Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan

Instructions and Measurement

Monitoring Priority: General Supervision

The State's SPP/APR includes a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) that meets the requirements set forth for this indicator.

Measurement

The State's SPP/APR includes an SSIP that is a comprehensive, ambitious, yet achievable multi-year plan for improving results for children with disabilities. The SSIP includes each of the components described below.

Instructions

Baseline Data*:* The State must provide baseline data that must be expressed as a percentage and which is aligned with the State-identified Measurable Result(s) (SiMR) for Children with Disabilities.

Targets*:* In its FFY 2020 SPP/APR, due February 1, 2022, the State must provide measurable and rigorous targets (expressed as percentages) for each of the six years from FFY 2020 through FFY 2025. The State's FFY 2025 target must demonstrate improvement over the State's baseline data.

Updated Data: In its FFYs 2020 through FFY 2025 SPPs/APRs, due February 2022 through February 2027, the State must provide updated data for that specific FFY (expressed as percentages) and that data must be aligned with the State-identified Measurable Result(s) Children with Disabilities. In its FFYs 2020 through FFY 2025 SPPs/APRs, the State must report on whether it met its target.

Overview of the Three Phases of the SSIP

It is of the utmost importance to improve results for children with disabilities by improving educational services, including special education and related services. Stakeholders, including parents of children with disabilities, local educational agencies, the State Advisory Panel, and others, are critical participants in improving results for children with disabilities and should be included in developing, implementing, evaluating, and revising the SSIP and included in establishing the State's targets under Indicator 17. The SSIP should include information about stakeholder involvement in all three phases.

Phase I: Analysis:

- Data Analysis;

- Analysis of State Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity;

- State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities;

- Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies; and

- Theory of Action.

Phase II: Plan (which, is in addition to the Phase I content (including any updates)) outlined above):

- Infrastructure Development;

- Support for local educational agency (LEA) Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices; and

- Evaluation.

Phase III: Implementation and Evaluation (which, is in addition to the Phase I and Phase II content (including any updates)) outlined above):

- Results of Ongoing Evaluation and Revisions to the SSIP.

Specific Content of Each Phase of the SSIP

Refer to FFY 2013-2015 Measurement Table for detailed requirements of Phase I and Phase II SSIP submissions.

Phase III should only include information from Phase I or Phase II if changes or revisions are being made by the State and/or if information previously required in Phase I or Phase II was not reported.

Phase III: Implementation and Evaluation

In Phase III, the State must, consistent with its evaluation plan described in Phase II, assess and report on its progress implementing the SSIP. This includes: (A) data and analysis on the extent to which the State has made progress toward and/or met the State-established short-term and long-term outcomes or objectives for implementation of the SSIP and its progress toward achieving the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities (SiMR); (B) the rationale for any revisions that were made, or that the State intends to make, to the SSIP as the result of implementation, analysis, and evaluation; and (C) a description of the meaningful stakeholder engagement. If the State intends to continue implementing the SSIP without modifications, the State must describe how the data from the evaluation support this decision.

A. Data Analysis

As required in the Instructions for the Indicator/Measurement, in its FFYs 2020 through 2025 SPPs/APRs, the State must report data for that specific FFY (expressed as actual numbers and percentages) that are aligned with the SiMR. The State must report on whether the State met its target. In addition, the State may report on any additional data (e.g., progress monitoring data) that were collected and analyzed that would suggest progress toward the SiMR. States using a subset of the population from the indicator (e.g., a sample, cohort model) should describe how data are collected and analyzed for the SiMR if that was not described in Phase I or Phase II of the SSIP.

B.   Phase III Implementation, Analysis and Evaluation

The State must provide a narrative or graphic representation, (e.g., a logic model) of the principal activities, measures and outcomes that were implemented since the State's last SSIP submission (i.e., February 1, 2023). The evaluation should align with the theory of action described in Phase I and the evaluation plan described in Phase II. The State must describe any changes to the activities, strategies, or timelines described in Phase II and include a rationale or justification for the changes. If the State intends to continue implementing the SSIP without modifications, the State must describe how the data from the evaluation support this decision.

The State must summarize the infrastructure improvement strategies that were implemented, and the short-term outcomes achieved, including the measures or rationale used by the State and stakeholders to assess and communicate achievement. Relate short-term outcomes to one or more areas of a systems framework (e.g., governance, data, finance, accountability/monitoring, quality standards, professional development and/or technical assistance) and explain how these strategies support system change and are necessary for: (a) achievement of the SiMR; (b) sustainability of systems improvement efforts; and/or (c) scale-up. The State must describe the next steps for each infrastructure improvement strategy and the anticipated outcomes to be attained during the next fiscal year (e.g., for the FFY 2022 APR, report on anticipated outcomes to be obtained during FFY 2023, i.e., July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024).

The State must summarize the specific evidence-based practices that were implemented and the strategies or activities that supported their selection and ensured their use with fidelity. Describe how the evidence-based practices, and activities or strategies that support their use, are intended to impact the SiMR by changing program/district policies, procedures, and/or practices, teacher/provider practices (e.g., behaviors), parent/caregiver outcomes, and/or child outcomes. Describe any additional data (e.g., progress monitoring data) that was collected to support the on-going use of the evidence-based practices and inform decision-making for the next year of SSIP implementation.

C. Stakeholder Engagement

The State must describe the specific strategies implemented to engage stakeholders in key improvement efforts and how the State addressed concerns, if any, raised by stakeholders through its engagement activities.

Additional Implementation Activities

The State should identify any activities not already described that it intends to implement in the next fiscal year (e.g., for the FFY 2022 APR, report on activities it intends to implement in FFY 2023, i.e., July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024) including a timeline, anticipated data collection and measures, and expected outcomes that are related to the SiMR. The State should describe any newly identified barriers and include steps to address these barriers.

17 - Indicator Data

Section A: Data Analysis

What is the State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR)?

The number and percent of American Indian students with disabilities who successfully complete their secondary education will increase.

Has the SiMR changed since the last SSIP submission? (yes/no)

NO

Is the State using a subset of the population from the indicator (*e.g.*, a sample, cohort model)? (yes/no)

NO

Is the State's theory of action new or revised since the previous submission? (yes/no)

NO

Please provide a link to the current theory of action.

https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page Files/Special Education/Annual Performance Report/MT_ToA_ FINAL.pdf?ver=2021-12-02-090633-033

Progress toward the SiMR

Please provide the data for the specific FFY listed below (expressed as actual number and percentages)*.*

Select yes if the State uses two targets for measurement. (yes/no)

NO

Historical Data

Baseline Year	Baseline Data
2013	63.50%

Targets

FFY	Current Relationship	2022	2023	2024	2025
Target	Data must be greater than or equal to the target	68.70%	68.80%	68.90%	69.00%

FFY 2022 SPP/APR Data

Number of American Indian Special Education High School Completers	Number of American Indian Special Education High School Students eligible to complete in 2021-2022	FFY 2021 Data	FFY 2022 Target	FFY 2022 Data	Status	Slippage
139	156	72.09%	68.70%	89.10%	Met target	No Slippage

Provide the data source for the FFY 2022 data.

The data for the FFY2022 Data came from the Graduation/Dropout certification taken in Fall 2022. This certification is done within Montana's statewide student information system.

Please describe how data are collected and analyzed for the SiMR.

Data are collected within the statewide student information system and certified to the OPI through the Graduation/Dropout certification. Data is verified and analyzed by the Data Operations team of the OPI.

Optional: Has the State collected additional data *(i.e., benchmark, CQI, survey)* **that demonstrates progress toward the SiMR? (yes/no)**

NO

Did the State identify any general data quality concerns, unrelated to COVID-19, that affected progress toward the SiMR during the reporting period? (yes/no)

NO

Did the State identify any data quality concerns directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic during the reporting period? (yes/no)

NO

Section B: Implementation, Analysis and Evaluation

Please provide a link to the State's current evaluation plan.

https://opi.mt.gov/Portals/182/Page Files/Special Education/Annual Performance Report/Evaluation Questions FINAL 3-26-2020.pdf?ver=2021-12-02-090632-053

Is the State's evaluation plan new or revised since the previous submission? (yes/no)

NO

Provide a summary of each infrastructure improvement strategy implemented in the reporting period:

Redesign Internal SEA Infrastructure to Support Intra-agency Collaboration and Coordination.

The SEA is continually enhancing and improving the internal infrastructure to support inter-agency collaboration and coordination. One vital aspect of this work is the continuation of the Knowledge Keepers of Indigenous Nations (KKIN) and their work with students, communities, and school districts. This reporting year the KKIN adopted Articles of Association to provide guidance on how to support educators serving American Indian students. The KKIN worked closely alongside the Resilience In Something Else (RISE) youth group and their dynamic interaction has infused student voice into school improvement efforts. Another aspect of the work that has been pivotal, is the addition of two American Indian Student Achievement (AISA) positions. The AISA staff provided training and support to schools serving American Indian students using evidence-based interventions like

wraparound and restorative practices, as well as promising practices centered on culture, identity, and mental wellness.

Additionally, the American Indian Task Force continued to meet monthly. This is a long-standing Task Force within the OPI. The SSIP Implementation Specialist is a member of this group. The purpose of the Task Force is to develop strategic and aligned plans among all OPI staff who work with American Indian students to promote success and wellbeing. The AISA taskforce has two goals: (1) Develop a Framework that guides districts on how to structure education that fits American Indian learners, one that is focusing on the whole child, and includes building self-identity and building on the strengths and values of the Indigenous people and their culture. (2) Develop an agency plan on how we use American Indian student data to monitor that the work we are doing with American Indian students is successful and addresses the opportunity gap.

Establish a Data Use Culture at the SEA and LEA level.

Throughout the reporting year, professional development opportunities have been provided to establish a data use culture for both the SEA and LEA Level. During the Summer Institute two sessions were offered related to using data: 1. Data Equipped & Data Informed: The Montana Early Warning System and 2. Using Your Local Data: The Montana Statewide Longitudinal Data System. Professional development was also offered through the Montana Teacher Learning Hub, the SEA's digital repository of educational-based modules across all PreK-12 topics. The self-based virtual course was titled: Building the Foundation of Data Literacy.

One of the most direct tools for effective data use in Montana is the custom-made Early Warning System hosted on the Growth and Enhancement of Montana Students (GEMS) website platform. The Early Warning System (EWS) is a system that uses live student-level data to determine the chance of a student dropping out in grades 3-12, as well as the reasons why the student is at risk. This system is free to any Montana public school and may be used at any time during the school year. Montana schools have taken advantage of the tool and utilized it to improve graduation/completion rates of students, including American Indian students with disabilities.

The SEA also offered a professional development session unique to special educators. The course was titled Data Collection – Skill Acquisition (3 hours/3 PD Units). The course content included: Why collect data? What is a task analysis and when do you need one? What are the different types of data collection and their advantages/disadvantages? When should you use or not use a specific type of data collection? Four types of prompts and how/why to record prompt data? What is "chaining" and when should you use it? How do you teach students to maintain and generalize the skills they have learned?

Provide Professional Development and Technical Assistance to implement EBPs.

The targeted TA/PD, through mentorship for one particular SSIP School District (Frazer) continued to be delivered through a collaborative partnership with the SEA's Special Education staff. District special education staff at this school district also willingly engaged in professional learning opportunities outside of the monthly TA calls, taking advantage of the SEA offerings via the Teacher Learning Hub.

Through collaboration, the special education team of a second SSIP school district (Ronan) and the Montana SSIP Director focused on content standards for computer literacy/digital competencies. The collaborative team supplemented student learning with digital exploration of math/science skills.

Introductory coding to advanced coding (dependent on student interest and skill development); digital games used to introduce, enhance, or increase math/science skills; and Invention Literacy provided the students enriching opportunities with content standards. Through this approach, students demonstrated a grasp of content standards that had previously been noted as deficiencies on their IEPs and school Special Education staff found higher rates of student engagement.

Promote American Indian Youth and Family Empowerment.

Partnering with our Tribal Relations and Resiliency Unit has brought tribal leaders, tribal education departments, tribal colleges, youth leaders, and tribal knowledge keepers to the table to gain a deeper understanding of traditional Indigenous ways of 1. Being; 2. Teaching and Learning; 3. Connecting to cultural roots/heritage; along with 4. Walking in both worlds. Gaining guidance from our Montana Tribal Nations through their leaders and knowledge keepers is the impetus for emergent steps to have their voice front and center on educational matters. The work was intentionally designed to reconnect Indigenous Youth to their self-identity while empowering staff at our schools on or near Montana reservations to immerse in traditional teachings and approaches from the communities themselves. The Tribal Relations and Resiliency Unit has connected and will continue to build relationships and understandings within the SEA and Montana school districts to incorporate tribal voice, share resources, and build connections through consultation on educational matters affecting American Indian students.

Because youth are primary collaborative partners in the Montana SSIP, SEA staff regularly seek youth input and elevate student voice through the Resilience In Something Else (RISE) youth group. RISE continues to address students' need for support and connection. This group fosters relationships across the state of Montana and continues to offer invaluable opportunities for leadership development and relationship building. Meetings are held every other week with schools across the state and the meeting agendas are youth designed and youth led. Additionally, TRRU staff provide opportunities for RISE youth to speak at major venues hosted by the SEA.

Describe the short-term or intermediate outcomes achieved for each infrastructure improvement strategy during the reporting period including the measures or rationale used by the State and stakeholders to assess and communicate achievement. Please relate short-term outcomes to one or more areas of a systems framework (e.g., governance, data, finance, accountability/monitoring, quality standards, professional development and/or technical assistance) and explain how these strategies support system change and are necessary for: (a) achievement of the SiMR; (b) sustainability of systems improvement efforts; and/or (c) scale-up.

Redesign Internal SEA Infrastructure to Support Intra-agency Collaboration and Coordination.

Survey results from the Youth Conference between the Knowledge Keepers of Indigenous Nations (KKIN) and students, communities, and school district staff illustrate the SEA intra-agency collaboration and coordination efforts. Survey results from two questions were:

• 86.7% respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Tribal Education Summitt provided them new ideas, resources, or strategies for supporting Montana's American Indian youth.
•   93.4% agreed or strongly agreed that school(s) in their community use data in a way that is relevant to their culture and values.

The SEA's AISA Taskforce was held six times for 1.5 hours during the reporting period. In attendance were on average 17 SEA staff representing various units—Special Education; Assessment; Fiscal; Teaching and Learning; AISA, TRRU; Federal Programs; School Improvement, and Health Enhancement and Safety. Professional learning and collaboration during the task force sessions, lead to SEA staff reporting an increase in their capacity to support Indigenous youth/families and the educators who serve them.

Establish a Data Use Culture at the SEA and LEA level.
At the LEA level, the use of the Montana Early Warning System (EWS) enabled high school staff from two SSIP participating districts (Wolf Point and Rocky Boy), to have live data to identify students who are at-risk of dropping out of school before the drop out. The use of the EWS system is directly connected to the state SiMR to increase completion and graduation rates of American Indian students served with an IEP.

Provide Professional Development and Technical Assistance to implement EBPs.
In June 2023, at the SEA sponsored Summer Institute, SSIP participating educators from Frazer, Poplar, Rocky Boy, and Wolf Point were in attendance. Sessions ranged across all aspects of holistic support for students and/or educators in both academic and behavior evidence-based practices. Special Education professional development courses were successfully completed on the Montana Learn Hub by staff from four of the SSIP participating high schools (Brockton (2), Hays/Lodge Pole (3), Poplar (9), Wolf Point (8), and Frazer (2)).

Promote American Indian Youth and Family Empowerment.
RISE meetings were held every other week and attended by youth from SSIP participating high schools. The RISE group has an ongoing communication thread with over 227 participants. Through the meetings and ongoing communication, American Indian Youth are encouraged and encourage each other to pursue educational goals. The Tribal Student Achievement, Relations, and Resiliency Unit or TSARR has worked throughout the reporting period to build relationships and understandings within the SEA and Montana school districts to incorporate Tribal voice, share resources and build connections through consultation on matters affecting American Indian students.

Did the State implement any new (newly identified) infrastructure improvement strategies during the reporting period? (yes/no)
NO
Provide a summary of the next steps for each infrastructure improvement strategy and the anticipated outcomes to be attained during the next reporting period.
Based on observations, experiences, and data within the four infrastructure improvement strategies, next steps include:
1. Interagency stakeholders incorporating the local resources of tribal communities into educational programs for students.
2.   Increasing the use of the Early Warning System among high schools predominantly serving American Indian students. The use of EWS allows district staff to identify students at risk in a timely manner to prevent drop-out and improve the likelihood of high school completion.
3.   Increasing the capacity of Montana tribal leaders, knowledge keepers, LEA leadership, and students to understand and use data to make informed decisions for American Indian students with disabilities.
4. Continuing to provide training opportunities that develop cultural perspectives of historical Indigenous Restorative Justice practice efforts.
5.   Continuing to develop the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) and Personalized Learning Networks (PLN) that seek to build and strengthen the capacity of special education teachers to meet the needs of students.
6. Through collaboration and communication infrastructure efforts, building awareness and the need to empower American Indian students to reconnect to their identity and build pathways to high school completion.

List the selected evidence-based practices implement in the reporting period:
Professional Learning Community (PLC)

Provide a summary of each evidence-based practices.
Montana utilizes a Professional Learning Community (PLC) combined with a Professional Learning Network (PLN) to coach educators through technology within the SSIP target schools. The identified PLC/PLN was developed by the SEA based on research from Rock (2019) in his The eCoaching Continuum for Educators: Using Technology to Enrich Professional Development and Improve Students Outcomes (2019). Montana has called their PLC/PLN the Critical Friends' Network (CFN). The PLC is based on the premise that professional development offered through a Professional Learning Community (PLC) or Personalized Learning Network (PLN) provides the reciprocity for educators to share and learn strategies to support their students with special needs. Five features of effective professional development are utilized in the PLC: content focus (studying subject matter); active learning (observing, reviewing, discussing); coherence (demonstrating consistency with knowledge, beliefs, policies, and reforms); duration (engaging in 20 or more hours of contact time spread over a semester); and collective participation (interacting and conversing with colleagues). (Rock, 2019)
The Critical Friends' Network (CFN) started in the NE Region of Montana in March of 2021. The NE Region is comprised of the following school districts: Wolf Point, Frazer, Poplar, Brockton (all within the Fort Peck Reservation), Hays/Lodge Pole (within

the Fort Belknap Reservation), and Rocky Boy (within the Rocky Boy Reservation). In October of 2022, a district in the Western region became a Montana SSIP site, Ronan School District (Flathead Reservation).

Rock, M. (2019). The eCoaching Continuum for Educators: Using Technology to Enrich Professional

       Development and Improve Student Outcomes. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Provide a summary of how each evidence-based practice and activities or strategies that support its use, is intended to impact the SiMR by changing program/district policies, procedures, and/or practices, teacher/provider practices (e.g. behaviors), parent/caregiver outcomes, and/or child /outcomes.

The CFN enhances the capacity of educators to utilize high impact strategies, practices, and interventions which increases educator effectiveness to improve teaching and learning strategies. This includes improved intentional planning of culturally relevant curriculum, instructional practices, use of formative and summative data to guide instruction, and building pathways to post-secondary readiness. Ultimately, these educators will have schoolwide practices, teaching, and learning that are responsive to students needs and culture, leading to increased completion rates of American Indian students with disabilities. The CFN will also strengthen the capacity of educators to cultivate and maintain positive, inclusive, safe, and empowering school environments. It will emphasize the importance of elevating student voice, youth leadership and advocacy, as well as promote the use of MTSS to ensure the school structure addresses the needs of American Indian students with disabilities. This will enable educators to utilize restorative approaches to build strong relationships and learning environments. The CFN will help students have improved attendance rates, participation in school activities, reduce discipline rates. Ultimately educators will have a systematic approach to identify students at risk of dropping out of school, applying targeted interventions based on student needs and tracking interventions over time to determine if they are working.

       The chosen content of inclusion is the guiding topic for Critical Friends' Network (CFN) discussions. To encourage transformational skill building and learning for Indigenous students with disabilities, the subtopic of Invention Literacy is also offered to MT SSIP schools as a TA/PD focus area. Aligning with SEA priorities, the MT SSIP began introducing TA/PD focused on math instructional practices, particularly in the development of Number Sense and the 8 mathematical themes identified in the NAEP research (Wu, et. al., 2020). While all TA/PD offered focuses on best practices for special education identified Indigenous youth, these practices cross over to all youth served in a school setting.

       The basic structure of the CFN remains the same: invitation only, regionally based, and composed of special education teachers in SSIP schools residing on or near Montana reservations with a primary student population of Indigenous youth. The delivery method is virtual and occurs monthly for 1-hour.

Wu, K., Chaphalker, R., Hecker, M., & Lask, E. (2020). Hidden Strengths of American Indian and Alaska

       Native Students in Mathematics as Measured by the National Assessment of   Educational Progress. Journal of American Indian Education, 59(2–3), 7–32.

Describe the data collected to monitor fidelity of implementation and to assess practice change.

Survey questions aligned to rubrics are utilized to monitor the fidelity of implementation of the CFN. The rubrics are adapted from Killion's (2008) book, Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development (2nd Ed.). Rubric selection is based on the following criteria: 1) it is a continuum of growth; 2) doesn't require administering on a regular basis but at random check points; 3) demonstrates a partnership in the process as well as an opt out; 4) and it is qualitative in nature staying clear of quantifying professional relationships and growing together to better serve students.

       Past reporting periods indicated the CFN participants had a comfort level with inclusionary practices at 2s, 3s, and 4s. Past reporting periods open-ended responses indicated the lower comfort level with inclusionary practices was due to a lack of understanding inclusionary practices across school staff. The rubric responses this reporting year show growth on the continuum with comfort level with inclusionary practices being noted at 2, 4, and 7. The current open-ended response indicates certified staff, including reading coaches and counselors, have enhanced their ability to utilize more inclusionary practices.

Reference: Killion, J. (2008). Assessing Impact: Evaluating Staff Development (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Describe any additional data (e.g. progress monitoring) that was collected that supports the decision to continue the ongoing use of each evidence-based practice.

N/A

Provide a summary of the next steps for each evidence-based practices and the anticipated outcomes to be attained during the next reporting period.

The SEA plans to use the next steps during the next reporting period:
1. Expand outreach of the CFN beginning in the fall of 2023.
2. Realign the focus of the CFN to build capacity with the LEAs as described above.
3. Provide targeted professional learning to SSIP schools on how to utilize the Early Warning System to gather data on risk factors leading to drop-out.
4. Strengthen and utilize tribal consultations for district and school leaders to expand engagement efforts to ensure students, families, communities, and tribal councils are invested partners in increasing the completion rates of American Indian students with

disabilities.
5. Work towards implementation of the differentiated monitoring process to help the SEA and LEAs use the data from the monitoring process to determine next steps aligned to the SiMR.

Does the State intend to continue implementing the SSIP without modifications? (yes/no)

NO

If no, describe any changes to the activities, strategies or timelines described in the previous submission and include a rationale or justification for the changes.

Based on continual achievement of the targets in the MT SiMR, the SEA intends to utilize the SSIP process to address other indicators and areas of need. The SEA has initiated the process to establish a new SiMR and SSIP with both the advisory panel and OSEP TA providers. In May of 2023, during a joint stakeholder session, data was reviewed, and areas of improvement were considered to begin establishing a new SiMR. The SEA intends to have the new SiMR identified and SSIP drafted during the next reporting cycle.

Section C: Stakeholder Engagement

Description of Stakeholder Input

Discussions and Stakeholder input of the State's Performance Plan (SPP), Annual Performance Report (APR), State's Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), and Results Driven Accountability (RDA)/Results Based Accountability (RBA) began in 2013 with our State Special Education Advisory Panel. The Panel is fully vested and broadly representative of Montana. Additionally, many of the panel members as well as SEA staff serve in other agency or organization leadership positions or on advisory groups in the disability community. This enables MT to draw insight and advice from a broad group of stakeholders with an understanding of Montana's unique needs, strengths, and potential weaknesses.

Other stakeholder groups we sponsor and/or engage include:
1) Our Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) includes both regional and state councils that regularly meet to assess APR data and to evaluate professional development priorities and results.
2) The State Education Agency (SEA) staff has developed strong working relationships with other Montana agencies that serve youth and adults with disabilities. The SEA staff participate as members of advisory councils for early childhood, vocational rehabilitation, low incidence disabilities, developmental disabilities, and the state independent living council. This has strengthened the commitments of the agencies working with Montana's youth to facilitate smooth transitions from birth to adulthood.
3) Working with the Technical Assistance for Excellence in Special Education (TAESE) staff, the SEA has facilitated the Montana Higher Education Consortium (HEC). The HEC provides a mechanism for collaboration, networking, discussion, and advising of critical issues among Montana Institutes of Higher Education. The consortium works towards encouraging a more seamless educational system and merging general and special education into one unified system; understanding and promoting the use of evidence-based academic and behavioral strategies; and closely linking Montana teacher training and educational leadership programs to early childhood programs, K-12 education, and the SEA.
4) The SEA staff is engaged with the Schools Administrators of Montana (SAM) which include affiliates for Superintendents, Principals, Special Education Administrators, and Information Technology (IT) Directors. This partnership gives the SEA the opportunity to develop collaborative partnerships with the Local Education Agencies (LEAs). The SEA also provides SAM with a grant to help fund the Montana Recruitment Project. This program focuses on recruiting hard to fill positions such as speech/language pathologists, special education teachers, occupational therapists, and school psychologists for our districts.
5) Annually, the SEA brings together representatives from various stakeholder groups for a joint meeting facilitated by TAESE. This meeting brings stakeholders together to share up-dates and gather input from each other. There is a comprehensive representation of the Montana disability community, families and parents of children and students with and without disabilities.

During the FFY22 reporting period, the Student Support Services Senior Manager met with the parents and community members of the Montana School for the Deaf & Blind (MSDB) to start creating a graduate profile. In addition, our Early Assistance Program (EAP) Director presented to the parents of MSDB on the IDEA Framework (state purposes), general supervisory responsibilities and OPI's role as an SEA. The EAP Director also provided information on dispute resolution options and where at the OPI parents could go for technical assistance.

The Montana Empowerment Center and the OPI conducted various virtual presentations for parents of students with disabilities birth through age 21 and LEA staff. During the reporting period, the OPI presented on Present Levels of Academic Achievement Functional Performance (PLAAFPs), Measurable Annual Goals (MAGs), Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), transitions, early childhood, and extended school year. Superintendent Arntzen hosted multiple community events in four geographically diverse cities across the state in December of 2022. Parents listened to the goals of legislators for education and then had the opportunity to ask questions of the legislators. Throughout the reporting period, OPI provided numerous virtual trainings for parents regarding student and school safety and supporting youth with ASD and other developmental disorders.

Annually, the OPI assists with the Montana Youth Transitions (MYT) Conference. The OPI team works in conjunction with MYT to present, coach, and mentor educators, parents, and students. This conference brings together the transition team of youth, parents, and professionals to learn strategies and resources to build a seamless transition plan from high school to the adult world. One parent stated the following, "This was my first time at the conference, and I had no idea there were so many things out there to help my son. The sessions on parenting techniques and educational tools were eye-opening, and I feel more equipped to support my child's learning journey."

In May of 2023, the SEA brought together the Special Education Advisory Panel along with stakeholders from other agencies, parents, Montana Empowerment Center, Disability Rights Montana, and school district and cooperative special education directors. The State Director of Special Education presented the 17 indicators and asked for feedback on all of them. In particular, the stakeholders wanted to include math. Aligning with the SEA and stakeholder input, the MT SSIP began introducing TA/PD focused on math instructional practices, particularly in the development of Number Sense and the 8 mathematical themes identified in the NAEP research.

Describe the specific strategies implemented to engage stakeholders in key improvement efforts.

A presentation of all indicators was presented to the stakeholders during our Joint Stakeholders meeting in May of 2023. The SEA showed past indicator results and compared them to current results. Once the information was shared, the stakeholders broke into small table discussions. They were tasked with reviewing all the data again, asked to discuss the data provided, and as a group write down one to two areas of improvement the SEA could work on. As a facilitator, TAESE gathered all information and provided it back to the State Special Education Director in a summary. Once all feedback was received, the Director determined adding math instructional practices to the SSIP was an area the SEA could work on to improve completion rates for Native American Students with disabilities.

Were there any concerns expressed by stakeholders during engagement activities? (yes/no)

YES

Describe how the State addressed the concerns expressed by stakeholders.

The stakeholders were primarily concerned with the math assessment scores among our Native American population. These concerns were addressed by adding training and professional development in math instructional strategies among our SSIP schools.

Additional Implementation Activities

List any activities not already described that the State intends to implement in the next fiscal year that are related to the SiMR.

N/A

Provide a timeline, anticipated data collection and measures, and expected outcomes for these activities that are related to the SiMR.

N/A

Describe any newly identified barriers and include steps to address these barriers.

N/A

Provide additional information about this indicator (optional).

17 - Prior FFY Required Actions

None

17 - OSEP Response

17 - Required Actions