

State Knowledge Utilization Strategies: Washington

Challenge:

How do we use Washington State OSPI's Special Education Consistency Index Data to increase and sustain early literacy skills by the third grade in pre-k students with disabilities?

The ability to significantly increase and sustain gains in early literacy for students with disabilities and a desire to bridge the gap between compliance and results-driven accountability (RDA) led Washington State to innovate a solution. This state spotlight will focus on Washington's improvement strategy to address this early literacy challenge using the state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) **Special Education Consistency Index (SECI)**. The foundation of the SECI is to measure whether certain requirements—namely, student evaluation, quality of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and the special education services provided—correlate to improved student outcomes. This SECI data allows schools to measure the degree to which compliance with IDEA requirements for evaluation, IEP development, and service provisions is attained and how it relates to student achievement. It is based on the hypothesis that greater compliance with the requirements most closely related to educational results will lead to improved outcomes.

State Context

How do we then connect this potential correlation between compliance and results to the state systemic improvement plan (SSIP) strategies that lead to the state SIMR and beyond? What would be the benefits of evaluating students correctly in the first place, having an IEP that is instrumental to designing specially designed instruction (SDI), measuring progress, and then evaluating the implementation of that instruction and strategies with fidelity? These are the questions Washington set out to answer as they approached their SSIP planning.

Public School Facts: Washington

Districts: 295

Schools: 2,370

Students: 1,127,493

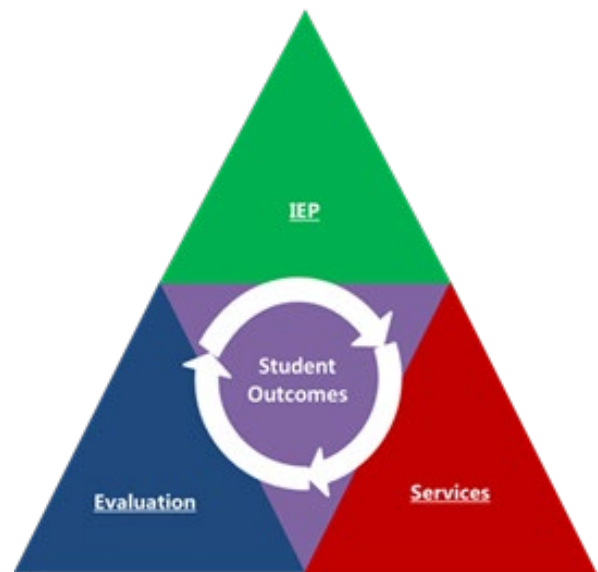
Students with individualized education programs: 13.1%

During Phase I of the SSIP, the state of Washington's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) participated in an in-depth systematic analysis to identify and select its area of focus for student improvement. This consisted of five stages in which they formed a SSIP Core Planning Team, identified and analyzed any existing quantitative and qualitative data, identified an area of focus, and further identified the potential root cause and improvement strategies to consider. After significant consideration of the data, the SSIP planning team focused on the literacy gap between students with disabilities and their typically developing peers. Specifically, the decision was made to focus on the early literacy skills of pre-k through third grade. In an effort to identify the root causes behind this gap in achievement, the Core Planning Team and stakeholders identified concerns that they believed contribute to their area of focus, including a lack of internal control, inconsistent implementation of interventions, lack of data-informed decision-making, limited capacity for selecting evidence-based practices, and finally, a reliance on an antiquated means of providing professional development for staff. In an effort to get at these root causes, the Core Planning Team decided to focus their efforts at the district, school, and classroom levels. A cornerstone improvement strategy of Washington's SSIP for Part B services is using the Washington State Special Education Consistency Index (SECI). The SECI is a composite numerical representation of the congruency of a student's evaluation to the development of their IEP and finally specially designed instruction (SDI) to remediate any student gaps. Washington is working

to support educators to move from understanding and using the IEP process to achieve compliance to understanding and using it as a tool that informs instruction to achieve results aligned with IDEA IEP requirements.

Implementation

In order to measure the effect that compliance with the IEP framework has on early literacy skills for kindergartners with disabilities, Washington initiated specific technical assistance targeted at the SECI data collection. SECI diagnostic tools, including review protocols and forms, were developed for the three areas of compliance: the evaluation, IEP, and current services. The services protocol includes data from the students' current schedule of services, teacher interview(s), and classroom observations. Districts and schools were coached by teams of trained SECI reviewers in order to support them in their analysis of district- and school-level data. Additionally, a web-based data collection and reporting platform was launched to ensure fidelity of the SECI data calculation. Inter-rater reliability was demonstrated by having Master Coders use the Fleiss' Kappa Methodology, which resulted in IRR of .08. Finally, a college-level certification course was developed and launched to onboard teachers and practitioners. This course provides an overview of the Consistency Index, the diagnostic tools and the web-based platform, and allows educators to practice with mock profiles. Washington is currently focusing its SSIP work in three specific regions of the state, where 54% of the state's preschool population resides. Regional trained coaches are helping schools collect baseline data and identifying students entering preschool to be followed longitudinally through third grade for progress towards the state's early literacy initiative, third grade literacy proficiency, as well as the state SIMR.



Strategies for Success

- Compliance instruments validated on a web-based data collection platform to ensure standardization
- Inter-rater reliability coefficient established
- Certification modules created for Master Coders
- Operationalized CI Diagnostic tools integrated into IDEA and ESSA toolkits

A fundamental premise for the application of Consistency Index is the greater the consistency between these three elements, the student's IEP, the services provided, and the evaluation, the greater the likelihood that coordinated and intentional instructional efforts will positively influence student outcomes.

Recommendations for States Facing Similar Challenges

- It is important to use a strengths-based approach with coaches onsite in order to help them see the connection between the requirements of IDEA and the potential outcomes.
- Adopt standardized resources, including forms and professional development, and identify consistent data sources across districts. For example, in Washington, the coaching framework and Consistency Index were consistent across the three regions.

Available Resources:

- [National Center for Systemic Improvement \(NCSI\), State Technical Assistance Facilitators](#)
- [State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#)

About this resource: This resource was developed by members of the NCSI Knowledge Utilization Service Area Team, including Tracy Long (AIR), Cesar D'Agord (WestEd), and Taltha Derrington (AIR), in collaboration with Kathleen Pfannenstiel (AIR) and Kristin Ruedel (AIR). The content was developed under cooperative agreement number #H326R140006 (NCSI) from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. Opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government. Project Officer: Perry Williams.