to Practice.

Preschool Services

Preschool training and professional development are offered on a statewide, regional, and district basis. They include in-service and pre-service trainers, mentors, coaches, consultants, technical assistance providers, preschool special education teachers, early childhood education teachers, Head Start personnel, childcare workers, para-educators, administrators, and individuals working with young children with disabilities to prepare highly qualified staff to create appropriate environments for, and work with, young children with disabilities in all settings, to improve their performance outcomes. The OSES continues to work with the Expanding Opportunities Interagency Inclusion Initiative to partner and collaborate with key state agencies serving young children. All trainings are researched-based and outcome-oriented.

The OSES staff undertook regional training for the Special Education Early Childhood Certification (required July 1, 2016), partnering with the South Carolina Centers for the Re-Education and Advancement of Teachers in Special Education (SC CREATE) personnel preparation project funded by the SCDE. The OSES expanded their efforts to include teachers who would not meet the criteria for being grandfathered under the new certification, but were currently working in the field.

A number of initiatives were undertaken to create appropriate environments for and to work with young children with disabilities in all settings and to prepare well-qualified staff in various regular early childhood and special education educational environments. Other initiatives were to improve performance in the three early childhood outcomes for preschool and to increase opportunities for children with disabilities.

Training participants are required to present documentation of their understanding of the material and subsequent implementation by delivering at least one training in the first year and attending a one-day, follow-up training. Participants agreed to complete a required “pre-training” online module for material exploration before the training.

The preschool initiatives will be particularly valuable as the state proceeds with the development and implementation of its SIMR. Early childhood outcome #2 (SPP Indicator 7) addresses the acquisition and use of knowledge and skills (including early language/communication and early literacy). They will also be supportive of the Part C SSIP and SIMR. The preschool endeavors will be particularly valuable as the state proceeds with the development and implementation of its SIMR as well as being supportive of the Part C SIPP and SIMR.

Targeted technical assistance is provided to LEAs and SOPs based on specific needs identified from dispute resolution data and/or program monitoring. When the OSES, another office within the SCDE, or a hearing officer, issue systemic findings to an LEA or SOP with respect to IDEA compliance, the Oversight and Assistance team is notified so that it can assist the LEA or SOP in addressing the areas of systemic noncompliance. Specifically, technical assistance is offered on developing policies and procedures in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations relating to students with disabilities, developing compliant IEPs and related documents in the SC

Enrich IEP system, and how to effectuate system-wide changes in practice to improve compliance and student outcomes.

Challenges

To ensure access to the general curriculum for all students, including students with disabilities, there may be challenges as to providing joint professional development in literacy to include both special education and general education teachers, specifically regarding curriculum alignment, scaffolds, and supports for diverse learners. Concerning personnel standards and teacher evaluation, currently there are teacher evaluation process changes in place at the SCDE presenting short-term challenges.

Professional Development and Technical Assistance Analysis

- The Office of Special Education Services will provide on-going professional learning opportunities for special educators, administrators, related service providers, early interventionists and stakeholders supporting children and youth with disabilities
- Professional development will center on building the capacity of LEAs and SOPs to reduce the achievement gap by providing training on access to the general curriculum for all students, including students with disabilities, to promote graduation and college and career readiness.

Monitoring and Accountability

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Career and Technology Education
- Office of Federal and State Accountability
- Office of Student Interventions
- Office of Instructional Practices and Evaluation
- Office of School Leadership
- Office of School Transformation
- Office of Special Education Services

Local Education Agency representatives

South Carolina Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities

Parents of Students with Disabilities

State Agencies

Program Monitoring and General Supervision System Description

The SCDE implements a general supervision system to help ensure that students with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This general supervision system includes provision of appropriate dispute resolution options and identification and correction of individual and systemic areas of noncompliance through data determinations and fiscal, program, and focused compliance monitoring activities. Descriptions of the components of the SCDE's general supervision system are set forth below along with references and links to forms and detailed information utilized in the various general supervision processes.

The goal of the SCDE's program monitoring activities is to ensure that LEAs and SOPs are meeting the requirements of both federal and state regulations and statutes regarding educational programs for students with disabilities. In alignment with federal regulations, the SCDE's monitoring approach is both outcome and compliance oriented. If noncompliance is identified through any of the SCDE's monitoring activities, the SCDE will require LEAs or SOPs to correct the noncompliance as soon as possible, but in no case later than one year from the date of notification of the noncompliance. In addition, the SCDE provides commendations for exemplary programs and provides recommendations and technical assistance as part of its monitoring activities in order to help LEAs and SOPs improve student outcomes.

The steps in the program monitoring process, from notification of program monitoring to verification of corrective activities, are as follows: Step 1: Notification of Program Monitoring; Step 2: Pre-visit Document Submission; Step 3: Data Review and Onsite Visit; Step 4: Letter of Findings and Monitoring Report; Step 5: Development of the Corrections and Ongoing Improvement Plan (COIP); Step 6: Verification of Correction of Noncompliance; Step 7: Closure of Findings of Noncompliance.

A thorough explanation of the program monitoring process is available in "The Compliance Seekers Guide to the Universe". The guide includes all of the forms, rubrics, and materials that are used by the OSES in the process (see appendix A: Links).

O&A Targeted Technical Assistance

The Oversight and Assistance team provides targeted technical assistance to LEAs and SOPs based on specific needs identified from dispute resolution data and/or program monitoring. When the OSES, another office within the SCDE, or a hearing officer issues systemic findings to an LEA or SOP with respect to IDEA compliance, the Oversight and Assistance team leader is notified so that the team can assist the LEA or SOP to address the areas of systemic noncompliance. Specifically, technical assistance is offered on developing policies and procedures in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations relating to students with disabilities, developing compliant IEPs and related documents in the SC Enrich IEP system, and how to effectuate system-wide changes in practice to improve compliance and student outcomes.

Challenges

Effectively monitoring more than eighty-five LEAs and SOPs presents various challenges. The current method has been refined so that LEAs are more thoroughly monitored for compliance and student outcomes. For example, reports are provided for each student file reviewed; specific feedback is given on findings; IEP development review has been reorganized into twelve categories; preliminary data is able to be provided to directors on site at exit conferences; and more specific corrective actions are given to LEAs. This effort will play an important role as the OSES implements the SIMR and monitors the progress for those LEAs'/SOPs' schools being targeted for that implementation. In addition, there will be multiple areas of professional development that will be made available on a statewide basis through the Phase II portion of the SIMR and the implementation of Read to Succeed. This will provide opportunities for impacting student outcomes on a much larger scale.

Conclusion

Resulting from the infrastructure analysis, challenges specific to reading became apparent that led to determining the State's SIMR. As previously noted, there were areas of legislative action and other statewide initiatives that also supported the focus of a SIMR in the area of reading. Because all of those points were considered by the

OSES, other department offices, and stakeholders from across the State, the OSES is confident that it has developed a SIMR that will yield positive outcomes for students in South Carolina in the coming years.

Section IV: State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR)

State Identified Measureable Result (SIMR) for South Carolina

The SCDE and the OSES selected the following State-identified Measurable Result (SIMR) for South Carolina’s State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP): *For students with disabilities in grade three, South Carolina will increase the percentage of students who are deemed proficient or higher on the statewide reading accountability assessment in select districts with the largest average achievement gaps as determined by the ESEA waiver (i.e., those districts with “focus” or “priority” schools).* This SIMR is based on Indicator 3C, the proficiency rate for children with IEPs against grade level and alternate academic achievement standards.

SIMR: Why was this SIMR identified as appropriate for the SSIP in South Carolina?

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Research and Data Analysis
- Office of Special Education Services

IDEA Part C Participating Agencies and Stakeholders
 LEA Special Education Directors, Coordinators, and Data Managers
 State and local partners
 Families of students with disabilities
 Mid-South Regional Resource Center

After a review of the data and infrastructure analysis, the OSES determined the SIMR based on the following four conclusions:

1) *According to the data analysis, there is a clear and urgent need to increase the rate of reading proficiency for students with disabilities as revealed by both the broad and in-depth data analysis.*

In the data analysis, the OSES revealed that there was a significant gap between students with disabilities and students without disabilities in the area of reading. The OSES identified that the reading performance gap increases as the students move to higher grade levels; that reading performance for South Carolina decreases relative to other states and territories; and that there are statistically significant gaps shown for students in all disabilities. A summary of findings relative to reading performance is shown in the next table:

Summary of Data Analysis Findings

Data Analysis Component	Applicable Findings
SC PASS Reading exam	49 to 67 point gap between SWD and General Education students
NAEP Reading exam	52 to 61 point gap between SWD and General Education students
Proficiency vs. other states	23 rd (third grade) to 46 th (High School)
Gender	No statistically significant gap between genders
Race	24 to 40 point gaps between African-American and White Special Education students
Disability	Statistically significant gaps shown for students in all disabilities
Age and LRE	23% drop in Regular Class 80%+ LRE from Age 6–9 to Age 14–18
Statewide Avg. Reading Gap	16.6 point increase in gap from third grade to eighth grade

SC Assessment Performance	47.8% average percentage of students reading at the proficient level or higher
Socioeconomic status	Smaller reading performance gap – higher poverty index Larger reading performance gap – lower poverty index
Compliance Data	No apparent relationship between APR indicator compliance or monitoring compliance and reading performance
Stakeholder Feedback	Multiple root causes suggested including a lack of RTI and multi-tiered systems of support, an insufficient use of assessment data to determine appropriate instruction, a lack of in depth knowledge of what is needed for literacy instruction, lack of inclusion for students with disabilities in the general education curriculum, and an inconsistent use of evidence-based practices and interventions

2) *A SIMR that focuses on increasing the proficiency of reading for students with disabilities aligns with the current and upcoming priorities and policies of the South Carolina government and the SCDE agency administration.*

South Carolina has an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver, which is an important piece of the infrastructure in South Carolina that contributes to the SIMR and the selection of school districts participating in the SSIP. Recent South Carolina legislative action established a statewide reading initiative called *Read to Succeed*. The Read to Succeed (R2S)/Reading and Early Learning Team, which is part of the Office of School Effectiveness, will offer a comprehensive, systematic approach to reading instruction that will increase opportunities for all students to develop reading and writing skills that prepare them to be college and career ready. This significant initiative creates a statewide system of support and partnership that will increase collaboration and development of reading plans and interventions to increase reading competencies in the early grades. In addition, it was noted by stakeholders that third grade should be the focus of our efforts based on the language of the R2S legislation. Thus, the OSES determined that the importance of the R2S initiative, together with the launch of new ELA standards for the 2015–16 school year, it would be prudent and justifiable to align SSIP efforts with Read to Succeed and use third grade as the measurement point of the SIMR.

One key challenge with the rollout of new state standards, however, is the accompanying selection and development of new assessments for ELA and Math. This will require intensive professional development for the implementation of these new standards, and the way reading proficiency is measured will change based on the assessment that will be used. Thus, the SIMR was crafted in a way that will allow us to measure proficiency over a number of years by focusing on the number of students who are deemed proficient, regardless of what assessment will actually be used to measure reading proficiency.

3) *Stakeholders have indicated they agree with the selection and wording of the SIMR. Selected districts are also ready to engage with the OSES to move forward with the SSIP and are willing to take ownership of the SIMR to achieve meaningful results.*

Stakeholders indicated both low performing districts as well as those with high achievement gaps should be included in the SSIP cohort, with interventions focused on the early elementary grades. The OSES also desired to link with other statewide general education initiatives in order to promote sustainability beyond the SSIP. The strategies implemented in Phases II and III of the SSIP will be a model for the rest of the State to improve reading proficiency for all children with disabilities. One general education initiative is the Read to Succeed Act (discussed in the Governance section of the Infrastructure Analysis) where reading plans will be required from all

districts and schools in the State. In addition, stakeholders highly recommended finding ways to link with the State's ESEA waiver (further explained in the Governance section of the Infrastructure Analysis). Thus, the OSES chose districts that were part of the ESEA waiver who had schools identified as *focus* or *priority* schools for multiple years. These chosen SSIP districts are varied in nature (e.g., size, socioeconomic status, racial and ethnic diversity) and also reflect multiple characteristics of districts not involved in the SSIP cohort. Approaching the work in this manner will give the SCDE the opportunity to implement a wide array of strategies for use within the SSIP cohort, determine the specific evidence-based strategies that are most effective to improve reading proficiency, and scale up the SSIP work to the rest of the districts statewide.

The OSES organized a meeting with the selected cohort of districts for the SSIP to discuss the progress on the SSIP and the SIMR in South Carolina. During this meeting, the districts who are part of the SSIP cohort overwhelmingly indicated that they were in full support of being a part of the SSIP and the selected SIMR. They assisted the OSES by completing a district inventory based on five core areas to address success gaps for reading proficiency: Data-based decision making, cultural responsiveness, core instructional programs, assessment (universal screening and progress monitoring, and interventions and supports. This feedback provides a gateway for the OSES to determine root causes (explained in the Data Analysis section) as well as to develop specific strategies that will help the OSES determine the appropriate plans to improve reading proficiency in each district within the SSIP cohort.

4) South Carolina will have the capacity to support professional development and technical assistance to implement statewide reading initiatives that align with the SIMR.

The OSES currently has a system to monitor that all LEAs and SOPs in the State expend funds properly and that services are being provided according to the regulations of IDEA. The OSES provides customized professional development when requested by LEAs, SOPs, or community organizations through the Oversight and Assistance team. This professional development covers compliance with federal and state laws and regulations relating to students with disabilities, interpretation and application of the South Carolina Special Education Process Guide, and developing IEPs and related documents in the SC Enrich IEP system. With this systemic framework of professional development already in place, the OSES will have the opportunity to expand the professional development to incorporate the coherent improvement strategies necessary to help districts focus their efforts on improving the SIMR. The State's ability to expand the professional development will be possible as a result of the Read to Succeed legislation passed in July 2014 which develops a statewide system of reading coaches and regionally based SCDE literacy specialists. This will be a clear, unique, and important opportunity to develop an integrated technical assistance and professional development system with general education in order to leverage resources across programs and align the agency's efforts to improve reading proficiency for all students, including students with disabilities (an in-depth explanation of the Read to Succeed legislation is included in the infrastructure section).

SIMR: Baseline Data and Targets

As explained in the data analysis section, the OSES selected twelve districts that met the criteria for having either a focus and/or priority school for multiple years, did not have major compliance issues in their annual determinations or monitoring visits, and had a local administration that would be available and prepared to participate in the planning and implementation of the SSIP through Phases II and III. These twelve districts were evaluated based on each district's reading assessment performance, and then weighted based on the average

number of students from the four school years indicated, to determine a baseline for reading proficiency. Based on this evaluation, the OSES will be setting the baseline for FFY 2013 to be 43.08 percent.

SC PASS Reading Proficiency Percentages

Twelve Selected Districts with Focus or Priority Schools as Identified by the ESEA Waiver

Third-Grade Students with Disabilities

Provided by SCDE's Office of Research and Data Analysis

District	SY 2013– 2014	SY 2012– 2013	SY 2011– 2012	SY 2010– 2011	4 Yr. Avg. Proficiency Percentage	4 Yr. Avg. # of Students	Percentage of Total Students in SSIP Cohort	Weighted Percentage (Prof. Avg X Percentage of Cohort)
1	38.1	35.2	24.9	25.6	31.0	188	11.19%	3.46
2	38.9	44.0	41.9	40.2	41.3	313	18.63%	7.68
3	34.9	36.4	32.8	28.9	33.3	95	5.64%	1.87
4	37.6	48.8	45.6	28.4	40.1	75	4.48%	1.80
5	53.2	51.5	44.3	39.8	47.2	107	6.35%	3.00
6	47.7	42.4	37.1	34.8	40.5	118	7.04%	2.85
7	49.3	58.6	58.6	63.6	57.5	197	11.71%	6.73
8	21.5	31.5	41.5	61.6	39.0	76	4.51%	1.76
9	46.4	56.9	52.0	44.3	49.9	239	14.19%	7.08
10	30.2	38.6	50.0	32.8	37.9	71	4.22%	1.60
11	46.5	41.8	41.5	46.5	44.1	56	3.30%	1.46
12	37.3	49.7	39.4	46.5	43.2	147	8.75%	3.78
							FFY 2013 Baseline	43.08%

From further data analysis, the OSES determined it would be appropriate to increase the baseline approximately 1.0 percent to 1.5 percent per year to reach a target of over 50 percent by FFY 2018, as indicated in the next table. This is a target stakeholders believed was both rigorous and realistic. By setting an SSIP target of 50 percent, this will set the OSES on a track to move the selected twelve SSIP districts above the statewide average for reading proficiency by FFY 2018. Furthermore, the State understands there will be a new assessment during this timeframe due to the State's adoption of new ELA standards, and thus the State will revisit and revise the baseline once the new assessment given to students, if necessary.

FFY	Percentage of students Proficient or Higher on the Statewide Reading Accountability Assessment in districts selected for the SSIP
2013 (Baseline)	43.08%
2014	44.58%
2015	46.08%
2016	47.58%
2017	49.08%
2018	50.58%

Section V: Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies

Stakeholders involved for this section of analysis

South Carolina Department of Education Offices

- Office of Assessment
- Office of Career and Technology Education
- Office of Federal and State Accountability
- Office of Student Interventions
- Office of Instructional Practices and Evaluation
- Office of School Leadership
- Office of School Transformation
- Office of Virtual Education
- Office of Special Education Services

Local Education Agencies General Education and Special Education Administrators, Teachers, and Parents

IDEA Part C Participating Agencies and Stakeholders

South Carolina Advisory Council for the Education of Students with Disabilities

Stakeholders that were involved in the early stages of SSIP development assisted in defining the improvement strategies that emphasize three priority areas, including (1) developing collaborative partnerships; (2) building a framework for sustainable professional development; and (3) implementing evidence-based interventions. The improvement strategies are based on the data and infrastructure analysis and feedback from stakeholders; each drafted to support our State’s SIMR, to improve the reading proficiency of students with disabilities in PreK through third grade.

Collaborative Partnerships

The OSES collaborated with many inside and outside stakeholders to assess the validity and reliability of our data and infrastructure. Based on stakeholder feedback in the form of surveys, success-gap rubrics, and face-to-face meetings, root causes for low student proficiency in reading were proposed. This collaborative effort enabled the identification of root causes and the determination of appropriate improvement strategies. This effort was an improvement on previous attempts to collaborate outside of the OSES and marked a turning point in our departmental decision-making procedure.

The OSES integrates the philosophy promoted by The IDEA Partnership (2014) in their publication *Leading by Convening*. The authors describe the impact collaborative partnerships have, such that “a broader array of perspectives leads to a broader spectrum of possible solutions...implementation leads to natural supports for sustainability as strategies have been proposed, validated and implemented by those at the practice level... sustainability is shared by a larger network of key implementers” (The IDEA Partnership, 2014, p.4).

The following describes strategies for collaborative partnerships:

- Increase vested interest with state teams and advisory groups to represent each SCDE instructional division, accountability, university/college partners, statewide projects, policy makers and parent organizations that provide continued support for a shared vision to improve reading proficiency for all struggling reader, including students with disabilities.

- Strengthen partnerships that consistently promote the shared vision of one system meeting the needs of ALL students. Some examples include selecting and implementing evidence-based curriculum; and utilizing MTSS as the platform for integration of initiatives such as standards-based instruction, Read to Succeed, Student Learning Outcomes, and continuous school improvement.
- Partner with the SCDE's Read to Succeed Office, statewide legislated reading initiative, to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment system that supports the State's academic standards and is responsive to the diverse needs of all learners in PreK through third grade. Stakeholder input indicated a need to improve the assessment system used by teachers to guide instruction and meet the needs of SWD (pages 23, 26, and 27). A more comprehensive assessment system will assist LEAs in looking closely at data to address professional development areas to increase student outcomes. The comprehensive assessment system will include reliable, valid, and instructionally relevant assessments as stated below:
 - Screening Measures: Assessment tools designed to collect data for the purpose of measuring the effectiveness of core instruction and identifying students needing more intensive interventions and support.
 - Diagnostic Measures: Formal or informal assessment tools that measure skill strengths and weaknesses, identify skills in need of improvement, and assist in determining why a problem is occurring.
 - Progress Monitoring Measures: Ongoing assessment conducted for the purposes of guiding instruction, monitoring student progress, and evaluating instruction/intervention effectiveness.
 - Formative Measures: Ongoing assessment embedded within effective teaching to guide instructional decisions.
 - Summative (Outcome) Measures: Typically administered near the end of the school year to give an overall perspective of the effectiveness of the instructional program.

Professional Development

In an effort to improve outcomes in literacy for all students, both the State and LEAs have an organizational responsibility to promote effective professional development for teachers and school staff; including media specialists, guidance counselors, principals, and district staff in the area of literacy to improve educational outcomes for all students. Various researchers point to the impact of a highly qualified teacher compared to a low-qualified teacher in producing varying student achievement in literacy. In Tennessee, researchers found that fifth-grade students are still affected by the quality of their third-grade teacher (Sanders & Horn, 1998). A Texas study found that students assigned to highly effective teachers three years in a row scored more than two standard deviations higher than students assigned to lower-performing teachers three years in a row (Ferguson, 1997). Finally, one study found that “students enrolled in classrooms offering higher-quality instruction achieved standardized reading test scores after three years that were approximately 40 percentile ranks higher than students enrolled in classrooms with lower-quality instruction (Bembry et. al, 1998).” (Allington, 2001, p. 112)

Based on stakeholder feedback (surveys, rubrics, and meetings), data indicated that there was a high need for literacy-centered professional development for teachers, school principals, and district staff specific to instructional strategies and curriculum (pages 23, 25, and 26). In response to this need, the Office of School Transformation's Read to Succeed team and the OSES will provide professional development to the general and special education teacher population. Furthermore, a valuable Read to Succeed mandate that will have a positive influence on building capacity of teachers, is the requirement that all teachers in South Carolina must earn a literacy endorsement/credential.

From the introduction of Indicator 17, the OSES has initiated numerous other collaborative sessions centered on the need to design integrated professional development opportunities. Two examples include the following: (1) the State's Office of Educator Effectiveness and the OSES have collaborated on the creation of new ELA

Academic Standards and will collaborate on the professional development that occurs around these Standards; (2) the SCDE’s Office of School Transformation (Read to Succeed) and the OSES have collaborated on professional development for all teachers in literacy and will continue to collaborate in such areas as the creation of a State Literacy Plan and literacy endorsements for special education teachers. From the State Literacy Plan, LEAs are required to develop a District Literacy Plan.

Central to improving professional development opportunities, is the need to promote district level understanding of evidence-based practices and how their implementation can have a positive impact on learning outcomes. Specifically, it is essential that educational professionals realize not only the definition of evidence-based practices, but truly understand what it looks like to operationalize these effective strategies in their daily practice. The International Reading Association explains in the simplest terms, “evidence-based reading instruction means that a particular program or collection of instructional practices has a record of success. That is, there is reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest that when the program is used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in reading achievement” (International Reading Association, 2002, p. 3).

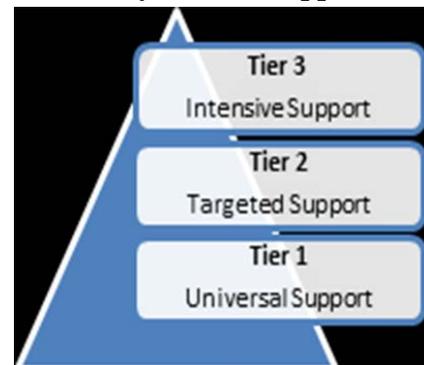
The following describes strategies for professional development:

- Develop a cohesive and integrated professional development system which is scalable and sustainable that includes multi-modal presentations with attention to selection, training, coaching, and fidelity as key components:
 - Gather data to identify the assumptions, beliefs, skills, and professional development needs of state-level personnel in relation to scaling up implementation of MTSS in select districts; and
 - Cultivate shared knowledge, foundational beliefs, and commitment from LEAs to integrate problem-solving and support the full implementation of MTSS; and
 - Create and maintain the structure and responsibility for the implementation of MTSS in select districts by developing a training and technical assistance delivery system through the organization of inter-agency teams to support collaboration, coordination, and implementation at the district level. Training and technical assistance will emphasize the development of a district level needs assessment, development of a technical assistance protocol, and the use of technology for collection and dissemination of information.

- Design a pyramid of support that includes differentiated incentives, supports, and interventions based on each LEA’s unique strengths, progress, challenges, and needs:

- Tier 1—Universal Support provides resources with or without a direct request for the information to all LEAs.
- Tier 2—Targeted Support provides resources based on common needs in a few specific areas to identified LEAs.
- Tier 3—Intensive Support provides resources on a focused set of activities designed to reach valued outcomes for identified LEAs.

SSIP Pyramid of Support



- Link State level teams to regional literacy specialists and district-based leadership teams by establishing a clear and functional operating and communication system to ensure that the entities that comprise the

infrastructure are able to implement MTSS in the most efficient and effective manner. As a result, district-based leadership teams will

- Assign and provide personnel with the requisite knowledge and experience to support coordination and implementation of MTSS across selected districts in all regions;
 - Support the capacity development and sustainability of the implementation of evidence-based practices at both the district and school levels; and
 - Support the development and implementation of district plans that ensure the integration of general and special education resources and expertise resulting in successful implementation of MTSS at the school level.
- Provide a series of integrated professional development and leadership capacity-building opportunities supporting PreK through third-grade educators in the implementation of literacy-centered, evidence-based practices for students with disabilities that are aligned with South Carolina’s Read to Succeed law including
 - Data Literacy: Collecting appropriate data and using the data to identify and utilize appropriate tools and assessments to inform instructional decision-making;
 - Literacy-rich Environments: Promoting strategies to encompass all learners (e.g., Universal Design for Learning, differentiated instruction, responsiveness to poverty, communicative competency, cultural responsiveness); and
 - Community and Family Partnerships: Providing information and opportunities to engage families to improve literacy.

Intervention

The rationale and research to support improved interventions includes several key points noted in the collaborative partnerships and professional development sections above. Specifically, interventions will be disseminated by inter-agency teams and include evidence-based strategies. These interventions move beyond theory and training toward practical application. For example, LEAs may understand the value of data and know how to collect it; however, feedback from LEAs revealed that additional support is necessary to interpret data and how to use it to inform, and when appropriate, adjust instructional practices.

The following describes strategies for intervention:

- Develop a strategic plan to address district needs based on needs assessment data, support districts’ effort to implement MTSS as needed, provide necessary training and technical assistance provided to district based leadership teams, and evaluate the effectiveness of training and technical assistance in relation to district level outcomes.
- Provide customized support to select districts by utilizing district-level data to determine the areas of training and technical assistance needs.
- Assist LEAs to use data to identify and determine students who may potentially need intervention, and provide customized support to assist districts and schools in the implementation of evidence-based practices to improve reading proficiency for struggling readers.
- Identify and utilize effective models of multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) for early intervention in reading and behavior, such as Read to Succeed, Positive Behavior Intervention System, Universal Design for Learning, and Student Learning Outcomes, to support the implementation of MTSS in schools that demonstrate need.

- Develop customized tools, such as rubrics, to assess the quality of implementation of evidence-based strategies, MTSS, and other initiatives to improve fidelity.

Section VI: Theory of Action

Priority Areas	If	Then	Then	Then
 Collaborative Partnerships	<p>If the SCDE partners with state programs, local school district, families, and community stakeholders to provide literacy strategies,</p>	<p>then collaborative stakeholders will have the knowledge and skills of a shared vision to improve reading proficiency for all struggling readers;</p>	<p>then appropriate evidence-based reading strategies will be selected and implemented to improve the reading proficiency of students with disabilities in PreK through third-grade.</p>	<p>then students with disabilities in third grade will improve reading performance to prepare them to be college and career ready.</p>
	<p>If the SCDE strengthens partnerships and engages strategically with the integration of identified initiatives,</p>	<p>then the LEAs will be able to more effectively leverage resources for continuous school improvement;</p>		
	<p>If the SCDE develops and implements a comprehensive assessment system that supports the State’s academic standards and is responsive to the diverse needs of all learners,</p>	<p>then the LEAs will use reliable, valid, and instructionally relevant data to address professional development areas to increase student outcomes.</p>		
 Professional Development	<p>If the SCDE designs a pyramid of support that includes differentiated incentives, supports, and interventions, providing LEA staff with choices based on their unique strengths, progress, challenges, and needs,</p>	<p>then the LEAs will recognize the value of utilizing evidence-based strategies to improve instruction in schools.</p>	<p>then appropriate evidence-based reading strategies will be selected and implemented to improve the reading proficiency of students with disabilities in PreK through third-grade.</p>	<p>then students with disabilities in third grade will improve reading performance to prepare them to be college and career ready.</p>
	<p>If the SCDE develops a professional development system that includes multi-modal presentations with attention to selection, training, coaching, and fidelity as key components,</p>	<p>then the LEAs will provide ongoing PD using a tiered support delivery model to increase the competencies of educators in the area of literacy instruction.</p>		
	<p>If the SCDE links State level teams to regional literacy specialists and district-based leadership teams to identify root causes to low student achievement and allocates resources,</p>	<p>then the LEAs will increase capacity to support the school’s implementation of evidence-based literacy practices.</p>		
 Intervention	<p>If the SCDE provides customized support to LEAs to identify, select, and implement evidence-based multi-tiered literacy and behavior interventions,</p>	<p>then the LEAs will be able to tailor the interventions to meet the specific literacy and behavioral needs for students with disabilities.</p>	<p>then appropriate evidence-based reading strategies will be selected and implemented to improve the reading proficiency of students with disabilities in PreK through third-grade.</p>	<p>then students with disabilities in third grade will improve reading performance to prepare them to be college and career ready.</p>
	<p>If the SCDE provides a series of integrated professional development and leadership capacity-building opportunities supporting PreK through third-grade educators that are aligned with South Carolina’s Read to Succeed law,</p>	<p>then the LEAs and building leadership will be accountable for higher levels of improved performance for students with disabilities in reading including the use of data literacy, literacy-rich environments, and community/family partnerships.</p>		

Description of Graphic Representation

The Theory of Action for improving reading in South Carolina schools is a set of interrelated pieces that outline how state, local and community partners will use coherent improvement strategies that address root causes for low performance in reading for students with disabilities in South Carolina (see table below). Implementation of these strategies will promote systematic sustainable change while building capacity in parents and staff to yield successful outcomes.

Attributed root causes for low performance in reading for students with disabilities in South Carolina
A lack of RTI or multi-tiered systems of support within the districts
Insufficient use of assessment data to determine appropriate instruction
Lack of in-depth knowledge of what is needed for literacy instruction
A lack of inclusion for students with disabilities in the general education curriculum
Inconsistent use of evidence-based practices and interventions

The South Carolina theory of actions begins with the collaboration of state, local, families, and community partners working toward the common goal of increasing the number of students who are proficient or higher on the statewide reading accountability assessment. Schools alone do not make up the full education equation—all of the programs that touch a child contribute to his or her success. Partners will come together around a shared vision for improving educational outcomes beginning at birth.

The theory of action consists of three priority areas through which this vision will be accomplished: collaborative partnerships, professional development, and intervention.

1. Collaborative partnerships with all stakeholders will be strengthened by developing a cohesive vision to gain buy-in and to develop a sense of urgency, and to provide support systems as needed.
2. Professional learning opportunities provided by the State to LEAs will provide collaborative, evidence-based, rigorous preparation for stakeholders to improve student outcomes.
3. The State will define intervention and identify interventions that reflect evidence-based strategies and are grounded in multi-tiered systems of support to be utilized by LEAs to improve student outcomes.

Furthermore, each priority area is interrelated and aligned to provide coherent improvement strategies that will result in systemic change, stronger infrastructure to support literacy and improved reading outcomes for students in third grade. The SCDE discovered that in third grade, 43.7 percent of students with disabilities scored proficient or above. However, by the time students were in high school, only 12 percent of students were rated proficient or above. This reflects a 31 percent drop in reading proficiency from third grade to high school. Statistically there were significant gap between fourth- and eighth-grade general education and special education students in reading assessments.

As depicted in the model, the priority areas will deliver evidence based strategies and/or interventions to school stakeholders through a coherent improvement strategies model to positively impact outcomes for PreK through third-grade children and youth with disabilities. The coherent improvement strategies are designed to build the capacity of the state as well as the capacity of the district and school level; such as, developing systemic professional development, interpreting and using data, building teacher knowledge and skills, targeting interventions for students and/or schools.

When implemented with fidelity, these priority areas opportunities will have a monumental effect on the classroom environment by improving teacher practices, child behavior, and family engagement which will yield increased proficiency in reading and meet the South Carolina reading target of 50 percent by 2018. The SIMR was developed to measure proficiency over a number of years by focusing on the number of students who are deemed proficient, regardless of what assessment will actually be used to measure reading proficiency. These benefits will lead to gains in assessments and improvement in reading.

Description of Internal and External Stakeholders Involvement

The SCDE's OSES held a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Collaborative Leadership Meetings with both internal and external stakeholders. These meetings were designed to authentically engage stakeholders in collaborative activities that were directly aligned with educational results and functional outcomes for children with disabilities in South Carolina. SSIP leadership meetings provided opportunities for breakout sessions designated to petition recommendations from stakeholders relating to the development of the Theory of Action. Stakeholders were divided into small groups and asked to respond to targeted questions and to complete a collaborative summary document one per small group. The small stakeholder groups used the data sources from the Infrastructure and Data Analysis summaries to review the State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) and Coherent Improvement Strategies in relationship to the Theory of Action to provide recommendations for establishing coherent alignment for each section of Indicator 17 State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). These groups submitted to the OSES their collaborative thoughts, observations, and notes from their small groups related to the Theory of Action. The breakout sessions concluded with a whole group discussion focusing on what recommendations and/or suggestions are needed to establish measurable criteria changes to continue to bridge the gap between stakeholders to produce positive outcomes and sustainability in reading for children with disabilities in South Carolina schools.

As explained in the infrastructure section, the R2S Act will provide professional development to teachers and school leaders on evidence-based practices in reading instruction in grades PreK through twelfth grade. Elementary reading coaches were funded by the State and will provide professional development to the educational staff in each elementary school. This funding resource will provide professional development on reading instruction for all elementary teachers and school leadership, including special education teachers. The SPDG grant will be another source of funding for professional development on differentiation of instruction and UDL. The cohort of districts will be provided funding from the OSES to improve areas of need that directly affect reading outcomes for students with disabilities. The OSES staff has capacity to assist select districts in choosing appropriate resources and personnel for assisting them in increasing reading outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities. The ESEA waiver is another means of providing support to focus and priority schools in the area of reading improvement. The partnerships between offices at the State level will assist in coordination of services and allocation of resources to LEAs in the cohort. Plans will be made to provide statewide professional development on such areas as UDL and differentiation of instruction.

Section VII: Appendices

Appendix A: Links to Websites with Additional Information

From Section III: Analysis of State Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity

Description	Link
The Read to Succeed Act	http://ed.sc.gov/agency/ie/School-Transformation/Read-to-Succeed/
Online Resources	http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/173/FiscalandDataManagement.cfm
Online Technical Assistance (TA) Requests	https://adobeformscentral.com/?f=GpjFwO-SPAr7ZYKC2b7UHQ#
ESEA Waiver	http://ed.sc.gov/scde-grant-opportunities/documents/Memorandum-H3893.pdf
Alternate achievement standards in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies	http://ed.sc.gov/agency/ccr/Special-Education-Services/NCSCTrainingResources.cfm http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/48/
SC Early Childhood Standards	http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/64/
SC Infant and Toddler Standards	http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/64/
A full description of Standards from the Division of School Effectiveness	http://ed.sc.gov/agency/ee/Educator-Services/Licensure/documents/CertManual_Feb2015.pdf
<i>The Compliance Seekers Guide to the Universe</i> that describes the program monitoring process and includes all of the forms, rubrics, and materials that are used by the OSES in the process	http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/173/documents/ComplianceSeekersTableOfContents2014-15.pdf .

Appendix B: Acronyms and Definitions

4K – Four-year-old kindergarten
AA-AAS – Alternate Assessment based on Alternate Achievement Standards
ADEPT – Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching
APPLE – Assistant Principal Program for Leadership Excellence
APR – Annual Performance Report
AT – Assistive Technology
CCSS – Common Core State Standards
CEC – Council for Exceptional Children
CFR – Code of Federal Regulations
CDEP – Child Development Education Program/Early Learning and Literacy
CSEFEL – Center for Social and Emotional Foundations in Early Learning
DaSy – Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems
ECTA – Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
EDGAR – Education Department General Administration Regulations
ELA – English Language Arts
EOC – Education Oversight Committee
ESEA – Elementary and Secondary Education Act
ESY – Extended School Year services
FAPE – Free Appropriate Public Education
FDM – Fiscal and Data Management Team
FFY – Federal Fiscal Year
ICC – Interagency Coordinating Council
IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IDC – the IDEA Data Center
IEP – Individualized Education Program
ITG – Infant and Toddler Guidelines
LEA – Local Education Agency (local school district)
LRE – Least Restrictive Environment
M – Meets Requirements
MOA – Memorandums of Agreement
MOE – Maintenance of Effort
MSRRC – Mid South Regional Resource Center
MTSS – Multi Tiered Systems of Support
NA – Needs Assistance
NAEP – National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCSC – National Center and State Collaborative NDLA – New Directors Leadership Academy
NI – Needs Intervention
NSI – Needs Substantial Intervention
O&A – Oversight and Assistance Team
OIPE – Office of Instructional Practices and Evaluation
OMB – U.S. Office of Management and Budget
OSSES – Office of Special Education Services

P&I – Programs and Initiatives Team
PALS – Peer Assisted Learning Strategies
PASS/SC PASS – South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards
PD – Professional Development
PPD – Principal’s Professional Development
PWN – Prior Written Notice
RBD – Refreshable Braille Display
R2S – Read to Succeed
RTI – Response to Intervention
RtP – Research to Practice
SBE – State Board of Education
SCASA – South Carolina Association of School Administrators
SCDE –South Carolina Department of Education
SCDMH – South Carolina Department of Mental Health
SCVRD – South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department
SC CREATE – South Carolina Centers for Re-Education and Advancement of Teachers in Special Education
SCDDSN - South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
SIM – Strategic Instruction Model
SIMR – State Identified Measureable Result
SLICE – South Carolina Longitudinal Information Center for Education
SOP – State Operated Program
SPP – State Performance Plan
SSIP – State Systemic Improvement Plan
SWEET – SCDE’s Student Information System (SIS) Web Extract and Export Tool
SY – School Year
USC – University of South Carolina
TECS – Training for Early Childhood Solutions
UDL – Universal Design for Learning

Appendix C: Section II Data Analysis Graphs and Tables

Total - Students with Disabilities - SC: 99,530

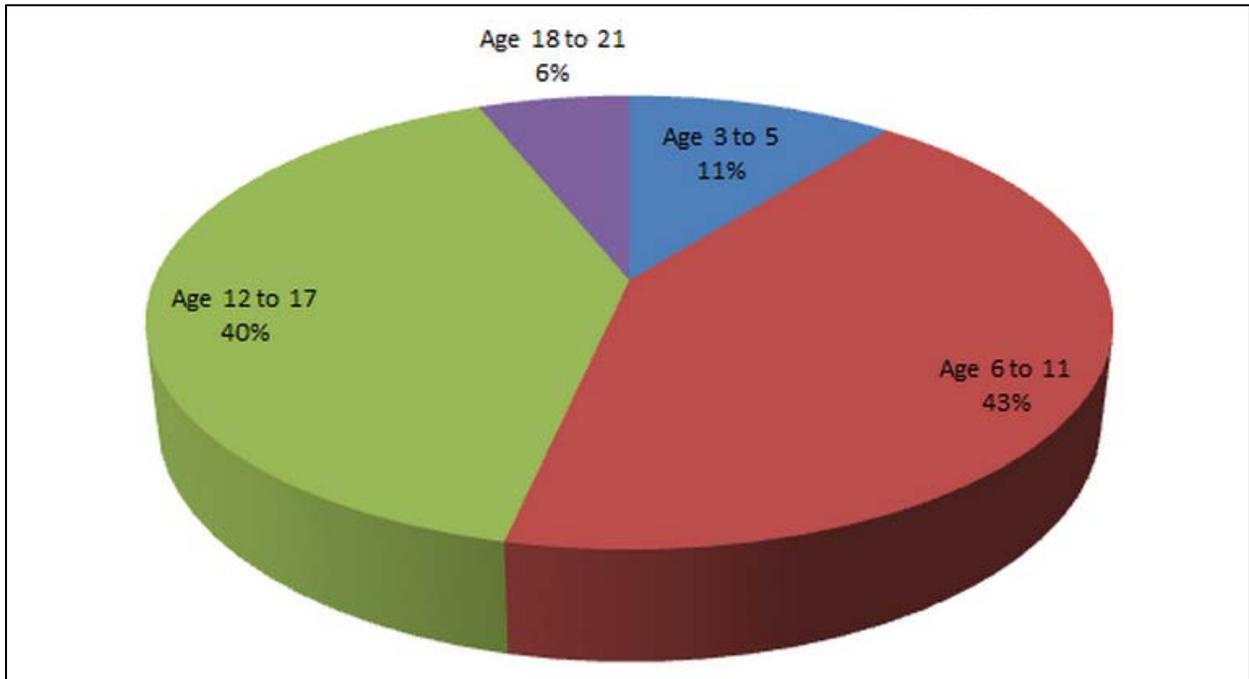


Figure 2.1: Students with Disabilities, South Carolina, by age group

Age 3-5: 10,626

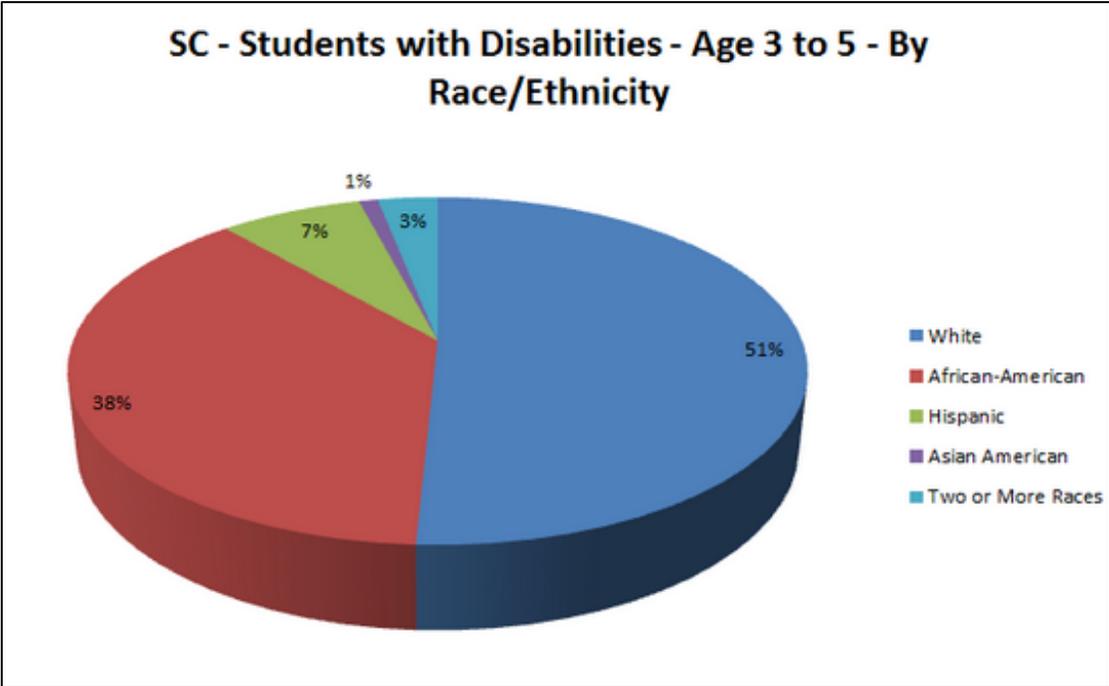
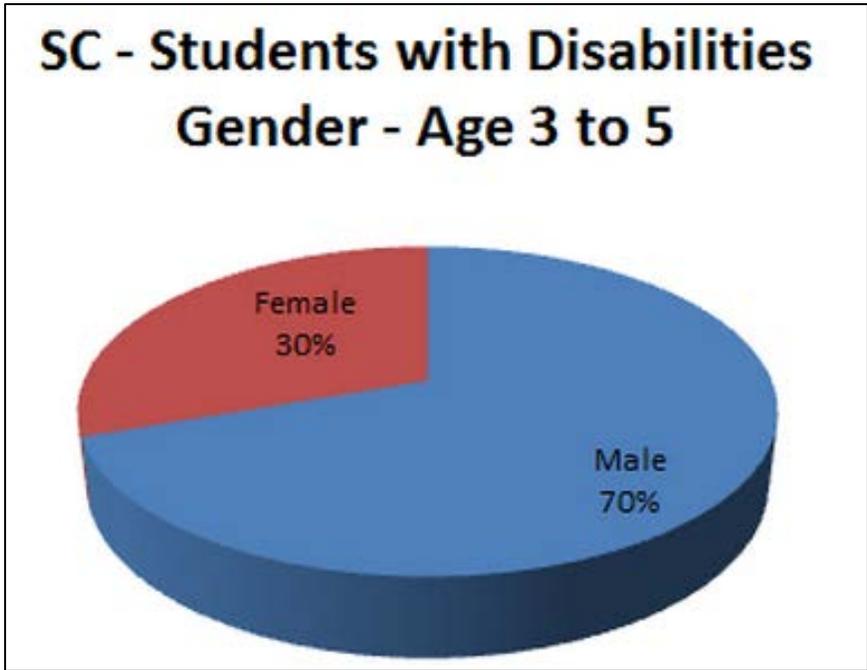
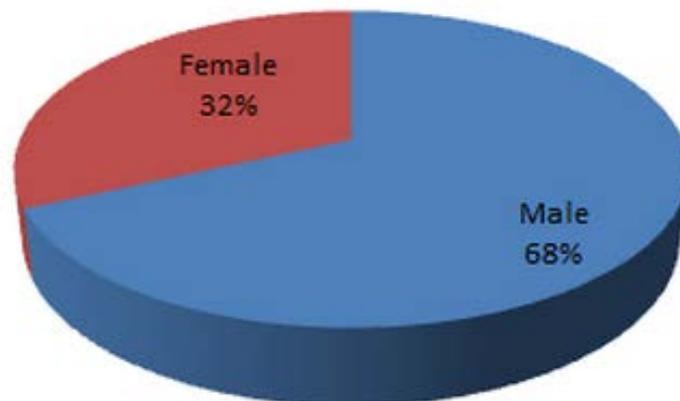


Figure 2.2: Overview of Students with Disabilities in South Carolina, Age 3–5 and 6–21

Age 6-21: 88,904

SC - Students with Disabilities Gender - Age 6 to 21



SC - Students with Disabilities - Age 6 to 21 - By Race/Ethnicity

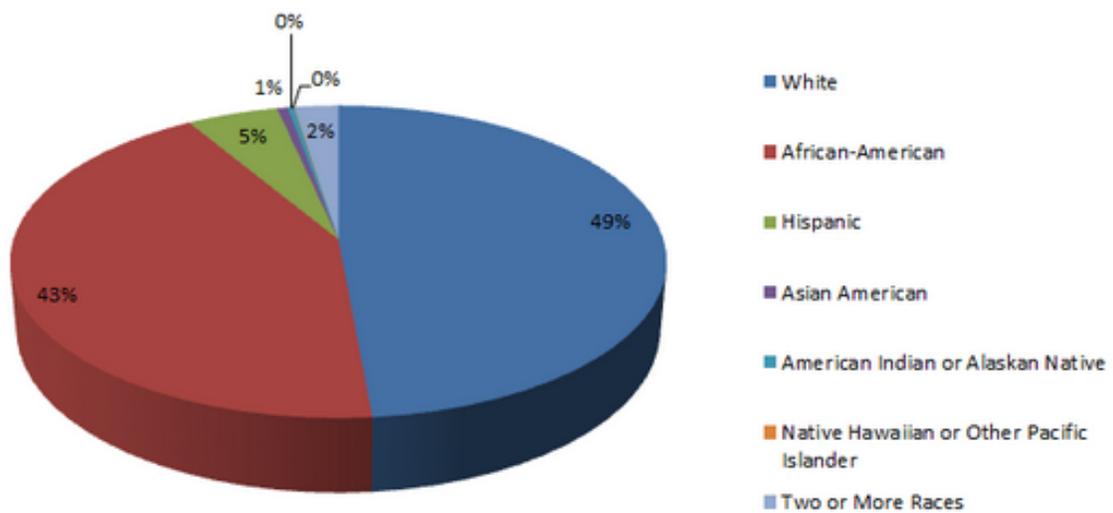


Figure 2.2: Overview of Students with Disabilities in South Carolina, Age 3–5 and 6–21

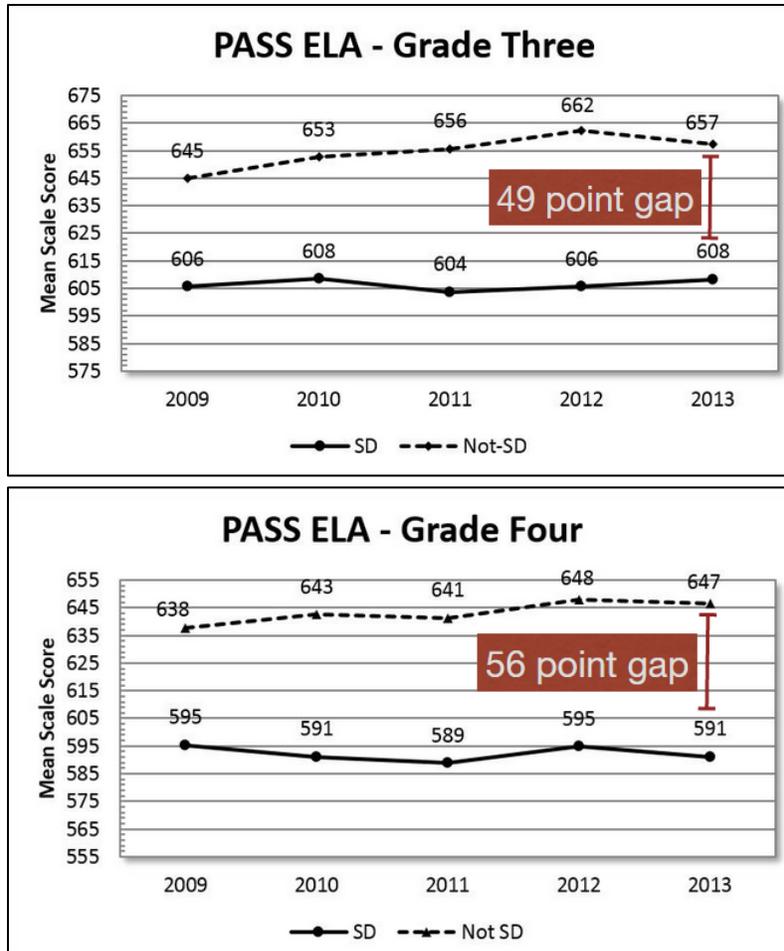


Figure 2.3:
 Reading performance gaps for the PASS ELA Assessment (Grade 3 and 4) and the NAEP Reading Assessment (Grade 4 and 8)

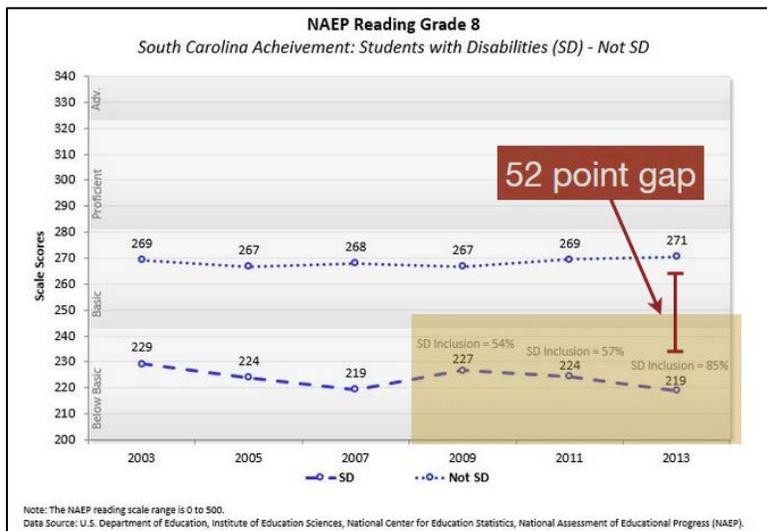
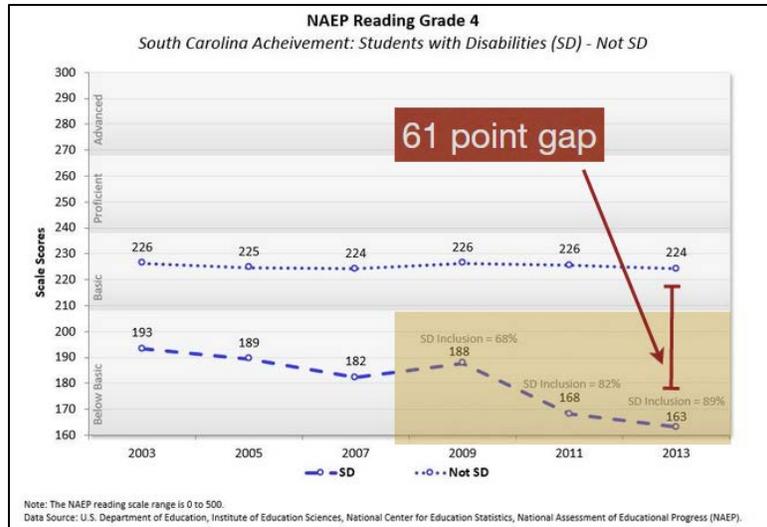


Figure 2.3 (continued):
Reading performance gaps for the PASS ELA Assessment (Grades 3 and 4) and the NAEP Reading Assessment (Grades 4 and 8)

Students with an IEP, Regular Assessments, with or without accommodations, 2011-2012

	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade	High School
% Proficient and Above	43.7%	36.7%	38.8%	26.8%	28.7%	25.4%	12%
State Rank	23rd	31st	31st	35th	28th	33rd	46th



Source: IDEA Data Center, ideadata.org

Figure 2.4: Reading proficiency rate for students with an IEP in South Carolina

Gender

PASS 2013 - Grades 3 and 4 - Students with Disabilities

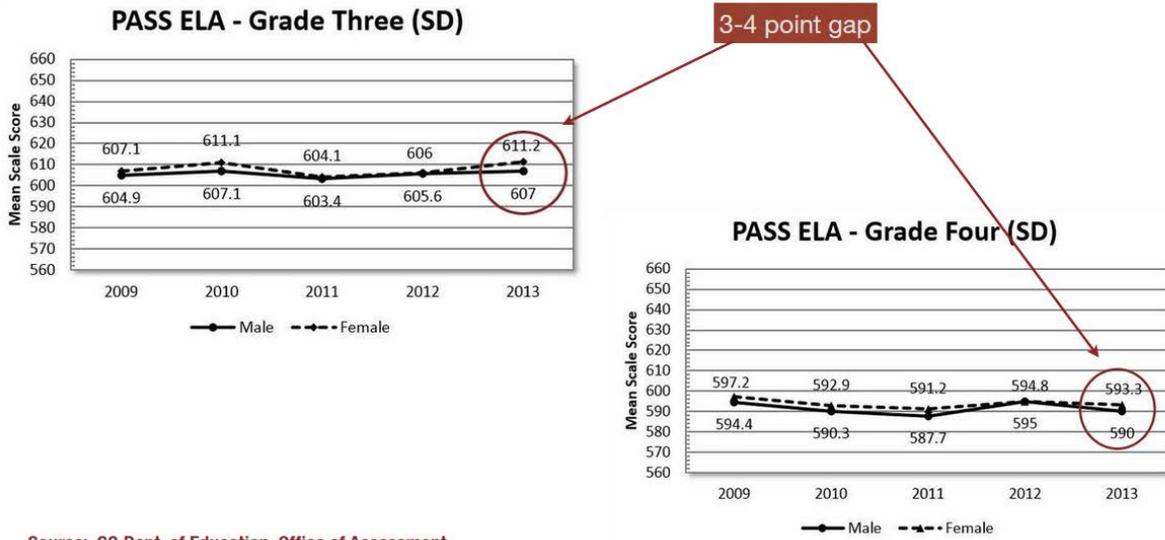


Figure 2.5: Reading performance gaps for students with disabilities for gender and race for students with disabilities on the SC PASS ELA assessment and the NAEP reading assessment

Gender

NAEP Reading - Grade 4 and 8 - Students with Disabilities

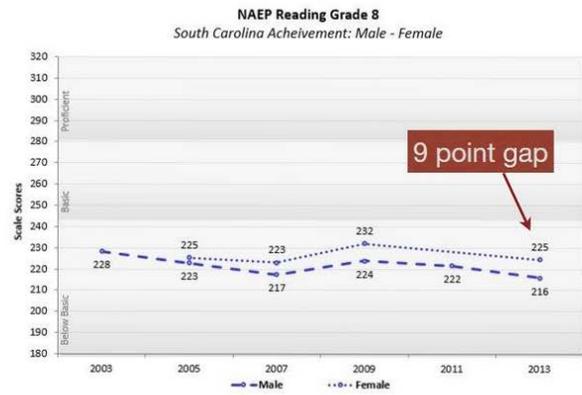
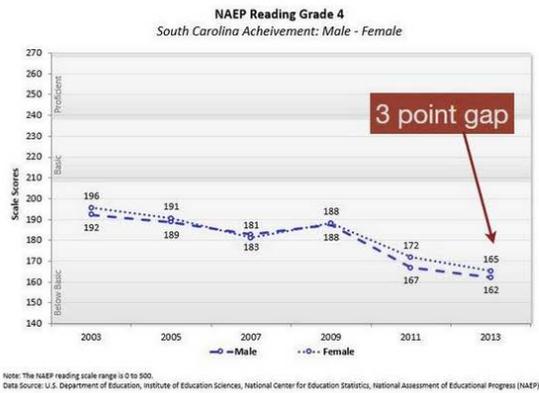


Figure 2.5: Reading performance gaps for students with disabilities for gender and race for students with disabilities on the SC PASS ELA assessment and the NAEP reading assessment

Race

PASS Reading - Grade 4 and 8 - Students with Disabilities

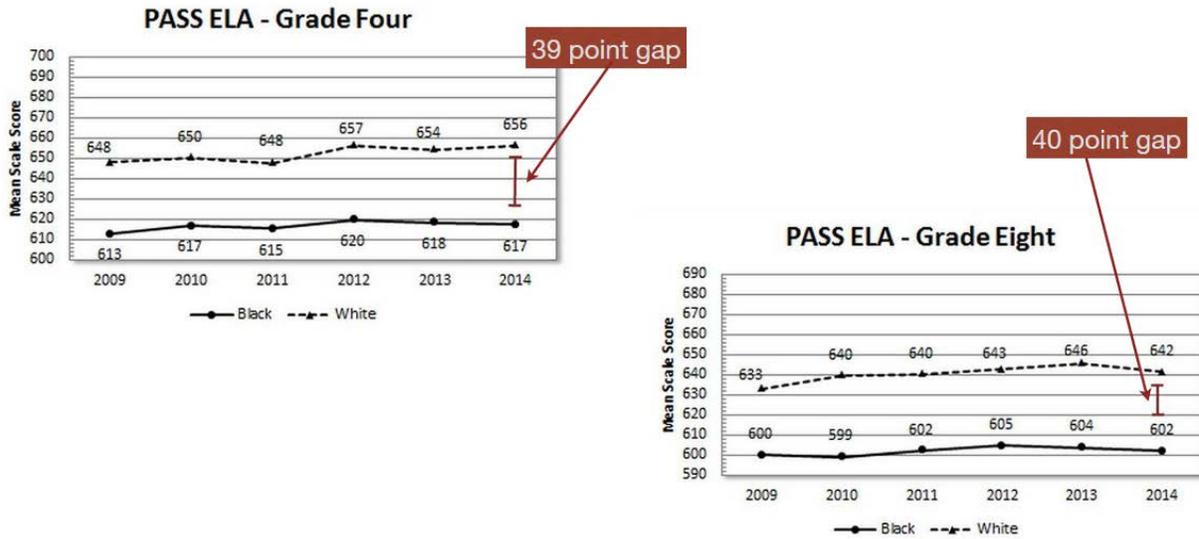


Figure 2.5: Reading performance gaps for students with disabilities for gender and race for students with disabilities on the SC PASS ELA assessment and the NAEP reading assessment

Race

NAEP Reading - Grade 4 and 8 - Students with Disabilities

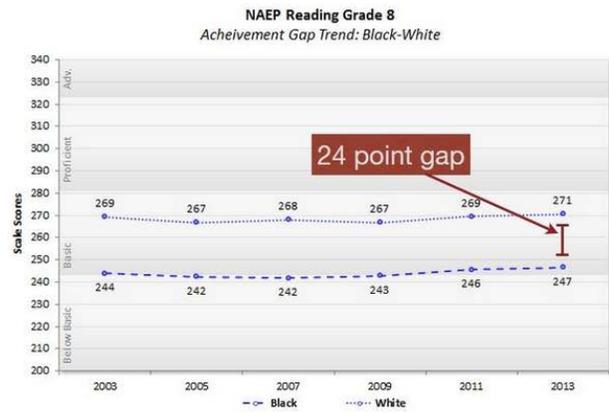
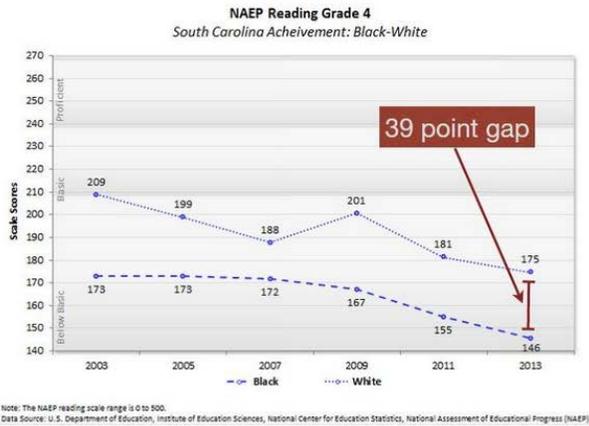
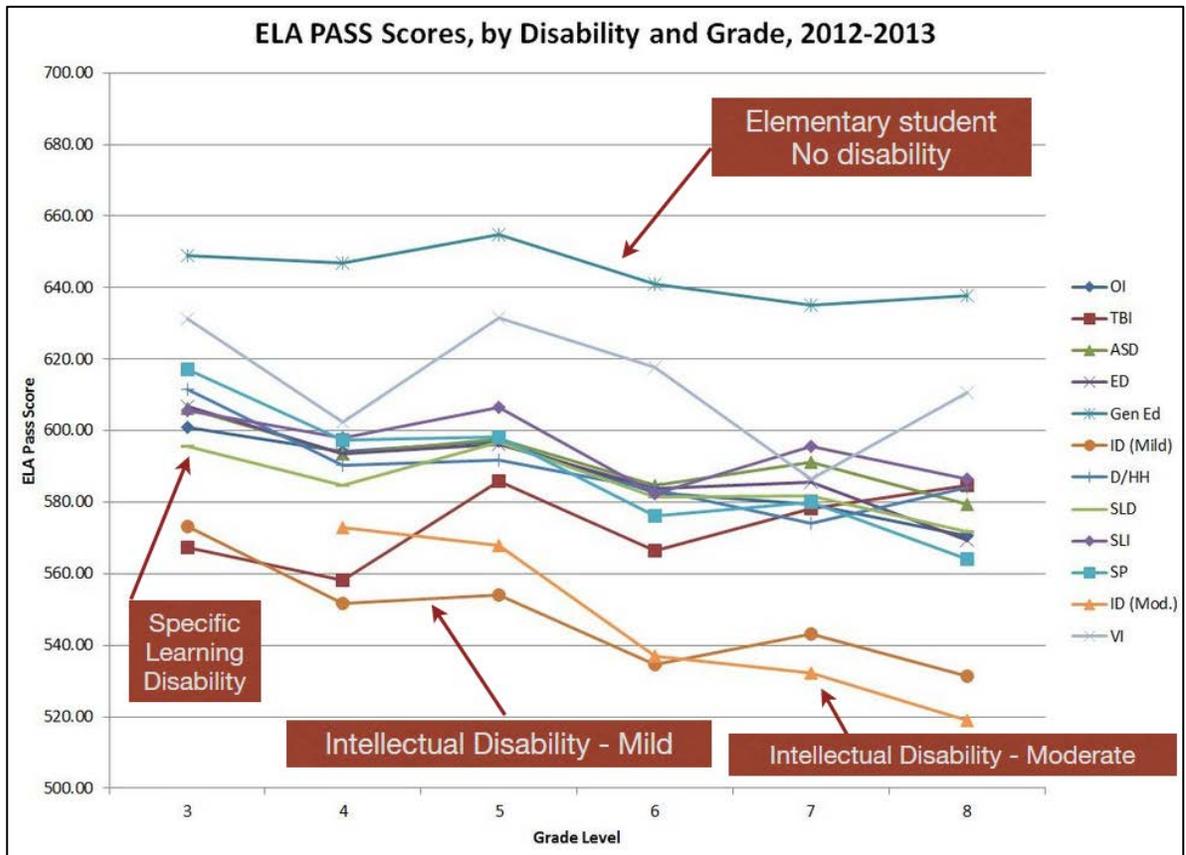


Figure 2.5: Reading performance gaps for students with disabilities for gender and race for students with disabilities on the SC PASS ELA assessment and the NAEP reading assessment



ASD	Autism
ID (MILD)	Intellectual Disability - Mild
ED	Emotional Disability
D/HH	Deaf/Hard Hearing
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
OI	Orthopedic Impairment
SLI	Speech/Language Impairment
ID (MOD)	Intellectual Disability - Moderate
VI	Visual Impairment
OTH	Other Health Impaired

Figure 2.6: SC PASS ELA assessment scores by disability and grade, 2012–13 school year

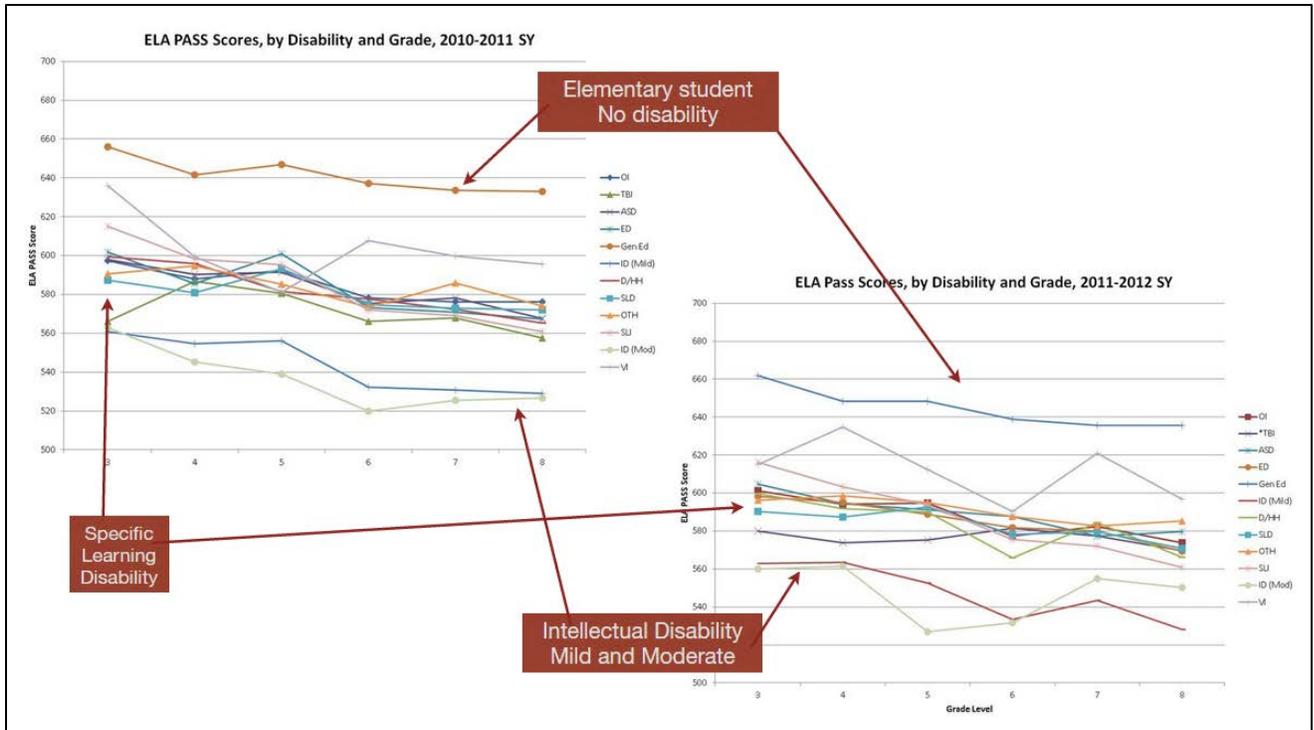


Figure 2.7: SC PASS ELA assessment scores by disability and grade, 2010–11 and 2011–12 school years

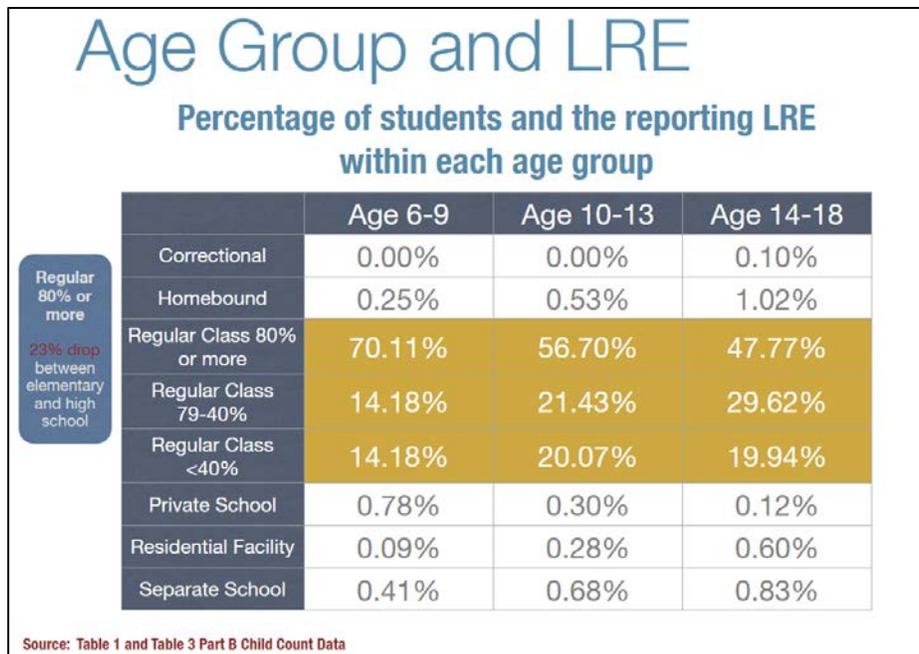


Figure 2.8: Age group and LRE percentages

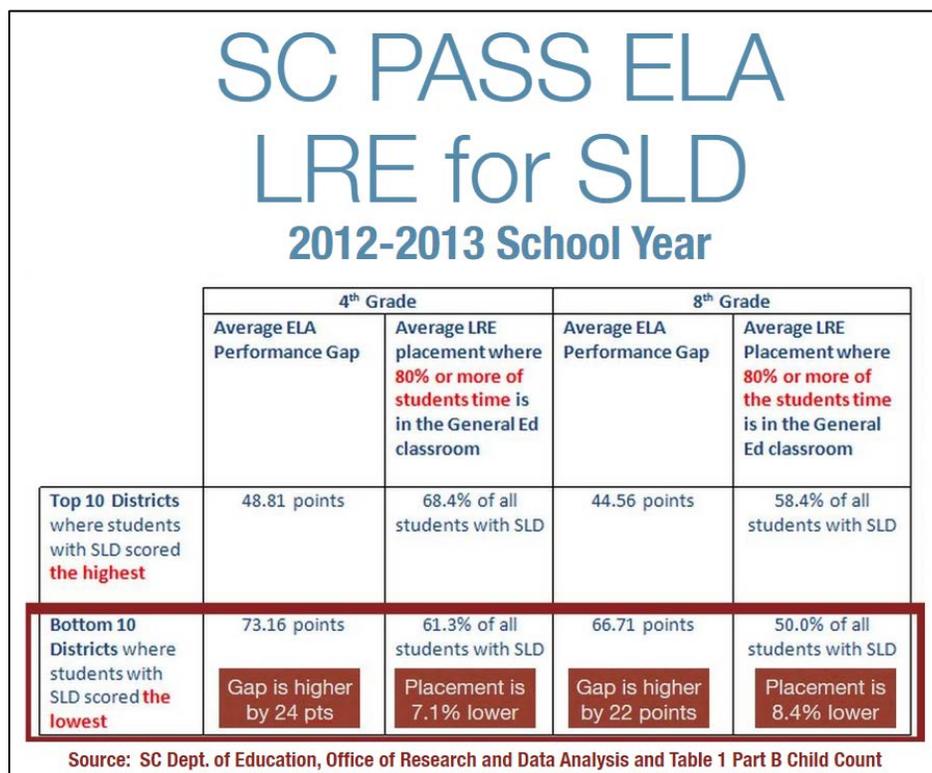


Figure 2.9: SC PASS ELA gaps, fourth and eighth grades, based on LRE for SLD students

SWD vs. General Education Reading Performance Gap

Statewide Average Gap - 2013 PASS Reading
3rd through 8th grade
 (measured in points)

3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	6th Grade	7th Grade	8th Grade
46.6	52.3	54.5	57.4	52.6	63.4



Source: SC Dept. of Education, Office of Assessment

Figure 2.10: Reading performance gap SWD vs. General Education students, 2013

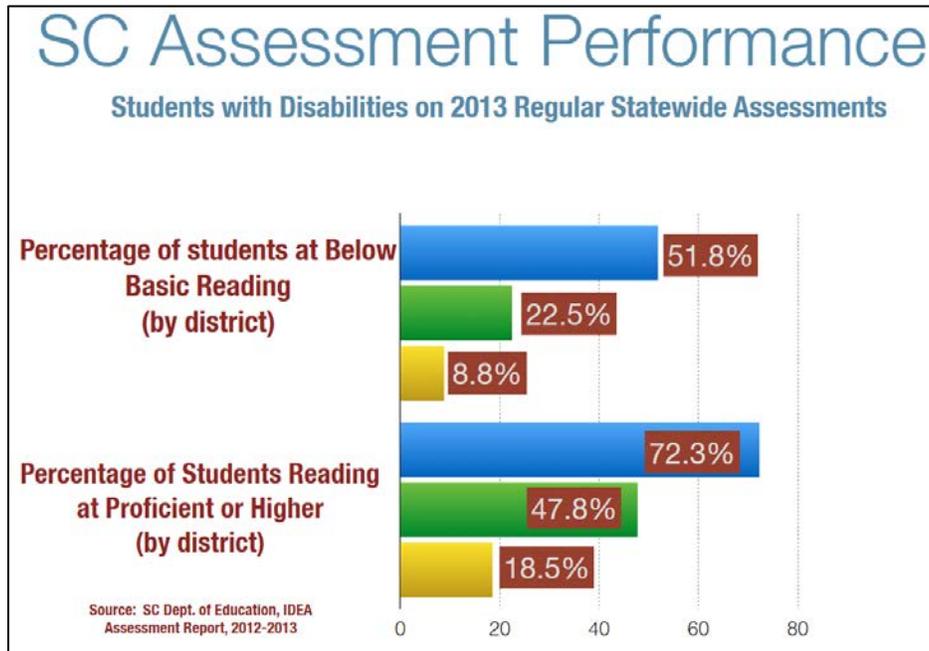


Figure 2.11: SC PASS ELA assessment performance for students with disabilities, 2013

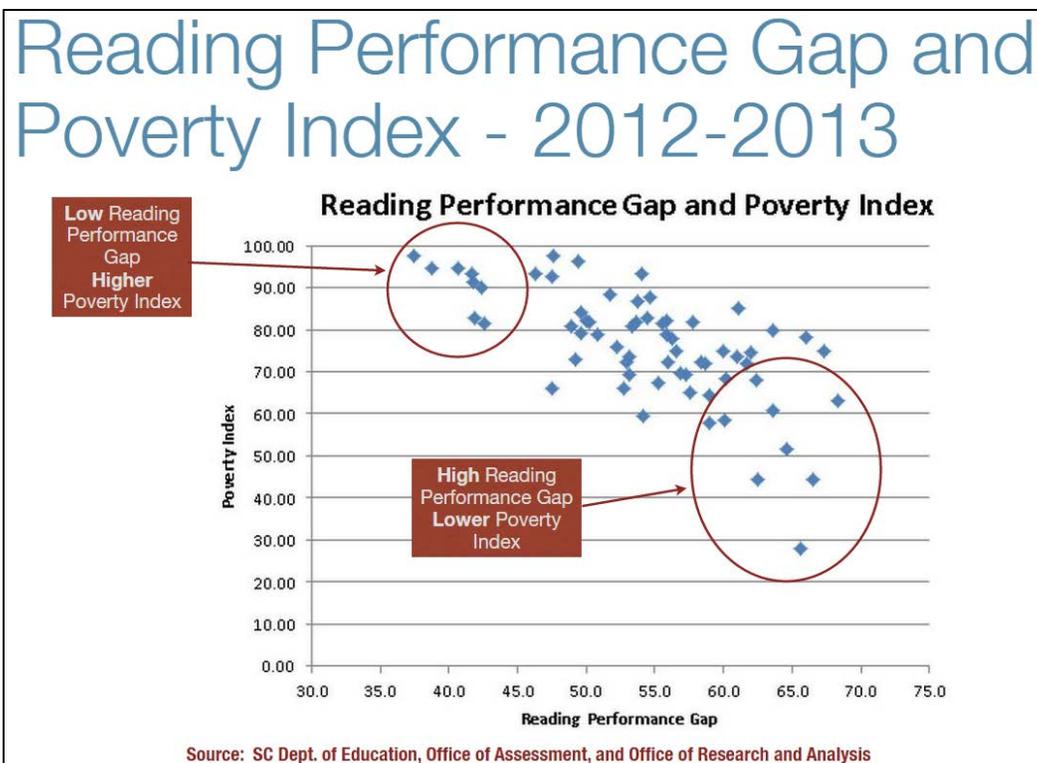


Figure 2.12: District reading performance gaps by poverty index, 2012–13 school year

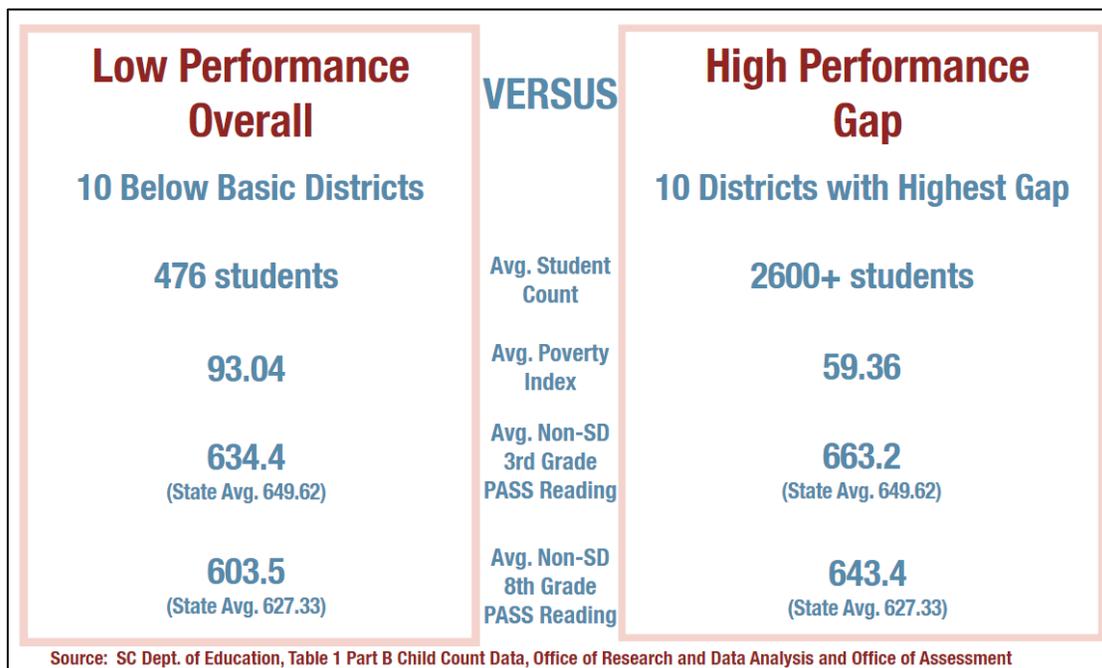


Figure 2.13: Lower performance vs. high performance gap districts, 2012–13 school year

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