

Phase III – 2016-17 School Year Recap

In the 2016-17 school year, the department began implementation of Phase III of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). In this phase, work toward **the State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR) of increasing the percent of students with a specific learning disability (SLD) scoring at or above basic on the English and language arts assessment in grades 3–8 by three percent annually** began, with a focus on the first of the following three improvement strategies:

- *Increasing the access to core instruction for students with disabilities.*
- *Using RTI² initiative as a continuum of service in which special education is the most intensive intervention.*
- *Developing and implementing instructionally appropriate individualized education plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities that address areas of deficit to help support them in core instruction.*

Thirty districts identified to participate in the SSIP initial cohort, through the support of three regional SPDG interventionists, implemented the content developed to increase access to core instruction for students with disabilities. The responses from participants in this work was overwhelmingly positive, with the mean responses to questions ranging from teachers' knowledge of how to support students with disabilities in the general education setting to teachers' ability to differentiate instruction for students increasing steadily from the fall of 2016 to the spring of 2017. The educational setting reflected these changes in practice, with a 2.35 percent change in the percent of students with an SLD in the general education setting 80 percent or more of the day when comparing data from Dec. 1, 2015 to data from May 1, 2017. The 82.18 percent of students with an SLD in the general education 80 percent or more of the day is nearly 2 percent higher in the districts participating in the SSIP as compared to those not participating.

Phase III – Strategy 2

The work for the first improvement strategy of increasing access to core instruction for students with disabilities will continue in the 2017-18 school year, with an additional focus on intensifying special education services in a continuum of service model. In the spring of 2017, the department developed content to train educators on this strategy, with a particular focus on literacy. A train-the-trainer session was hosted in Nashville for one week in June to equip their lead district facilitators with necessary content to redeliver to educators in their school districts. The feedback on this training

provided by the facilitators was immensely positive, with 100 percent of the 53 attendees agreeing or strongly agreeing with all statements about the training, including a better understanding of the content covered, an improvement in ability to redeliver the training, and a greater understanding of present levels of performance.

The positive responses and increased knowledge reflected in the surveys from the train-the-trainer event have translated into successful redelivery of the content by facilitators to their district staff. To-date, 27 of the 30 participating school districts have completed facilitator-led fall trainings. Across the state, 384 school staff members attended their respective district trainings. Surveys were given to attendees after the trainings to elicit information about the impact of the trainings and ensure fidelity of implementation. Questions were completed by respondents using a Likert scale of 1–4, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 4 being “strongly agree.” The impact responses were very encouraging, with over 94 percent of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing to each item in the survey. The response rate from participants was nearly 60 percent.

Phase III – Strategy 3

In the late summer and fall of 2017, department staff began analyzing IEP data for the 30 participating districts to determine the quality of the IEPs being written. Writing instructionally appropriate IEPs serves as the third improvement strategy in Tennessee’s SSIP, and it is vital because it reflects the educational placement decisions and academic instruction outlined in the first two strategies. Indeed, the IEP is the blueprint by which educators know how to best serve a student. Thus, it is essential they are thorough and of high quality. Utilizing a department-designed rubric, members of the instructional programming team and regional consultants supporting the SSIP implementation from the division of special populations and student support conducted file reviews of 10 percent of IEPs written for students with specific learning disabilities.

Subsequent to the review, the department aggregated the data to identify performance both statewide and for individual districts in key areas of IEP writing, including writing present levels of performance, goals, narratives, and transition plans. To ensure uniform review, the department developed a [quality analysis rubric](#), based on scores of 1-5, for IEP review to assess whether best practices were being employed in the development of documents. This information will be utilized to identify districts that require further support in their areas of highest need. **Figure 1** provides a breakdown of the quality analysis of 510 files across the 30 participating districts by each IEP area.

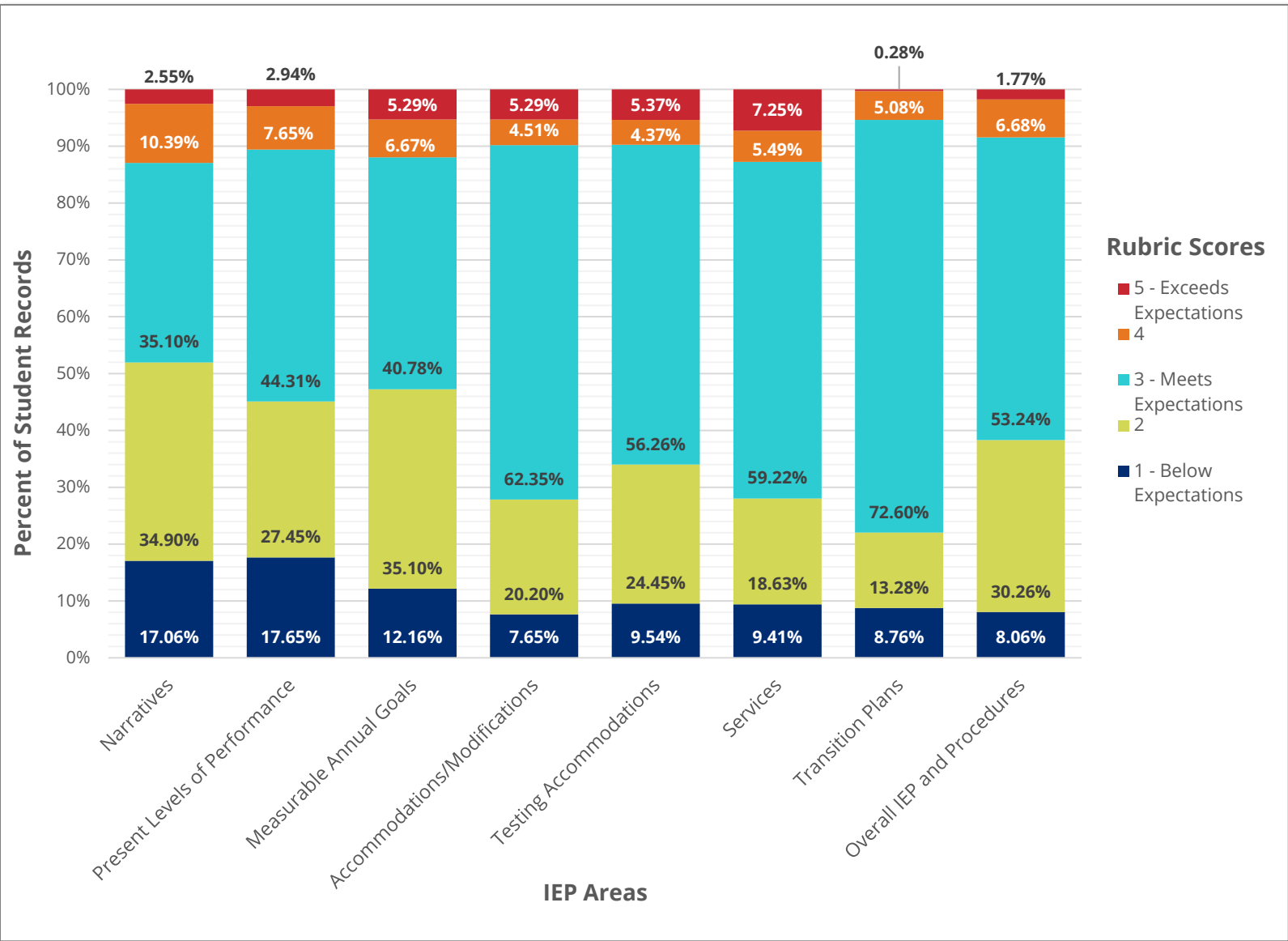


Figure 1. File review results for students with an SLD in the 30 participating districts

By disaggregating the data by section of the IEP, the department hopes to provide strong, tailored training and guidance to districts in the necessary areas. These trainings will take place over the 2017-18 school year and operate in tandem with the remaining winter and spring trainings for strategy 2.

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