Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013
Part B State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)
Phase I

Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services

April 1, 2015

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Overview

A. Description of the State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR)

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (DSE/EIS) in consultation with internal and external stakeholders identified the SIMR as increasing the mathematics proficiency of students with disabilities in grades (3) – (5) in six (6) Local School Systems (LSSs). The MSDE SIMR is aligned with Indicator 3C: proficiency of students with disabilities on the English/language arts and math Statewide assessments in grades 3 – 8 and high school. Specifically the Maryland SIMR is to increase proficiency of students with disabilities on the mathematics Statewide assessments in grades three (3) – five (5).

B. Baseline and Targets

FFY	Average Percentage of Students with Disabilities At or Above Proficient at Grades 3, 4, and 5 in the Six (6) Selected LSSs
2013 (Baseline)	35%
2014	35%
2015	35%
2016	38%
2017	41%
2018	44%

C. Description of State Program

The State of Maryland has 24 LSSs from 23 counties and Baltimore City. The MSDE generally divides its LSSs into six regions. The **Baltimore Metropolitan Region** has six (6) LSSs: Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Carroll County, Harford County, and Howard County. It also has the SEED School of Maryland, a publicly-funded, residential boarding school that is identified as an LSS for accountability under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The Baltimore Metropolitan Region is the largest of the six (6) State regions. The **National Capital Region** consists of Montgomery County and Prince George's County and is the second-largest region in the State. The **Western Maryland Region** has four (4) LSSs: Allegany County, Frederick County, Garrett County, and Washington County. The **Upper Shore Region** has five (5) LSSs and includes Caroline County, Cecil County, Kent County, Queen Anne's County, and Talbot County. The **Lower Shore Region** has four (4) LSSs and includes Dorchester County, Somerset County, Wicomico County, and Worcester County. Finally, the **Southern Maryland Region** is home to three (3) LSSs – Calvert County, Charles County, and St. Mary's County.

As of Fall 2013, those 24 LSSs served 866,169 PreK–12 students (see http://www.mdreportcard.org). Of this student population, 102,882 (11.9%) were children and youth with disabilities, ages three (3) through 21, receiving special education and related services in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and State law. Of the 102,882 children and youth with disabilities, 90,652 (88%) were school age children and youth, ages six (6) through 21 years old.

D. Process Used for Developing Phase I of the SSIP

The data and infrastructure analysis began internally with a review of a broad base of information related to student outcomes from reports and data requests. Next, stakeholders reviewed the data and participated in an iterative process over time with facilitated brainstorming activities to generate recommendations. Identification of the State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) focused on the development of three components – what result area, where or which subpopulation group, and which

LSSs would be involved. With the proposed SIMR, internal and external stakeholders identified root causes, coherent strategies, and developed a Theory of Action. While most of the face-to-face Phase I activities with stakeholders were completed by January 2015, they continued to be involved through email communications and met for a final Phase I review of activities and a draft of the SSIP on March 17, 2015.

E. Overview of Stakeholder Involvement

In the Spring of 2014 MSDE leadership met with LSS special education directors and their teams from all 24 jurisdictions to review identification and placement patterns for students with disabilities and disproportionate gaps in student performance. These were followed by a series of meetings in the Fall of 2014 and Winter of 2015 with Maryland stakeholders, representing a broad range of organizations instrumental in advocating for children with disabilities, providing professional learning opportunities and technical assistance to families and educators, and delivering special education services. In addition to LSS Directors, representatives included other state organizations such as Maryland's Protection and Advocacy agency (Maryland Disability Law Center), and the Parent Training and Information agency (Parents' Place of Maryland) as well as other state agencies (e.g., MD Department of Disabilities), Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs), the Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC), and State educational organizations for general and specialized teachers. Special attention was given to ensure that representatives of Maryland family groups were involved. In addition to external stakeholders, key staff from various MSDE Divisions reviewed data summaries and engaged in infrastructure analysis. These 26 external stakeholders had areas of expertise that included district and school administration, parent partnerships, delivery of multi-tiered instruction and interventions, data analysis, policy planning, early intervention, early childhood services, behavior interventions, mathematics instruction, teacher preparation, and inclusive practices for students who need the most comprehensive supports. Stakeholders were involved in Phase I through face-to-face meetings, reviews of data, summaries of input in meetings, and email. See Infrastructure Analysis, Section 2F for a list of the representatives engaged in all parts of the Phase I SSIP Development.

1. Data Analysis

The purpose of the analysis of data for Phase I of the SSIP is to identify the strengths and targets for improving the performance of children and youth with disabilities and subsequently identify a primary area of concern. A broad-based analysis was initially conducted, considering all areas of student performance, including areas such as identification, attendance, academic achievement, behavioral indicators, and post-school outcomes. The analysis began with gathering and charting key data from the State's Part B State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR) indicators, 618 data collections, and other data sources (e.g., Special Services Information System – SSIS). Data were organized to identify patterns, trends, strengths, and, as potential targets for improvement emerged, further disaggregated to identify other factors for consideration.

A. How Key Data were Identified and Analyzed (1(a))

In order to conduct a comprehensive review of quantitative and qualitative data, MSDE considered student performance data (disaggregated by jurisdiction, placement, race, disability category, and students receiving Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs) as well as other factors such as attendance, suspension, graduation, dropout rates, and post-school outcomes. Qualitative data included information gathered from the State Professional Development Grant (SPDG) and the priorities emerging through the state partnership with the Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) Center. Other qualitative data included the input from stakeholders based on their experience as parents, advocates, professional developers, or service providers. These "real world" experiences lent a story to the numbers, and led groups to provide direction to the State in next data analysis steps and allowed the State to create consensus around the SIMR.

Quantitative Data Analysis – Data Sources.

Data were examined for the 2013-2014 school year, and where relevant, longitudinal data over time were examined. Sources of data included the following:

- **Maryland's Public Website for State Performance Plan Results**
  The Maryland Public Website for State Performance Plan Results is a web-based application that serves as the public reporting site for the IDEA Part C and Part B SPP/APR data. Individuals may examine data for each SPP indicator over time by State aggregate as well as disaggregated by the State's 24 LSSs.
- **Maryland Report Card**
  The Maryland Report Card is the State's website that provides detailed information relative to the performance of the State, the LSSs, and individuals schools. The Maryland Report Card also highlights information on School Progress, Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs), demographics, enrollment, and attendance.
- **Maryland 2013-2014 Student Publications**
  There are several publications on this website that provide data about students in Maryland school systems. Documents used in the data analyses included:
  - Maryland Public School Enrollment
    The MSDE annually publishes enrollment data of all students. These data are also disaggregated by grade, gender, and race for elementary and secondary enrollment.
  - Maryland Special Education/Early Intervention Services Census Data
    The document includes information collected annually on children with disabilities who reside in the State. To collect these data, Maryland uses the Special Services Information System (SSIS) database to compile information. The MSDE uses the SSIS database as a source of information to meet planning, monitoring, and accounting responsibilities; a recording and reporting tool for decisions made by LSSs; and as an instrument for federal reporting.
  - Maryland Public School Suspension and Expulsions
    MSDE annually publishes several documents related to the number of incidents of in-school and out-of school suspensions of students, including students with disabilities. Data from the *Maryland Public School Suspensions by School and Major Offense Category In-School and Out-of-School Suspensions and Expulsions* were the primary sources used in the data analyses. The data are disaggregated by gender and race.
- **Internal Data Reports**
  - Special Education Child Count from the DSE/EIS;
  - Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) from the Office of School Effectiveness, School & Community Nutrition Programs Branch; and
  - English Learners from the Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability, Office of Instructional and Teacher Effectiveness, English Language Learners Program.

Qualitative Data Analysis – Data Sources.

As quantitative data were gathered, other data sources provided qualitative input. These included:

- **The DSE/EIS Complaint Database**
  The number and type of state complaints are monitored and tracked in the DSE/EIS Compliant Database. These data are compiled and used by the DSE/EIS to identify areas of needed assistance and support and to ensure identified noncompliance is corrected as soon as possible but in no case later than one year from identification, consistent with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Memorandum 09-02.
- **SPDG Reports**
  There are three (3) LSSs participating in Maryland's State Personnel Development Grant, each with two schools. The project focuses on addressing the knowledge and skill development needs of general and specialized educators working with students whose disabilities are mild or moderate. Quantitative and qualitative data on LSS, school and classroom use of implementation science strategies were reviewed in relationship to student performance on formative assessments of mathematics.

  SWIFT School Data Snapshots

There are four (4) LSSs each with four (4) schools receiving technical assistance from MSDE and SWIFT Center staff. They use an implementation science approach to assess school practices and review student data to select priorities for improvement. School teams generate Data Snapshots that include data from the SWIFT-FIT, a research based tool administered by trained assessors, and the SWIFT-FIA, a progress-monitoring tool, both measuring implementation of the SWIFT Core Features. It also includes data on the capacity of the school to install new practices through a "Drivers" assessment, as well as evidence of behavioral and academic student outcomes.

- **Stakeholder Focus Groups**
  Several Stakeholder groups were convened in Phase I to review data, request additional information, and make recommendations to the MSDE. These meetings also provided opportunities to identify barriers and facilitators of improvement in student performance, as well as strategies and issues for further discussion. This discussion contributed to the root cause analysis to inform the development of coherent and evidence-based strategies to address the areas of focus. Meetings occurred in the Spring and Fall of 2014 and the Winter of 2015.

- **Literature Review**
  As the SIMR was identified, the MSDE core development team embarked on a literature review of evidence-based practices related to the emerging SIMR as well as best practices discussed in the field.

Questions Guiding the Analysis

The MSDE, DSE/EIS and stakeholders examined trend and disaggregated data to identify problem areas, identify a measurable result, and the population who would be affected. Some sample questions that guided these examinations and discussions included:

- *To what extent are students with disabilities in Maryland performing proficiently or advanced on the Maryland State Assessment, and where are the greatest gaps when compared with nondisabled peers?*
- *Is there disproportionate suspension and expulsion of students with disabilities, and is there a discrepancy by race/ethnicity?*
- *Is poverty (measured by FARMS) influencing identification or placement of students with disabilities?*
- *To what extent do students with disabilities have access to general education instruction alongside their non-disabled peers, and is there any relationship between placement, performance, and any other factor?*
- *Are students with disabilities graduating or dropping out at rates comparable to their non-disabled peers?*
- *Is there a relationship between attendance/absences (more than 20 days) and disability category, grade, or race?*
- *Is there disproportionate performance by gender or race across LSSs and grades in reading and math performance?*
- *Is there disproportionate identification of students with disabilities or placement of students with disabilities by race/ethnicity?*
- *Does the absence of 20 or more days affect the academic proficiency for students with disabilities? And if so, how?*
- *What policies or practices are in place that may be affecting academic performance, suspension, placement, attendance, and disproportionality by race?*

B. Trend Analysis and Disaggregation of Data (1(b))

Broad Data Analysis Results

The information below represents the broad-based analysis that preceded and contributed to the identification of the SIMR. It includes both quantitative and qualitative information in the context of current priorities and initiatives in place in Maryland.

Enrollment: The total enrollment of students has remained relatively stable over the last 10 years, with the percentage of students with disabilities (ages 3 – 21) slightly declining from 13% of the total school age population in 2003 to 11.9% of the student population in 2013-2014 school year.

Gender: While male students are 51% to 49% females in the general student population; 68% of the students with disabilities are male compared to 32% of females.

Attendance/Absences: Overall, student attendance has remained high over time for students with and without disabilities, at approximately 93-94% for students receiving special education services in elementary and middle school and 94-96% for same age students in the general population. In high school, overall attendance slightly declined to 88 – 89% over the last 10 years for students with disabilities and 92-93% for regular education students. Variation is seen however when looking at chronic absenteeism, defined in Maryland as absent 20 or more days. While the rate of absences increases as students move into middle and high school, special education students have a higher rate of chronic absences as seen in the table below.

	Percent of students absent ≥ 20 days					
	Elementary		Middle		High	
School Year	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education	Regular Education	Special Education
2014	5.5%	11.6%	7.6%	16.8%	15.6%	28.0%

Graduation: More Maryland students are receiving their high school diplomas at higher rates than ever before. As the graduation rate has hit record levels, the dropout rate has declined. The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate reached 86.39% in 2014 -- more than 4 percentage points better than the 81.97% rate registered in 2010. The graduation rate jumped more than 1 percentage point over 2013, from 84.97%. Among students receiving special services, the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate rose in two of three categories. The graduation rate for special education students, for example, improved more than 3 percentage points in one year, from 60.03% to 63.45%.

Dropout Rate: The overall dropout rates have fallen to new lows and are decreasing for both special education and regular education students. However students with disabilities drop out of school at a rate almost twice as high as non-disabled students. The 4-year adjusted cohort of students sorted by grade level similarly shows that classes of students decrease their dropout rate over time, but overall students with disabilities are dropping out at approximately twice the rate (15.82%) when compared to the general population (7.58%).

Disability Identification: The total number of school age students with disabilities, age 6 – 21, is 90,652, or 10.47% of the total student population. Identification rates vary from 7.38% in rural Calvert County to 15% in Baltimore City, with wide variability among the 24 jurisdictions. These variances do not appear to be influenced by size or location within the state. The largest disability population is **Specific Learning Disabilities** (34.6%) followed by students who have **Other Health Impairments** (18.44% who may be students with Attention Deficit Disorder, or other disabilities that affect learning) and **Speech/Language Impairments** (15.21%) and then students with **Autism** (10.25%) and **Emotional Disabilities** (7.31%).

The remaining 15% of the population of special education are students who have **Intellectual Disabilities** (5.76%), **Multiple Disabilities** (4.59%), with less than 1% each for students who are Deaf or have Hearing Impairments, Vision Impairments, Orthopedic Impairments, Deaf-Blindness, Traumatic Brain Injury, and Developmental Delay.

Poverty: There is not a clear pattern of association between poverty and disability identification. Districts with high rates of poverty as measured by students who receive Free and Reduced Meals (FARMs), do not necessarily have high rates of students with disabilities identified and, conversely, students with low poverty rates may have higher proportions of students with disabilities compared to others and the state average. However, within the group of students who receive FARMs, there is a slightly higher than average proportion of students who have disabilities, across all jurisdictions.

Race/Ethnicity: The majority of students in Maryland identify as White (41%) or African American/Black (35%). Hispanic students make up almost an additional 14% of the student population. African American students are identified as having a disability at a rate higher than their presence in the student population (43% versus 35%); White students are slightly underrepresented in receiving special education services (38.5% versus 41%). The fewest non-white students are in rural Allegany and Garrett Counties in Western Maryland; the largest non-white populations are in Baltimore City and Prince George's County, a Washington DC suburb.

Race	All Students	Students w/Disabilities, 6-21
American Indian/Alaskan Native	0.3%	0.3%
Asian	6.1%	2.7%
African American/Black	34.9%	43.2%
White	40.9%	38.5%
Hispanic	13.6%	12.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.1%
Two or More Races	4.1%	3.2%

Placement: Students with disabilities are being placed in general education classes at a higher and higher rate over time, with more time spent learning the general education curriculum alongside their nondisabled peers. Ten years ago, 55.38% of students with disabilities participated in general education settings for 80% or more of the day; this has increased to 69%. The variation across jurisdictions, however, is large, ranging from 54% in the second largest school system to 92% in one of the smallest school systems. The 5 largest school systems with 75,000 to 150,000 students rank in the bottom third for including students with disabilities in general education instruction. These districts also have a number of special schools (public and nonpublic) as well as private schools for nondisabled students. The LSSs that have historically competed for and won discretionary funds to promote inclusive practices hold the highest rates for placing students in general education and maintain that rate over time.

Performance in Math/Reading: The trend in progress in Reading and Math achievement for students with disabilities has mirrored that of their nondisabled peers in increasing over time, but at a lower rate. The exception is in the last two years: as teachers prepared to teach to the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, students across the state performed lower on the state assessment that was not aligned with these standards in both areas across most grades. The gap in proficiency between special education and general education students grows as student's age; in Math, 39.9% of students with disabilities score proficient or advanced in 3rd grade as compared to their nondisabled peers (78.1%). This 38 percentage point gap increases to a difference of 46.6 points in 8th grade. While nondisabled students maintain a relatively constant level of proficiency as a group, the percent of students with disabilities achieving proficient/advanced scores decreases after grade five.

Percent of Students Proficient and Advanced and GAP in MATH (2013-2014)						
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Regular Ed Students	78.1	85.0	78.0	73.0	68.2	63.7
Special Ed Students	39.9	45.6	33.2	26.8	22.4	17.1
GAP	38.2	39.4	44.8	46.2	45.8	46.6

In Reading, the overall rating of proficient and advanced performance of students with disabilities is higher across all grades than in math. The gap in proficiency and advanced performance is also smaller until 6th grade.

Percent of Students Proficient and Advanced and GAP in READING (2013-2014)						
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Regular Ed Students	80.0	89.8	92.3	87.9	84.1	82.1
Special Ed Students	52.5	58.8	63.3	46.0	37.9	33.2
GAP	**27.5**	**31.0**	**29.0**	**41.9**	**46.2**	**48.9**

Behavior Outcomes: Students with disabilities make up 25% of the suspensions and expulsions in Maryland school systems but only 10.5% of the total population. The offenses resulting in behavioral consequences are proportionate to regular education students for offense category; they are slightly lower for dangerous substances, and slightly higher for threats/attacks. Suspensions of students with disabilities are showing a decreasing trend over time. The largest numbers of students are from the largest jurisdictions (Prince George's: 1,803; Baltimore City: 1, 464; and Baltimore County: 1,285). It is interesting to note that the largest school system, Montgomery County only had 674 suspensions.

Practices and Priorities in SWIFT Partner Schools: Twelve of the 16 partner schools have completed data snapshots, and 3 of the LSSs have developed district data snapshots that identify common priorities and others that can be leveraged through the SWIFT work. All schools are identifying high quality Tier 1 instruction that promotes student engagement as a critical priority to be strengthened in order to successfully include ALL students. Most of them have also identified advance tier behavior intervention, math instruction/intervention, and parent engagement as areas for growth.

Statewide Strengths in Educating Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities in Maryland are being included in general education at greater rates each year. Student performance for students with and without disabilities has shown an increasing trend over time, except for the last years as schools transition to the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards. Students with disabilities are entering post-secondary programs at higher rates than in the past, and students with disabilities are being suspended at lower rates. New discipline regulations promise to reduce suspensions even farther.

State Concerns and Opportunities for Improving Results for Students with Disabilities

While students with disabilities are being included at higher rates each year, there remains a large discrepancy across jurisdictions. The largest school systems in the state (Baltimore City, Prince George's County, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, and Montgomery County) remain the most segregated systems, along with the smaller and more rural Charles and Calvert counties. Two of these LSSs (Baltimore City and Prince George's County) have a largely African American population, which greatly skews the state data for disproportionate separate placements.

While there is a gap across grades in Reading and Math performance for students with disabilities, the lower performance and larger achievement gap across all grades for math and increases dramatically in middle school. It is notable that the SPDG work focuses on improving math instruction and student

proficiency. In addition, emerging priorities for improvement in the SWIFT Center partner schools and districts include math instruction and intervention.

Disaggregation of Data

An initial review of the data led to the selection of key areas to disaggregate the data for certain areas by grade, race/ethnicity, and disability categories. Based on the broad analysis and considering the current initiatives that could be leveraged after much discussion and data examinations (see Section 1(F), stakeholders recommended a focus on math achievement and gap reduction. Stakeholders recommended a focus on math performance in elementary years as the initial target, and discussed the impact of improvement in early skills as developing the foundation for improved performance in the middle school years. Specific disaggregated data included the following sources:

- ✓ *State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR) Compliance and Results Data,* disaggregated over time and by LSS;
- ✓ *Maryland School Assessment* Data for Reading and Mathematics disaggregated over time, by grade, by race, and by jurisdiction;
- ✓ *Maryland School Assessment* Data for Reading and Mathematics disaggregated over time, by grade, by children with disabilities, and by nondisabled;
- ✓ *Disability Identification Data,* disaggregated by race, poverty (FARMS), and LSS;
- ✓ *Graduation Data* of youth with disabilities by disability, gender and race;
- ✓ *Attendance Data,* disaggregated by disability, race, gender, grade and LSS;
- ✓ *Suspension Data*, disaggregated over time, by race, and by jurisdiction; and
- ✓ *Placement Data,* disaggregated by race, disability, poverty, and LSS.

Data Results

Data were disaggregated by various factors to look at math performance in grades 3, 4, and 5, to determine trends or patterns of influence. Further data disaggregation will be conducted within targeted jurisdictions related to the SIMR in Phase II.

Placement: Of students in grades 3, 4 and 5, more students score proficient and advanced who are included in general education instruction for 80% or more of the day.

	Students with disabilities receive services in			
MATH	**general education ≥80% of the school day**	**general education 40 to 79% of the school day**	**general education less than 40% of the school day**	**Separate Day School**
Basic	42.8%	68.7%	76.4%	60.8%
Proficient	57.0%	30.6%	21.9%	28.5%
Advanced	0.2%	0.8%	1.6%	10.8%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Students who are least likely to participate in general education settings are students with multiple disabilities and students with intellectual disabilities.

Attendance: Students who are absent for 20 or more days have consistently lower math achievement in elementary school than students who are absent less than 20 days.

	Math Performance and Absences	
	Less Than 20 Days	20 or More Days
	Percent	Percent
Gr 3 Proficient	49.63%	34.00%
Gr 4 Proficient	60.67%	44.92%
Gr 5 Proficient	45.26%	31.68%

Poverty: Students who receive Free or Reduced Meals (FARMs) do not appear to have a greater risk for lower achievement rates. In fact, the percent of students who receive special education services are performing slightly lower than students who receive special education services as well as FARMs.

MATH	FARMs+Spec.Ed.	All Spec Ed	All Students
Basic	55.8%	60.6%	19.7%
Proficient	43.7%	33.7%	54.3%
Advanced	0.6%	5.6%	26.0%

Disability: Students with Specific Learning Disabilities and Other Health Impairments are among the most frequently identified yet are among the lowest in scoring proficient or advanced in Math in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades in Maryland. Students with intellectual disabilities consistently demonstrate the lowest proficiency across all three grades.

MATH:	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Hearing Impaired	21.9%	78.1%	0.0%
Visual Impairment	26.8%	73.2%	0.0%
Speech or Language Impairment	31.3%	68.6%	0.1%
Autism	45.3%	54.2%	0.5%
Traumatic Brain Injury	42.3%	53.8%	3.8%
Orthopedic Impairment	46.3%	53.7%	0.0%
Emotional Disability	47.2%	50.3%	2.5%
Specific Learning Disability	50.3%	49.3%	0.4%
Deaf	48.1%	48.1%	3.7%
Other Health Impaired	54.0%	45.3%	0.7%
Multiple Disabilities	56.1%	43.4%	0.5%
Intellectual Disability	88.1%	10.2%	1.7%

Race/Ethnicity: Student proficiency in math in elementary school is quite variable across different racial/ethnic groups. Highest proficiency rates are noted for students with disabilities who are Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Asian, and White. African American and Native American students and Hispanic students demonstrate lower math proficiency.

2013-2014 Special Education Students proficient in Math

Race/Ethnicity	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	100.0%	75.0%	100.0%
Asian	62.4%	70.5%	70.0%
White	61.9%	72.1%	51.0%
Two or More Race	50.9%	67.2%	54.8%
Hispanic	37.0%	56.8%	35.2%
Black or African American	36.6%	46.1%	29.4%
American Indian or Alaska Native	33.3%	62.5%	55.6%

Priorities, Variability, and Concerns in LSSs: Looking at achievement data or gap data alone is not sufficient to identify needs within local jurisdictions. For example while Worcester County has the highest level of general and special education math performance and among the lowest gaps in math proficiency in 3rd and 4th grades their ranking slips in 5th grade. Washington County ranks 13 out of 24 jurisdictions in math proficiency for general education 3rd grade students but has the biggest gap between special and general education performance. The jurisdictions that have the lowest performance and biggest gaps across elementary grades are Baltimore City, and Prince George's, Dorchester, Charles, Caroline, Kent, Talbot, and Cecil counties. Most of these counties are in the eastern shore or southern region of Maryland.

Future data analyses: In looking at data on students with disabilities across the State, patterns emerged which bear further scrutiny as implementation strategies are designed in Phase II. For example, students who are African American are over-identified as having an intellectual or emotional disability as compared to the student population or the disability population, and are under-identified as having autism compared to other races. A higher proportion of students with intellectual disabilities live in poverty across all races. Students who are African American are included in general education placements less than students of other races/ethnicities, and are placed in special education classrooms for most of the school day at rates far greater than their proportion of the total population or their presence in the disability population. These need to be further examined in relation to the SIMR as well as the design of coherent strategies to address the SIMR.

Relationship of Data to SIMR Selection

The analysis of data was developed and presented to stakeholders in multiple meetings. As can be noted in the Data Analysis, Stakeholder Participation, Section 1F below, stakeholders identified a number of initial areas on which to focus. Post-secondary outcomes are improving, and Maryland has had improved graduation rates and decreasing dropout rates. Literacy instruction has been a focus of MSDE guidance and there are more literacy tools and resources available to schools than math. This led the MSDE and stakeholders to focus on math performance of elementary school students with disabilities with the expectation that improved performance in elementary school would pave the path to improved performance in middle schools and beyond. Stakeholders recommended targeting grades 3 through 5.

C. Data Quality (1(c))

The State has adopted a data-informed decision-making approach to programmatic improvement and places great importance on the ability of the LSSs to provide timely and accurate data. The DSE/EIS collaborates with the Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability (DCAA) in accessing, verifying, and validating data.

Data Strengths

Maryland's use of a Unique Student Identifier (USID) enables the MSDE to disaggregate data based on demographics, attendance, disciplinary removals, achievement, gender, race/ethnicity, children with disabilities, etc. The MSDE, DSE/EIS also has a strong history of accurate data based upon its Special Services Information System (SSIS) that is analyzed against the MSDE, DCAA data. This is also demonstrated by the high levels of data accuracy and timeliness as noted in the MSDE Letters of Determination by the OSEP.

Data Security

The Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (MOIEP) was designed to collect data for Section 618 and State Performance Plan data reporting as the result of IEP team decisions. As a data tool, the LSSs using the MOIEP, transmit data nightly to Maryland's SSIS. The SSIS resides on a secure network and is backed up nightly using Storage Area Network (SAN) Disk and replicated off-site. The Division of Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability maintains the Education Data Warehouse and is responsible for the collection of data from LSSs and other entities; and ensures the validation, definition, and

maintenance of multi-year data in accordance with Department and Division policies and procedures for data quality and accessibility.

Strategies to Foster Timely and Accurate Data

The MSDE, DSE/EIS has in place a number of policies and mechanisms intended to foster and ensure that data collected and submitted to various databases are both timely and accurate. These include the following:

***Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (MOIEP) Database Structure*.** The MOIEP database was built with a mechanism to detect data entry errors in order to improve the accuracy of data entry. For example, when inaccurate dates are entered into the system, a message appears during data entry to indicate that there is a problem with the data. The Database also has an audit feature that ensures that all required information is entered into the system before an IEP can be made "closed."

SSIS Data. The Special Services Information System (SSIS) functions as a centralized data submission system for the IDEA Part B Section 618 data. Section 618 data are submitted via a secure server file transfer from LSSs that are to monitor and verify their data collection systems at the local level. Most public agency special education data collection elements are collected as a part of the daily information management for all students.

***Local Determinations*.** In order to emphasize the importance of timely submission of high quality data, the State has incorporated this requirement into its local determination criteria. The LSSs are required to submit all data, including programmatic and fiscal reports, in a timely and accurate manner.

***Monitoring for Continuous Improvement and Results (MCIR) Record Reviews*.** As part of the State's birth through 21 MCIR process, monitoring staff from the DSE/EIS examine student records for the presence of documentation that supports reasons for missing timelines. The State's goal is to ensure that documentation in each student record is consistent with data entry and meets the regulatory requirements.

Improvement Plans/Corrective Action Plans. The DSE/EIS requires the LSSs submit data to the SSIS Database in a timely and accurate manner and assigns Improvement Plans and/or Corrective Action Plans when local programs fail to do so.

Local Application for Federal Funds Assurances. The DSE/EIS includes language in the Local Application for Federal Funds (LAFF) that LSSs will provide data for all children with disabilities receiving special education and related services in the manner and timeframe specified.

***Professional Learning and Technical Assistance*.** The DSE/EIS, in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University (JHU), Center for Technology in Education (CTE) conduct hands-on Statewide professional learning opportunities for LSSs when there are major changes to the Maryland Online IEP. The DSE/EIS conducts regional meetings of LSS data managers twice a year to review amendments to the SSIS database, manual, and/or reporting timelines to help ensure competence with data entry and database report capabilities.

Data Quality Concerns

There were no concerns relative to data quality activities. The DSE/EIS continually collaborates with the Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability in accessing, verifying, and validating data. Also, as discussed earlier, the MOIEP is built with a mechanism to detect data entry errors in order to improve the accuracy of data entry.

Data Use

The MSDE believes that the data used in the analysis is of high quality, accurate, and easily used to inform decision-making. At this time the available baseline data is from the Maryland State Assessment (MSA) of student performance. A limitation on the use of these data is connected the State adoption of a

new assessment aligned with the Common Core beginning in the 2014-2015 school year. Students will take the applicable Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, based on Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards aligned with the Common Core. This new assessment requires future standard setting and establishment of targets and at least two years of assessment data before the MSDE is able to predict trends. The baseline and targets established in the SSIP will require future revision.

D. Compliance Data Considerations (1(d))

During the Data Analysis process, the MSDE, DSE/EIS and stakeholders considered all SPP/APR data, including compliance data from the Monitoring for Continuous Improvement and Results (MCIR). The aggregate State compliance indicator data were substantially compliant at greater than 95%. The LSSs continue to correct noncompliance within one year of notification. One area for continued examination is the significant discrepancy in the disciplinary removals of children and youth with disabilities by race/ethnicity as compared to nondisabled peers in four (4) LSSs. Although noncompliance has not been identified for this indicator, a child's absence from instruction for any reason, including disciplinary removal may need to be addressed within coherent evidence-based improvement strategies.

E. Additional Data Needed (1(e))

Stakeholders did not identify a need for additional data at this time. As Phase II progresses, additional data disaggregation analyses will be conducted as needed to inform decision-making.

F. Stakeholder Participation in Data Analysis (1(f))

The MSDE and stakeholders looked at a variety of disaggregated data to (1) select the State-Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and (2) identify root causes contributing to low performance. Four (4) stakeholder group meetings were conducted to examine data, starting with broad data analysis, which became more focused over time. Facilitated whole and small group activities enabled participants to identify priorities for improving student outcomes and to discuss current practices and issues related to addressing the priority areas.

All stakeholders were invited to attend and participate in each meeting (except the 4/29/14 meeting, which was specific to statewide leaders) and were also provided the opportunity to provide additional input into the data analyses after meeting notes/materials were distributed. The specific participation and feedback of stakeholders is indicated below:

Internal Stakeholders

Stakeholder	4/29/14	5/29/14	10/10/14	10/16/14
Deputy Superintendent, Office of Finance and Administration		X	X	X
Deputy Superintendent, Office of Teaching and Learning	X	X	X	X
Assistant Superintendent Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Assistant Superintendent Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and		X	X	X

Accountability				
Deputy Superintendent, Office of School Effectiveness	X	X	X	X
Policy & Accountability Branch Chief, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Interagency Collaboration Branch Chief, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Programmatic Support & Technical Assistance Branch Chief, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Part B Data Specialist, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
MITP Program Manager, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Monitoring & Accountability Section Chief, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Early Education Section Chief, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Quality Assurance Specialist, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Education Program Specialist, Math, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Marilyn Muirhead SPDG Educational Specialist, Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Consultant			X	X

External Stakeholders

Stakeholders	5/29/14	10/10/14	10/16/14
Parents	X	X	X
Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC)	X	X	X
Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committees (SECAC)	X	X	X
Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD)	X	X	X
Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC)	X	X	X
Educational Advocacy Coalition (EAC)	X	X	X
Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)	X	X	X
Maryland Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE)	X	X	X
Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)	X	X	X
Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)	X	X	X
Maryland Council of Staff Developers (MCSD)	X	X	X
Maryland Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM)	X	X	X
Maryland Middle School Association (MMSA)	X	X	X
Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)	X	X	X
State of Maryland International Reading Association Council (SoMIRAC)	X	X	X
Ready At Five Partnership	X	X	X
Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA)	X	X	X
Maryland Association of Teacher Educator s (MATE)	X	X	X
Maryland Family Network/Friends of the Family	X	X	X
University of Maryland – Department of Education Policy Studies	X	X	X
Maryland Coalition of Inclusive Education (MCIE)	X	X	X
Johns Hopkins University, Center for Technology in Education (JHU/CTE)	X	X	X
Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health	X	X	X
Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD)	X	X	X
Maryland Department of Human Resources	X	X	X
Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM)	X	X	X
Local Directors of Special Education	X	X	X
Local Preschool Coordinators	X	X	X
Schoolwide integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT)	X	X	X

Below is a brief summary of the data analysis stakeholder meetings:

Stakeholder meeting #1 (4/29/14) – **Preschool and School-Age** Student proficiency in reading and math, suspension, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Data, and students who receive Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) were disaggregated by race. Local leaders from LSSs, Local Infants and Toddlers Programs (LITPs), and Preschool Coordinators examined disaggregated State data then met as an LSS team to examine their local data and recommend targets.
Data discussion: Across all LSSs, students with disabilities performed lowest of all subgroups in reading and math at all grade levels – but more so in math, followed by English Language Learners. Of the racial/ethnic groups in the general population, African American students performed lowest in reading and math at most grade levels. Students living in poverty performed lower than those not receiving FARMs, across all grades for both reading and math, but with a higher gap in performance for math, particularly in recent years.

Stakeholder meeting #2 (5/29/14) – **SPP/APR Data, Assessment, Graduation, Dropout and Race Data** were presented. The reading and mathematics Maryland State Assessment (MSA), graduation, and dropout data were disaggregated by race, disability, gender, and LRE. Stakeholders asked MSDE to examine the performance of students by grade on reading and mathematics assessments, in relationship to attendance to determine if there may be any relationship between absence from instruction and performance on the MSA.
Data discussion: Students with disabilities are performing below the state target for reading and math and for drop out and graduation. Students with emotional disabilities were more likely to be suspended from school than other disability groups. African American students were disproportionately suspended compared to other racial/ethnic groups.

Stakeholder meeting #3 (10/10/14) – The DSE/EIS reviewed the initial broad data analysis, including additional data requested by various stakeholder groups. The following data were examined by stakeholders at this meeting:

- State Part B SPP/APR Results Indicator Trend Data (2007-2012);
- State Part B SPP/APR Compliance Indicator Trend Data (2007-2012);
- Ages of Student – Trend Data (2007-2012) by 3-5, 6-21, and 3-21;
- Race – Trend Data (2007-2012);
- Disability – Trend Data (2007-2012);
- Post School Outcomes by Local School Systems – Trend Data (2009-2012);
- Students with Disabilities, Absent 10 or More Days by Grade and Disability, Three Year Olds, and PreK through Grade 12;
- Students with Disabilities, Absent 10 or More Days by Grade and Race, Three Year Olds, and PreK through Grade 12;
- Absent Less than Five Days – All Students and Students with Disabilities;
- Absent More than 20 Days – All Students and Students with Disabilities;
- Math Performance of Students with Disabilities Absent Less than 20 Days and Absent More than 20 Days, Grades 3 through 8;
- Reading Performance of Students with Disabilities Absent Less than 20 Days and Absent More than 20 Days, Grades 3 through 8;
- Suspension Data – A National Comparison – General Education and Special Education;
- Percentage of Students Suspended by Disability Trend Data (2009 – 2013);
- Percentage of 3-5 Year Olds with Disabilities Suspended Trend Data (2011Suspension Rates in Maryland by Race, General Education vs. Specialized Education (2012-2013); and
- Relative Risk Ratio for Suspension of Students in General and Specialized Education by Race (2010-2012).

Data discussion: Students with disabilities attend school at a rate close to their nondisabled peers. However when looking at absences for 20 or more days, they miss school much more often, particularly in middle school and 9th and 10th grades. African American students with disabilities are only slightly more likely to be absent more than 20 days compared to their White counterparts across grades. Removals from the classroom for suspension and for separate class or school placements occur disproportionately higher for African American students with disabilities. This is particularly influenced by the low rates of placement in general education settings by the two largest jurisdictions whose African American population is over 90%. Upon discussion and following a brainstorming activity, stakeholders targeted theses potential areas of improvement of student results:

- ❖ Math performance for all students with disabilities across all grades (gap reduction) and
- ❖ Disproportionate placement of African American students with disabilities in separate special education classes and schools.

Stakeholder meeting #4 (10/16/14) – In a joint meeting of the Maryland Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC) and the local Special Education Citizens' Advisory Councils (SECACs), state leaders who represent families of students with disabilities reviewed the data analysis that had occurred to this point. Stakeholders were asked to consider the data in relationship to the Division's involvement with current State initiatives, including the:

- ✓ DSE/EIS strategic plan, *Moving Maryland Forward*, that focuses on early childhood, professional learning, access, equity, progress, and secondary transition;
- ✓ State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) to close the math gap using tenets of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), evidence-based math practices, and parent engagement;
- ✓ Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) Center work to promote inclusive school reform;
- ✓ Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver;
- ✓ Race to the Top (RTTT); and
- ✓ Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTTT, ELCG).

Stakeholders continued to review data related to the composition of the population of students with disabilities, including types of disabilities, race/ethnicity, and FARMS. Data were shared relative to:

- ✓ The ***settings*** in which students are receiving special education and related services, including these distributions by race/ethnicity.
- ✓ ***Student proficiency*** on the statewide assessment, showing data related to proficiency levels by disability category, grade level, as well as gap analysis between students with and without disabilities.

Data discussion: Stakeholders agreed upon the following concerns:

- ❖ Disproportionate segregation of African American students with disabilities out of general education and comprehensive schools
- ❖ Disparities in assessment performance of certain local school systems, noting that LSSs may need assistance and technical support in understanding, reviewing, and using their local data to make data-informed decisions
- ❖ Poor math performance across grades/jurisdictions
- ❖ Post-school outcomes (noting that this may not be truly reflective of actual post-school experiences)
- ❖ Diversity in achievement by disability, and in particular, discrepancies for students identified with an emotional disability in segregated placements and in academic performance
- ❖ The group had no concerns about the adequacy, quality, or depth of data presented and discussed

2. Infrastructure Analysis to Support Improvement and Build Capacity

The MSDE DSE/EIS recognizes that the organizational capacity of the MSDE and LSSs to support the improvement of student results, build State and local capacity to sustain improvement, and to scale up evidence-based promising practices is critical to success. Toward that end, the MSDE identified several ways in which infrastructure could be assessed, including state capacity for implementation of evidence-based strategies and sustainment of results.

A. How Infrastructure Capacity was Analyzed (2(a))

The purpose of the infrastructure analysis was to identify systemic strengths and areas for improvement to build State capacity to support LSSs to implement, scale up, and sustain evidence-based practices. The analysis, which resulted in the preliminary SIMR, was used as the base for infrastructure analysis discussions: to improve math results for students with disabilities in grades 3 – 5. The State structures that were reviewed included governance, fiscal, quality standards, data, professional development/technical assistance, and accountability/monitoring. The infrastructure analyses resulted in the identification of capacity-building areas to be strengthened in order to improve results. The activities, processes, and results of the infrastructure analysis are described below and in the following sections.

State Capacity Assessment

The SWIFT State team is an MSDE cross-Divisional team charged with providing technical assistance to SWIFT partner LSSs and schools in the SWIFT process for change; delivering professional learning to support implementation of priorities; identifying the state capacity needs to sustain and scale up implementation of SWIFT Core Features; and supporting the state in integrated, coherent planning. The SWIFT State Implementation Team participated in an externally facilitated State Capacity Assessment, adapted with approval by the State Implementation and Scaling up of Evidence-based Practices (SISEP) Center (Fixen, Duda, Horner, & Blasé, 2014). As a baseline measure (May 2014), many aspects of implementation had not yet occurred. A second assessment is being scheduled for late Spring 2015.

Internal and External Stakeholder Input

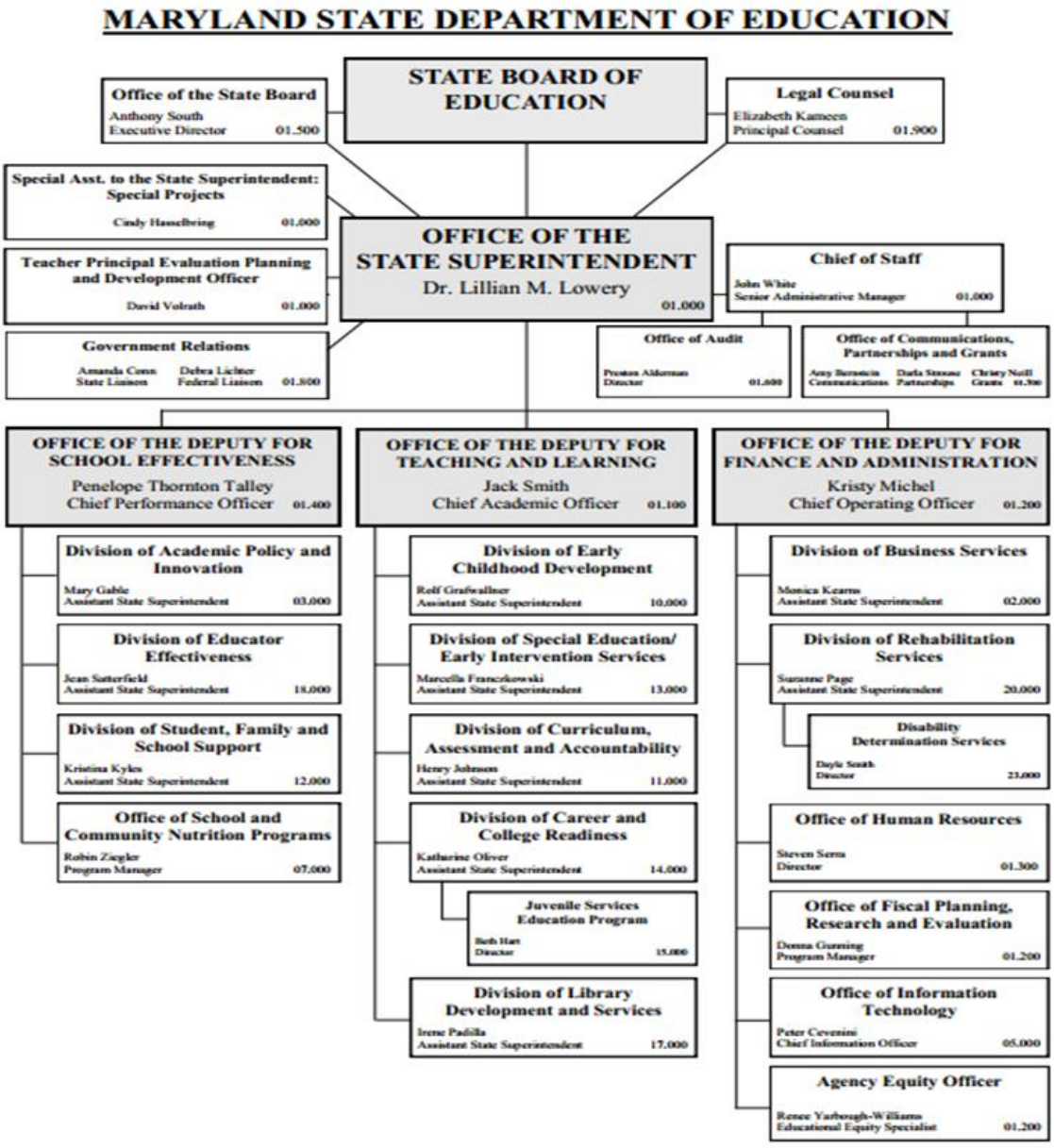
An analysis of infrastructure with external stakeholders who also participated in data analysis, and the internal MSDE stakeholders from the State Superintendent's Executive Team were conducted over four sessions. Please refer to Infrastructure Stakeholder Involvement, Section 2F for details of Stakeholder involvement.

B. Description of the State Systems (2(b))

Governance

The organizational structure of the MSDE is designed to effectively, efficiently, and equitably focus the Department's work on the MSDE's ambitious mission: *to provide every student, including students with disabilities, with a world-class education that ensures post-graduation college- and career-readiness*. Under the leadership of the State Superintendent, Dr. Lillian M. Lowery, MSDE is organized into three Offices, each led by a Deputy State Superintendent: the Offices of School Effectiveness, Teaching and Learning, and Finance and Administration. The DSE/EIS is in the Office of Teaching and Learning. The Assistant State Superintendent of the DSE/EIS is a member of the State Superintendent's Executive Team which allows for advocacy for improvement for students with disabilities and to leverage resources – personnel and fiscal**. Please refer to Attachment A - MSDE Organizational Chart.**

Attachment A
Maryland State Department of Education
Organizational Chart



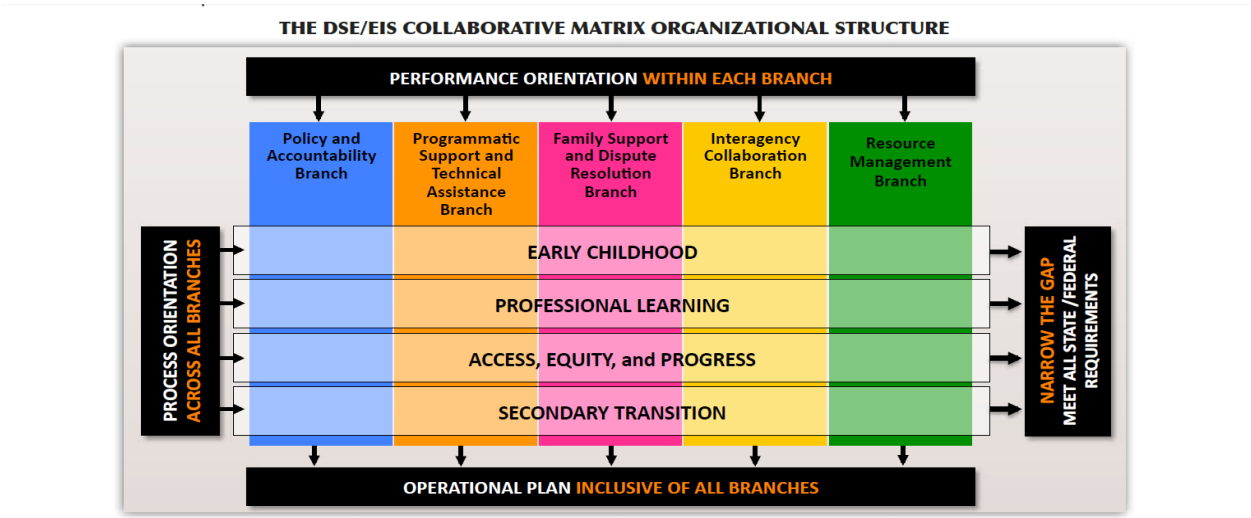
Legal Foundation

The Maryland State Department of Education is Maryland's State Education Agency (SEA) responsible for the implementation of the IDEA and the general supervision of Local Education Agencies (LEAs – referred to as LSSs in Maryland) for the provision of services to children and youth with disabilities. The MSDE, DSE/EIS is accountable to the State leadership, Maryland General Assembly, and State Board of Education to improve academic achievement and functional outcomes for children and youth with disabilities, in order to ensure these children leave school college, career, and community ready.

Administrative Structures and Leadership to Carry Out the IDEA

Within the MSDE **Office of Teaching and Learning**, the DSE/EIS is able to complement and collaborate with the other Divisions directly responsible for instruction, assessment, accountability and the public reporting of student progress of all children, including children and youth with disabilities. The mission of the **DSE/EIS** is to provide leadership, support, and accountability for results to LSSs, and stakeholders through a seamless, comprehensive system of coordinated services to children and youth with disabilities, birth through 21, and their families. The DSE/EIS organizational structure is based upon principles of collaboration and shared responsibility and is organized by five branches: Policy and Accountability; Programmatic Support and Technical Assistance; Family Support and Dispute Resolution; Interagency Collaboration; and Resource Management. The Division matrix organizational design integrates knowledge and skills for improvement of compliance and results, and ensures consistent communication within the DSE/EIS, throughout the Department, and with external stakeholders and partners. **Please refer to Attachment B – Division Cross-Matrix Organizational Structure.** The core functions of the DSE/EIS are *leadership, accountability for results, technical assistance and program support, and fiscal and resource management.* For more information on the DSE/EIS Strategic Plan, *Moving Maryland Forward*, please refer to Infrastructure Analysis, Section 2(F). The DSE/EIS is committed to measuring and reporting its progress in accomplishing the ambitious Goals and Action Imperatives set forth in *Moving Maryland Forward*. The *Key Measures of Success* table in the strategic plan presents our expectations for change from baseline in 2013 through 2018. Each Branch within the DSE/EIS is responsible for the development and implementation of an operational plan of objective actions to address each goal and action imperative.

Attachment B
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services
Cross-Matrix Organizational Structure



Fiscal

The MSDE is committed to the use of fiscal and program data to engage in a finance planning process to identify funds and resources needed to sustain the system. It ensures that funds and resources are allocated equitably to meet the needs of the program and used efficiently and effectively to implement high quality programs. Funds and resources are procured, allocated, used, and dispersed to improve program effectiveness and ensure efficient use of resources. The MSDE is organized to ensure that spending is in compliance with contract performance and all federal, state, and local fiscal requirements. Some of the responsibilities related to fiscal stewardship are described below.

The **Office of Finance and Administration** is responsible for developing and implementing the MSDE administrative and financial policies, procedures, and systems. The Chief Operating Officer provides guidance, management, and coordination of the services provided by the **Division of Business Services** and advises the State Superintendent and the State Board of Education on the financial implications of proposed courses of action. The Accounting Branch develops and recommends policies and procedures relative to financial and cost accounting to ensure the MSDE is in compliance with all applicable State and federal accounting and reporting requirements. This Branch also initiates monitoring activities to detect possible financial problems and recommend corrective courses of action, and provides regular and Special Payments payrolls, controls inventory, and transmits authorization to the Comptroller's Office for payments to vendors for various services and goods. The Budget Branch recommends policies and procedures for the formulation and execution of the MSDE budgets. The Procurement, Grants, and Contracts Section: interprets and applies laws, regulations, and guidelines promulgated by the State and MSDE; maintains liaisons with all regulatory agencies; and administers the Risk Management Program. The Financial Reporting and Coordination Branch provides integrated fiscal support services to the Office of the State Superintendent and several Divisions within the Department; including grant management and financial training to MSDE staff; and reviewing program financial documents prior to their submission to the Budget, Accounting, and Administrative Services Branches.

The Local Finance Reporting Office is responsible for developing, collecting, reviewing, evaluating, editing, reporting, and publishing local schools systems' financial data. It administers the automated financial reporting system (the Annual Financial Report and Grant Reporting System) to serve the purpose of answering State and/or federal surveys in the form of special projects or reports. This office also administers compliance with Maintenance of Effort requirements (MOE) under the Bridge to Excellence, makes determinations on eligibility for Nonrecurring Cost exclusions from MOE calculations, and provides support to the LSS Master Plan review process.

The MSDE uses *The Financial Reporting Manual for Maryland Public Schools*, developed and adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education to assure uniform reporting at the local, State, and federal levels. Each LSS and PA that receives sub-awards of the federal IDEA funds to support its special education or early intervention programs must comply with applicable programmatic and fiscal regulations. It is the responsibility of the DSE/EIS to ensure all sub-recipients of federal funds comply with applicable State and federal regulations. The DSE/EIS developed the Local Application for Federal Funds (LAFF) process and the associated submissions as necessary requirements for the DSE/EIS to discharge its administrative responsibilities related to its sub-awards of the federal IDEA Part B funds.

State and federal regulations under the IDEA require that each LSS submit an application for the expenditure of federal funds. Each LSS is required to develop the LAFF with meaningful public input from entities such as its Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committee (SECAC), parents, community partners, special and general educators, and administrators. Through the LAFF, the LSS provides assurances of compliance with federal and State regulations and reports on the proposed expenditures of allocated federal funds in order to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities.

In addition to the federal funds passed through to LSSs, the DSE/EIS uses selected IDEA set-aside funds for competitive and noncompetitive grants for LSSs. For the 2014-2015 school year the DSE/EIS awarded one (1) highly competitive Bridges for Systems Change Initiative grant to enable the MSDE, community, and the LSS partners to engage in a collaborative approach to support schools and

classrooms to impact student outcomes, and build local capacity to sustain evidence–based promising practices.

Fiscal data are used for both planning and for accountability/monitoring of expenditures. All sub-awards of federal funds must be used and accounted for consistent with all program requirements, State and federal statutes and regulations, grant conditions, and the new Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (2CFR §200). The policies, procedures, and practices established by the MSDE for the procurement, distribution of funds, semiannual programmatic and fiscal review, sub-recipient monitoring, and audits support the effective and efficient use of funds. Each step in the process is supported by multiple steps from the DSE/EIS internal fiscal procedures to Department review procedures.

Data

The MSDE has developed an integrated data system that collects data from LSSs in accordance with the *Maryland Student Record Manual.* This includes, but is not limited to attendance, assessments, graduation, enrollment, and discipline of all students, including students with disabilities. Student records provide an accurate presentation of the academic performance. The MSDE Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability collect data from all LSSs on all students. The State assigns each student a Unique Student Identifier (USID). MSDE integrates two data systems; the Child Find/Special Education data generated from online Individual Education Programs for students with disabilities and the State's accountability system that holds all student demographic, behavioral, and state assessment data. These systems are easily integrated for multiple areas of analysis. Special education data systems are the:

- ***Maryland Online Individualized Education Program (MOIEP).*** The MOIEP is a secure web-based application that serves as the primary case management tool for LSSs serving children and youth with disabilities in Maryland. The main user function is the development and monitoring of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) which are entered into the MOIEP by local users. The State has access to the IEPs of all children receiving services and can utilize the data analysis functions of the MOIEP to generate both predefined and dynamic reports, including reports that display child outcomes progress, to assist with programmatic data-informed decision-making. The MSDE and the LSSs are able to generate reports on a regular basis to monitor statewide and local compliance/results and audit for data validity and reliability. Evidence that the data on the processes and results component is part of a State's or an LSS's system of general supervision includes the following:
  - data are collected as required under the IDEA and by the U.S. Secretary of Education,
  - data are routinely collected throughout the year,
  - LSSs submit data in a timely and accurate manner, and
  - data are available from multiple sources and used to examine performance of the LSSs.

- ***Longitudinal Accountability Decision Support System (LADSS).*** In order to facilitate local data analysis for students with disabilities, the DSE/EIS, in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University Center for Technology in Education (CTE) is developing the Maryland Special Education and Early Intervention Longitudinal Accountability Decision Support System (LADSS). This system encompasses the integration of statewide demographic and outcome data with special education and early intervention services data collection tools through a linked special education longitudinal data warehouse.

- ***Complaint and Dispute Resolution.*** The IDEA provides parents certain rights and procedural safeguards. The Family Support and Dispute Resolution Branch collects and analyzes data on an ongoing basis using the parent contact and dispute resolution database to ensure effective implementation of the dispute resolution system.

- ***Ready at Five.*** Ready at Five publishes school readiness data, based on the performance of kindergarteners on the Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) Work Sampling System

(WSS). Children are identified as either fully ready, approaching readiness, or developing readiness in seven domains of learning: Language and Literacy, Physical Development, Social Studies, Scientific Thinking, Mathematical Thinking, The Arts, and Social/Personal Development. Statewide Readiness Data are published on the organization's website, found here http://www.readyatfive.org/school-readiness-data/statewide-readiness-data-2014.html

- ***MD EXCELS.*** Maryland EXCELS is a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) that awards ratings to registered family childcare providers, licensed childcare centers (e.g., Head Start, facilities, and school age-only childcare), and public pre-kindergarten programs that meet increasingly higher standards of quality identified areas. Maryland EXCELS is voluntary and is designed to increase parent and provider awareness of the key elements of high quality childcare. A database has been created to collect the QRIS data for future monitoring and analysis. Please also see Infrastructure Analysis, Section 2D.

Quality Standards for Teaching Children and Youth

A core value of the MSDE is the belief that: *In order to be prepared for the challenges of work and college, Maryland students must graduate from high school equipped with the knowledge and skills to help them succeed*. Maryland has led the nation in establishing strong academic standards and accompanying curriculum, but to achieve world-class status the State must continue to raise those standards and improve the achievement of all students*.*

In June 2010, by unanimous vote, the Maryland State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards, national education standards that define the skills and knowledge that students should master during their K-12 education by unanimous vote. The MSDE website - Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards - includes numerous resources for LSSs, educators, and parents. Through the Division's strategic plan, *Moving Maryland Forward*, the DSE/EIS focuses on building the capacity of LITPs, LSSs, and Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to narrow the performance gap and enable all children to be college, career, and community ready when they leave school. The Division works collaboratively with other Divisions within the MSDE to improve achievement of the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards and performance on statewide accountability measures.

Professional Learning and Development (PLD)/Technical Assistance (TA)

The MSDE implements a coordinated system of professional development to address recruitment and retention, standards and competencies, and ongoing systematic professional development strategies. The MSDE has combined Professional Development/Learning (PD/L) and Technical Assistance (TA) as support structures for LSSs. TA has a more individualized focus whereas PD/L may have a more broad based distributive focus.

Since 1986, the MSDE, in conjunction with local school systems and institutions of higher education (IHEs) conduct a survey annually to determine critical teacher shortage areas. Although some data is collected annually, the report is published biennially. The latest Maryland Teacher Staffing Report, 2012-2014, provides data on teacher candidates completing programs in IHEs that have Maryland Approved Programs (MAP) and in Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Programs (MAAPP). The report also collects the hiring needs of the local school systems to determine critical shortage areas by analyzing the data and applying the criteria agreed upon. The process includes additional data beyond the traditional formula used since the beginning of the report. It incorporates the recommendations of an Expert Panel, composed of representatives of various stakeholders, that was convened in 2008 to review the process and make recommendations. The criteria developed by the Expert Committee are used in this study.

The scope of the report has expanded over the years, and now includes shortage areas for both teachers and select non-classroom professionals; information on traditional higher education as well as alternative preparation programs; the graduates; geographic shortage areas; teacher attrition; highly qualified teachers (as defined by the 2001 No Child Left Behind [NCLB] Act); and the number of retired/rehired teachers and principals. This report also includes a number of important incentives and strategies for the recruitment and retention of quality teachers and principals for Maryland public schools.

Standards for Professionals

The Division of Educator Effectiveness certifies teachers and other professional personnel; oversees the preparation of education candidates, and approves the education programs of nonpublic schools. This Division is also responsible for **the Professional Standards and the Teacher Education Board** (PSTEB) that originated in 1971 as an advisory board established to set standards and regulations by which teachers and other professionals are prepared and licensed for Maryland public schools. The board's twenty-five members are appointed to three-year terms by the Governor with Senate advice and consent (Code Education Article, §6-701 through §6-708).

The ***Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards (MTPDS)*** were adopted in 2004 and have guided professional development in the State since that time—not only for teachers but for administrators and other educators at all levels. The Maryland standards are based on the National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development (2001). Importantly, the standards acknowledge that teacher professional development encompasses a wide range of learning activities, such as teacher study groups, coaching and mentoring relationships, teacher networks, participation on school improvement teams and committees that develop curricula and assessments, workshops, and college and university courses.

Currently, Learning Forward ***Standards for Professional Learning*** are at the very core of our professional development and technical assistance and support for local school systems, schools, and general and specialized educators. They are: 1) provide a clear vision of high-quality professional development that recognizes local needs, priorities, and resources; 2) guide planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating high-quality professional development; 3) support alignment of professional development with goals for improving student learning and state, district, and school policies and priorities; 4) inform allocation of resources for professional development; and 5) define accountability for ensuring that professional development is of the highest quality and readily accessible to all teachers.

Professional Learning/Development

The DSE/EIS targets specific universal professional learning activities to local early intervention and early care and education leaders. These include the annual DSE/EIS Professional Learning Institute, quarterly face-to-face Birth through 21 Leadership professional learning, and monthly Birth through 21 Leadership teleconferences. In addition, there are other formalized professional learning opportunities and tools:

- The MSDE and Maryland colleges and universities have developed the **Maryland Professional Development School (PDS) Network** to connect Maryland colleges and universities and their local school system partners in their efforts to implement the Redesign of Teacher Education in Maryland. The MSDE sponsors regional network meetings of stakeholders in these partnerships: college/university liaisons, school system PDS representatives, school principals and site coordinators, and preservice mentor teachers.

- To assist general and specialized educators, the DSE/EIS, through a federal State Improvement Grant (SIG) developed an online tracker, ***Professional Development Online Tracker (PDot).*** This online tool assists personnel to identify particular areas of strength and areas of need. In addition, it provides clear stepping stones to guide professional development on an ongoing, career-long basis. The online tool includes links to professional development courses, videos, curricula, webinars, books, and other materials that can be invaluable.

- As part of the Maryland RTTT grant, the MSDE conducted 11 regional **Educator Effectiveness Academies** during the summers of 2011, 2012, and 2013. Academy content was delivered through voluntary regional conferences and on-line content sessions in 2014. Beginning in 2013, the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services joined the EEA planning team and the EEA master teacher cadre. Content specific to the needs of educators who teach students with disabilities was subsequently included in the EEA content sessions.

Online Professional Learning Activities and Resources

In order to improve program quality and services to positively impact child and family outcome results, the MSDE, DSE/EIS, in collaboration with numerous partners, provides resources, training, consultation, and technical assistance to LSSs, service providers, community partners, stakeholders, and parents in numerous formats and forums. Dissemination of these trainings, resources, media, and tools to strengthen student outcomes is supported through the DSE/EIS website – Maryland Learning Links - in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University/Center for Technology in Education (CTE). Several online professional learning resources have been highly utilized for providing ongoing training and support to general and specialized educators and service providers.

School Improvement in Maryland – mdk12.org is the **School Improvement in Maryland** web site which provides information on instruction and assessments, data analysis, and school improvement for students, parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members.

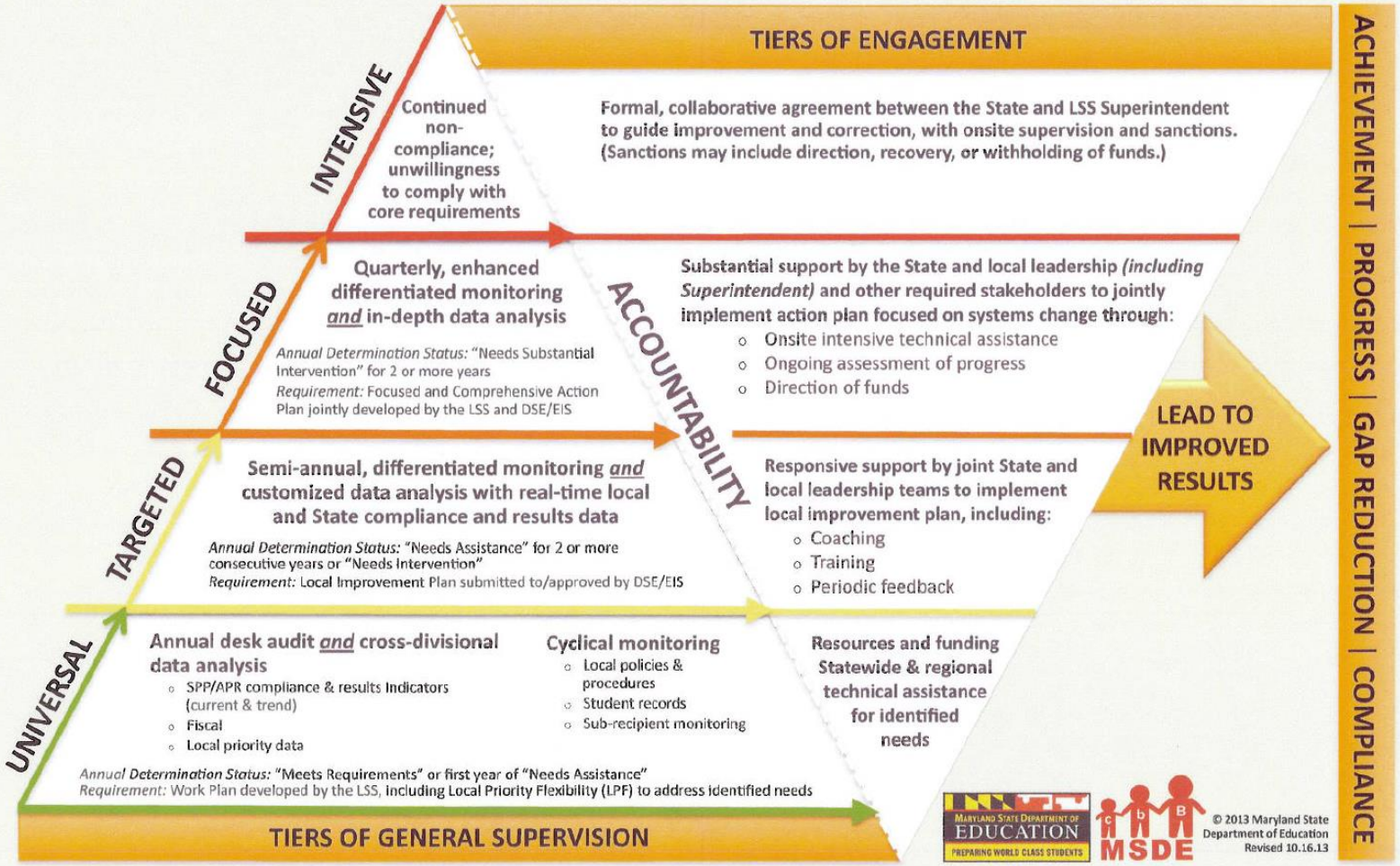
Differentiated Framework for Technical Assistance

The DSE/EIS has aligned its general supervisory responsibilities with engagement for program support and technical assistance to provide a tiered system for both **monitoring** and **technical assistance** to address the needs of each LSS. The *Differentiated Framework* illustrates the shared responsibility and shared accountability to improve results for children and youth with disabilities. An LSS is assigned to a tier of general supervision and oversight based upon performance on federal compliance and results indicators, correction of noncompliance, analysis of data, fiscal management, and monitoring findings. The corresponding technical assistance and support (engagement) an LSS can expect to receive is differentiated and based on that system's assigned tier and a comprehensive analysis of needs**. Please see Attachment C, Differentiated Framework.**

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (DSE/EIS)

Differentiated Framework

Tiers of General Supervision and Engagement to Improve Birth–21 Special Education/Early Intervention Results



NOTE: Monitoring is a review of performance and compliance. It may include, but is not limited to: data review, desk audits, interviews, case studies, observations, focus groups, on or off-site student record review, and on or off-site policy/procedures review. Cyclical monitoring occurs not less than every six years. However, the DSE/EIS reserves the right to initiate monitoring activities at anytime.

- The **Universal Tier of Engagement** is available to all LSSs and focuses on professional development/learning and support to address statewide needs based on overall State trend data, (e.g., performance on SPP Indicators, child outcomes, and student achievement). This includes general information related to special education policies, procedures and practices, as well as the general work of the MSDE. Examples of statewide technical assistance include State and regional professional development, online tools, resources through Maryland Learning Links, and Technical Assistance Bulletins.

- **Targeted Tier of Engagement** focuses on professional learning and support (training, coaching, and technical assistance) to address the needs of the LSS on specific topics identified through general supervision. It is a responsive and proactive approach to prevent the LSS from needing substantial support. The LSS leadership is required to engage with the DSE/EIS to review State and local data and information in order to implement an Improvement Plan that is approved by the DSE/EIS to build capacity to effectively address the identified needs. Evaluation and periodic feedback are critical elements of Targeted Engagement. A Targeted Assistance and Support Committee (TASC), consisting of jointly identified local and state cross-Divisional members, provides performance-based and responsive support.

- The goal of the **Focused Tier of Engagement** is to direct substantial support to address the continuous lack of improvement of a LSS through significant systems change. A joint multi-faceted State and local Focused Intervention and Accountability Team (FIAT) meets quarterly to develop, implement, and review progress and change in policy, program, instructional practices, and professional learning at multiple systems levels. Principles of effective systems change, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability are foundational elements of the technical assistance. Frequent feedback and general supervision is maintained throughout the term of the technical assistance.

- The **Intensive Tier of Engagement** focuses on providing support based on a Formal Agreement that is developed to guide improvement and correction with onsite supervision. The MSDE may direct, recover, or withhold State or federal funds.

Accountability/Monitoring

The MSDE is committed to ongoing program evaluation and accountability. It expects the LSSs to meet agreed-upon standards. Mechanisms to document the need for change, track progress, and demonstrate improvement are included, as well as the State's role to facilitate the local use of accountability and improvement planning processes.

Maryland Bridge to Excellence Master Plans

In 2002, the Maryland General Assembly enacted the *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act.* This legislation provides a powerful framework for all 24 school systems to increase student achievement for all students and to close the achievement gap. The *Bridge to Excellence* legislation significantly increased State Aid to public education and required each LSS to develop a comprehensive Master Plan, to be updated annually. This Plan is expected to link school finance directly and centrally to decisions about improving student learning, including a review of the performance of children and youth with disabilities on State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators. The LSS Master Plans are to also address the needs, supports, and technical assistance for general and specialized educators and service providers. By design, the legislation requires school systems to integrate State, federal, and local funding and initiatives into the Master Plan. Under Bridge to Excellence, academic programming and fiscal alignment are carefully monitored by the Master Plan review process. The review of LSS Master Plans involves all Divisions within the MSDE, including the DSE/EIS.

Beginning in 2011, Maryland integrated the Race to the Top (RTTT) Local Scopes of Work with the existing Bridge to Excellence Master Plan (BTE) and reviewed and approved the Scopes of Work within the Master Plan review infrastructure in accordance with RTTT and BTE guidelines. The purpose of this integration was to allow Maryland's LSSs to streamline their efforts under these programs to increase

student achievement and eliminate achievement gaps by implementing ambitious plans in the four RTTT reform areas. This integration also enabled the MSDE to leverage personnel resources to ensure that all Scopes of Work receive comprehensive programmatic and fiscal reviews

Differentiated Framework for Accountability and Continuous Improvement

The DSE/EIS has aligned its general supervisory responsibilities with engagement for program support and technical assistance to provide a tiered system for **monitoring** and **technical assistance** to address the needs of each LSS (See also Professional Development/Technical Assistance – Differentiated Levels of Engagement). The *Differentiated Framework* illustrates the shared responsibility and shared accountability to improve results for children and youth with disabilities. **Please refer to Attachment C, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, *Differentiated Framework*, page 25.** An LSS is assigned to a tier of general supervision and oversight based upon performance on federal compliance and results indicators, correction of noncompliance, analysis of data, fiscal management, and monitoring findings.

- **Universal Tier of General Supervision** is assigned to most LSSs. They have met identified performance and compliance criteria, resulting in a determination status of "Meets Requirements" or are in the first year of "Needs Assistance." These LSSs have no findings of noncompliance or have corrected all findings of noncompliance within one year and have maintained compliance. Each LSS is monitored annually through a desk audit and cross-divisional data analysis of SPP Indicators, local priorities, and fiscal data. Additionally, a cyclical general supervision monitoring of select LSSs includes, at a minimum, student record reviews for the IDEA requirements, a review of policy, procedures, and practices, and sub-recipient fiscal monitoring. Each LSS develops and self-monitors an internal work plan including Local Priority Flexibility to address locally identified needs.

- An LSS receiving a determination status of "Needs Assistance" for two or more consecutive years or "Needs Intervention" is assigned to the **Targeted Tier of General Supervision**. An LSS in this tier may have an active Corrective Action Plan(s) (CAPs) for identified noncompliance, and/or although noncompliance may be corrected within one year, compliance is not sustained. Targeted monitoring occurs semi-annually and includes customized data analysis with real-time local and State data. Activities may include, but are not limited to: student record reviews using selected sections of the student record review document, a review of policies, procedures, and practices, a review of the LSS's system of general supervision, interview questions, and/or case studies. State and local joint cross-departmental and cross-divisional teams are formed to address identified needs. The LSS develops a local Improvement Plan which is submitted to and approved by the DSE/EIS.

- When a LSS is given a determination status of "Needs Substantial Intervention" it is assigned to the **Focused Tier of General Supervision**. This is the result of uncorrected findings of noncompliance, active CAPs for two or more years, and little progress despite general and targeted technical assistance. Focused general supervision is comprised of enhanced and differentiated monitoring and in-depth data analysis. This tier of general supervision oversight also requires the participation of the State Superintendent, the Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, and the DSE/EIS Assistant State Superintendent work closely with the local school superintendent to develop a cross-departmental, cross-divisional State and local implementation team. The MSDE provides increased oversight activities to assess progress and may direct federal funds, impose special conditions, and/or require more frequent submission of data. Maryland's focused monitoring as seen in the *Differentiated Framework* occurs quarterly and may include, but is not limited to: student record reviews using selected sections of the student record review document, a review of the LSS's real time data, a review of policies, procedures, and practices, a review of the LSS's system of general supervision, interview questions, classroom observations, and case studies.

- **Intensive Tier of General Supervision** is given to an LSS that fails to progress and correct previously identified noncompliance despite receiving technical assistance and support. The failure to comply has affected the core requirements, such as the delivery of services to students with disabilities or to provide effective general supervision and oversight. The LSS enters into a formal

agreement with the MSDE to guide improvement and may have additional sanctions. The LSS informs the MSDE of its unwillingness to comply with core requirements.

Monitoring for Continuous Improvement and Results (MCIR)

In response to OSEP's shift in monitoring priorities, the MSDE, DSE/EIS revised its monitoring procedures and now includes a greater emphasis on requirements related to improving educational results for children and youth with disabilities. In addition, the MSDE, DSE/EIS uses the *Differentiated Framework*, thus enabling the MSDE, DSE/EIS to work collaboratively with the LSSs to focus on areas in need of improvement. This is accomplished through Maryland's Monitoring for Continuous Improvement and Results (MCIR) process. General supervision is accountable for enforcing the requirements and for ensuring continuous improvement. The primary focus of the MCIR process is to improve educational results and functional outcomes for all children and youth with disabilities and their families and ensure that the MSDE meets the program requirements within the IDEA.

The MCIR process verifies data, documents compliance with both the IDEA and the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) regulatory requirements, and provides technical assistance for the timely correction of identified findings of noncompliance. Findings of noncompliance concerning the records of individual students with disabilities always result in verification of correction using a two prong process, consistent with the OSEP Memorandum 09-02.

Comprehensive monitoring occurs at least every 6 years in each LSS. While some monitoring activities are universal for all, other monitoring activities are customized to examine areas of need. These areas are identified through a variety of sources such as but not limited to: indicator data verification; other data reviews, grant reviews, fiscal data, Medicaid monitoring, Family support data, State complaints, and advocacy organization concerns.

C. System Strengths and Areas for Improvement (2(c))

As a part of the review of infrastructure, the internal SSIP planning team reviewed state initiatives, resources, and regulations as well as the areas above. Teacher preparation programs and professional learning opportunities through the MSDE have resulted in higher levels of co-teaching and collaboration among general and specialized educators. Regulations to implement instruction based on the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are supporting the increase in high quality teaching practices that meet the diverse needs of learners. A recent focus on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in both academic and behavioral supports promises to assist LSSs in systematically meeting the needs of ALL learners and include students with disabilities in those systems. The State's Strategic Plan for the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, *Moving Maryland Forward*, provides a guide for State plans for narrowing the achievement gap for students with disabilities. To meet this vision, competitive discretionary funding has focused strategically on making positive results in narrowing the gap for students with disabilities. Funding for the Maryland State Professional Development Grand (SPDG) has been leveraged to narrow the math gap in 3 school systems. Strategically, the MSDE is partnering with the national SWIFT Center to focus on school-wide change and district capacity building to improve behavioral and academic outcomes for ALL students, with a focus on 16 schools in 4 school systems. The SWIFT Center work is serving as a catalyst for supporting existing cross-Divisional collaborations and developing coherent strategies that can be shared statewide.

In conducting the State Capacity Assessment, strengths were evident in the functioning of the State Implementation Team and the participation of the SWIFT State Coordinators and their access to State leadership. Strengths of the cross-Divisional Implementation team are in providing professional learning opportunities to partner LSSs and supporting the installation of evidence-based practices. Future work will be focused on state planning in concert with the SSIP. Needs were noted in the involvement of leadership across Divisions, communication structures from the State Implementation Team to the State Executive Team, and to Local School System partners. Implications relate to improving cross-Divisional communication and investment in technical assistance capacity on the part of the State.

As a result of iterative SWOT Analyzes by internal and external stakeholders (refer to 2(F)), the chart below summarizes their input on the strengths of Maryland's systems and Areas for Improvement.

	Strengths	Opportunities (Areas for Improvement)
Governance	• Vision and mission of the MSDE and the DSE/EIS • Only 24 LSSs – easier to engage in dialogue (autonomy)	• Shared staff by overlapping divisions to work on similar projects/initiatives • Cross Division communications
Fiscal	• Federal and state competitive grant opportunities • Division offers local priority – local use of funds • Fiscal workgroup that drives through data where money will be spent (stakeholder input) • Shared initiatives	• Increase cross divisional work plans to leverage funds better; cost sharing – integrate funding • Continue to explore opportunities for braiding funding
Data	• Data available online – MD Report Card, Mdideareport.org, mdk12.org, Complaints/due process • LADSS • MOIEP/SSIS	• Increase use of data-informed decision making to prioritize PD/TA • Teach parents how to look at data • Increase LSS use of local data for decision making
Quality Standards	• Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards (MCCRS) • Early Learning Standards aligned with MCCRS • Professional Development Standards	• Assist LSS administrators, school personnel, and general and specialized educators to implement strategies to improve results for all students.
Professional Development/ Technical Assistance	• State provides flexible dollars for LSSs to develop and implement specific PD/PL • State monitors use of evidence based practices and standards • Shared initiatives	• Provide onsite PD/TA to LSSs • Provide resources to LSS leaders, school administrators, and general and specialized educators • Blending resources with aligned State initiatives
Accountability/ Monitoring	• Strong monitoring and accountability protocols	• Alignment of Department accountability and monitoring for student results

D. State-level Improvement Plans and Initiatives (2(d))

There are several State initiatives and priorities across the various Divisions within the MSDE that are designed to engage each Division in the MSDE mission to create a world-class education system that prepares all students for college and career success in the 21st century.

MSDE Plan for Education Reform.

Maryland has been engaged in strengthening its education system to meet changing social and economic conditions. Maryland's education reforms have been designed to pave a path for all students to have the skills and academic success to compete in the changing, technology-based, 21st century world. Through several decades of reform that have brought Maryland to its current status as national leader, one thing has remained constant—Maryland's commitment to continually improving the education and achievement of all students.

To fully prepare students to excel in college and the workforce in the 21st century, Maryland has focused its efforts around four areas of reform: higher standards for curriculum and assessments, robust data, effective educators, and strategic help for struggling schools. The State is also committed to

strengthening Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education across all four reform areas. Once fully implemented, these comprehensive reforms will provide all students with a world-class education that gives them the skills and knowledge they need for future success. Below is a chart of the various initiatives within the MSDE that are aligned to support our Department mission and strategic plan.

State Goals / State Initiatives	Higher Standards	Robust Data	Effective Educators	Strategic Help for Struggling Schools	Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics (STEM)
DSE/EIS Strategic Plan	X	X	X	X	X
Race To The Top	X	X	X	X	X
RTTT – Early Learning Challenge Grant	X	X	X	X	X
ESEA Flexibility	X	X	X	X	X
SPDG	X	X	X	X	X
SWIFT	X	X	X	X	X
Bridges	X	X	X	X	X

It can be noted as the SSIP Phase I activities were completed that the four areas of reform and the commitment of the State to STEM were used as unifying themes. The initiatives listed above also served as a means of identifying points of intersection to ensure the MSDE coordinated efforts.

Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (DSE/EIS) Strategic Plan

The DSE/EIS Strategic Plan, *Moving Maryland Forward* was developed and informed by the innovative thinking and transformative ideas of stakeholders from across the State. This included LSS superintendents, special education directors, early intervention and preschool special education coordinators, instruction and curriculum specialists, family advocates, parents, and community partners. The DSE/EIS Assistant State Superintendent's Advisory Council, State Advisory Councils, and the DSE/EIS leadership staff collaborated to produce this final plan. The MSDE is the State Education Agency and State Lead Agency for early intervention and special education and related services to infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities, and their families, birth through age 21.

This plan fully integrates the overall aims of the MSDE, including a strong commitment to collaboration and shared responsibility, a multi-tiered system of support, and family and community partnerships. By working collaboratively across the Department, and throughout the State, Maryland intends to build the capacity of the Department and LSSs to narrow the existing achievement gap in order to prepare all students for college, career, and community living after successful completion of secondary school. To narrow the gap requires effort in four major areas: Early Childhood, Professional Development, Access, Equity, and Progress, and Secondary Transition**. Please refer to Attachment D for a graphic representation of the DSE/EIS Strategic Plan.**

Attachment D
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services
Strategic Plan, *Moving Maryland Forward* Graphic

The DSE/EIS is committed to a strategic planning process rooted in a set of principles that will remain essential to the successful implementation and measurement of the *Moving Maryland Forward* plan and the achievement of its intended outcomes.

- **Strategic Collaboration** We involve stakeholders through participatory processes that promote innovation, the sharing of best practices, and dissemination of research and evidence-based models. We are also committed to strengthening partnerships and planning with the other MSDE divisions and external stakeholder groups.
- **Family Partnerships** We promote families and school staff to engage in active regular two-way, meaningful communication as equal partners in decisions that affect children and families in order to jointly inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.
- **Data Informed Decisions** We make every effort to serve stakeholders in a timely and effective manner and to ensure the availability of "real-time" data for decision making and dissemination of models of best practices throughout the State.
- **Evidence Based Practices** We will work to identify and implement evidence-based practices with fidelity to improve child outcomes.

Four (4) DSE/EIS core functions necessary to close the gap are: to provide leadership, a shared accountability for results, technical assistance and program support, and fiscal and resource management. **Please refer to Attachment E – The DSE/EIS Core Functions.** This comprehensive

system aligns policy and requires the essential relationship between the MSDE, the LSSs, and schools to ensure the timely and appropriate provision of services to children and youth with disabilities and their families.

Attachment E
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services
Core Functions

Leadership	Accountability for Results	Technical Assistance and Program Support	Fiscal and Resource Management
For a comprehensive and coordinated birth through twenty-one system of services with high expectations for all children	To narrow the achievement gap– maximizing learning for all students, and to ensure State and local compliance	To build and sustain local capacity	To ensure efficient and transparent use of federal, State, and special funds

Race to the Top (RTTT)

On August 24, 2010, Maryland was awarded one of the federal government's coveted Race to the Top (RTTT) grants in the amount of $250 million over four years. The aims of the RTTT program were to boost student achievement, reduce gaps in achievement among student subgroups, turn around struggling schools, and improve the teaching profession.

Maryland has one of the nation's most honored systems of public education, but for our State to continue to be competitive our schools must continue to improve. President Barack Obama, in announcing the $4.35 billion Race to the Top initiative, said the program is based on a simple principle: "whether a state is ready to do what works."

Maryland developed its RTTT proposal with unprecedented collaboration and transparency. To help frame its proposal, the State called upon a top level committee of educators and State education leaders. Following extensive stakeholder input, the MSDE laid out the State's robust plan to move its education system from national leader to world class, setting an ambitious agenda focused on improving education by:

- ***Implementing higher, more rigorous standards and advanced assessments aligned to those new standards to help prepare students for success in college and careers***
  In school year 2013-14, the new Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards were fully implemented in all schools across the State. These new, more rigorous academic standards are based on the Common Core State Standards, a set of consistent, high-quality academic goals for what students should know and be able to do in English Language Arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics. Maryland took the Common Core State Standards and adapted them to the specific needs of the State – creating the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards. Students will receive an education that not only leads to a high school diploma, but also prepares them for success, without remediation, in college, career-training, and life after graduation. (See also Section 2.B. Quality Standards.)

- ***Building a statewide technology infrastructure that links all data elements with analytic and instructional tools to monitor and promote student achievement***
  Maryland's work to improve data collection and analysis and technology in the State's education system hits directly at the heart of the MSDE's overarching vision of equity, efficiency, and excellence. Through the development and expansion of the State's longitudinal data system (see also, 2.B. Data, LADSS), educators, policy makers, parents, and other stakeholders will have a clear

view of long-term student outcomes and be able to make policy decisions that help close gaps and increase the achievement of all students.

- ***Redesigning the model for teacher and principal evaluations, with a focus on preparation, development, and retention***
  Over the course of the first three years of RTTT, the State worked with its local school systems, teachers' associations, and principals' organizations to develop a rigorous, transparent, and fair evaluation system, giving school systems the flexibility to include local measures within the broader statewide requirements. During that time, school systems had the opportunity to field test their new evaluations and provide the State with vital feedback. Findings from the field test were used to make refinements and enhancements to the evaluation system before it was implemented across the State in school year 2013-14. Maryland has incorporated **Student Learning Objectives** (SLOs) as a measure of student growth in teacher and principal evaluations, believing the SLOs will allow for specific school and local school system goals to be captured while also maintaining a focus on the importance of student growth. The SLOs are measurable instructional goals for a specific group of students over a set period of time. Through the SLO process, educators are empowered to examine data and student outcomes to make meaningful decisions about what is most important for their students to learn and how their students' learning is measured.

- ***Fully implementing the innovative Breakthrough Center approach for turning around the State's lowest-performing schools***
  Through the RTTT, Maryland has worked to significantly improve the performance of the State's lowest performing schools and set them on a path for continued improvement by fully implementing the innovative Breakthrough Center approach for transforming low-achieving schools and school systems. The Breakthrough Center's focus on building a community of practice for turnaround does not begin and end with Priority and Focus Schools. The Breakthrough Center aims to build this community throughout the state, and in many cases, the nation. The MSDE's Breakthrough Center coordinates, brokers, and delivers support to schools and local school systems across the State. During years one through four of Maryland's RTTT grant, the Breakthrough Center provided hands-on support to the State's 21 Priority Schools, the lowest performing five percent of Title I schools in the State, and their 20 feeder schools in Baltimore City and Prince George's County.

Race to the Top, Early Learning Challenge Grant (RTTT – ELC)

On December 16, 2011, Maryland received the US Department of Education four-year, $50 million Race To The Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTTT – ELC) Grant. Maryland was one of only nine states receiving an award. The RTTT – ELC grant will enable Maryland to create a seamless Birth to Grade 12 reform agenda to ensure that all young children and their families are supported in the State's efforts to overcome school readiness gaps and to move early childhood education in Maryland from a good system to a great system. The MSDE is the fiscal agent for the grant and its Division of Early Childhood Development (DECD) takes the lead in applying the funds. The Governor's State Advisory Council on Early Care and Education advises the MSDE on the implementation of the RTT-ELC State Plan. Participating state agencies, including the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), the Maryland Department of Human Resources (DHR), and the Governor's Office for Children (GOC), collaborate with the MSDE in support of the State Plan. Ten innovative projects address the scope of Maryland's RTTT – ELC State Plan.

ESEA Flexibility Waiver

On May 29, 2012, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) approved Maryland's request for ESEA Flexibility for the 2012-2013 and the 2013-2014 school years. The ED provided all ESEA Flexibility States with the opportunity to apply for an Extension to this ESEA Flexibility for the 2014-2015 school year. Maryland sought to extend ESEA flexibility through the end of the 2014–2015 school year because the implementation of the flexibility has enhanced the ability of the MSDE and the local school systems to increase the quality of instruction for all students as well as improve their achievement levels. The waiver has allowed Maryland to target resources and implement rigorous interventions in our lowest performing schools. Maryland believes that the flexibility of the waiver has allowed the State and its LSSs to focus on

implementing the Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards, transition to the College and Career-Ready PARCC Assessments, provide support, recognition, and intervention to all Maryland public schools, and develop a teacher and principal evaluation system that incorporates student growth as a major component.

The MSDE State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)

The overarching goal of the MSDE's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) is to improve mathematics achievement results for students with disabilities in Pre-K through Grade 6. Over the remaining two and a half years of this grant Maryland will continue to use SPDG funds to accomplish three major project goals by providing technical assistance and ongoing support to build capacity at the State, LSS, and school levels. The following shows the goals and description of how the State is working toward achieving SPDG goals:

Goal 1: Increase use of data-informed decision-making and implementation science application by State, district and school leaders. The State, in partnership with JHU-CTE, has developed a protocol, ***TAP-IT***, for data-based decision making that provides guidance for: **T**eam formation, **A**nalysis of student learning and teacher implementation data, **P**lan action steps to address identified needs, **I**mplementation, and **T**racking progress and implementation data to enable informed decision-making for needed adjustments to the SPDG program at participating schools. The State is also providing ongoing support at the school level for use of the ***Snapshot Data Tool***. Teachers use this tool to collect classroom assessment information on a daily or weekly basis. This enables teachers to monitor student progress and adjust their instruction based on student needs.

Goal 2: Increase use of evidence-based practices in early and elementary math instruction
The evidence-based practices selected for this project are Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Team Based Cycle of Instruction (TBCI), and Structured Cooperative Learning. By providing ongoing support with the formation and operation of an LSS-IT, the MSDE has helped the LSS to develop a district level system of ongoing support for the implementation of evidence-based strategies with fidelity.

Goal 3: Increase parent involvement in educational decision-making and instruction
The MSDE has partnered with its Parent Information and Training (PTI) center, Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD) to provide training to families on mathematics activities to be used with their students at home. In addition, the MSDE, in partnership with the PPMD, has developed an innovation that integrates parent/family involvement into instructional delivery. This was accomplished by introducing a new component into TBCI. This component, ***Family Connections***, provides a routine way for teachers to address their professional responsibility to communicate with families. The ***Family Connections*** are made through the Community Standard "*Explain what you've learned to your family team member*", the Honeycomb for Home activity, and the Expectation "*Answer the Challenge Question and share with family*".

Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT)

Maryland is one of five (5) States in the nation to participate in the SWIFT Center partnership. SWIFT is a national K-8 technical assistance center committed to eliminating silos in education by bridging general and specialized education through academic and behavioral supports, creating powerful learning opportunities for all students and teachers, and promoting active, engaged partnerships among families and community members. Four local school systems in Maryland are participating in the SWIFT Center work with four schools identified in each system. The MSDE DSE/EIS collaborates with the Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability (DCAA) and Division of Student, Family and School Support (DSFSS) to implement this initiative. SWIFT uses implantation science and TA tools aligned with implementation frameworks developed by the SISEP Center, with a framework to promote inclusive school practices in five domains:

- Collaborative and Distributed Leadership
- Multi-tiered System of Academic and Behavioral Supports with data-informed decision making
- Integrated Organizational System
- Positive family and community partnerships

- Aligned Inclusive Policy

Bridges Systems Change Initiative

In March 2014, the Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services released a Request for Proposal for a highly competitive State IDEA Set-aside grant to affect change system-wide, birth through 21 years of age. The Bridges for Systems Change Initiative Grant is aligned with the DSE/EIS Strategic Plan: *Moving Maryland Forward* and supports the attainment of the goals and objectives of the strategically targeted Action Imperatives. It requires a strong systemic commitment to the design, implementation, and evaluation of sustainable/scalable processes and products in collaboration with family and community, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), the Regional Comprehensive Center, the DSE/EIS, and identified partners. This opportunity was established to serve as a catalyst for supporting local jurisdictions, the DSE/EIS, and their strategic partners in developing an infrastructure that provides a seamless, coordinated, and comprehensive system of services for Maryland's infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities, and their families through the braiding of funds to blend programs. This highly competitive grant has been awarded to one LSS to significantly ***enhance, restructure, and transform*** services within their existing system for improved results; specifically to increase the academic performance of African American students which will directly reduce the number of African American students referred and found eligible for special education services.

Attendance Matters Campaign

The MDSE is partnering with **Attendance Works**, a national nonprofit, to declare September as "Attendance Awareness Month." The MSDE works with local school systems and leaders to get students in school, keep them there, and move them along the track to college and career. **Attendance Works** released a report detailing the correlation between attendance and achievement. It can be found at www.attendanceworks.org. In partnership with **Attendance Works**, the MSDE is making available a wealth of tools and strategies that can be used to fight chronic absenteeism. For **LSS leaders** it is important to provide data and offer support, including the development of a plan to prioritize local needs. **School leaders** must make attendance a priority and provide resources to implement effective attendance plans. **Community leaders and partner**s can support district and school efforts by linking community resources—including afterschool, health, and mentoring, family support, and food and nutrition programs— to meet student needs.

E. Representatives involved (2(e))

The following relevant external education organizations, representing LSS personnel, local school boards, local superintendents, Institutions of Higher Education, content specialists, parents, families, the Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC), and advocates supported the development of Phase I of Maryland's SSIP.

- Educational Advocacy Coalition (EAC)
- Johns Hopkins University, Center for Technology in Education
- Local Directors of Special Education
- Local Preschool Coordinators
- Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)
- Maryland Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE)
- Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)
- Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)
- Maryland Association of Teacher Educator s (MATE)
- Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE)
- Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health
- Maryland Council of Staff Developers (MCSD)
- Maryland Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM)
- Maryland Department of Disabilities
- Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC)

- Maryland Family Network/Friends of the Family
- Maryland Middle School Association (MMSA)
- Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)
- Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA)
- Parents' Place of Maryland
- Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM)
- Read y At Five Partnership
- Schoolwide Integration for Transformation (SWIFT) Center
- Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC)
- State of Maryland International Reading Association Council (SoMIRAC)
- University of Maryland – Department of Education Policy Studies

The following relevant internal MSDE stakeholders, included representatives from the MSDE Divisions that support the components of State infrastructure that influence and leverage change in State and LSSs include:

- **Office of the State Superintendent,**
  - Race to the Top Coordinator & Teacher/Principal Evaluation (RTTT)
- **Office of the Chief Operating Officer,**
  - Division of Business Services
  - Division of Rehabilitation Services
- **Office of School Effectiveness**
  - Division of Academic Policy and Innovation (ESEA Waiver)
  - Division of Educator Effectiveness
  - Division of Student, Family, and School Support (Title I)
- **Office of Teaching and Learning**
  - Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability (Breakthrough Center)
  - Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (SPDG, SWIFT, Strategic Plan)
  - Division of College and Career Readiness

With the selection of the SIMR, the relevant external and internal stakeholders were identified. These stakeholders have direct State or local involvement with LSSs, State initiatives aligned with the SIMR, families, professionals, and advocates. The following relevant Internal and external stakeholders are committed to supporting the implementation of Phase II of the SSIP:

- Local Directors of Special Education
- Educational Advocacy Coalition (EAC)
- Johns Hopkins University, Center for Technology in Education
- Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)
- Maryland Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE)
- Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)
- Maryland Association of Teacher Educator s (MATE)
- Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE)
- Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health
- Maryland Council of Staff Developers (MCSD)
- Maryland Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM)
- Maryland Department of Disabilities
- Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC)
- Maryland Family Network/Friends of the Family
- Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)
- Parents' Place of Maryland
- Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM)
- Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC)
- **Office of the State Superintendent**
  - Race to the Top Coordinator & Teacher/Principal Evaluation (RTTT)
- **Office of School Effectiveness**

- Division of Academic Policy and Innovation (ESEA Waiver)
- Division of Student, Family, and School Support (Title I)

- **Office of Teaching and Learning**
  - Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability (Breakthrough Center)
  - Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (SPDG, SWIFT, Bridges Systems Change Initiative, Strategic Plan)

The role of the external and internal stakeholders will be to work with the DSE/EIS to develop Phase II of the SSIP to address: 1) State and local infrastructure development; 2) support for the LSSs to implement Evidence Based Practices; and 3) Design an Evaluation Plan.

F. Stakeholder Involvement (2(f))

The MSDE engaged both external and internal stakeholders in discussions and feedback related to State and local capacity. Stakeholders participated in a total of five (5) facilitated meetings using the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) process for analysis. They were also provided information and the opportunity to examine alignment and coordination of the MSDE Offices/Divisions. The MSDE and stakeholders also reviewed the results of the adapted State Capacity Assessment (SCA) conducted in late spring 2014.

All stakeholders were invited to attend each meeting and then given the opportunity to provide feedback to the infrastructure analysis after meeting notes were distributed. Some stakeholders were unable to regularly attend stakeholder workgroup meetings due to preexisting commitments, but provided significant input outside of meetings. The Assistant State Superintendent of the DSE/EIS and the MSDE Executive Team, for example, was heavily involved in each step of the SSIP process through internal planning meetings and document reviews.

Internal Stakeholders

Stakeholder	11/10/14	12/10/14	1/12/15	2/5/15
Chief of Staff	X	X	X	X
Special Assistant to the State Superintendent (STEM)	X	X	X	X
Executive Director, Governmental Relations	X	X	X	X
Director, Departmental Coordination & National Legislative Liaison	X	X	X	X
Race to the Top Coordinator & Teacher/Principal Evaluations	X	X	X	X
Chief Operating Officer	X	X	X	X
Division of Business Services	X	X	X	X
Office of Human Resources	X	X	X	X
Office of Information Technology	X	X	X	X
Division of Rehabilitation Services	X	X	X	X
Office of School Effectiveness	X	X	X	X
Division of Academic Policy and Innovation	X	X	X	X
Division of Educator Effectiveness	X	X	X	X
Division of Student, Family, and School Support	X	X	X	X

Director, Program Improvement and Family Support Branch (Title I) Division of Student, Family, and School Support	X	X	X	X
Office of Teaching and Learning	X	X	X	X
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Division of Early Childhood Development	X	X	X	X
Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability	X	X	X	X
Division of Career and College Readiness	X	X	X	X
Division of Library Development and Services	X	X	X	X
Branch Chief, Policy & Accountability, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Branch Chief, Programmatic Support & Technical Assistance Branch, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Research Consultant, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X	X	X
Consultant	X	X	X	X

External Stakeholder Input

The external stakeholders represented families, disability organizations, advocacy organizations, general and special education instructional personnel, LSS leadership, Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs), the Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC), local Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committees (SECACs), and State organizations representing families and teachers that collaborate on various IDEA services and issues. Areas of expertise among these stakeholders included district and school administration, parent partnerships, delivery of multi-tiered instruction and interventions, data analysis, policy planning, early intervention, early childhood services, behavior interventions, mathematics instruction, and inclusive practices for students who need the most comprehensive supports.

External Stakeholders

Stakeholders	11/10/14	12/10/14	1/15//15
Parents	X	X	X
Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC)	X	X	X
Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committees (SECAC)	X	X	X
Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD)	X	X	X
Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC)	X	X	X
Educational Advocacy Coalition (EAC)	X	X	X
Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)	X	X	X
Maryland Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE)	X	X	X

Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)	X	X	X
Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)	X	X	X
Maryland Council of Staff Developers (MCSD)	X	X	X
Maryland Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM)	X	X	X
Maryland Middle School Association (MMSA)	X	X	X
Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)	X	X	X
State of Maryland International Reading Association Council (SoMIRAC)	X	X	X
Ready At Five Partnership	X	X	X
Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA)	X	X	X
Maryland Association of Teacher Educator s (MATE)	X	X	X
Maryland Family Network/Friends of the Family	X	X	X
University of Maryland – Department of Education Policy Studies	X	X	X
Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE)	X	X	X
Johns Hopkins University, Center for Technology in Education (JHU/CTE)	X	X	X
Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health	X	X	X
Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD)	X	X	X
Maryland Department of Human Resources	X	X	X
Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM)	X	X	X
Local Directors of Special Education	X	X	X
Local Preschool Coordinators	X	X	X
Schoolwide integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) Center	X	X	X

Stakeholder meeting #5 (11/10/2014) - Stakeholders were provided an overview of the Office of Special Education Program's (OSEP's) purpose for having states conduct the infrastructure analysis: to have states look at how their agency is working as a whole, not just in the area of special education, in order to see how initiatives are or can be aligned, how activities such as professional development are coordinated, and where coordination and collaboration can be improved. Stakeholders received information about the MSDE infrastructure:

- ✓ Organizational structure of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE);
- ✓ Special Education Strategic Plan, *Moving Maryland Forward*;
- ✓ Two Race to the Top grants;
- ✓ ESEA Flexibility Waiver;
- ✓ Division's State Professional Development Grant (SPDG);
- ✓ Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT);
- ✓ Bridges for System Change Initiative; and
- ✓ Resources for Professional Learning and Development (PLD), and technical assistance.

Following this review, stakeholders worked in groups on infrastructure analysis using the SWOT analysis process. The areas for analysis included ***Governance, Data, Quality Standards, Personnel Development/Technical Assistance, and Accountability/Monitoring.***

Each small group conducted two analyses and then worked as a whole group to discuss and modify each analysis. It was noted that the state elections may affect state leadership and there have been personnel changes at the MSDE. Emphasis was also put on the need for coaching to be an integral part of professional learning and development.

As a result of this initial SWOT analysis, stakeholders made the following observations:

Infrastructure Components	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Governance	• Vision and mission of DSE/EIS	• Too many initiatives, not aligned • No systematic plan statewide that crosses divisions	Only 24 LSSs – easier to engage in dialogue	• Lack of alignment and coordination
Data	• Data available online – MD Report Card, Complaints/due process, distributed at meetings • LADSS • Preschool Readiness Data	• Available online, yet hard to find • Access • Inconsistent databases across LSSs • Accuracy of the data • Indicator 8 – some data not disaggregated enough; response rates	• Generate a variety of data reports from SLDS (LADSS) • Teach parents how to look at data • Local systems can drill down	• Changing assessments (Readiness, Statewide) lose the ability to look at data over time
Quality Standards	• *Moving Maryland Forward* (State strategic plan) • Meetings including general and special ed • Inclusion of advocates and SECAC members in events, such as leadership conference where information is disseminated	• Uneven dissemination of info to people/public in local school systems ○ Info stays at the top ○ Staff turnover State beginning to focus on quality as part of accountability. There is a plan in place – some intense work has begun with a few LSSs	• Standards are unifying the work of the State and driving everything the Division of Special Ed/EIS is doing • State using data to prioritize TA and decision-making	• Shift in state leadership (elections) • Budget concerns • Personnel changes at state (MSDE)
Personnel Development/ Technical Assistance	• State provides flexible dollars for LEAs to develop and implement specific PL • State monitors [that] dollars are used according to	• Lack of time, dollars, knowledge to provide PLD, ongoing **coaching** – may impact LSSs • Not everybody	• Provide onsite TA to LEAs • Provide resources • Blending resources is an opportunity	• Budget concerns • State leadership changes (election) • Personnel changes (MSDE)

Infrastructure Components	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	evidence based practices and standards	who needs PLD gets it (e.g., gen ed and support personnel)		
Accountability/ Monitoring	• MMSR • MDIDEA report • MSA • MD Report Card • SESAC, SICC, SSIP Stakeholders	• Data reported annually but not necessarily analyzed systematically • Separate accountability plans, doesn't seem cohesive	• Develop short-term accountability goals • Actually analyze data on a regular basis and develop action plans • State lead stakeholder meetings • Compare data with other states • Leverage various initiatives to support students with disabilities.	• Lack of cohesion • Accountability silos • Teacher prep/PD – special and general ed • Will for change.

Stakeholder meeting #6 (12/10/2014) – By this time it was agreed that math performance would be targeted for grades 3 – 5. Data related to the gap in math performance over time in these grades were reviewed. It was also agreed to target districts participating in the SPDG and SWIFT Center. Both efforts have prioritized math performance and were at initial stages of exploration (SWIFT) and installation (SPDG). Additionally, an LSS receiving a significant state discretionary grant was included. External stakeholders met to take a deeper look at the MSDE infrastructure. Specifically, they examined the components of the MSDE infrastructure in relationship to the targeted SIMR and in conjunction with the identification of root causes of poor performance. This meeting also provided time for stakeholders to have initial discussions about strategies to address improvement of the SIMR.

- ***Infrastructure review:*** Preliminary discussion of root causes (barriers) included low expectations of students with disabilities, teacher preparation in math, lack of parental knowledge of "today's math," paraprofessionals acting as the child's teacher in the classroom, learned helplessness in students, and lack of meaningful access to curriculum. Leverage points are the State's move toward using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, co-teaching emphasis across the State, cooperative learning in elementary schools, and increased use of technology in the classroom. Potential evidence based strategies in professional learning, instruction, organizational structure of schools, and family/community engagement were identified. It is notable that ***UDL, Tiered instruction, and culturally competent instruction*** were identified in multiple areas.

Internal Stakeholder Input

Stakeholder Meeting #7 (1/12/2015) The Assistant State Superintendent, DSE/EIS provided an overview of the SSIP process to the State Superintendent's Executive Leadership Team. She enlisted their engagement and support in the SSIP process of infrastructure analysis to address the SIMR and to develop coordinated and collaborative strategies for improvement of results for children and youth with disabilities in Maryland. Specifically, the Assistant State Superintendent, DSE/EIS asked for a representative from each of the Leadership Team areas to meet as an internal stakeholder group and that the Executive Leadership Team would continue to engage in dialogue throughout the phases of the SSIP.

See Stakeholder Meeting #8 in Section 3E.

Stakeholder Meeting #9 (2/5/2015) - For the internal stakeholder meeting it was decided to combine the Part C and Part B SWOT analyses. This was decided for several reasons and purposes. An important reason was that the DSE/EIS is responsible for both Part C and Part B programs. As such, the Division's strategic plan spans the birth through 21 early intervention and special education services. It was decided that taking this unified approach with representatives of the Executive Leadership Team provided a comprehensive approach to address both infrastructure analysis and to begin to consider Phase II, infrastructure development. Additionally, by approaching the infrastructure analysis in this unified manner, it was expected to see the extent to which there were cross program strengths and opportunities for improvement.

The Internal MSDE stakeholders representing the State Superintendent's Executive Team representatives received a brief presentation on the IDEA State Systemic Improvement Plan process. They reviewed and discussed a combined SWOT analysis by external stakeholders for Part C (Early Intervention Services, Birth - 4) and for Part B (Special Education, 3 -21). Additionally, they engaged in analysis and discussion of the infrastructure analyses. They paid particular attention to the ***Governance*** and ***Fiscal*** strengths, opportunities, threats, and weaknesses. Below is a chart of the internal MSDE SWOT Analysis:

Infrastructure Components	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Governance	• Vision and mission of DSE/EIS • Extended IFSP • Online IFSP for all families • Early Childhood Intervention & Education (ECIE) w/DECD in same department (collaboration) • Matrix leadership w/EI in all • Braided funding • Making access happen • Birth mandate • Eligibility criteria • Only 24 LSSs –	• Variability among jurisdictions • Too many initiatives • Collaboration between ECIE & DECD ○ improving • Lack of needed staff support • Change from compliance to outcome • Conceptual strength current status is opportunity	• Only 24 LSSs – easier to engage in dialogue • SICC/ SESAC • Evolving collaboration between ECIE and DECD • Transition to results based outcomes (Shift in balance in compliance to outcome) • Maryland Learning Links • Grants • Limited systematic plan statewide that crosses divisions • ECAC	• Non-transparency of SSIP process • Change in State Leadership in Annapolis • Lack of alignment and coordination • Competing interests • Budget cuts

Infrastructure Components	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	easier to engage in dialogue (autonomy)			
Fiscal	• Federal and state competitive grant opportunities • Division offers local priority – local use of funds • Fiscal workgroup that drives through data where money will be spent (stakeholder input) • Use federal money to share staff throughout MSDE • Share initiatives • Purchasing policies and procedures – guidelines and training • Title 1 103A – funds could be available to support this area • Having only 24 LSSs allows for leveraging of partnerships • Strong monitoring and accountability protocols for fiscal • Share funds with Division of Early Childhood • Leverage of federal funds	• Policies and procedures are daunting even as welcomed • ESEA flex plan currently does not support Title 1 103A funds • Bureaucracy of how many signatures, timelines – slowness of the process for checks and balances • Fiscal process is time consuming	• Budget cuts requiring MSDE to look at other sources of funds/creative ways and partnerships • Beneficial to have cross divisional plans to learn how to leverage funds better; cost sharing – integrate funding • More opportunities for braiding funding • Shared staff for overlapping divisions to work on similar projects/initiatives • Cross divisional plans • Creating a fiscal workbook for consistency, clarity, maximize completion time, comprehensive workbook • Prioritizing funding activities	• State government turnover – changes in priorities
Data	• Data available online – MD Report Card,	• Available online, yet hard to find	• Generate a variety of data reports from	• Changing assessments (Readiness,

Infrastructure Components	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	Complaints/due process data, distributed at meetings • LADSS • Preschool Readiness Data	• Access • Inconsistent databases across LSSs • Accuracy of the data • Indicator 8 – some data not disaggregated enough; response rates	SLDS (LADSS) • Teach parents how to look at data • Local systems can drill down	Statewide) lose the ability to look at data over time
Quality Standards	• *Moving Maryland Forward* (State strategic plan) • Meetings including general and special ed • Inclusion of advocates and SECAC members in events, such as leadership conference where information is disseminated	• Uneven dissemination of info to people/public in local school systems ○ Info stays at the top ○ Staff turnover State beginning to focus on quality as part of accountability. There is a plan in place – some intense work has begun with a few LSSs	• Standards are unifying the work of the State and driving everything the Division of Special Ed/EIS is doing • State using data to prioritize TA and decision-making	• Shift in state leadership (elections) • Budget concerns • Personnel changes at state (MSDE)
Personnel Development/ Technical Assistance	• State provides flexible dollars for LEAs to develop and implement specific PL • State monitors [that] dollars are used according to evidence based practices and standards	• Lack of time, dollars, knowledge to provide PLD, ongoing coaching – may impact LSSs • Not everybody who needs PLD gets it (e.g., gen ed and support personnel)	• Provide onsite TA to LEAs • Provide resources • Blending resources is an opportunity	• Budget concerns • State leadership changes (election) • Personnel changes (MSDE)
Accountability/ Monitoring	• Online data system ○ MD IDEA Report ○ MD Report	• Just starting to focus on outcome data so lack of longitudinal	• Refine data for all the variables • Develop short-term accountability	• Lack of cohesion • Dev. screening • Lack of state

Infrastructure Components	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
	Card • MMSR • MSA • State oversight of data system • Linking funds for program improvement • Posting of data/outcomes lends to accountability • Looking at outcomes regularly • SESAC, SICC, SSIP Stakeholders	data • Determining outcomes related to personnel • Variability in/across jurisdictions ○ Different personnel ○ Different focuses • Data reported annually but not necessarily analyzed systematically • Separate accountability plans, doesn't seem cohesive	goals • Online IFSP • Dev. screening • Analyze data on a regular basis and develop action plans • Stakeholder input and receptiveness to partnerships within MITP • State-lead stakeholder meetings • Compare data with other states • Extended option offers focus on children who might have fallen through "cracks" • Leverage various initiatives to support students with disabilities	and local resources to fully implement the SSIP process • Accountability silos • Teacher prep/ PD-separate special and general ed • Will for change

There are a number of infrastructure strengths:

- A strategic plan that lays out the vision and mission for the DSE/EIS within the broader mission of the MSDE provides a strong governance component;
- Databases that capture most of the individual student information and make it possible to have an online IEP for managing individual student data, LSS data, and aggregating for state data reports. Data reporting that provides both the MSDE and the public with multiple ways of examining and comparing data for students with disabilities, as well as for all students.
- Innovative and creative methods have been used to leverage fiscal resources as well as ensure accountable management and reporting of the use of funds with standardized protocols for monitoring and accountability;
- Quality standards are in place to guide both teacher preparation programs and the MSDE in professional development activities. There are also quality standards for how professional development is delivered to align with adult learning principles;
- Professional Learning and Development and Technical Assistance are guided by the Tiered Approach, Differentiated Framework, as well as the professional learning and development database that supports identifying needs and how they were addressed; and
- DSE/EIS has developed a strong accountability and monitoring component through the Monitoring for Continuous Improvement and Results (MCIR) and the Differentiated Framework.

There are also areas in which the MSDE and the DSE/EIS need improvement. These include further developing and strengthening the cross-divisional communications' channels to continue to support coordination and collaboration. Similarly, there is a need to continue to explore ways that fiscal and human resources can be leveraged and shared to support efficiency and effectiveness of operations that lead to student improvement. There is a wealth of data; yet, a need exists to develop and expand the skills of the MSDE, LSSs, schools, and classroom personnel to use the available data. There is also a need to expand the public's knowledge of the available data and how to access reports of interest. Specifically related to the SIMR area of math, it is recognized that until the last few years much emphasis had been placed on literacy without as much concerted focus on math. This provides an area that can be developed and expanded. The MSDE and the DSE/EIS intend to build on the strengths in order to address the infrastructure improvement areas.

3. State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR)

A. SIMR Statement (3(a))

The Maryland Part B State-identified Measurable Result (SIMR) is ***to increase the mathematics proficiency of students with disabilities in grades 3-5 in six (6) LSSs****.* The MSDE, DSE/EIS identified this child outcome as a result of the iterative data and infrastructure analyses with internal and external stakeholders that identified the strengths of the MSDE infrastructure and State initiatives for coordination within and across Divisions.

B. Data and Infrastructure Analyses Substantiating the SIMR (3(b))

The average math achievement gaps for children with disabilities in grades 3 – 5, as compared to their nondisabled peers are 38.2, 39.4, and 44.8 percentage points, respectively (see also Data section 1, Data Results). The average math achievement gap for children with disabilities in grades 6 – 8 compared to their nondisabled peers is 41.1 percentage points. Although the achievement gap is larger in grades 6-8, research shows that the effects of low-quality instruction in math (as well as other subject areas) are cumulative (Pianta et al., 2007). Among children with math under-achievement in the primary grades, approximately two thirds continue to experience difficulties not only through primary school (Mazzocco & Myers, 2003) but also into middle school (Chong & Siegel, 2008; Mazzocco & Devlin, 2008).

There was much discussion in the Stakeholder meetings about whether the SIMR should address closing the gap, as is the case in several federal initiatives, or increasing the percent of students with disabilities who score proficient and above on the statewide assessment of mathematics. It was noted that while the gap between the performance of students with disabilities and all students has not appreciably decreased over the last five or six years, the percent of students with disabilities scoring proficient and above in mathematics on the statewide assessment has generally increased in a parallel trajectory as that of all students. It was also noted that in aligning with indicator 3C, proficiency rate is the key measurement. From these discussions and observations, it was determined that the SIMR would address *increasing the mathematics proficiency of students with disabilities.*

Mathematical underachievement ultimately has lifelong consequences. Success in mathematics promotes success in occupations and gains in socioeconomic status (Parsons & Brynner, 1997; Rivera-Batiz, 1992). Beyond career success, low math achievement affects financial decision making and healthcare risk assessment (Hibbard, Peters, Dixon, & Tusler, 2007), as well as social activities (McCloskey, 2007).

The MSDE has also chosen to focus on increasing math proficiency in grades 3 – 5 to leverage alignment with existing initiatives. As was noted above, the MSDE examined statewide initiatives. One of those is the SPDG with a math emphasis on similar grades in three LSSs. Another initiative with a focus on integrity of implementation is the SWIFT Center work which is being initiated in four LSSs. In addition to these two initiatives the one LSS that received a significant Division of Special Education/Early

Intervention Services competitive grant from State IDEA set-aside funds to engage in implementation science to support schools and classrooms to impact student outcomes and build local capacity to sustain evidence–based practices was considered. The geographic distribution of the LSSs was examined, as well as the ethnic/racial diversity. One additional LSS was included in this preliminary round for consideration.

From this initial pool of 9 LSSs (9/24 = 38%), several factors were analyzed and examined. Data specific to these nine (9) LSSs and the state were examined to determine the percent of students scoring proficient and advanced at each grade for the past three years. Discussions focused on the current capacity of the MSDE to support work in the LSSs. Factors associated with the LSSs were also considered – have there been leadership changes, does the LSS have sufficient resources – personnel and financial – to enhance or expand current initiative work. In the final analysis it was determined that six (6) LSSs would be included in the SSIP. This represents 25% (6/24) of Maryland's LSSs and over 20% of the total number of students with disabilities. These LSSs also provide geographic, racial, and ethnic diversity. All six (6) have agreed to participate in the SSIP Phase II planning process and Phase III implementation and evaluation.

C. SIMR as Child-Family-Level Outcome (3(c))

The SIMR is aligned with the IDEA Part B SPP Indicator 3C relative to the achievement of children with disabilities in mathematics. Although the SIMR is aligned, it does not duplicate Indicator 3C. The SIMR is specific to mathematics, while Indicator 3C includes reading and mathematics. The SIMR addresses grades 3, 4, and 5, while Indicator 3C addresses all grades tested – grades 3-8 and high school. The SIMR is applicable to only six LSSs, while Indicator 3C applies to all students with disabilities taking the statewide assessment. The SIMR will support statewide improvement on Indicator 3C as improvement strategies are implemented.

D. Stakeholder Involvement in Selecting the SIMR (3(d))

Over a series of meetings as described in Data Analysis, Sections 1(F), Infrastructure Analysis, Section 2(F),and SIMR, Section 3(D), internal and external stakeholders examined and asked questions of data and of the State infrastructure capacity to identify the SIMR. As noted earlier, an iterative approach was used with stakeholder meetings, even as in this document's elements and activities are described in a linear manner. This approach allowed stakeholders to examine data as well as learn about State-level initiatives and priorities, such as those in the Special Education Strategic Plan, in the same meeting to build shared knowledge. In subsequent meetings new elements would be added while reviewing data and information from previous meetings. For example, in the November meeting a description based on the previous data analyses was given in the area of SIMR focus (math) before conducting the infrastructure SWOT analysis. In order to leverage the systemic work being conducted in the LSSs participating in the SPDG and SWIFT Center partnership – both of which are also prioritizing math performance – stakeholders agreed that LSSs, participating in the SPDG and SWIFT Center partnership, and located across all 6 regions of the state, should be targeted.

Internal Stakeholders

Stakeholder	1/12/15	1/15/15
Chief of Staff	X	X
Special Assistant to the State Superintendent (STEM)	X	X
Executive Director, Governmental Relations	X	X
Director, Departmental Coordination & National Legislative Liaison	X	X

Race to the Top Coordinator & Teacher/Principal Evaluations	X	X
Chief Operating Officer	X	X
Division of Business Services	X	X
Office of Human Resources	X	X
Office of Information Technology	X	X
Division of Rehabilitation Services	X	X
Office of School Effectiveness	X	X
Division of Academic Policy and Innovation	X	X
Division of Educator Effectiveness	X	X
Division of Student, Family, and School Support	X	X
Director, Program Improvement and Family Support Branch (Title I)	X	X
Office of Teaching and Learning	X	X
Division of Special Education/ Early Intervention Services	X	X
Division of Early Childhood Development	X	X
Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability	X	X
Division of Career and College Readiness	X	X
Division of Library Development and Services	X	X
Branch Chief, Policy & Accountability, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X
Educational Program Specialist, Math, Programmatic Support & Technical Assistance Branch, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X
Educational Program Specialist, SPDG, Programmatic Support & Technical Assistance Branch, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X
Research Consultant, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention	X	X

Services		
Consultant	X	X

External Stakeholders

Stakeholders	1/15//15
Parents	X
Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC)	X
Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committees (SECAC)	X
Parents Place of Maryland (PPMD)	X
Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC)	X
Educational Advocacy Coalition (EAC)	X
Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)	X
Maryland Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE)	X
Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)	X
Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)	X
Maryland Council of Staff Developers (MCSD)	X
Maryland Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM)	X
Maryland Middle School Association (MMSA)	X
Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)	X
State of Maryland International Reading Association Council (SoMIRAC)	X
Read y At Five Partnership	X
Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA)	X
Maryland Association of Teacher Educator s (MATE)	X
Maryland Family Network/Friends of the Family	X
University of Maryland – Department of Education Policy Studies	X
Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE)	X
Johns Hopkins University, Center for Technology in Education (JHU/CTE)	X
Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health	X
Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD)	X
Maryland Department of Human Resources	X
Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM)	X
Local Directors of Special Education	X
Local Preschool Coordinators	X
Schoolwide integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) Center	X

See Stakeholder Meeting #7 in Section 2F.

Stakeholder Meeting #8 (1/15/2015) – The stakeholders met in January to review the data and infrastructure analysis, finalize discussion of the SIMR, identify and review root causes, establish reasonable targets, generate broad areas of improvement based upon the previous meeting activity of "what's working" and "what is not working" and to review and react to a draft Theory of Action. Please see also Stakeholder Meetings #6, #7, and #9 in Infrastructure Analysis, Section 2(F).

E. Baseline Data and Targets (3(e))

The MSDE will support efforts to increase the number of children with disabilities scoring Proficient or above and target an average increase of three percentage points from the baseline average score percentage after the first two years of implementation. The chart below illustrates this rate of improvement to be ambitious and achievable. This target will raise the average percentage of children with disabilities scoring Proficient or above on Maryland's Statewide assessment of mathematics by nine (9) percentage points in five years. Baseline data for FFY 2013 (2013-2014 school year) is student performance as measured using scores on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). Please note that beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, students will take the applicable Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, based on Maryland's College and Career-Ready Standards aligned with the Common Core. This new assessment will require future standard setting and establishment of targets and at least two years of assessment data before the MSDE is able to predict trends. The baseline and targets established in the SSIP will require future revision.

FFY	Average Percentage of Students with Disabilities At or Above Proficient at Grades 3, 4, and 5 in the Six (6) Selected LSSs
2013 (Baseline)	35%
2014	35%
2015	35%
2016	38%
2017	41%
2018	44%

4. Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies

A. How Improvement Strategies were Selected (4(a))

Based on the review of data and State infrastructure analyses internal and external stakeholders identified existing evidence-based practices used within other aligned State initiatives. Please refer to the data identified in Data Analysis, Section 1(B), State infrastructure in Section 2(B-D), and State Identified Measurable Result, Section 3(B). From this broad based examination, improvement strategy areas emerged, were discussed, and refined.

Maryland has chosen 5 improvement strategies based on the data analysis that will build the State capacity to support capacity building and improvement in LSSs. These strategies are:

1. Data-informed decision making for continuous improvement;
2. Family engagement and partnership to promote family involvement and student success;
3. High quality general education math instruction based on principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to increase student engagement and learning;
4. Multi-tiered system of supports with evidence-based math instruction and interventions to provide tailored instruction for math deficits; and
5. Equitable access to the general education curriculum and classroom through culturally responsive interactions and specialized instruction for students with disabilities within the regular classroom.

MSDE will support the implementation of these improvement strategies by:

- Increasing collaboration across the MSDE Divisions to provide professional learning and TA in math instruction and culturally responsive practices; and
- Leveraging the resources of the SWIFT, the SPDG, and the competitive State IDEA set-aside Bridges for Systems Change Initiative grant to build upon the LSSs and schools actively engaged in a State TA relationship.

The frameworks of implementation science will be used to identify specific practices within those strategies to implement. DSE/EIS will leverage the SPDG, SWIFT, and other work currently being implemented in the six LSSs to engage in a practice-policy feedback loop. These improvement strategies were selected because they provide a coherent approach and are related to the State's specific needs: 1) narrowing gaps in academic achievement, 2) implementing the College and Career Ready Standards, 3) improving math learning for all students, 4) increasing the use of data-informed decision making, 5) helping educators choose appropriate evidence-based practices, 6) scaling up use of evidence-based practices, 7) providing effective professional development, and 8) increasing family involvement. In addition, they provide the flexibility needed to customize State support to local contexts by increasing the LSSs organizational capacity to sustain evidence-based practices that are yielding improvements in student achievement and to scale up those practices with fidelity.

B. How Improvement Strategies are Sound, Logical, and Aligned (4(b))

Research indicates that many interventions in education fail due to inadequate implementation (Fixsen, D. L., & Blase, K. A., 2009; Fixsen, D. L., Blase, K. A., Duda, M. A., Naoom, S. F., & Van Dyke, M., 2010; Fixsen, D., Blasé, K., Horner, R., Sugai, G., Sims, B., & Duda, M., 2012). What is unique about the DSE/EIS improvement strategies is that they are focused on putting into place structural components that support local capacity building, not just implementing evidence-based math practices. Maryland has chosen improvement strategies that are sound, logical, and aligned from a research perspective, as well as from the data and infrastructure analyses, including identifying LSSs that combine the installation of evidence-based practices, and will result in improvement in the State's SIMR.

1. Data-informed Decision Making for Continuous Improvement

Over the past decade, educators in Maryland and elsewhere have become interested in and committed to using data-informed decision making (also often referred to as data-based or data-driven decision making). Its use at the central office, school, and classroom levels is encouraged. Teachers, principals, and administrators systematically collect and analyze various types of data, including input, process, outcome and satisfaction data, to guide a range of decisions to help improve the success of students and schools. Achievement test data, in particular, play a prominent role among practitioners—in large part due to increased emphasis on data as a result of the requirements of NCLB (Massell, 2001).

However, the existence of data does not guarantee its use. Raw data must be organized and combined with an understanding of the situation to yield ***information***. Information becomes ***actionable knowledge*** when data users synthesize the information, apply judgment to prioritize it, and weigh the relative merits of possible solutions. At this point, actionable knowledge can inform different ***types of decisions*** that might include: setting goals and assessing progress, addressing individual or group needs (such as targeting support to low-performing students or schools), evaluating the effectiveness of practices, assessing whether the needs of students or others are being met, reallocating resources, or improving processes to improve outcomes. To promote improvement decisions based on data and to support strategy alignment, the MSDE promotes two continuous improvement cycles.

With a strong technical assistance connection from the MSDE to participating LSSs and the schools that will be the focus of the SSIP, practices will inform local and state policy which in turn will enable the implementation of high quality evidence-based practices. "The ***practice-policy feedback loop*** provides organizational leaders and policy makers with information (data) about implementation barriers and successes so that a more aligned system can be developed. Feedback from the practice level engages and informs organization leaders so that they can ensure that policy, procedures, resources, etc. enable innovative practices to occur in classrooms, schools, and districts as intended." (AI Hub: Topic 3: Practice-Policy Feedback Loops)

TAP-IT Process

The MSDE promotes continuous improvement through the TAP-IT process (Team, Analyze, Plan, Implement, and Track). It begins with the formation of an implementation **TEAM** that collects all

current, relevant data sources. They then **ANALYZE** the data**,** including formative, summative, longitudinal summary reports, and early warning alert systems that may be in place. The team analyzes the data using an agreed upon protocol to develop a **PLAN** to narrow the gap between children with disabilities and their nondisabled peers. The team shares current research and research based practices and consider the allocation of resources to determine their effectiveness in narrowing the gap. The plan is then **IMPLEMENTED** and progress is monitored. Team members continuously **TRACK** progress through regular meetings. Success is shared, plans are revised, and the work is scaled up as appropriate. The MSDE has actively promoted this collaborative data-based decision making model over the last two year and regularly provides technical assistance and guidance to the LSSs regarding systemic and strategic data use. This will be highlighted in the work of the participating SSIP LSSs.

2. Family engagement and partnership to promote family involvement and student success

Given the power of family involvement to influence learning, it is not surprising that the IDEA strongly supports a parents' right to be involved in the special education their child receives. As the IDEA states: "Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by… strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families…have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home." Maryland's strategic plan promotes engaging families and school staff in active regular two-way, meaningful communication as equal partners in decisions.

Engaging families of students who will be in schools participating in the SSIP work will range from providing family-friendly information (on math problem-solving activities, on their child's performance and progress) and providing training opportunities to understand educational decision-making to soliciting the active input from families in the decisions made by the school and school system. This has the dual purpose of connecting what is being learned to daily life and providing meaningful ways for the student and her/his family to engage in the life of the school. The data and infrastructure analyses revealed a concern that parents do not know "today's math." By engaging families in the improvement process, there is no intent to teach parents "today's math" but rather to help families use math and be engaged in their child's education.

An important component of the Maryland SPDG is family engagement through the partnership with The Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD), the State's Parent Training and Information (PTI) in OSEP's Parent Technical Assistance Center Network. This partnership provides two way communication and commitment. It is also a complementary strategy with high quality math instruction by providing parents/families with ways to interact with their children around math. Currently, PPMD has been developing strategies to engage children with their families around "what are you learning," rather than around "how to solve" problems.

3. High quality general education math instruction based on principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to increase student engagement and learning

UDL is based on educational research that finds students are highly variable in their response to instruction. Accordingly, to meet the challenge of high standards, the UDL approach shuns "one size fits all" curricula and instruction in favor of flexible designs with customizable options to meet individual needs. UDL has three major principles that include providing multiple means of representation, multiple means of action and expression, and multiple means of engagement. Each of these principles intends to address the diversity of student learning styles and means of demonstrating learning. The use of UDL along with high quality math instruction and interventions increases opportunities for students with disabilities to both engage in instruction and effectively demonstrate what is learned.

The MSDE will build upon the UDL network in Maryland and experts within the State who are working closely with the SWIFT Center to build teacher and school capacity to employ UDL principles. It will also leverage the knowledge base resulting from the SPDG work to implement evidence-based math

instruction. The data-informed decision making strategy will be incorporated to support the use of data for formative assessment of student progress. Through the SPDG and SWIFT center work, math has emerged as an important focus area. Leveraging the work of these initiatives, along with implementation of UDL – the lack of which was cited as a root cause – provides a powerful improvement strategy. The implementation of high quality math instruction and intervention using UDL will assist in addressing the root causes of "lack of problem solving skills and perseverance," "curriculum shift (MCCR)," and potentially the "inadequate identification of math learning problems."

4. Multi-tiered system of supports with evidence-based math instruction and interventions tailored instruction to math deficits

Implementing a MTSS in a school requires a significant change in practice, and a need for close collaboration with the school district administration. Particularly when it comes to math, screening and progress monitoring tools are limited; evidence-based interventions are scarce and may be expensive.

The MTSS models (Greenwood, Carta, Baggett, Buzhardt, Walker, & Terry, 2008; Greenwood, Kratchowill & Clements, 2008), such as Response to Intervention (RtI) (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2001) and School-Wide Positive Behaviors Support (SWPBS) (Sugai & Horner, 2009) are based on the premise that classroom instruction should be high quality, evidence-based, and universally designed for all students, considering their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, disabilities, and other learning needs. By using data on student performance and progress, the acquisition of targeted skills can be monitored and the need for more intensive instruction or specific interventions for students not "responding" to the universal instruction can be identified. A second tier of intervention focusing on those target skills or behaviors is provided to students who have not acquired the targeted skills. Through ongoing data monitoring, the need for a third tier of more individualized and intensive intervention can be identified and designed for specific students based on their unique needs. Evidence-based instructional strategies, progress monitoring, and fidelity of intervention characterize the implementation of all tiers.

Each intervention type (e.g., behavior, reading, math, etc.) needs criteria for identifying when students need more or less intensive interventions. It is important to note that as students move to more intensive levels (tiers) of support, they do not need to be removed from regular classes or school settings (Sailor, 2008/2009). Interventions can be embedded within the general education instruction and classroom activities, maintaining opportunities for the benefits of inclusion. Copeland and Cosbey (2008/2009) describe four key MTSS principles:

1. The tiers should be additive, not exclusionary: Tier 1 instruction should be supplemented by Tiers 2 and/or 3, and not replaced by them.
2. This model should be an instructional decision making model, not a placement model.
3. Decisions to change interventions, moving a student from one tier to the next, should be based on data.
4. Teachers should evaluate student performance based upon the documented delivery of strategies that have been demonstrated to be effective for their specific students.

The National Center on Intensive Intervention (http://www.intensiveintervention.org/) provides a variety of resources and current evidence-based tools and interventions for reading, math, and behavior. As can be seen, math resources are limited. The MSDE intends to leverage the work with the SWIFT Center to access current and evidence-based resources to support its ability to provide PD/L and TA for math instruction and intervention.

A MTSS model has evidence of effectiveness in enabling teachers to use screening and progress monitoring tools to identify specific areas in which students are proficient and where they need additional intervention to acquire important skills. The MSDE will work closely with and develop professional learning in MTSS/math that crosses the SPDG, the SWIFT, and the LSS awarded the State IDEA Set-Aside competitive Bridges for Systems Change Initiative grant, and target TA for the schools identified as part of the SSIP.

5. Equitable access to the general education curriculum and classroom through culturally responsive interactions and specialized instruction for students with disabilities within the regular classroom

Research shows a variety of positive short term and long term effects of educating students with disabilities in inclusive classes. In a two-year study of students with learning disabilities, Cole, Waldron, Majd, and Hasazi (2004) found that 41.7% made progress in math in general education classes compared to 34% in traditional special education settings, without the presence of nondisabled peers. When comparing progress with their typical peers, 43.3% of students with disabilities made comparable or greater progress in math in inclusive settings versus 35.9% in traditional settings. The National Longitudinal Transition Study examined the outcomes of 11,000 students with a range of disabilities and found that more time spent in a general education classroom was positively correlated with a) fewer absences from school, b) fewer referrals for disruptive behavior, and c) better outcomes after high school in the areas of employment and independent living (Wagner, Newman, Cameto & Levine, 2006).

For students with severe disabilities, academic benefits include: high levels of active engagement (Hunt, Soto, Maier & Doering, 2003; Wallace, Anderson, Bartholomay & Hupp, 2002), improved academic performance (Brinker & Thorpe, 1984; Cole et al., 2004; Downing, Spencer & Cavallaro, 2004; Wolfe & Hall, 2003; Hawkins, 2011; Hunt & Staub et al., 1994; Katz & Mirenda, 2002; McDonnell, Mathot-Buckner, Thornson & Fister, 2001; Teigland, 2009; Westling & Fox, 2009), access to general curriculum (Carter, Cushing, Clark & Kennedy, 2005) and higher quality individualized education program goals (Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis & Goetz, 1994b).

There are also several tools to promote culturally responsive practices, ranging from policy assessments (Kozleski and Sion (2006) to special education culturally responsive practices assessment (Richards, Artilles, Lingner, and Brown (2005). The MSDE will promote exploration of current practices and development of specific improvement across schools through a professional learning community. Further, the Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, a partner with the MSDE in promoting high quality inclusive instruction and interventions, will provide assistance to participating LSSs in the delivery of specialized instruction within the general education setting.

C. Strategies that Address Root Causes and Build Capacity (4(c))

Root causes of low math proficiency rates for students with disabilities and identified during the data and infrastructure analyses work included: ***low expectations, student mobility, inconsistent instruction, failure to use high quality Tier 1 instruction based on UDL principles, lack of problem solving skills and perseverance, lack of meaningful curriculum access, curriculum shift to the MCCR, inadequate identification of math as a learner problem, and low kindergarten expectations***. In identifying improvement strategies to address the root causes and result in improvement of the SIMR, the MSDE personnel with stakeholders identified five broad areas by looking across data, infrastructure, and root causes.

Broad areas that were determined to need to be addressed were ***data-informed decision-making, access, mathematics instruction, attendance, and behavior/discipline.*** From this initial identification of areas, discussion moved to identifying actionable and measurable strategies. (See Section 4.B. above.) The MSDE personnel with stakeholder input identified five improvement strategies that are aligned with the DSE/EIS strategic plan, current initiatives, and are supported by the data and infrastructure analysis.

A questioning technique was used to delve more deeply into the root causes identified. For example, inconsistent instruction was identified as a root cause. Using probing questions, one reason identified for inconsistent instruction was the lack of adequate or useful formative assessment data. Again questioning why that is, one reason emerged as the lack of skill in collecting and using data at the school and

classroom levels. To address this skill gap, the strategy of data-informed decision making was identified. (See other examples of how the strategies address the root causes identified in Section D below.)

To ensure a direct connection between the proposed actionable and measurable strategies and the five broad areas of need (*data-informed decision-making, access, mathematics instruction, attendance, and behavior/discipline)* stakeholders were asked to compare strategies to need factors using the *Hexagon Tool for Assessing Evidence-Based Practice Readiness of Fit*. Specifically, they were asked to use questions for five of the broad factors to assess whether the strategies addressed the Need – SIMR, fit the current initiatives and priorities, were supported by the infrastructure analysis of Resources and Support, and were Evidence-based promising practices. It was noted that the MSDE, DSE/EIS used two broad factors in making the final selection of the SSIP LSSs – Readiness for Replication and Capacity to Implement.

D. Strategies Based on Data and Infrastructure Analysis (4(d))

Data analysis and infrastructure analysis both support the need to continue to address equitable access. As was noted in the Data Section students with disabilities who are African American have a greater representation in the population of students with disabilities than in the general population. They also have the lowest proficiency rates in math in grades 4 and 5. Placement in segregated settings is higher for African American students with disabilities. The infrastructure analysis noted that the Maryland Strategic plan has an action imperative that directly addresses the "implementation of equitable services." Additionally, "lack of meaningful access" emerged as a possible root cause for the low performance of students with disabilities in math, regardless of race/ethnicity. To some extent this strategy, along with others, will address the root causes of a "shift in curriculum" and "lack of problem solving skills." By ensuring students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum and the general education classroom, Maryland will be ensuring students are receiving the instruction necessary to demonstrate aligned performance. The two strategies identified as a result of the infrastructure analysis are:

- Collaboration across the MSDE Divisions to provide professional learning and TA in math instruction and culturally responsive practices.
- Leverage the resources of the SWIFT, the SPDG, and the Bridges for Systems Change Initiative work to build upon the LSSs and schools actively engaged in a State TA relationship.

E. Stakeholder Involvement in Selecting Improvement Strategies (4(e))

A series of meetings with stakeholders were held to conduct the data and infrastructure analyses and identify the State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR). Representatives of relevant offices within the MSDE as well as advocacy and professional organizations and LSS administrators examined and asked questions of data to identify coherent strategies in relationship to State initiatives and the DSE/EIS strategic plan, *Moving Maryland Forward*. As noted earlier, an iterative approach was used with stakeholder meetings, even as in this document, elements and activities are described in a linear manner.

Internal Stakeholders

Stakeholder	1/15/15	3/17/15
Chief of Staff	X	X
Special Assistant to the State Superintendent (STEM)	X	X
Executive Director, Governmental Relations	X	X
Director, Departmental Coordination & National Legislative Liaison	X	X
Race to the Top Coordinator & Teacher/Principal	X	X

Evaluations		
Chief Operating Officer	X	X
Division of Business Services	X	X
Office of Human Resources	X	X
Office of Information Technology	X	X
Division of Rehabilitation Services	X	X
Office of School Effectiveness	X	X
Division of Academic Policy and Innovation	X	X
Division of Educator Effectiveness	X	X
Division of Student, Family, and School Support	X	X
Director, Program Improvement and Family Support Branch (Title I)	X	X
Office of Teaching and Learning	X	X
Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X
Division of Early Childhood Development	X	X
Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability	X	X
Division of Career and College Readiness	X	X
Division of Library Development and Services	X	X
Branch Chief, Policy & Accountability, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X
Branch Chief, Programmatic Support & Technical Assistance, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services		
Research Consultant, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X
Consultant	X	X

External Stakeholders

Stakeholders	**1/15//15**	**3/17/15**
Parents	X	X
Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC)	X	X
Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committees (SECAC)	X	X

Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD)	X	X
Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC)	X	X
Educational Advocacy Coalition (EAC)	X	X
Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)	X	X
Maryland Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE)	X	X
Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)	X	X
Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)	X	X
Maryland Council of Staff Developers (MCSD)	X	X
Maryland Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM)	X	X
Maryland Middle School Association (MMSA)	X	X
Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)	X	X
State of Maryland International Reading Association Council (SoMIRAC)	X	X
Read y At Five Partnership	X	X
Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA)	X	X
Maryland Association of Teacher Educator s (MATE)	X	X
Maryland Family Network/Friends of the Family	X	X
University of Maryland – Department of Education Policy Studies	X	X
Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE)	X	X
Johns Hopkins University, Center for Technology in Education (JHU/CTE)	X	X
Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health	X	X
Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD)	X	X
Maryland Department of Human Resources	X	X
Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM)	X	X
Local Directors of Special Education	X	X
Local Preschool Coordinators	X	X
Schoolwide integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) Center	X	X

Stakeholder Meeting #8 (1/15/2015) – Stakeholders identified improvement strategies and activities that are working in the broad areas of: professional learning and development, math instruction, organizational structure of the MSDE and LSSs, and family/community involvement. These informed the MSDE in initially identifying broad areas for improvement. They also identified the need for teacher development in math instructional strategies, use of formative assessments to guide instruction and identify intervention needs, improved family engagement – particularly in supporting math skill development and school involvement, and the relationship of low reading skills to math performance.

Stakeholder Meeting #10 (3/17/2015) – The stakeholders met to more fully identify the improvement strategies by comparing them against the State specific needs (see Section 4.A.) and the root causes that had been identified. The stakeholders identified with the MSDE personnel the following - **data-informed decision making, multi-tiered systems of support with evidence-based math instruction, equitable access in the general education curriculum and classroom, family engagement, and high quality math instruction/intervention using Universal Design for Learning.** From this discussion the stakeholders then reviewed a revised draft of the Theory of Action. After much discussion they provided specific recommendations for the MSDE to be able to finalize the Theory of Action. There was also some discussion of what areas the MSDE might want to consider for Infrastructure Development in Phase II of the SSIP process.

5. Theory of Action

Maryland's Theory of Action is that when students with disabilities are taught within a MTSS framework based on principles of UDL, using culturally responsive instruction and interventions that are provided when performance falls below standards, and when specialized instruction is delivered within that general education framework, their proficiency in math skills will increase and the gap between students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers will decrease. If there is collaboration across Divisions within the MSDE to assist schools and their district administrators in implementing these practices, using data-based decision making processes, and if families are engaged in implementation, then there is a greater likelihood that successes can be sustained within the targeted LSSs and scaled up across other jurisdictions.

A. Graphic Illustration (5(a))

Attached is a graphic illustration of Maryland's Theory of Action that describes how the State anticipates leveraging resources to maximize existing State initiatives, improve the State infrastructure, and build local capacity to scale up the implementation of evidence based practices to improve the mathematics achievement and reduce the gap in performance of students with disabilities in grades 3, 4 and 5 in 6 LSSs**. Please see Attachment F, Maryland Theory of Action**.

Attachment F

Maryland Theory of Action

Vision: The Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services, ensures students with disabilities are ready for school; achieve in school; and are prepared for college, career, and community through participation in Maryland's early intervention and/or special education services. Focusing on improvement strategies identified as effective for schools, LSSs, and State implementation will yield measurable progress in mathematics achievement for grades 3, 4, and 5 in selected Local School Systems (LSSs) for all students, while leveraging the learning from key State initiatives.

Core Functions	If the MSDE...	Then the LSSs...	Then...
Leadership	• Promotes excellence, innovation, dissemination of research and evidence-based models, *and* • Collaborates strategically across Divisions within the MSDE to jointly plan and provide technical assistance and professional learning/development to LSSs, *and* • Develops partnerships with LSSs to support an implementation infrastructure, *and*	• Engage school personnel, families and community partners to co-develop, co-implement, and co-evaluate data and infrastructure capacity, *and* • Collaborate with families to support mathematics in the home and school implementation decisions, *and*	the math proficiency of students with disabilities in grades 3, 4, and 5 will increase.
Accountability	• Uses a data-informed decision making model for continuous improvement to make decisions about math instruction and intervention to improve math achievement for students with disabilities, *and*	• Enable teachers to work in teams that use data to modify instruction, design individual student supports, and provide secondary and tertiary interventions with fidelity, *and* • Evaluate current organizational and instructional infrastructure practices and the impact on teacher and student performance, *and*	
Technical Assistance	• Provides professional learning/development and customized technical assistance for the implementation of evidence-based math instruction and interventions, family partnerships, and the inclusion of students with disabilities, *and*	• Use high quality instruction that is culturally responsive and based on principles of UDL, in a multi-tiered system of math instruction and intervention, *and* • Provide specialized instruction for students with disabilities within that MTSS framework, *and*	
Resource Management	• Aligns the allocation of resources to specifically address the identified issue,	• Work in teams to ensure the use of universally designed, sustainable culturally responsive, evidence-based math practices and interventions.	

B. How Improvement Strategies Will Lead to Improved Results (5(b))

The Theory of Action incorporates the coherent strategies identified by stakeholders, aligns it with the MSDE DSE/EIS strategic functions, and considers the root causes in identifying the changes that are needed to lead to accomplishing the SIMR in six (6) local school systems. The sequential Theory of Action offers certain proof points that can suggest whether or not the DSE/EIS is on the right track. As such, the graphic representation will help the DSE/EIS to develop evaluation strategies for both progress and implementation fidelity in the development of the SSIP, Phase II. Specifically:

- The core function of **LEADERSHIP** is based on the belief that strategic collaboration and partnerships within the MSDE and across Offices/Divisions and meaningful family partnerships promote excellence, innovation, and dissemination of research and evidence-based models. This will guide the improvement strategies of collaboration across the MSDE Divisions to provide professional learning and TA in inclusive math instruction and culturally responsive practices and family engagement and partnership. Cross-Divisional collaboration will result in models for LSSs and schools for how special education leadership can effectively work with general education and student support services to impact instruction. Responsiveness to and partnerships with families should result in greater family involvement in supporting their child's education and school decision-making.

- The core function of **ACCOUNTABILY FOR RESULTS** is based on the belief that real time data and use of data to inform decisions supports the development and implementation of evidence based practices to maximize learning and narrow the achievement gap. This means that data-informed decision making processes are necessary to guide school improvement, and will result in:
  - School leadership teams that know how to use disaggregated student data to inform decisions,
  - Schools leadership teams that evaluate their current practices, select new practices (see below) and evaluate the impact on the math proficiency and performance gap of students with disabilities, and
  - Teachers who work in teams to use data to modify instruction, design individual student supports, and provide secondary and tertiary interventions with fidelity.

- The core function of **TA/PROGRAM SUPPORT** is based on the beliefs that professional learning forms the base for courageous conversations and systems change, technical assistance and coaching provide unique supports to meet the context of individual schools and LSSs. Evidence-based instructional practices and interventions provide access to the curriculum and lead to academic/behavioral proficiency, and specialized instruction, program modifications, and supplementary aids/services enable students with disabilities to make progress in the general education curriculum and participate in school with their nondisabled peers. These beliefs become evident in the improvement strategies to develop high quality general education math instruction based on principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), multi-tiered system of supports with evidence-based math instruction and interventions tailored to math deficits, and equitable access to the general education curriculum and classroom through culturally responsive interactions and specialized instruction for students with disabilities. These will result in:
  - Schools that identify instructional practices to install based on exploration of current practice, student data, and professional learning,
  - Schools that install a math MTSS framework,
  - Schools and individual teachers who identify and install culturally responsive practices based on self-assessment, identification of specific needs, and professional learning,
  - Teachers who select and use or improve student engagement strategies,
  - Students with disabilities who participate in universal/general education math instruction and receive tiered intervention based on their math performance,
  - Students with disabilities who receive specialized instruction, program modifications, and supplementary aids/services in the general education classroom,
  - Students with disabilities who have higher rates of attendance, and
  - Students with disabilities who are more engaged in instruction.

- The core function of **FISCAL/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT** is based on a belief that leveraging national and local resources results in effective and efficient implementation and sustainable evidence-based practices. By leveraging the SWIFT, SPDG, and the Bridges for Systems Change Initiative work will enhance the current work with the LSSs and schools actively engaged in a State technical assistance relationship. These LSSs have district planning teams, school based planning teams organized to promote systems change, and have identified math performance as a priority for improvement. They also have begun to be engaged with local and national experts to explore and/or install math instruction and interventions. By focusing on these jurisdictions, we will have with 6 LSSs with active school and district leadership teams engaged in systems change work that includes the SSIP SIMR in their action plans.

  These strategies should lead to the change in practices that will enable us to achieve the SIMR, and see the following associated results:

  STUDENTS with Disabilities in grades 3-5:
  - Increase in math proficiency
  - Reduction in performance gap in math
  - Reduction in disproportionate placement of African American students in separate classes and schools
  - Increase in general education participation and instruction in the regular classroom

  TEACHERS:
  - Increased confidence with teaching students with disabilities in regular classes
  - Increased use of evidence-based math instruction based on UDL interventions
  - Improved use of culturally responsive practices

  SCHOOLS:
  - Improved student outcome data

  FAMILES:
  - Increased satisfaction with their child's educational program
  - Increased involvement in school decisions

The Theory of Action will also serve as a guidepost for the participating LSSs. It relates which practices should lead to which results, and demonstrates a linkage across initiatives and strategies. For example, the collaboration with other Divisions to provide professional learning and customized technical assistance will support the development of systems within the LSSs to make the important changes needed to see improved results for students. It is anticipated that this theory can drive change and show a clear path to improving the math proficiency of students with disabilities in grades 3, 4 and 5.

C. Stakeholder Involvement in Developing the Theory of Action (5(c))

The Theory of Action was developed with stakeholders, as a result of the participation and feedback from internal and external stakeholders for data and infrastructure analysis, identification of the SIMR, discussion of root causes for low math performance, and identification of coherent improvement strategies. The development of the Theory of Action began with the use of a Logic Model to identify the beliefs and values of the MSDE. From this basis the identified coherent strategies were considered as to how the strategies would promote a change in knowledge/practice leading to outcomes. **Please refer to Appendix A, Logic Model**.

Internal Stakeholders

Stakeholder	1/15/15	3/17/15
Chief of Staff	X	X
Special Assistant to the State Superintendent (STEM)	X	X
Executive Director, Governmental Relations	X	X
Director, Departmental Coordination & National Legislative Liaison	X	X
Race to the Top Coordinator & Teacher/Principal Evaluations	X	X
Chief Operating Officer	X	X
Division of Business Services	X	X
Office of Human Resources	X	X
Office of Information Technology	X	X
Division of Rehabilitation Services	X	X
Office of School Effectiveness	X	X
Division of Academic Policy and Innovation	X	X
Division of Educator Effectiveness	X	X
Division of Student, Family, and School Support	X	X
Director, Program Improvement and Family Support Branch (Title I)	X	X
Office of Teaching and Learning	X	X
Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X
Division of Early Childhood Development	X	X
Division of Curriculum, Assessment, and Accountability	X	X
Division of Career and College Readiness	X	X
Division of Library Development and Services	X	X
Branch Chief, Policy & Accountability, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X

Branch Chief, Programmatic Support & Technical Assistance Branch, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services		
Educational Program Specialist, Math, Programmatic Support & Technical Assistance Branch, Division of Special Education Early Intervention Services		
Educational Program Specialist, SPDG, Programmatic Support & Technical Assistance Branch, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services		
Research Consultant, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services	X	X
Consultant	X	X

External Stakeholders

Stakeholders	**1/15//15**	**3/17/15**
Parents	X	X
Special Education State Advisory Committee (SESAC)	X	X
Special Education Citizens' Advisory Committees (SECAC)	X	X
Parents' Place of Maryland (PPMD)	X	X
Maryland Disability Law Center (MDLC)	X	X
Educational Advocacy Coalition (EAC)	X	X
Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE)	X	X
Maryland Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE)	X	X
Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP)	X	X
Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP)	X	X
Maryland Council of Staff Developers (MCSD)	X	X
Maryland Council of Teachers of Mathematics (MCTM)	X	X
Maryland Middle School Association (MMSA)	X	X
Maryland State Education Association (MSEA)	X	X
State of Maryland International Reading Association Council (SoMIRAC)	X	X
Read y At Five Partnership	X	X
Maryland State Family Child Care Association (MSFCCA)	X	X
Maryland Association of Teacher Educator s (MATE)	X	X
Maryland Family Network/Friends of the Family	X	X

University of Maryland – Department of Education Policy Studies	X	X
Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education (MCIE)	X	X
Johns Hopkins University, Center for Technology in Education (JHU/CTE)	X	X
Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health	X	X
Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD)	X	X
Maryland Department of Human Resources	X	X
Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland (PSSAM)	X	X
Local Directors of Special Education	X	X
Local Preschool Coordinators	X	X
Schoolwide integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) Center	X	X

Stakeholder meeting #8 (1/15/2015) – Stakeholders reviewed the practices identified at the December meeting as "working" and "not working so well" as a prelude to reviewing the continuing refinement of the SIMR, as well as root causes of low performance in math of students with disabilities previously identified. Following this review, stakeholders watched a video describing the process for developing a Theory of Action - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NbMIhCZVW-U

A preliminary draft was reviewed in small groups to discuss. It was noted the four areas of focus are the Core Functions of the DSE/EIS Strategic Plan with the "If the MSDE" statements followed by statements of what will occur at both the MSDE and LSSs levels which will then lead to higher expectations and access to resources that will allow the provision of effective interventions and services which, in turn, will then result in services in natural settings and improved educational results and functional outcomes. In small groups participants were asked to think about:

- what you have learned through the stakeholder meeting discussions,
- the identified SIMR,
- the evidence-based practices, and
- what you know from your own practice.

Stakeholder meeting #10 (3/17/2015) – Following a discussion to refine the coherent strategies, stakeholders reviewed a draft Theory of Action and provided specific recommendations. It was emphasized by participants that there needs to be models of collaborative practice and quality communication across the MSDE, with families, and to the LSSs in this process. Stakeholders also noted that the Theory of Action needs to clearly convey the general approach that will be taken to address the SIMR and needs to be one that can be consistently articulated by the MSDE and stakeholders alike. There was discussion about whether the SIMR should address reducing the gap rather than increasing mathematics proficiency. Participants considered that even when students with disabilities may demonstrate higher levels of achievement, if students with and without disabilities increase in performance at approximately the same rate, the achievement gap for students with disabilities may stay the same. They noted that the SIMR needs to address both areas and that the strategies and theory of action need to take this into consideration.

Appendix A

Logic Model

Beliefs/Values witihin the Core Functions of the MSDE, DSE/EIS	Coherent Improvement Strategies	CHANGE in KNOWLEDGE/PRACTICES	OUTCOMES
LEADERSHIP Strategic collaboration and partnerships within MSDE and across Offices/Divisions and meaningful family partnerships promote excellence, innovation, and dissemination of research and evidence-based models	• Collaboration across MSDE Divisions to provide professional learning and TA in inclusive math instruction and culturally responsive practices. • Family engagement and partnership	• DSE/EIS and DCAA within the MSDE model collaboration for planning and evaluating the impact of instruction and interventions. • DSE/EIS and DSFSS within the MSDE model collaboration for planning and evaluating culturally responsive practices within the classroom. • Families collaborate with schools to support math skills at home and school decisions regarding implementation.	**STUDENTS with Disabilities in grades 3-5:** • Increase in math proficiency • Reduction in performance gap in math • Reduction in disproportionate placement of African American students in separate classes and schools • Increase in general education participation and instruction in the regular classroom **TEACHERS:** • Increased confidence with teaching students with disabilities in regular classes • Increased use of evidence-based math instruction based on UDL interventions • Improved use of culturally responsive practices **SCHOOLS**: • Improved student outcome data **FAMILES:** • Increased satisfaction with their child's educational program • Increased involvement in school decisions
ACCOUNTABILY FOR RESULTS Real time data and use of data to inform decisions supports the development and implementation of evidence based practices to maximize learning and narrow the achievement gap.	• Data-informed decision making for continuous improvement	• School leadership teams use disaggregated student data to inform decisions. • Schools leadership teams evaluate their current practices, select new practices (see below) and evaluate the impact on the math proficiency and performance gap of students with disabilities • Teachers will work in teams to use data to modify instruction, design individual student supports, and provide secondary and tertiary interventions with fidelity.	
TA/PROGRAM SUPPORT **Professional learning** forms the base for courageous conversations and systems change. **Technical assistance and coaching** provides unique supports to meet the context of individual schools and LSSs. **Evidence based instructional practices and interventions** provide access to the curriculum and lead to academic/behavioral proficiency. **Specialized instruction, program modifications and supplementary aids/services** enable students with disabilities to make progress in the general education curriculum and participate in school with their nondisabled peers.	• High quality general education math instruction based on principals of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) • Multi-tiered system of supports with evidence-based math instruction and interventions tailored to math deficits • Equitable access to the general education curriculum and classroom through culturally responsive interactions and specialized instruction for students with disabilities	• Schools identify instructional practices to install based on exploration of current practice, student data, and professional learning. • Schools install a math MTSS framework. • Schools and individual teachers identify and install culturally responsive practices based on self-assessment, identification of specific needs, and professional learning, • Teachers select and use or improve student engagement strategies. • Students with disabilities participate in universal/general education math instruction AND receive tiered intervention based on their math performance. • Students with disabilities receive specialized instruction, program modifications and SAS in the general education classroom • Students with disabilities have higher rates of attendance. • Students with disabilities are more engaged in instruction.	
FISCAL/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT Leveraging national and local resources results in effective and efficient implementation and sustainable evidence-based practices.	• Leverage the resources of SWIFT, SPDG, and Bridges Systems Change Initiatives to build upon LSSs and schools actively engaged in a State TA relationship.	• 6 LSSs with active school and district leadership teams engaged in systems change work include SSIP SIMR in their action plans.	

Appendix B

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