

Vermont's Approach to the SSIP Work

In 2014, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) required the Part B program for every state to develop a five-year plan toward improving outcomes for students with disabilities.

State Identified Measurable Result (SIMR)

The goal of the SSIP work is to improve proficiency of math performance for students identified as having an emotional disturbance in grades 3, 4, and 5.

Rationale for the SIMR

In 2014, Vermont had the highest percentage of students in the country who were identified with an emotional disturbance. In that same year, Vermont experienced lower than anticipated math scores on the statewide assessment for these students in grades 3, 4, and 5. Root cause analysis indicated that this might be due to a lack of access to high quality math instruction. This lack of access might be attributed to students:

- being in class but not available for learning,
- being in school but not in class,
- being in an alternative setting, or
- not being in school at all.

Vermont believes that students need to have access to rigorous math teaching practices delivered by highly skilled teachers in order to increase their proficiency in math as measured by the statewide assessment. Concurrently, by supporting the social and emotional needs of students, schools have the potential to create conditions which allow for positive relationships for all students within their family, school, and the broader community.

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is imperative to the success of the SSIP work in Vermont. Stakeholders from numerous sources including schools, parents, mental health and trauma experts, and state agencies have guided the development of the SSIP work in Vermont. They asked that the SSIP work build on integration and alignment with other statewide initiatives for improved student outcomes. As the SSIP work progresses, the membership of the stakeholder groups will continue to be reviewed and redefined. Input and feedback gathered from stakeholders will ensure fidelity of the SSIP work in Vermont.

Theory of Action, Logic Model, and Evaluation Activities

Based on specific input and feedback from stakeholders and staff at the SSIP sites, the theory of action was designed to include a framework for developing partnerships between schools, teachers, and families with the result being improved outcomes for students. Vermont has intentionally aligned the theory of action, logic model, and evaluation plan to ensure that activities described in these documents are leading toward the desired results. The logic model and evaluation plan include more specific outcomes and measures intended to assess changes in:

- infrastructure and capacity at both the state and local levels,
- increased skills/knowledge at the school and teacher level, and
- improved proficiency in mathematics at the student level.

Alignment with other statewide initiatives

The SSIP work is based on implementation science or improvement science activities focused on math pedagogy and coaching support through intentional professional learning and technical assistance for:

- strengthening the knowledge of the 8 Math Teaching Practices (as endorsed by the National Council for Teachers of Math) for local staff,
- analyzing math curriculum and math assessments, and
- improving the delivery and practice of teaching and coaching support at the local level.

As the SSIP is focused on improving math performance for students who also experience social, emotional, and behavioral issues in the classroom, it will be critical that student IEPs be developed to support maximum educational benefit during universal instruction with their peers.

Although the SSIP focuses on improving proficiency of math performance for students identified as having an emotional disturbance in grades 3, 4, and 5, leadership teams are also committed to furthering the Agency's focus on developing a continuum of supports for all students in Vermont schools. To this end, when fiscally and organizationally feasible, the SSIP work has also been aligned with:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) research based framework for designing curriculum,
- Vermont's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) field guide,
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) statewide partnerships, and
- Vermont's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan.

Scale-up and Sustainability

Vermont developed a strategic scale-up approach that addresses systems coaching support and professional learning for the SSIP work over a four-year timeframe. Vermont's plan relies on intense technical assistance and support during the first year with decreasing support over time. This plan continues to focus on working with LEA leadership teams who are ready to engage in the SSIP work and on the eight math teaching practices for improved student outcomes.

Next Steps

As part of this process, Vermont will continue to assist in the identification of current challenges and effective strategies for continuous improvement at the state and local levels. Technical assistance provided by national organizations including representatives from the National Center for Systemic Improvement (NCSI) and the IDEA Data Center (IDC) will continue to support SSIP leadership teams to participate in this transformative change process required to meet the needs of students in Vermont.

Questions?

Contact Tonya Rutkowski, SSIP Coordinator at tonya.rutkowski@vermont.gov

Vermont's SSIP reports can be found by searching under "SSIP" at the Agency of Education [website \(http://education.vermont.gov/\)](http://education.vermont.gov/).