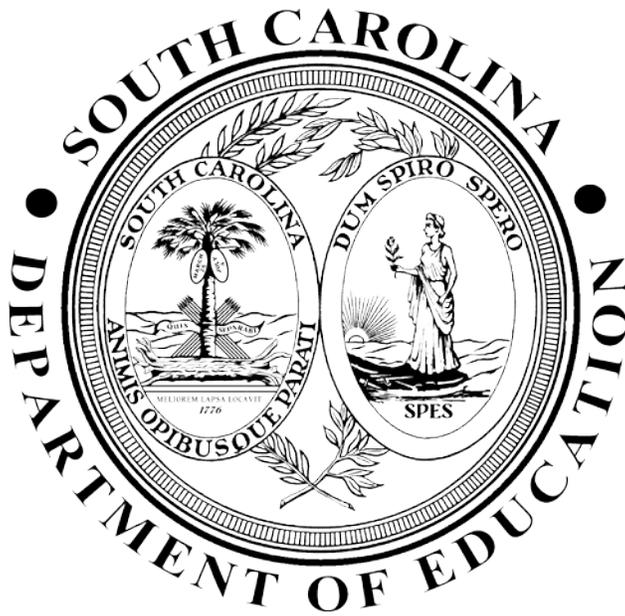


**Office of Special Education Services  
Early Childhood Framework**



**South Carolina Department of Education  
Office of Special Education Services**

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**Contents**

Introduction..... 3

Early Childhood Program and Goals ..... 4

Levels of Intervention ..... 5

Criteria for Identification or Tiers..... 6

Tier One: Universal Assistance Supports ..... 8

Tier Two: Targeted Assistance Supports ..... 9

Phase 1: Diagnose ..... 10

Phase 2: Select Strategies..... 10

Phase 3: Plan for Improvement..... 11

Phase 4: Implement the Plan..... 12

Phase 5: Monitor and Evaluate ..... 13

Phase 6: Revise for Momentum or Sustainability..... 14

Closing Observations ..... 15

Agency Resource Map..... 15

External Agency Resources ..... 15

## Introduction

Act 86 of 1993 requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to serve children with disabilities ages three through five. This state mandate represented a downward extension of all the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Public Law 101-476.

The vision of State Superintendent Molly Spearman and the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) is that all students graduate prepared for success in college, careers, and citizenship. The SCDE will work to accomplish this vision through state-level leadership, as well as school and LEA/SOP support to operationalize the most effective teaching and learning strategies to help make the Profile of the South Carolina Graduate a reality for every student in our state.

All children in our state, regardless of their disability status, deserve a high-quality, education that prepares them for successful professional and personal lives. Every child who does not graduate from high school or who enters the workforce underprepared is at risk of not becoming a contributor to our state's progress. High quality education is not just a state economic issue; it is a personal and moral issue. Every South Carolina child deserves the opportunities a high-quality education affords. There is great consensus in South Carolina around this vision and mission, and the need is clear for students to graduate with the world class knowledge, the world class skills, and the life and career characteristics outlined in the Profile.

The mission of the Office of Special Education Services (OSES) is; if the South Carolina Department of Education's Office of Special Education Services provide consistent, collaborative, proactive direction and support focused in the areas of academics, social emotional learning, early childhood development, and post-secondary transition by using data-based decision making, quality instruction (EBPs), family and community engagement and fidelity of implementation then LEAs/SOPs will have the infrastructure, capacity, and sustainability to provide students with disabilities equitable access and opportunity to meet the profile of the South Carolina graduate (world-class knowledge, world-class skills, and life and career characteristics).

The purpose of the Early Childhood (EC) team is to provide tiered supports to LEAs/SOPs in the area of early childhood outcomes in order to support the overall mission of the OSES, the SCDE, and federal requirements. The EC team works in conjunction with the preschool committee of the Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities (ACSED), South Carolina's Parent and Training Information Center (PTI), Family Connections of South Carolina, and the South Carolina Partnership for Inclusion (SCPI) in order to support and assist LEAs/SOPs.

## Early Childhood Program and Goals

The Early Childhood Outcomes mission are to provide consistent, collaborative, proactive direction and support in the area of Early Childhood Education by using data-based decision making, quality instruction (EBPs), family and community engagement and fidelity of implementation to support all students to meet the profile of the South Carolina graduate (world-class knowledge, world-class skills, and life and career characteristics).

In order to achieve this mission, the Early Childhood Outcomes Team will:

1. Support LEAs/SOPs by building capacity and infrastructure so all children ages three to five who are receiving special education services, can have access, opportunity and success as measured by indicators 6, 7, and 12 of the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR).
2. Support early childhood outcomes by building capacity and infrastructure to increase the use of high leverage practices to teach necessary early skills, offer a continuum of services, ensure timely transitions to early childhood education, and specialized instruction for young children with disabilities, as measured by indicators 6, 7 and 12 of the State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR).

## Levels of Intervention

OSES uses the *Ten Desired Elements of a General Supervision System for Improving Results Selection for Differentiated Intervention* (<https://ncsi-library.wested.org/resources/34>) to guide their work and to create tiers which includes but is not limited to:

- LEA/SOP interventions are differentiated based on LEA/SOP needs, which are collectively identified and addressed
- Supports include a feature to check data
- Differential will include both risk assessment and root cause analysis
- Intervention will use an LEA root cause analysis and other data at different levels of support
- OSES will give feedback to LEAs and link it to resources for improvement
- OSES will provide LEAs with feedback on particular groups of children in the focus area based on the tier of support needed by the LEA/SOP
- OSES will work to resolve or reach agreement on discrepancies between OSES and LEA assessments
- LEAs implementation plan address performance and are identified through data
- There will be a focus on the intervention once selected not just about selection of an intervention
- OSES will decide what interventions OSES will offer and what LEAs will do on their own based on different levels
- OSES staff has an understanding of the differentiated process
- LEAs will have an understanding of the differentiated process
- Triage, OSES will spend most time with the LEAs in tier 2 and 3 but will still provide support to all
- Tiered levels of support are well-defined
- OSES will have a way for LEAs to request TA even if they are not in a higher level of need

## Criteria for Identification or Tiers

The tiers will be determined by a combination of results from LEA determinations and LEA/SOP reported assurances. All LEAs/SOPs complete assurances regarding their program from multiple areas. The assurances for Early Childhood include:

- The LEA/SOP ensure that IEPs are results-oriented, are focused on improving the academic and functional achievement and facilitate the child's transition to school from early intervention services.
- The LEA/SOP ensures that IEPs are designed based on the individual child's needs, considering the child's strengths, preferences, and interests.
- The LEA/SOP ensures that IEPs are designed to include instruction, related services, acquisition of daily living, sensory, motor, and social emotional and functional skills.
- The LEA/SOP has someone to fill the role of early childhood coordinator/c to b 619 transition specialist.
- The LEA/SOP ensures agency collaboration/agency awareness.
- The LEA/SOP provides transportation services/ training to faculty and staff.

Based on the criteria above, LEAs/SOPs are assigned a tier based on the following:

- **Tier 1: Universal Assistance Supports of the LEA/SOP System of Tiered Assistance (SoTA)**

The indicators in the LEA determinations that the EC team include:

Indicator 6 Educational Environment (Ages 3-5)

Indicator 7 Early Childhood Outcomes (COSF)

Indicator 12 Part C to B Transition

- **Tier 2: Targeted Assistance/Tier 3: Intensive Assistance of the LEA/SOP Targeted Assistance System**

The first step in tier 2 supports includes a root cause analysis of the specific indicators that are not being met in the LEA Determinations. Tier 2 supports will be prescribed based on analysis of the LEA/SOP RCA responses. Tier 2 supports will include Tier 1 resources as well as regional support provided by OSES and affiliated organizations.

To determine what LEAs will be in tier 2 and tier 3 OSES will use each LEAs overall three-year determination category and the rating from the performance factors in the determinations. The total for each year for all performance indicators is summed and then the three years are averaged. Every LEA with an average of less than 10.99 and who has fallen in the "needs assistance" category for all three years is considered 'at risk'. There is a possible 21 points each year, so if the district is averaging less than 53% of the possible points on outcomes for three years in a row.

The purpose of using only the performance factors is to ensure a focus on outcomes to ensure validity, that OSES is measure performance and outcomes and not compliance.

Using an LEA Determination of needs assistance for three years in a row helps to ensure the reliability of the data by using multiple points of data.

A dynamic rating for each indicator for the four focus areas will be used to determine the health in the respective focus area. OSES will then combine this data and data from the other three Focus Areas with the Root Cause Analysis.

## Tier One: Universal Assistance Supports

Schools in South Carolina are not one-size-fits-all, and as a state, we value local control and flexibility. OSES support services are tailored to meet the needs and particular contexts of LEAs/SOPs and communities. To that end, the Early Childhood Outcomes team has established a tiered system of technical assistance for LEAs/SOPs. All LEAs/SOPs will be provided with access to universal supports, some of which are noted in the Early Childhood Outcomes Tier 1: Universal Supports Spreadsheet. Strategies for improvement should align with the improvement priorities based on the results of the LEA/SOP's most recent LEA determinations. Professional development and interventions are intended to target state involvement and support to the specific needs of the LEAs/SOPs; therefore, some modification may be made. The overall universal supports are intended to provide LEAs/SOPs across the state with high leverage practices to support the LEA/SOP's diverse students' needs.

Universal supports are provided to all South Carolina LEAs/SOPs through:

Topic	Delivery Method	Intended Audience
Professional Learning Opportunity—based on request	Face-to-face through direct request	Teachers and administrators
Modules	virtual	Teachers
Guidance	PDF posted online	Administration
IEP Development	virtual	Teachers and administrators
Co-Teaching and Inclusion	Face-to-face through direct request and virtual	Teachers and administrators
Tier 1 interventions - related service providers	Face-to-face through direct request and virtual	Teachers, support staff and administrators
Early Childhood Companion Guide	Virtual and PDF posted online	Teachers and administrators
MTSS/Pyramid model in the Early Childhood continuum and the LRE	Face-to-face through direct request and virtual	Teachers and administrators
MDR	virtual	Administrators

## Tier Two: Targeted Assistance Supports

Tier 2 LEAs/SOPs will complete a root cause analysis in the area where the LEA determinations show the LEA/SOP is struggling.

The root cause analysis is intended to provide school LEAs/SOPs with a framework for determining the degree to which their program is implementing practices which are likely to lead to more positive early childhood outcomes for students with disabilities. The LEA/SOP should consider the descriptions of predictor categories and each individual program characteristic below, as well as the Degree of Implementation and the Evidence of Implementation scales to guide decisions regarding program strengths, needs, and priorities for change.

### **Program Characteristics:**

**Educational Environment (Ages 3-5)** is defined as the setting where a child participates in early learning experiences. This could be any early childhood sector in S.C. and children with disabilities should be supported in any early learning environment they are otherwise (age, income, or other qualifying components) eligible for.

**A program of study** is an individualized set of experiences, and curriculum designed to develop students' academic and functional achievement to support the attainment of students' desired preschool goals.

**Part C to Part B Transition** describes children who have received early intervention services from the ages of 0-3 under an IFSP through BabyNet and are entitled to a transition meeting, eligibility determination and if eligible, an IEP in place by their third birthday without interruption of services.

**Rating Scale:** For each Essential Program Characteristic, choose one of these four numerical options to describe the degree of implementation.

- (1) The practice is not being implemented.
- (2) The practice is implemented sometimes, but it is not consistently implemented throughout the LEA/SOP.
- (3) The practice is evident most of the time, in most classrooms throughout the district, where preschool-aged students are served.
- (4) The practice is implemented consistently in all classrooms throughout the district, where preschool-aged students are served.

### **Evidence of Implementation**

- **Weak Evidence:** written policies and/or procedures, articulated agreements within and across agencies, curriculum, instruction or training materials, meeting agenda/notes
- **Moderate Evidence:** teacher lesson plan/services plan, IEP goal, objective or transition services, transcripts

- **Strong Evidence:** data collection forms, progress monitoring, or service notes, unit/lesson grades, work product, instruction artifact, program evaluation data supporting the implementation

### **I. Tier Three: Intensive Assistance Supports**

The LEA/SOP, in collaboration with OSES, will identify targeted professional development topic areas specific to individual LEA/SOP needs. Professional development will be offered by OSES, and partners, to support areas of need. The early childhood outcomes team will work in tandem with designated partners to build capacity for early childhood programming at the LEA/SOP level and to serve as a provider to assist the LEA/SOP in building its early childhood programming.

## **Phase 1: Diagnose**

A comprehensive review and analysis of student, perceptual, and environmental data is conducted to establish a baseline that: 1) provides the foundation for understanding the LEA/SOP's strengths and weaknesses, and 2) serves as the basis for selecting research-based strategies and programs to improve student achievement. The needs assessment serves as a formative assessment measure in the school improvement process. It provides documented evidence and specific information regarding key leadership, teaching, and learning practices in the school or LEA/SOP. In addition to the review of instructional and leadership practices, school climate and community engagement are also analyzed. The result is a comprehensive picture of the LEA/SOP and clear articulation of improvement priorities.

## **Phase 2: Select Strategies**

LEA/SOP teams identify priority areas for improvement based on the needs assessment and establish goals and strategies for the top three to five identified priorities – the most important problems to be addressed. Limiting the plan to a critical few allows the LEA/SOP to focus their efforts. Once priorities are identified, the team works to understand root causes.

LEA/SOP teams select appropriate evidence-based practices to support improvement in priority areas. Resources might include the [IRIS Center Evidence-Based Practice Summaries](#), [What Works Clearinghouse](#), [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](#), [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations](#), [National Center for Systemic Improvement](#), and [National Center for Intensive Intervention](#).

## Phase 3: Plan for Improvement

The LEA/SOP in collaboration with OSES develops a LEA/SOP Action Plan to address established priorities. Established priorities should have clear and measurable goals and should use evidence-based interventions. For example, if the school identifies an attendance problem as a top priority, the school improvement team should state a goal having a clear target, indicator, and milestone date. An effective goal statement is specific, measurable, realistic/relevant, and time bound. An example of an effective goal statement is, “Increase student attendance rates (indicator) to ninety-four percent per week (target) by December 14, 2020 (milestone date).”

During this phase, the LEA/SOP identifies needed resources, outlines future professional development, and develops a plan for monitoring implementation of the plan. The following considerations are critical when planning implementation of an effective plan:

- Determine the evidence-based strategy to ensure alignment with the assigned intervention;
- Define ownership: Assign persons responsible for each strategic action;
- Determine if identified strategies require funding, the source of the funding, and how funding will be sustained;
- Define and provide professional development required to implement each prioritized strategy; and
- Determine the structures and systems needed to support, sustain, and monitor the implementation of the plan.

## Phase 4: Implement the Plan

Strategies identified for each goal in the plan are implemented during this phase. Engaging stakeholders, ensuring fidelity of implementation, and using effective systems to support implementation are critical in this phase. The following considerations are critical for implementation:

- Determine a process for working with stakeholders to support and execute the implementation of the improvement strategies and identify necessary behaviors for improvement;
- Determine a process to monitor the fidelity of implementation for each improvement strategy;
- Determine which systems will be used to support the implementation of the plan. This may include systems used to determine needed professional development, analysis of data, and determination of instructional strategies for intervention.

## Phase 5: Monitor and Evaluate

Data are collected on the specific targets established in the LEA/SOP Action Plan and analyzed by the LEA/SOP to determine progress toward the set targets. Data may indicate progress toward the goal, lack of progress/change, or negative impact or change. Adjustments (continue with the strategy, abandon the strategy, or modify the strategy) are made based on the data. Measured results may indicate progress toward the goal, a lack of change, or possibly even a worsening situation. Based upon the results, determine to stay the course or to change strategy. Adequate progress likely means no change is necessary. If progress is being made, but the rate of change is not adequate to ultimately meet the goal, a change in the strategy might be needed, an assessment of the fidelity of the implementation may be needed, or an addition to the strategy may be required.

## Phase 6: Revise for Momentum or Sustainability

Outcomes of the internal analysis of the progress toward set targets in the LEA/SOP Action Plan are examined to determine the success of improvement activities, programs, and strategies. Focus must be placed on maintenance and sustainability. Based on the outcomes, the plan should be revised, following steps one through five to ensure continued improvement or to develop desired momentum. This planning cycle has been described as a series of separate phases, but in practice, the phases may overlap.

## Closing Observations

The cycle of school improvement answers four critical questions:

1. How are students currently performing?
2. Where do we want our students to perform?
3. What will we do to reach our goals for student learning outcomes?
4. How will we know when student learning outcomes have improved?

It is important to note that continuous school improvement is critical for the sustained success of all schools, regardless of their performance level. This is not a practice simply to be used with low-performing schools. Schools that are able to identify the core principles of continuous improvement and act upon them accordingly, have an increased likelihood of not only improving any deficient areas, but also sustaining any improvement that is achieved as result of following this model or a model such as this.

## Agency Resource Map

### SCDE Resources

- [Office of Early Learning and Literacy](#)
- [Office of Standards and Learning](#)
- [Office of Assessment](#)
- [Student Intervention Services](#)
- [South Carolina Assistive Technology Program](#)
- [Office of Special Education Services](#)
- [Office of Personalized Learning](#)
- [Office of Career and Technical Education](#)
- [Office of Instructional Materials](#)

## External Agency Resources

Agency Name	URL
SC Association for the Education of Young Children	<a href="http://scaeyc.org">http://scaeyc.org</a>
SC Center for Child Care Career Development	<a href="http://www.sc-cccd.net/index.html">http://www.sc-cccd.net/index.html</a>
SC First Steps/BabyNet	<a href="http://scfirststeps.org/babynet/">http://scfirststeps.org/babynet/</a>
South Carolina Early Childhood Association (SCECA)	<a href="http://www.sceca.org">www.sceca.org</a>

<b>Agency Name</b>	<b>URL</b>
Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA)	<a href="http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/">http://www.southernearlychildhood.org/</a>
<u>The Division for Early Childhood</u>	<a href="http://www.dec-sped.org/">http://www.dec-sped.org/</a>
The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center	<a href="http://ectacenter.org/">http://ectacenter.org/</a>
South Carolina Partnerships for Inclusion (SCPI)	<a href="http://scpartnershipsforinclusion.org/">http://scpartnershipsforinclusion.org/</a>
SC Inclusion Collaborative	<a href="http://www.scinclusion.org/">http://www.scinclusion.org/</a>
Head Start	<a href="http://sc-headstart.org/">http://sc-headstart.org/</a>
Office of the Child Care Administrator	<a href="https://www.schildcare.org/news-and-announcements.aspx#breastfeeding">https://www.schildcare.org/news-and-announcements.aspx#breastfeeding</a>
BabyNet, or Part C at SC Department of Health and Human Services	<a href="https://www.scdhhs.gov/resource/babynet">https://www.scdhhs.gov/resource/babynet</a>
Office of Early Learning and Literacy	<a href="https://www.ed.sc.gov/instruction/early-learning-and-literacy/">https://www.ed.sc.gov/instruction/early-learning-and-literacy/</a>
Office of Family and Community Engagement	<a href="https://www.ed.sc.gov/about/division-of-educator-community-and-federal-resources/">https://www.ed.sc.gov/about/division-of-educator-community-and-federal-resources/</a>
Advisory Council for Educating Students with Disabilities (ACSED)	<a href="https://www.ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/special-education-services/oversight-and-assistance-o-a/acesd/">https://www.ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/special-education-services/oversight-and-assistance-o-a/acesd/</a>
Family Connections SC	<a href="https://www.familyconnections.sc.org/">https://www.familyconnections.sc.org/</a>
DSS Office of Quality Rating System	<a href="https://www.schildcare.org">https://www.schildcare.org</a>
National Institute of Early Education Research NIEER	<a href="http://nieer.org/">http://nieer.org/</a>
South Carolina Assistive Technology Program	<a href="https://scatp.med.sc.edu/">https://scatp.med.sc.edu/</a>
Able SC	<a href="https://www.able-sc.org/">https://www.able-sc.org/</a>

Agency Name	URL
Federation of Families of South Carolina	<a href="https://fedfamsc.org/">https://fedfamsc.org/</a>
Child Care Resource and Referral Network	<a href="https://www.sc-ccrr.org/">https://www.sc-ccrr.org/</a>
SC First Steps	<a href="https://scfirststeps.org/">https://scfirststeps.org/</a>
SC Early Childhood Advisory Council	<a href="https://earlychildhoodsc.org/who-we-are/about-us/#:~:text=South%20Carolina%E2%80%99s%20Early%20Childhood%20Advisory%20Council%20is%20a,and%20medical%20communities%2C%20parents%20and%20early%20childhood%20educators.">https://earlychildhoodsc.org/who-we-are/about-us/#:~:text=South%20Carolina%E2%80%99s%20Early%20Childhood%20Advisory%20Council%20is%20a,and%20medical%20communities%2C%20parents%20and%20early%20childhood%20educators.</a>
First 5 SC	<a href="https://first5sc.org/">https://first5sc.org/</a>
SC Hands and Voices	<a href="https://sites.google.com/view/schandsandvoices/">https://sites.google.com/view/schandsandvoices/</a>
SC Beginnings	<a href="https://beginningssc.org/">https://beginningssc.org/</a>