

State Systemic Improvement Plan Introduction

This document represents Utah's Phase I plan for the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), and describes the state system and its capacity to assist Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to develop the needed capacity to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. These improvement efforts align with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The success of the SSIP requires systematic improvement across the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) and LEAs to leverage existing strengths while simultaneously closing system gaps. For this to occur, the USOE and LEAs need to:

- Increase capacity to implement the SSIP,
- Increase utilization of evidence-based practices,
- Improve infrastructure and coordination for delivering effective professional development (PD) and technical assistance (TA),
- Increase the use of effective dissemination strategies,
- Increase meaningful engagement of state and local stakeholders around SSIP efforts,
- Increase capacity to effectively utilize available TA resources, and
- Increase capacity to implement general supervision systems that support effective implementation of the IDEA and ESEA.

These combined improvement efforts, chronicled in the SSIP, will lead to improved educational outcomes for all students in the area of mathematics proficiency, which in turn will also improve state results in graduation, dropout, and post-school outcomes.

Executive Summary

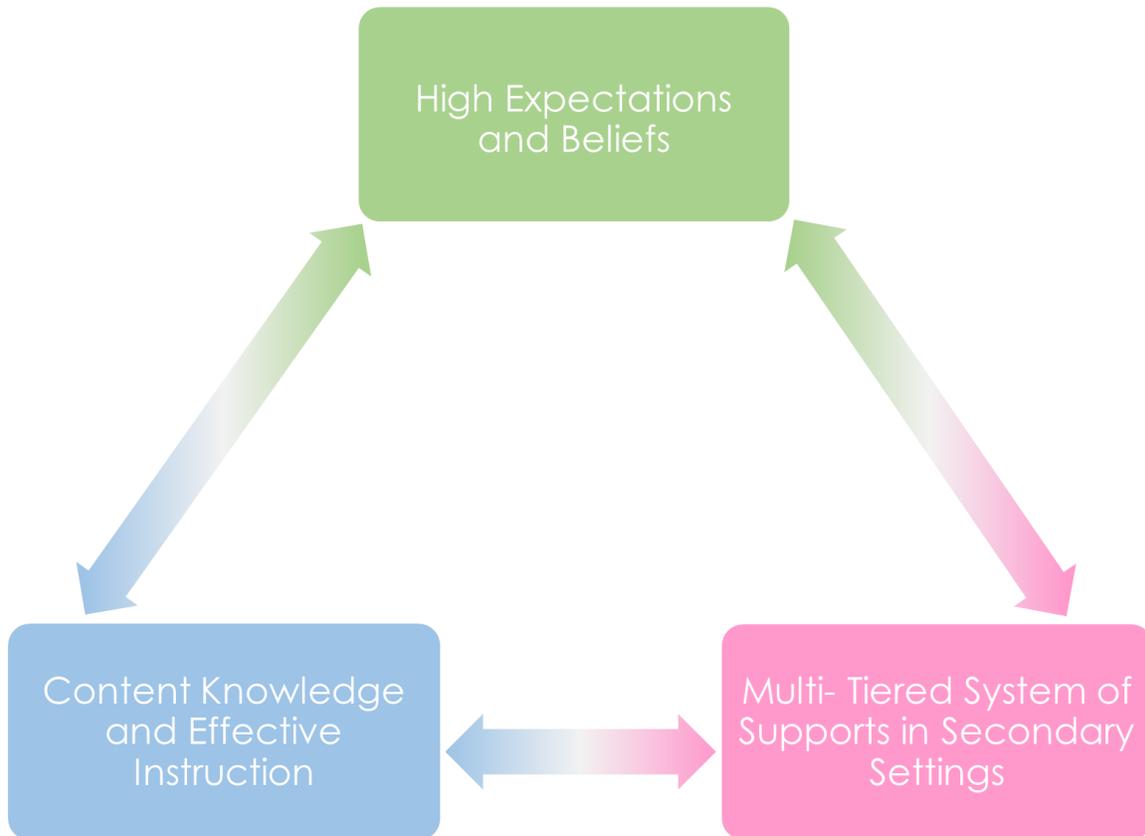
Utah's 2013–2014 SAGE tests show 42.2% of students without disabilities in grades three through eight and ten were proficient in mathematics, but just 12.9% of students with disabilities were proficient: a 29.3% achievement gap.

To address this achievement gap, the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) brought together a variety of education and community stakeholders to create the FFY 2013 State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase I. USOE held multiple in-person and online meetings with these groups to review and analyze state and local education agency (LEA) data as well as the USOE infrastructure, and determine the area of greatest need for immediate improvement for students with disabilities outcomes. Part of the review process identified the need to recruit and ensure the involvement of general education teachers (at the USOE and in LEAs) and members of the business community, groups who have historically had little role in providing input regarding students with disabilities, despite the fact that virtually all Utah's students with disabilities access the general education classroom and local businesses.

Stakeholders reached consensus on Utah's State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR). The goal is to increase statewide proficiency by 11.11% for students with Speech Language Impairments (SLI) or Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) in grades six through eight on SAGE mathematics over a five-year period. The SiMR-specific language was selected after a review of Utah mathematics data over the last five years on statewide assessments, in which proficiency trends were obvious. In order to improve achievement in mathematics, stakeholders identified three primary areas for USOE and LEAs to focus their efforts:

1. Administrator, teacher, parent, and student attitudes and behavior (resulting in some IEP team decisions that limit grade level core mathematics instruction);
2. Teacher understanding of mathematics standards and effective instruction; and
3. An educational system that decreases general education instructional support and interventions in the secondary settings, during a time when the mathematics core standards become more rigorous and abstract (i.e., Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)).

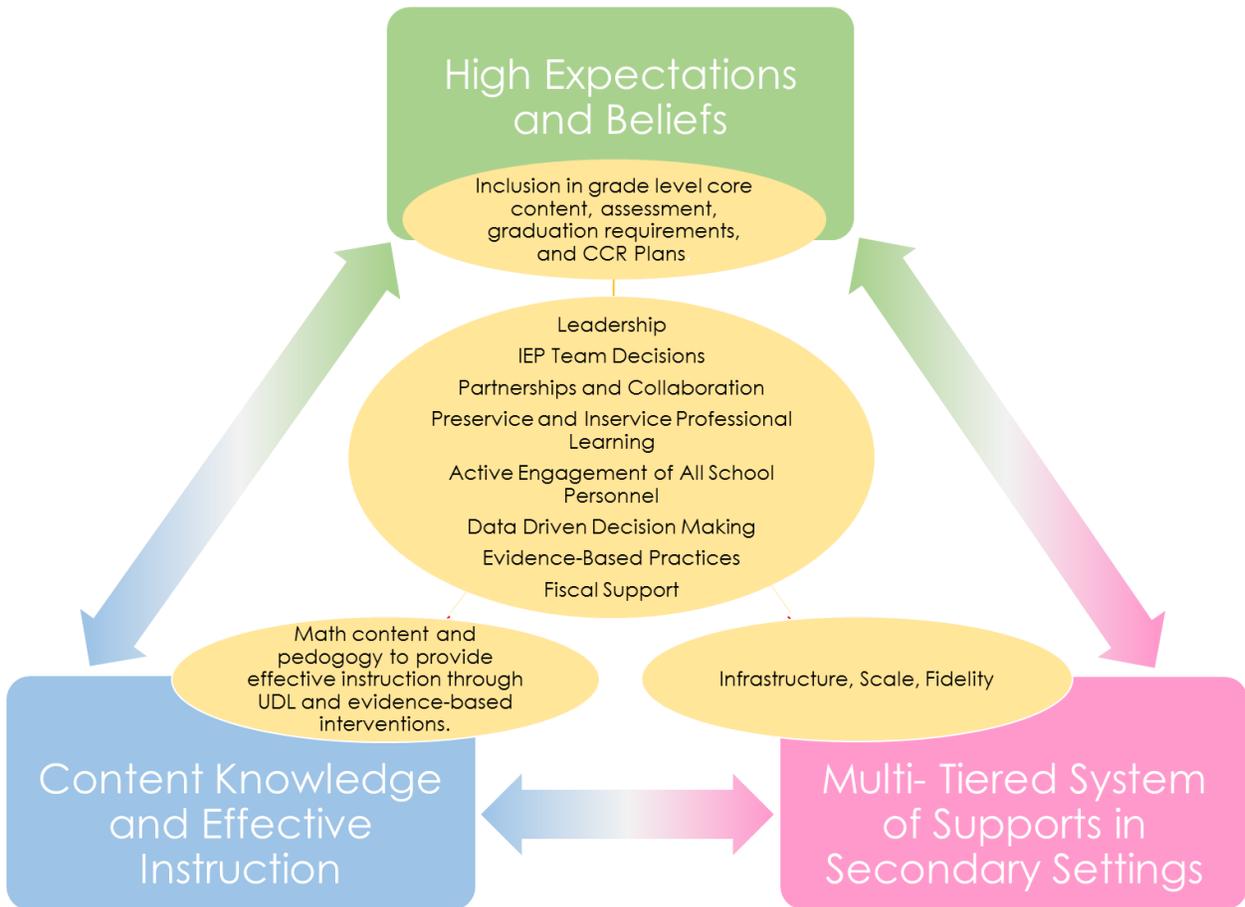
Figure 1: Root Cause Concerns/Broad Coherent Improvement Strategies



Across the three root causes identified by Utah stakeholders, there are common themes which, *when aligned, addressed, and supported through Utah's selected improvement strategies*, will result in correcting the identified root causes and ensure achievement of Utah's SiMR. Those themes include:

- Creating a learning environment that is supportive of leadership, partnerships, and collaboration to meet changing national, state, and local requirements;
- Basing IEP team decisions on individualized student needs with the provision of special education and related services to support achievement in the Utah Core Standards in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE);
- Providing both preservice and inservice professional learning to ensure all Utah teachers possess adequate Utah Core Standards content and pedagogy skills to meet the needs of all students;
- Engaging all school personnel to support educators, students, and families during the transition;
- Grounding educational and instructional decisions in data and use of evidence-based instructional practices; and
- Funding at the federal, state, and local levels to sustain effective practices.

Figure 2: Root Cause Concerns/Broad Coherent Improvement Strategies Including Gaps from Infrastructure and Data Analyses



The impact of the coherent improvement strategies, based upon the root causes and common themes, will result in three vital changes leading to increased student proficiency.

1. Administrators, teachers, parents, and students will see the need to expect students with disabilities to master mathematics content (resulting in IEP team decisions that require and scaffold grade-appropriate Core mathematics instruction);
2. General education and special education teachers will understand mathematics standards and effective instruction will improve; and
3. The state and local educational agencies will increase general education instructional support and interventions in the secondary settings, to scaffold mathematics Core standards as they become more rigorous and abstract.

In addition to the SSIP-specific improvement strategies, Utah has many infrastructure strengths to further support these improvement efforts, especially regarding professional learning, accountability and monitoring, data availability and usage, and a statewide

MTSS. Utah is participating in a variety of state-level initiatives that will be incorporated and leveraged within this SSIP, especially regarding existing improvement efforts included in the Utah Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility Waiver, the Utah Excellence (Equity) Plan, the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center Intensive Technical Assistance, and Governor Herbert's PACE (Prepare young learners, Access for all students, Complete certificates and degrees, Economic success) initiative. These strengths will be used to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices in Utah's SiMR, while areas needing improvement will also be addressed to reduce the impact of the gap.

Initially, nine LEAs across Utah have been selected to participate in the SSIP. Scaling up plans will adjust each year for the next five years to ensure that the SSIP is broad enough, and effective enough, to build the capacity of all Utah LEAs to systematically increase the mathematics proficiency of students with disabilities in grades six through eight.