

Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan

Plan Data and Overview

Monitoring Priority: General Supervision

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

Reported Data

Baseline Data: 2013

FFY	2013	2014
Target ≥		1.50%
Data	1.47%	

Key: Gray – Data Prior to Baseline Yellow – Baseline Blue – Data Update

FFY 2015 - FFY 2018 Targets

FFY	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target ≥	1.50%	2.50%	3.00%	3.50%

Key: Blue – Data Update

Description of Measure

Proficiency rate percent = [(# of children with IEPs enrolled in sixth grade at the selected schools scoring at or above proficient against grade level) divided by the (total # of children with IEPs enrolled in sixth grade at the selected schools who received a valid score on the PPAA and for whom a proficiency level was assigned, and calculated for math)]. The proficiency rate includes both children with IEPs enrolled for a full academic year and those not enrolled for a full academic year.

Targets: Description of Stakeholder Input

Targets were discussed during stakeholder meetings. Initially, stakeholders suggested setting targets identical to the Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs) established in PRDE's approved ESEA Flexibility Plan. The established AMOs are much more general, including the scores on all assessments island-wide from third through eighth grades. The data analysis, discussed below, reflected that the percentage of students reaching proficiency on the assessments for those grades clearly decreased each year, such that the percentage of students attaining proficiency on the third grade assessment was higher than those attaining proficiency on the fourth grade assessment, etc. As demonstrated by the baseline data for the schools at issue (1.47%), using the AMOs for this specific group would be unrealistic and fail to meaningfully consider the actual baseline for this specific population. As such, targets have been set that consider the actual baseline and an ambitious yet realistic goal for which to aim for each year. Additionally, because interventions will have been in place for such a short period before the 2014-2015 assessment, and 2015-2016 will be the first school year in which the interventions will be in place the full year, the decision was to maintain the baseline for the first two years.

Thanks to the collaboration with Academic Affairs, communication with the District Special Assistant of

Yabucoa has been excellent. She has been engaged in the implementation of the SSIP in her District and has served as the liaison between the school directors for the schools that have been selected to participate in the SSIP initiative.

Stakeholders have been meaningfully involved in every phase of the SSIP. Please note that stakeholder input is discussed throughout the SSIP, not solely in this section.

Overview

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Data and Overview

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Data Analysis

A description of how the State identified and analyzed key data, including data from SPP/APR indicators, 618 data collections, and other available data as applicable, to: (1) select the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities, and (2) identify root causes contributing to low performance. The description must include information about how the data were disaggregated by multiple variables (e.g., LEA, region, race/ethnicity, gender, disability category, placement, etc.). As part of its data analysis, the State should also consider compliance data and whether those data present potential barriers to improvement. In addition, if the State identifies any concerns about the quality of the data, the description must include how the State will address these concerns. Finally, if additional data are needed, the description should include the methods and timelines to collect and analyze the additional data.

The Associated Secretariat of Special Education (SAEE by its initials in Spanish) of the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE), with the collaborative support of the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, as part of the Results Driven Accountability efforts presents its State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) with the purpose of improving child-level outcomes for students with disabilities. The SSIP is the new Indicator 17 for the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act (IDEA) State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR).

Baseline Data

FFY	2013
Data	1.47%

FFY 2014-FFY 2018 Targets

FFY	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target	1.5%	1.5%	2.5%	3.0%	3.5%

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Data Analysis

The SAEE selected a group of stakeholders to work with in developing its SSIP, including from the initial stages of data analysis. The stakeholder group is composed of representatives from an array of sectors including: Special Education Service Center (CSEE by its acronym in Spanish) Executive Directors, parents of students with disabilities, Special Assistants/Compliance Officers, ESEA Flexibility Plan Coordinator, and relevant consultants. This group was selected to be able to conduct a comprehensive and effective analysis of the data. Once the group was selected, an orientation was held that included an explanation of the SSIP initiative and the need for the beginning of the process to include important data analysis.

Next we discuss the initial data analysis that led to the selection of the area of focus for improvement for our SSIP.

Identification of the Focus for Improvement

For the identification of focus for improvement the stakeholder group for SSIP met in various sessions. During the first session the stakeholder group narrowed the themes to Early Intervention and Assessment.

Data Analysis for Early Intervention (Indicator 7)

In an initial stakeholder group meeting, the group expressed great interest in focusing the SSIP on impacting Indicator 7, early childhood outcomes, with the purpose of improving the process for completing the Summary of Results of Pre-School Intervention form across the island. The group reviewed Indicator 7 data from Puerto Rico's APRs for FFYs 2008-2012. Tables 1-3, below, include the Indicator 7 data that was reviewed.

Table 1-Analysis by Year for Indicator 7, Outcome A

Table 2-Analysis by Year for Indicator 7, Outcome B

Table 3-Analysis by Year for Indicator 7, Outcome C

As reflected in the data in Tables 1-3 above, PRDE maintained averages of over 85% for the percentage of students who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they exited the program for all three outcomes (A, B, and C). Additionally, for outcomes A and B, PRDE demonstrated significant improvement from FFY 2008 to FFY 2012 in terms of the percent of children who were functioning within age expectations by the time they exited the program. For outcome C, this figure remained relatively steady over time at around 70%.

As previously mentioned, the stakeholder group's initial interest in focusing the SSIP on Indicator 7 was to focus on improving the process for completing the Summary of Results of Pre-School Intervention from across the island—not because the above reviewed data indicated a significant need for intervention on improving results.

During a technical assistance visit by OSEP to PRDE SAEE in May 2014, OSEP raised a concern of such a focus being more process-oriented and not sufficiently addressing child-outcomes to meet the purposes of the SSIP. As a result, a new meeting was held with the stakeholder group to re-consider the focus topic for the SSIP.

In that meeting, the group was in agreement on focusing on Indicator 3C, performance of students with

disabilities on statewide academic assessments, as it has perhaps the greatest correlation to measuring academic achievement of our students. This indicator is also related to the Puerto Rico Department of Education’s ESEA Flexibility Plan.

Data Analysis for Assessment (Indicator 3 proficiency)

The first step was to evaluate the historical data reported in Puerto Rico from FFY 2008 through FFY 2012. During this analysis, stakeholders reviewed the performance of students with disabilities on Puerto Rico’s annual assessments in both Math and Spanish to identify the area of greatest need. This analysis was extensive and included reviews of student performance on both the regular and alternate assessment, performance by grade level, and performance by geographical region. Next we provide a series of tables of data that was reviewed, along with descriptions of the data analysis and observations.

Table 4-Analysis by Year of the Proficiency Rates of Students with Disabilities on the Annual Assessments (Indicator 3C)

Examination	FFY 2008	FFY 2009	FFY 2010	FFY 2011	FFY 2012
Spanish Proficiency	24.27%	26.81%	29.62%	25.31%	31.73%
Math Proficiency	19.30%	22.20%	23.23%	30.98%	24.84%

The data in Table 4 reflects PRDE’s data under APR Indicator 3C from FFY 2008 through FFY 2012. The proficiency rate reflects the percentage of students with IEPs who received a valid score and for whom a proficiency level was assigned who scored at or above proficient (i.e., receiving a score of ‘proficient’ or ‘advanced’). This proficiency rate includes students who took both the regular and alternate assessments and is calculated separately for reading (Spanish) and math.

This data reflects that in nearly all years a lower percentage of students with disabilities attained proficiency on the Math examination than on the Spanish examination. The one exception was FFY 2011. Aside from FFY 2011, the proficiency rate for students with disabilities in Math for FFY 2008-FFY 2012 never reached 25%. In light of this data, and the agency-wide concern with the mathematics proficiency rate for all students, the stakeholder group decided to focus on student performance on the mathematics assessment.

Next, stakeholders analyzed and compared proficiency rates in Mathematics for students taking the regular assessment and the alternate assessment.

Table 5-Analysis by Year of Proficiency Rates of Students with Disabilities on the Alternate and Regular Assessments in Mathematics

Year	Alternate Assessment		Regular Assessment			
	# of children with IEPs in AA against AAS	# of children with IEPs in grades assessed who are proficient or above as measured by the AA against AAS	%	# of children with IEPs in RA		%
				W/Accom.	W/ No Accom.	

The data in Table 5 reflects a consistent pattern in which a lower percentage of students attained proficiency on the regular assessment than on the alternate assessment. FFY 2008 is the one exception, but it is important to note that the FFY 2008

FFY 2008	2057	396	19%	42820	12107	8451	2376	20%
FFY 2009	2191	554	25%	45685	10888	10501	2217	22%
FFY 2010	2223	673	30%	48853	8590	11529	1827	23%
FFY 2011	2266	649	29%	47537	7761	12115	1969	25%
FFY 2012	2094	711	34%	51345	7805	12684	1975	25%

proficiency rate was the lowest of all years reviewed for students taking both assessments. Additionally, the

difference in the proficiency rates that year was only 1% (proficiency rates of 19% vs. 20%). The data for both assessments demonstrates improvement in proficiency rates from FFY 2008 to FFY 2012 but not at the rate PRDE SAE would like to see improvement.

In light of this data analysis, as well as the facts that the far majority of students with disabilities take the regular assessment and the concurrent agency wide initiatives, especially those related to PRDE’s ESEA Flexibility Plan (see infrastructure analysis discussion), the decision was made to focus the SSIP on student performance (proficiency rates) in mathematics on the regular assessment.

Having analyzed the above discussed APR data related to Indicator 3C, the group turned to analyzing data from the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR). The group had looked at CSPR data previously, but having narrowed the focus to the proficiency of rates of students with disabilities in mathematics against grade level standards, the group re-visited the data to take a look at gaps in the proficiency rate between students with disabilities versus all students, by grade level.

Table 6-Comparison of Proficiency Rates on the Mathematics Examination of All Students vs. Students with Disabilities, by Grade Level (2012-2013)

MATHEMATICS	Proficiency Rate (Percent of Students Scoring at ‘Proficient’ or ‘Advanced’)			
	All Students	%	Students with Disabilities	%
Third (3rd) Grade	21700	66.51%	5695	59.94%
Fourth (4th) Grade	17256	53.26%	4199	44.07%
Fifth (5th) Grade	13515	40.68%	2936	31.44%
Sixth (6th) Grade	5791	16.52%	1106	11.85%
Seventh (7th) Grade	3367	8.84%	641	6.43%
Eighth (8th) Grade	3712	10.29%	566	6.57%
High School	2749	9.45%	232	4.65%

Analyzing the Mathematics exam results it was determined that, specifically, sixth grade demonstrated very low level of performance and would be the focus for PRDE’s SSIP. The decision to focus on sixth grade included more factors than simply the achievement gaps between students with disabilities and all students. While the gaps may not be the largest in sixth grade, the overall proficiency rates for students with disabilities was the lowest of all elementary school grade levels. Stakeholders discussed a desire to focus improvement activities in the later elementary grades, specifically grades four through six, with hopes of impacting sixth grade mathematics proficiency rate results. In improving sixth grade mathematics proficiency rate results, students should be better positioned for exiting elementary school.

In addition to having reviewed proficiency rates data by assessment subject, assessment type, and assessed grade level, the SAE reviewed more detailed raw data that allowed stakeholders to analyze proficiency rate data at the regional and district levels. PRDE obtained this more detailed data upon request from the PRDE Planning Unit. The Planning Unit provided the database of student performance results on Puerto Rico’s regular annual academic assessment examinations (i.e., against grade level standards), the *Pruebas Puertorriquenas de Aprovechamiento Academico* (PPAA) for school years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014.

The data analyzed for both years was broken down by grade and provided at the region, district and school levels. The assessment results data details student performance level in each exam as falling within one of four categories: Pre-Basic, Basic, Proficient, Advanced. As a result of this analysis, it was determined that

the focus of this initiative should be focused on the geographical area in which students presented the lowest level of academic achievement.

Table 7-Comparison of Proficiency Rates of Students with Disabilities on the Mathematics PPAA by Region

Region	2013	2014	Comparison
	% P/A	% P/A	
Arecibo	26.23%	25.94%	-0.30%
Bayamón	22.35%	22.98%	0.63%
Caguas	29.83%	31.79%	1.97%
Humacao	19.48%	21.32%	1.83%
Mayagüez	26.00%	27.56%	1.56%
Ponce	25.62%	27.49%	1.87%
San Juan	20.88%	22.43%	1.55%
Grand Total	24.50%	25.78%	1.29%

Table 7 reflects the proficiency rates (i.e., percentage scoring at ‘proficient’ or ‘advanced’) of students with disabilities on the Mathematics PPAA administered in April 2013 (2012-2013) and April 2014 (2013-2014). Additionally, the table includes the raw change in percentage in each region’s proficiency rate from the April 2013 to the April 2014 PPAA administrations.

The data reflects that the lowest proficiency rates for both years was Humacao Region. This is despite the Humacao Region having one of the larger improvements in proficiency rate data from the 2013 administration to the 2014 administration. As a result of this analysis, the decision was made to focus initial SSIP efforts in the Humacao Region.

Having selected to focus on the Humacao Region, additional factors upon proficiency rates, such a gender and disability determination, were reviewed.

Table 8-Comparison by Gender of the Performance of Students with Disabilities on the Mathematics PPAA within the Humacao Region (All Grade Levels)

Performance Level	Female		Male	
	2013	2014	2013	2014
Pre-Basic/ Basic	81%	79%	80%	79%
Proficient/Advanced	19%	21%	20%	21%

The Table 8 data reflects that there was nearly no difference based on gender in the proficiency rates of students with disabilities on the Mathematics PPAA in the Humacao Region. In fact, the proficiency rates by gender for the 2014 administration were identical. The raw difference in proficiency rates for the 2013 administration was only 1%.

The regional proficiency rate data was also broken down by disability and reviewed, but it was determined to not focus the SSIP on any specific disability groups. While there was some variation in proficiency rate by disability, stakeholders determined the SSIP effort should aim to impact all students with disabilities in the general classroom setting, regardless of disability. Due to the small size of some of the disability groups in this analysis, it was determined that the data table would not be included in the SSIP some group sizes were not statistically significant and might be seen as disclosing personal information. Again, the stakeholders were clear with the desire to provide the interventions to all students with disabilities in the general classroom setting regardless of type of disability.

Next, the data was reviewed at the district level within the Humacao Region. The next table reflects the mathematics proficiency rates for students with disabilities taking the PPAA, by district, within the Humacao

Region.

Table 9-Comparison of Proficiency Rates of Students with Disabilities on the Mathematics PPAA by District within the Humacao Region (All Grade Levels)

Humacao Region Districts	2013	2014	Comparison
	% P/A	% P/A	
Canovanas	18.73%	20.41%	1.68%
Fajardo	22.71%	20.94%	-1.77%
Las Piedras	22.73%	25.68%	2.95%
Yabucoa	14.43%	16.82%	2.39%
Humacao Region	19.48%	21.32%	1.83%

Analyzing the Mathematics exam results for this region by district, it was determined that Yabucoa District demonstrated the lowest percentage of students with disabilities attaining proficiency on the mathematics PPAA and would be the initial focus for PRDE’s SSIP. Although the Yabucoa District had the second highest raw percentage improvements in this data from 2013 to 2014, it had a significantly lower percentage of students with disabilities attaining proficiency than the other districts.

Table 10-Comparison by Grade of Performance of Students with Disabilities within the Yabucoa District on the Mathematics PPAA

Grade Level	% Pre-Basic	% Basic	% Proficient	% Advanced
Third (3rd Grade)	13.2%	41.4%	21.5%	23.8%
Fourth (4th) Grade	22.0%	49.1%	14.5%	14.4%
Fifth (5th) Grade	32.5%	51.6%	12.6%	3.3%
Sixth (6th) Grade	51.4%	45.3%	2.7%	0.7%
Seventh (7th) Grade	42.0%	56.2%	1.1%	0.7%
Eighth (8th) Grade	50.3%	48.0%	0.6%	1.1%
Eleventh (11th Grade)	49.3%	50.3%	0.4%	0.0%
Grand Total	35.7%	48.7%	8.4%	7.2%

As a result of the data analysis conducted, it was recommended that the SSIP would begin with a focus on impacting the proficiency rate of sixth grade students with disabilities taking the PPAA in mathematics within the Yabucoa district. For reasons discussed further within this SSIP, including the infrastructure analysis, the determination was later made to further focus the SSIP on those students attending schools within the Yabucoa district designated as ‘focus schools’ through PRDE’s ESEA Flexibility Plan.

Taking into consideration feedback and suggestions raised by OSEP during their visit to PRDE, it was determined that intervention efforts to impact results on the sixth grade mathematics examination would begin with students at an earlier elementary level (beginning in 4th grade). The idea is that the longer the students are impacted by the intervention before taking the exam, the greater the results that may be expected. This will allow multiple years of intervention build up through the multiple years of carrying out the SSIP.

For the start of Phase II of the SSIP, the stakeholder group was expanded to include representation in additional areas related to the selected topic. The additional resources incorporated into the stakeholder group were: Academic Superintendent of the Yabucoa School District (who is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Flexibility Plan in the District of Yabucoa), PRDE Director of the Mathematics Program, a School Director, and a Special Education Teacher. The school director and special education teacher were

selected from outside of the Yabucoa district, with the purpose of providing classroom and school director level perspectives without the influence of being individuals who would be directly involved with the initial SSIP efforts. The selected school director came from a school designated a school of excellence under the ESEA Flexibility Plan. The special education teacher was selected in part due to her being a specialist with mathematics instruction and assessment.

The new members received an orientation regarding the SSIP at the next meeting. During that meeting, the stakeholders discussed the elementary schools in the district and which schools might be included in implementation of the SSIP. PRDE SAEЕ determined that all elementary schools in the Yabucoa School District that were designated as 'Focus Schools' in accordance with PRDE's ESEA flexibility plan would be included. The nine schools are listed below, along with the municipality in which each is located in parenthesis:

- Calzada (Maunabo)
- Marín Abajo (Patillas)
- Eugenio María de Hostos (San Lorenzo)
- Luis Muñoz Rivera (San Lorenzo)
- Gerardo Selles Sola (San Lorenzo)
- Quemados (San Lorenzo)
- Quebrada Honda/SU Isidro Vicens (San Lorenzo)
- Dra. María T. Delgado de Marcano (San Lorenzo)
- Jorge Rosario del Valle (San Lorenzo)

With the purpose of measuring academic progress of students in these schools throughout the school year, it was determined that additional data could be requested and analyzed. As such, the SAEЕ will be requesting from the Yabucoa District data results from the district's analysis of evaluations of student academic progress. This district level analysis is conducted by subgroup and is conducted based on ten week periods (following the first 10, 20, 30, and 40 weeks of the school year). This will provide academic data aside from the annual assessment which can be reviewed to consider the impact of SSIP interventions throughout the year. Additionally, on a quarterly basis, the SAEЕ will request from the Undersecretary for Academic Affairs the results of desk monitoring conducted at the focus school to validate the effectiveness of Flexibility Plan interventions being carried out in the schools.

Root causes contributing to low performance

As part of the work plan, initial visits to three of the selected schools were held with the goal of providing the schools an orientation regarding the SSIP. Moreover, conversations were held with each of the school directors to identify some of the possible causes for the low achievement levels. Among the possible general causes identified were:

- Lack of a Special Education Facilitator in the municipalities and the district.
- Need for professional development for general education teachers with regard to serving students with disabilities.
- Need to strengthen instructional planning of special education teachers.
- Lack of communication between the teacher from the general education classroom and the special education teacher.
- Lack of schools utilizing data based strategies in making educational decisions.

Throughout this data analysis process, stakeholders analyzed the data closely with an eye for identifying data quality concerns. However, no data quality concerns were identified. Additionally, compliance data was considered, and no potential barriers to improvement were considered as a result of this analysis. For example, assessment participation rates and initial evaluation data were considered, but these raised no concerns as to the impact on the validity of the proficiency rate data.

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Analysis of State Infrastructure to Support Improvement and Build Capacity

A description of how the State analyzed the capacity of its current infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity in LEAs to implement, scale up, and sustain the use of evidence-based practices to improve results for children with disabilities. State systems that make up its infrastructure include, at a minimum: governance, fiscal, quality standards, professional development, data, technical assistance, and accountability/monitoring. The description must include current strengths of the systems, the extent the systems are coordinated, and areas for improvement of functioning within and across the systems. The State must also identify current State-level improvement plans and initiatives, including special and general education improvement plans and initiatives, and describe the extent that these initiatives are aligned, and how they are, or could be, integrated with, the SSIP. Finally, the State should identify representatives (e.g., offices, agencies, positions, individuals, and other stakeholders) that were involved in developing Phase I of the SSIP and that will be involved in developing and implementing Phase II of the SSIP.

The Puerto Rico Department of Education, as part of this ESEA Flexibility Plan application process, conducted an analysis of existing infrastructure with the goal of assuring an accurate accounting of areas and resources that would allow it to comply with the terms of its ESEA Flexibility Plan. It is important to note that as a part of the work undertaken with the stakeholder group during Phase I of the SSIP, the stakeholders reviewed the infrastructure analysis previously conducted by the PRDE through the ESEA Flexibility efforts. The stakeholders validated that this recently conducted infrastructure analysis was very helpful and responsive to the interest of development of the SSIP. Herein, we provide a description of PRDE infrastructure and explain how this infrastructure analysis responds to not only the needs of the ESEA Flexibility Plan but also to the SSIP initiative.

PRDE operates a unitary system with a central level lead by the Puerto Rico Secretary of Education and two principal subsecretaries: one focused on academic affairs, and the second focused on administrative affairs. The central level office leadership also includes a Special Education Secretary who oversees the SAE and an Auxiliary Secretary for Planning and Educational Development. The Auxiliary Secretary for Planning is responsible for collection of PRDE data, the analysis and validation of data, and sharing the data with other PRDE offices. The Special Education Secretary is in charge of all matters related to the administration of the special education program, including, technical assistance, transition, transportation, equitable services, provision of services to students with disabilities, and compliance with requirements related to special education. It is important to note that over 80% of students with disabilities within the PRDE system receive their education in the general curriculum, in a general education classroom setting. The PRDE Sub-Secretary for Academic Affairs has appointed a liaison to work directly with and in close coordination with the SAE.

PRDE divides the island geographically into seven educational regions and 28 school districts (four districts per educational region). The educational regions are functional units of the PRDE, under the supervision/leadership of a Regional Director. The regions are charged with administrative responsibilities for the purpose of benefiting school districts and schools falling within their geographical boundaries. Regional Directors are responsible for a variety of activities such as organizing training programs for school administrative personnel; coordinating transportation services; organizing academic, recreational, and cultural activities for schools; and managing professional services for students with disabilities. Regions are also responsible for providing support to address administrative issues in different schools and providing recommendations for addressing such problems. In addition, regions support schools on discipline norms; maintain teacher certification records; provide orientation to school directors on services and systems related to school security as well as any other administrative function delegated by the Secretary of Education.

The districts are branches of PRDE that operate under the direction of a district level special assistant who

supervises all academic activities of the schools within the geographical boundaries of the given region. As part of the district structure, the district level staffing includes academic facilitators for core academic subjects (Spanish, Mathematics, English, etc.) who function as instructional leaders for teachers, serve as coaches, and facilitate professional development regarding curriculum and instructional strategies. These facilitators also provide support in the design of programs adjusted to address the needs of specific students in the school and they collaborate with School Directors in the development of programs for a variety of student subgroups such as the gifted, low performing students, students at-risk of dropping out of school, students enrolled in special education, and students with limited Spanish proficiency. The districts are also responsible for the coordination of professional development activities for teachers and other school support personnel.

At the school level, each school has a School Director (the equivalent of a school principal) who is in charge of the administrative responsibilities and functions as a teaching leader for all teachers within the school. It is important to note that each school director, in conjunction with their school's PCEA Working Committee, will, among other things, establish the activities and interventions that the school will be developing during the school year in order to increase/improve the academic achievement of its students. This plan is known as the Authentic Comprehensive School Plan (PCEA by its acronym in Spanish). The PCEA permits each school to:

- Document achievements of students, personnel, and other resources available for the year, utilizing the available data provided by the PRDE planning unit.
- Document the analysis of student achievement tendencies, identify root causes of low academic achievement, and propose strategies for improving student academic achievement.
- Summarize school professional development needs and pin down additional professional development needs to meet the needs of specific student subgroups within the school.
- Plan activities that reflect the interests and needs of parents, plan initiatives to involve parents in educational processes of the school and promote strong and effective relationships between families and the school.
- Plan for effective use of school budget during the current school year.

PRDE uses a standard platform for PCEAs, which assists and guides schools with the development of their PCEAs. This and other technological tools makes it possible to standardize analysis of needs and the planning process for interventions, retrieval of school level data, dissemination of data to the schools, and use of data for decision making at the school, district, and central levels.

At the PRDE SAEE central level, SAEE is made up of Technical Assistance and Academic Support Unit which consists of seven (7) Special Education Academic Facilitators. This unit also responds to the needs of and provides assistance to the eleven (11) Special Education Service Centers (CSEEs by its acronym in Spanish). Generally speaking, this unit has the following responsibilities:

- Establish SAEE Public Policy in the Academic Area
- Work with the following topics: serving deaf, blind, and deaf-blind students; placement alternatives; early childhood transition; post-secondary transition; autism; and, adaptive physical education.
- Coordinate, via the district-level Special Education Academic Facilitators, activities related to academic support and Technical assistance to schools.
- Prepare and execute a Professional Development Plan for district, municipal, and CSEE level Special Education Academic Facilitators.
- Assure that interventions that should be carried out in the schools in compliance with the ESEA Flexibility Plan are realized.
- Through the CSEEs, streamline and provide special Education services from child find/identification through placement of students.

Previously, the facilitators from the Technical Assistance Unit were assigned to substantive specialty areas (e.g., serving deaf-blind students, transition). However, as part of the analysis carried out by the Special Education Secretary in searching for improved academic support to the regions, districts, CSEEs, and schools,

it was determined to assign each facilitator from this unit by Educational Region rather than substantive specialty area. Through this change in approach, the SAEE assured the maintenance of constant and consistent communication with the various administrative levels that make up the PRDE. Moreover, this assures the Technical assistance needs of both districts and schools are met.

As for data systems, the SAEE maintains and can access information regarding students with disabilities from two database/student Information systems which are able to communicate with each other: (i) *Mi Portal Especial* ('My Special Portal' or 'MiPE') (the special Education specific student information system) and (ii) the *Sistema de Información Estudiantil* (the 'Student Information System' or 'SIE' by its acronym in Spanish). Both systems identify students using the same student identification number. This is an improvement compared to the prior special education specific student information system which did not allow for the same level of integration between the two systems.

The following diagram lays out the PRDE infrastructure/organizational structure relevant to implementation of the ESEA Flexibility Plan and the SSIP. It reflects the relationship between the different agency components.

Figure 1-Organizational Chart

Combining Resources and Efforts to Achieve Similar Goals: A Strength of the Puerto Rico SSIP is its Implementation Alongside and Integration with PRDE's ESEA Flexibility Plan Efforts

One of the criteria taken into consideration for the selection of Indicator 3 as the focus for the SSIP is the fact that this is also a focus of PRDE's ESEA Flexibility Plan, which has an end goal of improving academic achievement for students, with a goal of having both initiatives aligned and working together. The shared connection in focus and commitment of resources and initiatives is an added strength for the SSIP.

As part of Principle II of the ESEA Flexibility Plan, Puerto Rico proposed a differentiated model of accountability. This new system allows for enhanced transparency, presents new and ambitious Annual Measureable Objectives (AMOs), and classifies schools into four categories: priority, focus, excellence, and transition (remaining Title I schools not otherwise classified). As established through the Flexibility Plan, the initiative provides external service providers to the lowest performing schools (which are designated as 'priority schools') and the schools with the lowest graduation rates or largest educational gaps (designated as 'focus schools'). This permits PRDE to attend to the specific needs of these schools utilizing comprehensive research based interventions.

As established in PRDE's ESEA Flexibility plan, during the 2013-2014 school year, each school district is to focus its efforts in providing technical assistance to support teachers with their professional development, maintaining rigor in education based in high standards and expectations. As previously mentioned, the district-level academic facilitators have a key responsibility of monitoring the planning and implementation of school interventions. As such, they are responsible for assuring that schools are attending adequately to these needs with interventions designed to improve the teaching-learning process for all. As part of the Flexibility Plan, teachers serving students with disabilities are provided technical assistance and supervision via the Special Education Academic Facilitators. This personnel is available for all schools and can provide coaching activities within the school as a form of on-site professional development. The hope is that such technical assistance will improve professional capacity of teachers to provide differentiated instruction and make the curriculum more accessible to students with disabilities.

Each school district is to prepare technical assistance calendars to attend to teachers and directors in their efforts to obtain an increase in the academic achievement of our students. The PRDE hopes to evidence a significant growth in academic achievement and to identify valid strategies to maintain academic progress for the 2015-2016 school year.

As part of PRDE's efforts to strengthen infrastructure with the goal of fully implementing the Flexibility Plan, external resources are assigned to provide services to each school classified as a priority or focus school.

These resources, external service providers, are referred to as the *Red de Apoyo Diferenciado* (Differentiated Support Network, 'RAD' by its acronym in Spanish). The RADs offer administrative and academic support individualized to address the specific areas of need for each school. The RADs also help schools in planning and implementation of the interventions designed to result in school transformation. Each school community, in cooperation with its assigned external service provider (i.e., its RAD), works to achieve the goals established in the school's intervention plan (which is a component of the school's PCEA). This intervention plan is to contain and address the school's needs and the specific reasons for why they school has been identified as priority or focus.

One of the services the RADs provide is professional development (via workshops, coaching, and other means) throughout the school year and push for the creation of a culture of data based decision making. Moreover, the RADs have the responsibility to provide the necessary support for schools to extended learning time and strengthen community integration. The services provided by the RADs are provided consistent with the strategies established by the School Director in the school's PCEA. Nonetheless, RAD services and resources are provided under a separate budget wholly apart from the school's standard operating budget. For implementing the RAD service efforts, PRDE has assigned a budget of approximately \$81 million dollars island-wide for contracting the external service providers.

With the purpose of assuring compliance [compliance with what? Flex Plan?], PRDE has developed internal systems for monitoring focus schools, through the districts, with the goal of assuring the schools are receiving the necessary support to comply with student needs and attend to the root causes of student academic performance issues. As established through the Flexibility Plan, these monitoring activities are to be held at least three times per year and may include desk monitoring or school visits. As part of the monitoring visits, focus are to provide quarterly evidence of implementation of their action plan. This evidence is collected through the desk monitoring process to be carried out by the Subsecretary for Academic Affairs. It's important to note that the information about results of this monitoring activity will be shared with the SAEE to guide decision making y develop new strategies or interventions, as necessary.

To demonstrate appropriate implementation and provide follow-up to the planned interventions with priority and focus schools, PRDE will use an external evaluator. The external evaluator will be responsible for monitoring the processes associated with planning, implementation, and intervention results with the priority and focus schools. Moreover, the external evaluator will carry out follow-up activities directly to the schools via on-site visits at least once per year.

PRDE considers that its strategies with focus schools will result in all students meeting rigorous standards and that all schools will attend to student needs, especially subgroups with lower demonstrated levels of achievement such as students with disabilities and limited Spanish proficient students. Because of the link between the ESEA Flexibility Plan and the interventions making up the SSIP, the involved costs for implementing the interventions have already been contemplated and reserved for these specific purposes. One resource for the SSIP not contemplated by the ESEA Flexibility Plan involves the more intensive involvement from the SAEE central level holding visits to the selected schools, assisting more directly in the needs assessment process and the professional development offerings.

One limitation has been the amount of subject/material based academic facilitators and special education academic facilitator positions that were vacant. Academic Facilitators are area or subject experts who serve as liaisons between the administrative levels to support services within their area of expertise in the schools. At the district-level, there are Academic Facilitators dedicated to subject-matter areas such as Mathematics as well as Academic Facilitators with expertise in Special Education. Additionally, there are Special Education Academic Facilitators assigned to the municipality level. With the goal of providing the best academic support to the schools, the SAEE revised the job responsibilities of the Special Education Facilitators at the District and Municipality levels to clarify their distinct roles and responsibilities. For special education, the municipality facilitators focus on gathering data and documentation evidencing compliance with legal requirements and reporting while the district level facilitators are dedicated to

providing technical assistance on more academic and results oriented matters, including integrating themselves with the district work plan.

At the outset of Phase I of the SSIP, the majority of Special Education Academic Facilitator positions within the Humacao Region were vacant—at both the district and municipality levels. Specific to the Yabucoa District, the district had been without any assigned Special Education Academic Facilitators for an extended period of time. As a result, the region struggled with the its limited number of Special Education Facilitators focusing in large part on attending to administrative and reporting tasks, not allowing sufficient time for providing the academic support and technical assistance required by the schools.

Such vacant positions were a concern island-wide, but particularly within the Humacao Region. Following a significant effort by PRDE and SAEE, pushed in part by the Flexibility and SSIP efforts, there has been success in filling the majority of Special Education Academic Facilitator positions that were empty island-wide. In the case of special education facilitator positions, the SAEE has successfully filled more than 75% of the positions that were vacant. Within Humacao Region, and as part of ensuring the necessary infrastructure to implement the SSIP, the SAEE filled 100% of the Special Education Academic Facilitator positions. Through this effort, there was success in strengthening the academic component that is providing technical assistance directly to the schools as well as at the district and SAEE levels.

In terms of Mathematics at the outset of Phase I, the district only had one Mathematics Facilitator for providing technical assistance to the district. An analysis conducted as a part of the ESEA Flexibility Plan infrastructure analysis, it was determined that the Humacao Region required three mathematics facilitators. Since that time, all three mathematics facilitator positions were created and have been filled. These efforts to ensure the necessary infrastructure in terms of Special Education and Mathematics Facilitators with the Humacao Region is key to successful implementation of PRDE's SSIP.

Considering the infrastructure analysis as part of SSIP Phase I, it was determined that as part of Phase II of the SSIP, PRDE would include as part of the stakeholder group, representation of the different levels of the DEPR. The additional resources incorporated into the stakeholder group, which has been mentioned previously in the SSIP, included the Academic Superintendent of the Yabucoa School District (whose main responsibility is overseeing the implementation of the Flexibility Plan in the District of Yabucoa), the Director of the Mathematics Program (which is part of the Undersecretary of Academic Affairs), a School Director, and a Special Education Teacher. In addition, as part of the stakeholder group, the SAEE joined forces with the Yabucoa School District with the goal of carrying out coordinated work to address both Flexibility and the SSIP initiatives. Initially, orientations were held to present the SSIP and evaluate how special education would be able to strengthen support provided by the RAD. Working sessions were coordinated to analyze the planned interventions in the selected schools, along with employees of the school district and the RADs.

Below we provide a graphic image of the representatives who were involved in the development of Phase I and will be involved in the development and implementation of Phase II of the SSIP:

Figure 2-Representatives who are involve in the development of SSIP

In the *Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies* section, more detail is provided regarding the strategies to be implemented.

-

Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan

Data and Overview

Monitoring Priority: General Supervision

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

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

A statement of the result(s) the State intends to achieve through the implementation of the SSIP. The State-identified result(s) must be aligned to an SPP/APR indicator or a component of an SPP/APR indicator. The State-identified result(s) must be clearly based on the Data and State Infrastructure Analyses and must be a child-level outcome in contrast to a process outcome. The State may select a single result (e.g., increasing the graduation rate for children with disabilities) or a cluster of related results (e.g., increasing the graduation rate and decreasing the dropout rate for children with disabilities).

Statement

Statement

PRDE's State-Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) is aligned to APR Indicator 3C and focuses on improving the performance of students with disabilities on the PPAA. Specifically, the SIMR shall be an increase in the percentage % of special education students from the 6th grade who score proficient or advanced on the regular assessment for math from the selected schools in the Yabucoa School District.

As stated at the outset of this SSIP, the following tables reflect the SIMR baseline data (FFY 2013) and SIMR targets for FFY 2014-2018:

Baseline Data

FFY	2013
Data	1.47%

FFY 2014-FFY 2018 Targets

FFY	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target	1.5%	1.5%	2.5%	3.0%	3.5%

Description

Description

Through the SSIP, PRDE hopes to improve performance of students with disabilities on the PPAA specifically within the following parameters:

- Students in sixth grade;
- Who attend focus schools in the Yabucoa School District;
- In the subject of Mathematics.

PRDE hopes that the interventions of the SSIP will result in increases in percentage of students who attain 'proficient' or above each year. As discussed throughout the SSIP, and in large part in the data analysis section, PRDE engaged in a systemic process with extensive stakeholder involvement in order to select the SIMR.

As discussed with the stakeholder group, PRDE has established measurable and rigorous targets for each successive year of the SSIP (FFYs 2014 through 2018) which require PRDE to more than double the percentage of special education student who score proficient or advanced on the regular assessment for math from the selected schools in the Yabucoa School District.

PRDE notes that while this SIMR focuses on improving a result for a subset of the SEA population of students with disabilities, implementing this SSIP will have an impact on the Statewide results. First, the targets aim for an increase in a subset of the overall measurement for Ind. 3C. Even a small increase here will increase the overall results for 3C. More importantly, while the SIMR focuses on grade 6 assessment, the interventions will be implemented in grades four (4) through six (6), and as such, we expect to see increases in the fourth and fifth grade assessments as well, which will also increase the results in Ind. 3C. These interventions for grades 4 through 6 at the selected schools began in January 2015. The first class of 6th grade students who have received the interventions will be taking the assessment this spring will have had the interventions for only a couple months before taking the exam. The second group, which will take the assessment in spring 2016, will have had the interventions for an entire school year. The third group, testing in spring 2017, will have had two full years of interventions (their entire 5th and 6th grade years) while the fourth and future groups will have had three full years with the interventions (their entire 4th, 5th, and 6th grade years). The idea is that the longer the students have consistently had these interventions, the better the chances of success they will have in attaining proficiency on the 6th grade mathematics assessment. Moreover, we expect the impacts of the interventions to continue beyond sixth grade leading to improved results in assessments in later grades as well. As such, improving results on this SIMR by implementing this SSIP will improve results on Inc. 3C overall on a Statewide basis.

Additionally, PRDE hopes to expand implementation of these interventions from the 9 focus schools in the Yabucoa district to all focus schools island-wide. Currently, there are 128 elementary level focus schools throughout PRDE. The following table reflects the percentage of sixth (6th) grade students with disabilities who took the Mathematics PPAA in April 2014 that attended focus schools.

Table 11-Percentage of 6th Grade Students with Disabilities taking the Mathematics PPAA who Attend Focus Schools

Sixth Grade Students with Disabilities Who Took the Mathematics PPAA in April 2014	
A. Number Attending Focus Schools	1323
B. Number Attending All Schools	8760
<i>Percentage Attending Focus Schools (A divided by B)</i>	15.1%

As reflected above, 15.1% of all 6th grade students with disabilities who took the mathematics PPAA in April 2014 attended focus schools. Withstanding significant changes in school populations or focus school designations, PRDE SAEE anticipates this percentage to maintain relatively steady in coming years. As such, upon PRDE’s planned expansion of the interventions to all focus schools, PRDE will directly be impacting 15.1% of this population. As discussed in prior sections, focus schools generally reflect lower achieving populations. Targeting the SSIP effort in these schools has the potential to have a significant impact on a State-wide basis.

Following the second semester of 2014-2015, the PRDE SAEE will analyze data to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions in the District of Yabucoa. This will be evaluated using the database of 2015 assessment results, as well as analysis of periodic academic evaluations and student progress reports that are issued at the 10 week, 20 week, 30 week, and 40 week points throughout the school year. Through this effort, necessary adjustments can be made in advance of expanding the interventions island-wide.

During the first semester of the 2015-2016 school year, PRDE SAEE hopes to expand the SSIP interventions to

all 128 elementary-level focus schools. This will be done with the support of staff from the central level through the district level, who will ensure the continuity of work and intervention implementation in each school. This was a decision discussed with and recommended by stakeholders.

The SIMR is clearly based on PRDE's data and State infrastructure analyses. Figure Three lists the components at the central and school district levels that will be supporting this initiative.

Figure 3- PRDE Resources Involved in Implementing the SSIP Initiative

The central level component, along with the stakeholder group, will work on the development and logistics of the required interventions to attend to the needs of each school. In coordination with district level personnel, PRDE assures it will offer, to the teachers of the selected schools, professional development on the identified topics. This will be accompanied by follow-up from the school district with the support of the Special Education Academic Facilitator who will serve as a liaison with the Educational Region. During this follow-up, work sessions will be held with teachers to evaluate the application of strategies discussed in offered professional development workshops.

Additionally, support will be provided with internal resources from the agency, specifically the support of the Differentiated Support Networks (RADs by the acronym in Spanish) at focus schools (please refer to the extensive discussion of the RADs in the Infrastructure Analysis section. As previously discussed, the RADs were established through PRDE's ESEA Flexibility Plan. In light of these resources and our infrastructure analysis, PRDE SAE, in order to avoid duplicity of effort and maximize results of the Flexibility Plan efforts, the SSIP interventions will be integrated with the RAD support efforts. The RADs are providing special attention to activities related to serving students with disabilities in grades 4 through 6 in the identified schools. Moreover, the RAD has among its responsibilities, the creation of workshops aimed at attending to previously identified themes for each subject area. As part of the special education themes to be addressed in these schools is identifying needs related to the SSIP.

Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement

Plan

Data and Overview

Monitoring Priority: General Supervision

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

Selection of Coherent Improvement Strategies

An explanation of how the improvement strategies were selected, and why they are sound, logical and aligned, and will lead to a measurable improvement in the State-identified result(s). The improvement strategies should include the strategies, identified through the Data and State Infrastructure Analyses, that are needed to improve the State infrastructure and to support LEA implementation of evidence-based practices to improve the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities. The State must describe how implementation of the improvement strategies will address identified root causes for low performance and ultimately build LEA capacity to achieve the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities.

As previously discussed and explained in detail, one of the determining factors leading to the selection of Indicator 3C as the area of focus for the SSIP was close relationship to goals of implementing PRDE's ESEA Flexibility Plan. Below we discuss our coherent improvement strategies in two parts: district level efforts initiated through the ESEA Flexibility Plan (which are discussed in great detail as a part of our infrastructure analysis) and SAEF-specific efforts being provided in addition to the ESEA Flexibility Plan efforts.

Throughout PRDE's ESEA Flexibility Plan, schools designated as focus schools are assigned an external service provider to serve as their RAD. The RADs are external providers that have the responsibility of offering services aimed at school transformation and school turnaround. The efforts are to be focused on increasing the academic achievement of students and teacher professional development, taking into consideration the specific needs of each school, including the needs of students with disabilities. They will offer individualized attention in administrative and academic areas for each school that they serve. As discussed earlier in our SSIP, all schools selected to receive SSIP interventions are focus schools. As such, all schools participating in the SSIP are receiving the support of a RAD.

Generally, each RAD shall implement coherent and integrated interventions and improvement strategies that shall offer: administrative support, programmatic interventions, extended schedules, and improved relationships with the school community. Additionally, the RAD shall apply models, strategies, services, and activities that have been proven effective in improving academic achievement, including differentiated instruction for students with disabilities. To ensure the interventions carried out by these providers are aligned with academic standards and current curricular materials, these providers participate in trainings offered by PRDE personnel regarding current curricular materials, planning, differentiated instructions, and strategies adopted by the Subsecretary for Academic Affairs, so that they may be able to dominate these themes.

Specifically, the RAD support to the schools focuses on the following areas:

1. **Administrative and Operational Support** – The administrative and operational support is based in providing tools to school personnel to carry out their work in more efficiently. They provide support, training, and follow up to achieve effective implementation of the work plan established for the school year, maximize resources, and comply with academic work efforts. For Special Education, the services in this area include:
 - Assistance in coordinating academic support to general Education teachers from Special Education Academic Facilitators with the goal of supporting teachers and providing them with differentiated Education strategies in teaching special Education students participating in the general curriculum / general classroom setting.
 - Support to ensure appropriate distribution of equipment and didactic materials necessary for serving this student population.
1. **Learning Communities** – Through this initiative, the RAD will be providing resources and strategies with the purpose of significantly integrating the community and enriching the educational process.
2. **Workshops** - Some of the themes that will be covered through the workshops are:
 - a. Data Driven Decision Making
 - b. Educational Leadership
 - c. School Climate and Culture
 - d. Discipline and Security/Safety
 - e. Assessment
 - f. Planning differentiated integration, individualized instruction, and construction of knowledge.

- g. Attending to special student needs, training of pedagogical strategies, accommodations, and alternate evaluations.
1. Individual Coaching – For school directors and teachers that provide instruction by core subject area, including mathematics, and special education.
 2. Group Coaching – This is by establishing learning communities by grade or material area, including teachers of Special Education.
 3. Provide follow-up on Basic Materials and Special education, in the areas of:
 - Planning process and academic achievement in the classroom.
 - Demonstrative Classes.
 - Modeling differentiated instruction.
 - Effective utilization of various evaluation methods.
 - Utilizing student data to guarantee effective differentiated instruction.
 - Attending to the needs identified through classroom observations, school transformation plan, and the results from evaluations and teacher requests.
 1. **Instruction (Extended Learning Time** of one hundred forty-four (144) hours during the school year) for the core subject areas with an emphasis on Spanish and Mathematics – Each RAD, along with the school director, is to design a program that provides this extended learning time for students for enrichment and the instruction necessary to meet academic standards.

In addition to the above mentioned support, the RADs will be responsible for:

- Strengthening and promoting teacher use of curricular materials developed and aligned to PRDE’s new standards, particularly curriculum maps and sequencing calendars according to focuses of the PRDE academic programs.
- Support the design and implementation of instructional strategies that permit students to dominate PRDE grade level standards with a special emphasis of Mathematics and Spanish. These strategies include strengthening development of linguistic concepts and mathematics, creating intellectually challenging activities that permit students to continuously advance to superior levels based on their competencies.
- In cooperation with PRDE, support the implementation of internal evaluation administration in Focus Schools to measure progress of students in subjects of Spanish, English, Mathematics, and create systems for managing and using these data in the school community.

Specific to the Yabucoa District, the district special assistant (i.e., superintendent) directed the RADs for the selected schools within the district to provide special attention to addressing needs of students with disabilities in the general curriculum in grades four through six in the area of mathematics.

In addition to the agency-wide efforts PRDE is implementing, the SAEЕ has begun to develop a series of improvement strategies aimed at strengthening infrastructure. Among these efforts are:

- The SAEЕ has joined efforts with the Yabucoa District with the purpose of carrying out coordinated work to address both the ESEA Flexibility and SSIP initiatives. Initially, orientation sessions were held to present the SSIP and evaluate how SAEЕ and special education staff would be able to strengthen support provided by the RADs. Working sessions were coordinated to analyze the planned interventions in the selected schools, including staff from the School District and the RADs.
- Review of the functions of the Special Education Facilitator of the District in order to focus on offering Technical assistance to the schools.
- As previously discussed, there had been a need to fill Special Education Facilitator positions in the District. SAEЕ was approved for fill the vacant positions, and then successfully filled all of those positions.
- As part of the ESEA Flexibility Plan, the SAEЕ is conducting a needs assessment regarding technical assistance for teachers with regard to special education, beginning with focus schools (as defined within the Flexibility Plan). The purpose is to prepare an intervention plan based on the needs identified by each school. This intervention plan will operate in coordination with the RADs, the companies who are contracted to provide support services directly to the schools.
- There was an orientation for Special Education Planning during October 21st, 2014 to Special Education Teachers of all regions. The speakers were Mr. Felipe Olmeda (Ponce, Caguas and Mayagüez- Regions) and Jorge Pérez (for Arecibo, Bayamón, Humacao and San Juan Regions). On November 12 and 18, 2014, Mr. Felipe Olmeda attended to a pair of orientations relating technical assistance in the Barranquitas District to Special Education teachers.
- Also, there was a second training to the Special Education Facilitators of Humacao Region, during December 4, 2014, to clarify questions and doubts related to ESEA Flexibility. The subjects discussed were Public Policy in the Planning of Learning and Curriculum Processes, and the participants included Special Ed Facilitators and Teachers.
- A residential workshop about differentiated instruction with an emphasis on students with disabilities was held. This workshop was provided for Academic Subject Material Facilitators as well as Special Education Facilitators. The goal is to prepare a district work plan for how the team would work together to train schools about this theme.

In addition to the strategies already implemented, and as discussed with and evaluated by the Stakeholder Group, the SAEЕ will be impacting Focus Schools in the additional following ways:

- In accordance with PRDE's ESEA Flexibility Plan, the district special assistant (superintendent) is charged with developing an intervention and academic monitoring plan that includes regular visits to the schools by Academic Facilitators, which includes the Special Education Facilitator. The frequency of the visits depends on the given school's classification. As all schools at issue in the SSIP are focus schools, these schools will be visited once each week. The goal of monitoring plan is to ensure the effective use by the schools of the curricular materials and implementation of PRDE's academic public policy initiatives, to help teachers with the use of data for developing differentiated academic instruction, to provide job-embedded professional development to teachers to assist them in using the different academic intervention strategies, and to develop corrective actions to attend to teacher needs.
- The SAEЕ will establish Intervention Plans based on needs assessments carried out at each Focus School.
- The SAEЕ will establish a Professional Development Plan to impact math teachers and special Education teachers at focus schools who teach fourth through sixth grade. Among the first themes that will be addressed as part of this plan are reasonable accommodations and differentiated instruction. Nonetheless, these themes may vary depending on the needs identified at each school as a result of Special Education Academic Facilitator intervention activities.
- The SAEЕ will continue holding periodic meetings between Special Education Academic Facilitators, Mathematic Facilitators, and the RAD coordinators / 'coaches', with the goal of coordinating efforts to establish and share intervention strategies that results in the highest levels of success. Also, these meetings will aim to promoting teamwork between math teachers from the general curriculum and special education teachers.

In summary, all of these activities, both those initially contemplated through the ESEA Flexibility Plan and those involving added resources and efforts lead by SAEЕ and special education staff, work to support the following key improvement initiatives: conducting school specific needs assessments for serving students with disabilities, providing professional development for teachers on serving students with disabilities that is coordinated between the SAEЕ and the districts and school RAD, assuring necessary resources are in place such as necessary academic facilitators, and district level academic monitoring to ensure compliance with ESEA Flexibility activities and goals. These activities are based on and supported by PRDE's data and infrastructure analyses, consider current PRDE initiatives, and are targeting at addressing root casus for low performance and

FFY 2014 Part B State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR)

building capacity to achieve the SIMR for children with disabilities. Additionally as discussed earlier in the SSIP, PRDE SAEI has plans to scale up intervention of improvement strategies to additional schools. Also, the effectiveness of the improvement strategies will be continuously reviewed and revised or further scaled up as necessary.

Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan

Data and Overview

Monitoring Priority: General Supervision

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

Theory of Action

A graphic illustration that shows the rationale of how implementing the coherent set of improvement strategies selected will increase the State's capacity to lead meaningful change in LEAs, and achieve improvement in the State-identified Measurable Result(s) for Children with Disabilities.

[Theory of Action Graphics](#) Theory of Action Graphics



Provide a description of the provided graphic illustration (optional)

Description of Illustration

As depicted below in our Theory of Action graphic, PRDE believes that IF it implements the combination of the following interventions:

- Conducting a school specific needs assessment for serving students with disabilities;
- Providing professional development for both general and special education teachers with regard to serving students with disabilities that will be sure to address concerns identified in the needs assessment (in a coordinated fashion between the SAEE, the RADs and the school district);
- Assignment of additional resources such as ensuring a district level special education facilitator is in place as well as those services provided to the school by the RAD (discussed above); and,
- An Academic Monitoring plan carried out by the district to ensure compliance with the Flexibility Plan,

THEN, the result will be in improved performance of students with disabilities taking the PPAA at the participating schools. Moreover, PRDE anticipates that the more time in which students are served with these interventions, the more improvement can be expected with their PPAA results. As such, with the interventions being implemented in 4th through 6th grade, while PRDE expects to see results in the first year, PRDE believes that greater results will be seen in future years as those students will have been served with these interventions for longer periods of time. As such, stakeholders believe that this theory of action has a high likelihood of leading to a measurable improvement in the SIMR.

Stakeholders were involved in the development of the Theory of Action. Multiple meetings were held with the Stakeholder Group where general needs were identified first, and later after those needs were validated through visits the district and school and those needs were validated. Similarly, the group discussed the strategies that would be utilized to address the needs that would be most likely to result in academic gains for students.

The below graphic illustration shows the rationale of how implementing the coherent set of improvement strategies described throughout this document will lead to achievement of improved results for children with disabilities.

Additionally, we are including a second graphic that addresses concerns/assumptions raised by the stakeholders that may impact the achievement of students with disabilities, coherent improvement strategies identified to address these needs, and expected outcomes from implementing these activities. In establishing these items, stakeholders considered the data and infrastructure analyses. The arrows demonstrate the relation between the information in each box.

Indicator 17: State Systemic Improvement Plan

Data and Overview

Monitoring Priority: General Supervision

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

Infrastructure Development

- (a) Specify improvements that will be made to the State infrastructure to better support EIS programs and providers to implement and scale up EBPs to improve results for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.
- (b) Identify the steps the State will take to further align and leverage current improvement plans and other early learning initiatives and programs in the State, including Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge, Home Visiting Program, Early Head Start and others which impact infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.
- (c) Identify who will be in charge of implementing the changes to infrastructure, resources needed, expected outcomes, and timelines for completing improvement efforts.
- (d) Specify how the State will involve multiple offices within the State Lead Agency, as well as other State agencies and stakeholders in the improvement of its infrastructure.

Part B

State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Phase II

The Associated Secretariat of Special Education (SAEE by its initials in Spanish) of the Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE), with the collaborative support of the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, as part of the Results Driven Accountability efforts presents its State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) with the purpose of improving child-level outcomes for students with disabilities. The SSIP is the new Indicator 17 for the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Improvement Act (IDEA) State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR).

After a broad analysis during Phase I, PRDE along with the stakeholder group agreed that the SSIP would begin with a focal point on impacting the proficiency rate of sixth grade students with disabilities taking the PPAA in mathematics within the Yabucoa District. Considering the infrastructure analysis, the determination was later made to further focus the SSIP on those students attending schools within the Yabucoa District designated as 'focus schools' through PRDE's ESSA Flexibility [\[1\]](#). The focus schools from the Yabucoa District which will be referred as participating schools are:

- Calzada (Maunabo)
- Marín Abajo (Patillas)
- Eugenio María de Hostos (San Lorenzo)
- Luis Muñoz Rivera (San Lorenzo)
- Gerardo Selles Sola (San Lorenzo)
- Quemados (San Lorenzo)
- Quebrada Honda/SU Isidro Vicens (San Lorenzo)
- Dra. María T. Delgado de Marcano (San Lorenzo)
- Jorge Rosario del Valle (San Lorenzo)

As stated at the outset of this SSIP, the following table reflect the SIMR baseline data (FFY 2013) and SIMR targets for FFY 2014-2018 and results for FFY 2014:

Baseline Data FFY 2013 - Data 1.47%

FFY 2014-FFY 2018 Targets and Data

FFY	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Target	<u>Baseline</u>	1.5%	1.5%	2.5%	3.0%	3.5%
Data	1.47%	3.51%				

Description of Measurement

Proficiency rate percent = [(# of children with IEPs enrolled in sixth grade at the selected schools scoring at or above proficient against grade level) divided by the (total # of children with IEPs enrolled in sixth grade at the selected schools who received a valid score on the PPAA and for whom a proficiency level was assigned, and calculated for math)]. The proficiency rate includes both children with IEPs enrolled for a full academic year and those not enrolled for a full academic year.

Data Analysis for Phase II of the SSIP

In Phase I, PRDE established measurable and rigorous targets for each successive year of the SSIP (FFYs 2014 through 2018) which requires PRDE to more than double the percentage of special education student who score proficient or advanced on the regular assessment for math from the selected schools in the Yabucoa School District.

As a result of the interventions implemented for the school District, the external providers (RAD) and the SAEE, the data shows that the proposed target of 1.5% for FFY 2014 was exceeded, reaching 3.51%. The analysis of the data below is based on the *Pruebas Puertorriqueñas de Aprovechamiento Académico* (PPAA) results for the 2014-2015 school year.

FFY 2014

Data 3.51%

This analysis was conducted for the purpose of calculating the percentage of special education students from the 6th grade who scored proficient or advanced on the regular assessment for math from the selected SIMR schools in the Yabucoa School District.

As described in Phase I of the SSIP, PRDE notes that while this SIMR focuses on improving a result for a subset of the population of students with disabilities, implementing this SSIP has an impact on the Statewide results. PRDE seeks eventually to implement this initiative island-wide and not limit the implementation to the Yabucoa District. Taking a more global look, the 2014-2015 assessment results for students with disabilities at all grade levels reveal that math scores increased 0.82% island-wide as compared to last year's scores. The graph below illustrates the increase. The increase in students attaining proficiency is positive, however, the increase in the SIMR for 2014-2015 is at a greater rate.

Analysis by Year of the Proficiency Rates of Students with Disabilities on Math

Stakeholder's Involvement

As mentioned in Phase I, for the start of Phase II of the SSIP, the stakeholder group was expanded to include representation in additional areas related to the selected topic. The additional resources incorporated into the stakeholder group were: Academic Superintendent of the Yabucoa School District (who is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Flexibility Plan in the District of Yabucoa), PRDE Director of the Mathematics Program, a School Director, and a Special Education Teacher. The school director and special education teacher were selected from outside of the Yabucoa District, with the purpose of providing classroom and school director level perspectives without the influence of being individuals who would be directly involved with the initial SSIP efforts. The selected school director came from a school designated as a school of excellence under the ESSA Flexibility. The special education teacher was selected in part due to her being a specialist with mathematics instruction and assessment.

PRDE developed Phase II with broad stakeholder input. The stakeholder group has been instrumental since the beginning of the SSIP process. PRDE SAEE held various meetings with stakeholder groups and received stakeholder input regarding all three components of Phase II of the SSIP. At first, PRDE SAEE made attempts to involve stakeholder groups which included teachers, school director, district and municipality special education facilitator, and other resources for different units in the PRDE. Through the work, PRDE SAEE experienced challenges due to the large number of stakeholders and the difficulty scheduling meetings so that everyone could be present. PRDE SAEE determined it was necessary to identify a smaller number of stakeholders who could represent all facets of the Island and be able to be present for ongoing meetings.

Additionally, the collaboration with PRDE's Under-secretariat of Academic Affairs, (this is the area in charge of the general education) has promoted an excellent communication with the District Special Assistant of Yabucoa. Both, the District Special Assistant of Yabucoa and the Academic Superintendent of the Yabucoa District have been engaged in the implementation of the SSIP in their District and have served as the liaison between the school directors for the schools that have been selected to participate in the SSIP initiative.

Stakeholders have been meaningfully involved in every phase of the SSIP. Below will be presented a **summary** of the stakeholder's participation for this phase. Please note that stakeholder's input is also discussed throughout the SSIP, not solely in this section.

Stakeholder Participation	Summary	Input
Closing of Phase I		
Meetings	1-Phase I submission was presented to the group. 2-Discussion of Phase II Components.	1-They demonstrated satisfaction with the document. 2-The group in consensus determined to continue with the SIMR presented in Phase I.
Component #1: Infrastructure		
Meetings Conference calls	1-Analysis of the SIMR Results	1-The stakeholder group analyzed the SIMR results and recommended to continue with the strategies and the alignment with ESSA Flexibility. Also, the group was pleased with the results achieved and student's improvement.
Emailed Input	1-Changes in the Infrastructure	1-Stakeholder recommended the importance of including in Phase II the restructuring that is undergoing PRDE. They agreed that these changes were aligned to the academic transformation and benefit the student's achievement.
Emailed Input	1-Discussion of Component #1 Draft	1-Various stakeholder group members submitted their recommendations to the draft.
Component #2: Evidence Based Practices		
Meetings	1-Discussion of EBPs	1- The stakeholder group considered that our SSIP is aligned with ESSA Flexibility and the EBPs that have to be used are the established in the ACSPOG (PCEA Guide). The group presented the concern of the limitation of the availability of EBPs for math.
Meetings	1-Discussion of SAEEs participation in the Math Collaborative and TA Visit	1-A summary of the knowledge acquired and the documentation provided during both events were discussed and analyzed with the group. As part of the discussion it was determined to use these materials as references.
Emailed Input	1-Discussion of Component #2 Draft	1-Various stakeholder group members submitted their recommendations to the draft. Also input from other areas of PRDE were received.
Component #3: Evaluation		
Meetings	1-Discussion of PRDE's Evaluation Plan	1-The stakeholder group considered to use current infrastructure for evaluation that is established by ESSA Flexibility. They enhanced the importance of evaluating the results of the professional development activities provided by the SAEE. Also, it was determined as part of the SAEE's evaluation to monitor and include the achievement through the school year of the participating students.

Stakeholder Participation	Summary	Input
Emailed Input Conference call	1-Discussion of SAEE Evaluation Instrument	1-The stakeholder group made recommendations to the document, which were included. They also recommended that this evaluation should be done by a core stakeholder group.
Emailed Input	1-Discussion of Component #2 Draft	1-Various stakeholder group members submitted their recommendations to the draft. Also input from other areas of PRDE were received.
-		

[1] It is important to note that with the change in the ESSA Law from 2016 Flexibility Plan became the Academic Transformation Plan with DEPR Longitudinal view of which is aligned with federal requirements.

Component #1: Infrastructure Development

General Infrastructure Changes

Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) operates as a unitary system with a central level lead by the Puerto Rico Secretary of Education. Under the Secretary of Education are two Special Secretaries. One focuses on academic affairs, while the other is focused on administrative affairs. The central level office leadership also includes a Special Education Secretary who oversees the SAEE and the Auxiliary Secretary of Transformation, Planning and Performance. PRDE divides the island geographically into seven educational regions and 28 school districts, which include four districts per educational region.

The districts are branches of PRDE that operate under the direction of a District level Special Assistant who supervises all academic activities of the schools within the geographical boundaries of the given region. As part of the district structure, the district level staffing includes academic facilitators for core academic subjects (Spanish, Mathematics, English, Science and Special Education) who function as instructional leaders for teachers, serve as coaches, and facilitate professional development regarding curriculum and instructional strategies. These facilitators also provide support in the design of programs adjusted to address the needs of specific students in the school and they collaborate with School Directors in the development of programs for a variety of student subgroups such as the gifted, low performing students, students at-risk of dropping out of school, students enrolled in special education, and students with limited Spanish proficiency. The districts are also responsible for the coordination of professional development activities for teachers and other school support personnel. As reported in Phase I, the SSIP infrastructure is aligned with PRDE’s approved ESSA Flexibility Plan. It is worth noting that Puerto Rico’s ESSA Flexibility Plan was approved for three years and without special conditions. The chart below present the PRDE structure previously described.

As part of PRDE’s efforts to improve student learning, provide appropriate services, and demonstrate fiscal discipline, PRDE is currently undertaking a comprehensive restructuring and academic transformation with longitudinal vision. This transformation is framed in a systemic vision that puts our students and graduates as agents of change in both their active participation in society and in the reenergizing of our economy. The restructuring plan will greatly improve PRDE’s infrastructure and improve PRDE’s ability to support regions and districts. Additionally, PRDE has carefully maintained functions and positions that are essential to complying with Federal requirements, including the SSIP and PRDE ESSA Flexibility. Some of the main objectives of the Restructuring plan include the following:

- Achieve a more efficient operational structure focused on the needs of students and schools.
- Create administrative and academic functions focused on providing services that meet the needs of schools.
- Improve academic performance and increase student retention by establishing a new integrative curriculum.
- Strengthen academic interventions in schools to reduce student transitions within our system. Before, the PRDE system promote at least two transitions: in sixth grade and in nine grade. In the new vision the students only have one transition in eighth grade, this promote school retention.
- Provide support services to educators through the establishment of a service-oriented culture to reduce bureaucracy and streamline processes.
- Reduce organizational levels and optimized resources.

- Promote the use of data in decision making.
- Demonstrate fiscal discipline by implementing a rigorous cost control to maximize resources for public education.
-

Changes will occur in phases. The first phase of restructuring impacted the following units: Secretariat for Academic Affairs, Associate Secretary of Special Education and the Auxiliary Secretariat of Transformation, Planning and Performance (previously the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Educational Development) and the Auxiliary Secretariat of Human Resources. The changes to the units that impact the SSIP will be discussed next.

Secretariat for Academic Affairs

The transformation of the Secretariat for Academic Affairs includes a complete reconceptualization of the central level and academic aspects of educational regions and school districts with the goal of improving the academic services offered. The new structure has new functional areas focused on the academic goals of the department. These areas have a direct interrelation between the central level and the implementation that takes place in school districts with a new design framed in a horizontal and vertical management that promotes the development of learning communities. One of these new areas is the Academic Transformation Unit. Some of the functions of this new area are:

- Promote the systematic, creative and transformative thinking based on scientific basis strategies.
- Develop innovative projects aimed at transforming school communities.
- Establish and promote data-based plans work.
- Strengthen strategies for differentiated interventions, such as the Differentiated Support Network, (RAD by its acronym in Spanish)
- Develops the methodology to measure the work plans and intervention strategies to ensure they are resulting in students' academic improvement and development of an effective school community.

The main objective of the restructuring of the Secretariat for Academic Affairs is to strengthen the academic services offered to schools and students, from a systemic vision focused on the development of essential skills of the Student Graduate School Profile. This involves the formation of global citizens capable of transforming our society and economy to compete as equal in our society.

Associate Secretary of Special Education

Under the restructuring plan, the Associate Secretary of Special Education (SAEE, by its acronym in Spanish) will strengthen its academic component and consolidate its administrative support in an effort to make the office more effective and efficient. Additionally, at the district level, the restructuring plan focuses on strengthening the academic unit that services special education students placed in public schools. Despite these change several features of the PRDE SAEE Central level will remain the same.

For example, as previously reported in Phase I, at the PRDE SAEE central level, SAEE is made up of Technical Assistance and Academic Support Unit which consists of seven (7) Special Education Academic Facilitators. This unit also responds to the needs of and provides assistance to the eleven (11) Special Education Service Centers (CSEEs by its acronym in Spanish). In general, this unit has the following responsibilities:

- Establish SAEE Public Policy in the Academic Area
- Work with the following topics: serving deaf, blind, and deaf-blind students; placement alternatives; early childhood transition; post-secondary transition, autism; and, adaptive physical education.
- Coordinate, via the district-level Special Education Academic Facilitators, activities related to academic support and Technical assistance to schools.
- Prepare and execute Professional Development activities for district, municipal, and CSEE level Special Education Academic Facilitators focused on increase the academic achievement of students with disabilities.
- Ensure specific interventions are being carried out in the schools in compliance with the ESSA Flexibility Plan are realized.
- Through the CSEEs, coordinate the provision of Special Education services from child find/identification through placement of students.

Each Special Education Academic Facilitator is assigned to a region for the purpose of maintaining constant communication

with the different levels that make up PRDE's infrastructure. Three of the seven facilitator positions at the central level are currently vacant, due to PRDE fiscal problems. Nevertheless, PRDE has taken the necessary steps to ensure that all regions continue to receive technical assistance services offered by the central level. Facilitators have been redistributed so that they are responsible for more than one region. PRDE is also working on identifying additional resources to cover the three vacancies.

Auxiliary Secretariat of Transformation, Planning and Performance

The Auxiliary Secretary of Transformation, Planning and Performance (SATPRE, by its acronym in Spanish) is responsible for designing and promoting public policy which benefits students across the island. Additionally, SATPRE will increase its role in strategic planning for PRDE. For example, it is PRDE's goal for SATPRE to assume the implementation and monitoring of the strategic plans across all units, programs and special projects developed in the Department. As part of the transformation, two existing units will have an increased importance: Data Management Governance and the Research and Educational Innovations Center.

School District Changes

The restructuring and academic transformation at PRDE wants to ensure that with its current infrastructure refocusing their staff functions will better support the academic achievement of our students. As such, the new district design is framed in a horizontal and vertical management that promotes the development of learning communities and professional practice. As part of the administrative and academic transformation PRDE is particularly focused on:

- The Under-secretariat for Academic Affairs and Associate Secretary of Special Education have outlined new roles for academic district officials focused on the differentiated instruction to assure needs of all students are met.
-
- The academic approach proposed in the district will be supported by various systemic implementation guidelines which ensure offering integrated services geared towards meeting the different needs of schools. Additionally, this approach supports teachers to impart effective differentiated instruction according to each student subgroup.
-
- The district will continue to develop high quality interventions to ensure that every school principal and teacher can be effective in using different evidence based practices.
-
- The district will focus developing an evaluation system which ensures schools the implement of rigorous standards and expectations. Additionally, districts will ensure that each school makes data-based decisions, meeting the needs of various subgroups of students, including students with disabilities.
-
- Support interventions, monitoring and evaluation will be recorded in platforms to have more effective interventions.

In addition to the organizational changes occurring at the district level, changes are also occurring at the school level. PRDE is in the process of restructuring school levels into elementary (which will include grades kindergarten through eighth grade) and secondary (ninth through twelfth grade). The purpose of the restructuring is to increase school retention and improve academic performance. It should be noted that the restructuring at the school level is also being implemented by phases. This aspect was discussed with the stakeholder group but concluded that the changes have not affected the SIMR at this moment. However, the group will evaluate the changes as they occur to verify if these changes could affect our SIMR.

It is important to note that the restructuring of the PRDE described previously be outlined and worked by the undersecretaries, associate secretaries and auxiliary secretaries of each of the areas impacted in the first phase as well as by key personnel from each of these areas, with knowledge's in PRDE most important projects and initiatives. This key personnel, that include Specials Assistances, Directors, etc., through multiple meetings and work sessions, helped develop the model restructuring and academic transformation with longitudinal vision that currently implements the department. In the SAEE, the Associate Secretary include as part of the restructuring working group the Compliance Officer to assure that the department transformation consider the aspects that the SAEE and the PRDE have to work to improve the academic achievements for special education students.

Additional efforts that ensure SSIP Implementation align with PRDE's ESSA Flexibility Plan

As we previously mentioned in Phase I, PRDE chose a SIMR that focused on increasing the percentage of special education students in the 6th grade who score proficient or advanced on the regular assessment for math because this goal is consistent with focus of PRDE's ESSA Flexibility Waiver. As established in PRDE's ESSA Flexibility, each school district will continue providing technical assistance to support teachers with professional development in order to maintain high expectations and

academic rigor.

The focus schools (schools with the lowest graduation rates or largest achievement gaps) share similar components to those offered to priority schools (lowest performing schools). These similarities include: the creation of professional learning communities, creating a culture of decision making based on data, integration of parents and the community in the educational process, program extended learning time with at least 144 additional hours per year, and individualized professional development to address the most urgent problems. In addition, the services of the focus schools will continue concentrate on serving subgroups of students with the aim of closing the achievement gap between groups, with particular attention to special education students and limited Spanish proficiency students.

As part of PRDE's efforts to strengthen its infrastructure to comply with its ESSA Flexibility, PRDE continue partnered with external providers, known as Differentiated Support Network (*Red de Apoyo Diferenciado* or RAD by its acronym in Spanish). Specifically, the RAD support to the schools focuses on the following areas:

1. Administrative and Operational Support
2. Learning Communities
3. Workshops
4. Individual Coaching
5. Group Coaching
6. Provide follow-up on Math and Special education, in the areas of:
 - Planning process and academic achievement in the classroom.
 - Demonstrative Classes.
 - Modeling differentiated instruction.
 - Effective utilization of various evaluation methods.
 - Utilizing student data to guarantee effective differentiated instruction.
 - Attending to the needs identified through classroom observations, school transformation plan, and the results from evaluations and teacher requests.
7. Extended Learning Time

The RADs continue offering administrative and academic support individualized to address the specific areas of need for each school. The RADs also continue help schools in planning and implementation of the interventions designed to result in school transformation. Each school community, in cooperation with its assigned external service provider (i.e., its RAD), works to achieve the goals established in the school's intervention plan (which is used by the school to prepare the PCEA). This intervention plan is to contain and address the school's needs and the specific reasons for why they school has been identified as focus.

During the next school year, the RADs continue offering individualized attention in administrative and academic areas to schools in order to help schools plan and implement interventions that result in school transformation. RADs also continue offering professional development services such as workshops and coaching to schools throughout the academic year.

In the academic support area, RADs continue provide direct support in core subject areas such as Mathematics, Spanish, English and Science. By developing interventions and providing direct support, RADs will continue helped schools to increase the academic achievement of students and aid in closing the achievement gap between students in each subgroup. RADs also continue helped teachers develop a deeper understanding of the academic content and make the content accessible to all subgroups. As part of the required services (established in the Request for Proposal or RFP), service providers and school principals meet with school districts with the goal of ensuring the link between the selected strategies and meets PRDE established public policy. RADs will continue collecting and analyzing data in order to demonstrate that they meet their stated objectives to improve the performance of focus schools. They use the data to illustrate that they are implementing reasonable and valid solutions designed to meet the needs of schools and support the school community.

Additionally, for the purpose of strengthening processes in focus schools and provide better academic service to students, the Undersecretary for Academic Affairs, in collaboration with Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center (FLICC), has designed an eclectic model of professional communities learning (MECPA). The model is designed to strengthen the academic database with the aim of improving the academic achievement of students. MECPA facilitates the achievement of the objectives of the ESSA Flexibility, as well as contributes to the achievement of the SSIP objectives.

PRDE is also working on developing online demonstration classes that will be available on PRDE's website. These videos describe best practices related to: planning, how to use curricular maps to develop performance tasks and making decisions based on data. In addition, subject to the availability of funds, PRDE will also work to develop additional online professional development resources for teachers.

Considering the specific needs of students with Autism, the Associate Secretary of Special Education has integrated the STAR/Links curriculum. STAR is a specialized curriculum for students with autism that combines standards with meeting the needs of students. The STAR curriculum is based on the ABA, TEACCH, PECS and other strategies. It is also aligned with the "Common Core State Standards" (CCSS). The elementary STAR program includes detailed lesson plan and teaching materials based on all six curricular assessment areas which are receptive language, expressive language, language spontaneous, functional routines, academic and social skills games. At the intermediate level, the program promotes student independence in natural environments. The online system Links provides teachers with the necessary tools to successfully teach life skills and independence to students.

This implementation will be divided in cycles and each cycle in turn is divided by cohort. PRDE will work with a total of two cycles and four cohorts (two cohorts per cycle) each with a total of seven (7) groups or "sites". Each cycle will begin with the training phase and will continue with follow-up visits to ensure implementation and provide teachers with the necessary support. It should be noted that the school Jorge Rosario Vega, which is one of the schools in the District of Yabucoa impacted through SSIP, is part of the 3rd cycle of implementation for this curriculum.

In the table below illustrates the cycles in which implementation will occur

Cohort	Date of Workshops (Workshops)	Implementation Period (Coach visits to ensure implementation)
Cohort 1	August 2015	September 2015 – March 2016
Cohort 2	September 2015	October 2015 – April 2016
Cohort 3	January 2016	January 2016 – May 2016
Cohort 4	January 2016	January 2016 – May 2016

In order to support the management of academic transformation and maintain compliance with PRDE's ESSA Flexibility and the SSIP, PRDE has developed a series of platforms in order to benefit the schools, the district and the central level. PRDE uses these new technology platforms to ensure implementation of interventions that are being developed at the level school and district levels. These new technology platforms are the following:

1. PCEA Live - This is an online platform that supports the development of the PCEA for each school. The platform delineates specific interventions for schools according to their rankings under to the ESSA flexibility plan. For the past two years, staff at the district level have provided ongoing support to principals and in the area of data analysis. Principals and teachers have requested additional support to develop interventions suited to their specific needs. Since January 2014, central level staff have designed and offered support based on the classification of each school.
- 2.
3. SAMA – PRDE developed the Support and Academic Monitoring System platform (SAMA by its acronym in Spanish) to enable central level staff and district personnel to provide monitoring and feedback to schools as they implement their plans. In addition, central level staff members use SAMA to hold monthly meetings with district staff to assess progress, identify support needs and provide ongoing technical assistance to ensure that all schools within the district are served.
- 4.
5. RAD or SPP – The online platform called Service Provider Platform (SPP) was developed by PRDE to manage contracted services with external suppliers and to allow systematic and computerized management. The SPP is used to obtain measurable and reportable data from schools, which in turn enables PRDE to interpret school results. It has a simple interface plan and organized service, with specific indicators that can be used to measure academic progress and related conducted at school. The SPP is also used to ensure fiscal and contractual compliance. The staff of the Office of Federal Affairs works with UTE staff to ensure that all services specified in the system are in line with the plans of the school.
- 6.
7. Dashboards - A dashboard is a technological tool that contains comparative tables and graphical summaries of key data related to schools, students and staff. PRDE dashboards include accountability indicators that are aligned with the classification criteria of accountability as well as other data necessary for making decisions based on data. The Office of Information Systems and the Auxiliary Secretary of Transformation, Planning and Performance share responsibility for a) ensuring that the dashboard contains data that are accurate and reliable, b) data is presented in a simple and easy to

interpret manner, c) ensure that schools, districts, and central level have access to this information. This shared responsibility ensures the technical management (collection and presentation) of data and content, such as support for decision-making that is based on data. Dashboards allows PRDE to track principle and teacher performance data.

Collaboration between Stakeholders and Various PRDE Offices

Considering the importance of involve multiples areas and offices of the PRDE in the infrastructure improvement, SAE E include as part of the stakeholder group, representation of the different levels of the PRDE. Some resources incorporated into the stakeholder group, which has been mentioned in the phase I of SSIP included a Special Assistance of the Undersecretary of Academic Affairs, the Yabucoa Superintendent of Academic Support (whose main responsibility include guiding the implementation of curriculum and assessment, and directing the design of intervention plans for academic and special ed facilitators and ensuring that they are implemented. It is also part of her responsibilities overseeing the implementation of the ESSA Flexibility in the District of Yabucoa), a School Director, a Special Education Teacher and parents of students with disabilities. In addition, the SAE E continue joined forces with the Yabucoa School District with the goal of carrying out coordinated work to address both Flexibility and the SSIP initiatives. Quarterly meetings/working sessions were coordinated to analyze the planned interventions in the selected schools, along with employees of the school district and the RADs.

Besides the working with the district, SAE E also joined forces and working together with the RAD's Offices Director in order to assure that the selected school receive the services that was contracted and that the RAD count with specialized resources to impact special education teachers.

Improvement Strategies

In addition to the agency-wide infrastructure improvement and efforts PRDE is implementing, and the initiative than we mentioned above, the SAE E also develop a series of improvement strategies aimed at strengthening infrastructure. Among these efforts are:

- During October 2015, SAE E have meeting with all the RAD's island wide and al the District Special Assistance, to orientate them about the SSIP initiative.
- As part of the joined efforts with the Yabucoa District, during this year SAE E provide an orientation for Differentiated Instruction on March 2016, to the math and special education teachers of the participating schools. This orientation was coordinated between the SAE E and the Yabucoa's Special District Assistance and was offered as a team by one SAE E special education facilitator and math facilitator of the Yabucoa's District.

In addition to the strategies already implemented, and as discussed with and evaluated by the Stakeholder Group, the SAE E will be impacting Focus Schools in the additional following ways:

- In accordance with PRDE's ESSA Flexibility, the district special assistant (superintendent) is charged with developing an intervention and academic monitoring plan that includes regular visits to the schools by Academic Facilitators, which includes the Special Education Facilitator. The goal of monitoring plan is to ensure the effective use by the schools of the curricular materials and implementation of PRDE's academic public policy initiatives, to help teachers with the use of data for developing differentiated academic instruction, to provide job-embedded professional development to teachers to assist them in using the different academic intervention strategies, and to develop corrective actions to attend to teacher needs.
- The SAE E will continue implementing the Professional Development Plan to impact math teachers and special Education teachers at focus schools who teach fourth through sixth grade. The themes may vary depending on the needs identified at each school as a result of Special Education Academic Facilitator intervention activities. As part of the professional development plan, SAE E was coordinated with the PRDE Teachers Institute for Professional Development to offer college math courses to special education teacher with the purpose to specialized de special education teachers in math.
- The SAE E will continue holding periodic meetings between Special Education Academic Facilitators, Mathematic Facilitators, and the RAD coordinators / 'coaches', with the goal of coordinating efforts to establish and share intervention strategies that results in the highest.

In summary, the PRDE transformation and efforts previously mentioned support directly the PRDE/SAE E in implementing the coherent improvement strategies and activities for both: ESSA Flexibility and SSIP. As we previously mentioned, all this effort has the purpose of improve academic performance of all PRDE students, especially the students with disabilities.

Support for EIS programs and providers Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices

- (a) Specify how the State will support EIS providers in implementing the evidence-based practices that will result in changes in Lead Agency, EIS program, and EIS provider practices to achieve the SIMR(s) for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.
- (b) Identify steps and specific activities needed to implement the coherent improvement strategies, including communication strategies and stakeholder involvement; how identified barriers will be addressed; who will be in charge of implementing; how the activities will be implemented with fidelity; the resources that will be used to implement them; and timelines for completion.
- (c) Specify how the State will involve multiple offices within the Lead Agency (and other State agencies such as the SEA) to support EIS providers in scaling up and sustaining the implementation of the evidence-based practices once they have been implemented with fidelity.

Component #2: Support for LEA Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices

PRDE's goal is to ensure that every public school student dominates core content areas so that when students graduate from high school, they have developed the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college or a career. As reported, during Phase I, one of the criteria taken into consideration for the selection of Indicator 3 as the focus of the SSIP is the fact that this is also the focus of PRDE's ESSA Flexibility, which has an end objective of improving academic achievement for students primarily in math, with a goal of having both initiatives aligned and working together. PRDE schools should promote appropriate academic settings with the help of an effective and efficient administration that makes the best use of existing services and resources.

The Mission of Focus Schools

PRDE's State-Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) is aligned as mentioned above to APR Indicator 3C and focuses on improving the performance of students with disabilities on the Puerto Rico Assessment (PPAA by its acronym in Spanish^[1]). Specifically, the SIMR shall be an increase in the percentage % of special education students from the 6th grade who score proficient or advanced on the regular assessment for math from the selected **focus** schools in the Yabucoa School District. The mission of the focus schools is to provide students access to a free and nonsectarian educational system that exposes them to academic, vocational, technical and highly skilled learning. The goal of these schools is to close the gaps between the subgroups to a minimum of 50% of their previous levels and not be within the 10% of schools with the widest gaps.

Each focus school has to establish an Authentic Comprehensive School Plan (PCEA by its acronym in Spanish). **The PCEAs highlight the analysis of student's needs data to define the interventions necessary to reduce the gaps in all focus schools.** The PCEA is the organized response to a planning process which will address the needs and goals of PRDE for a set time period. This should constitute the framework to guide the activities that need to be completed during the school year. The PCEA will be valid for two (2) years and annual reviews are required. The school director in collaboration with the School's Planning Committee (SPC), has the responsibility to determine the activities and interventions that will be developed in their PCEAs according to the specific needs of their students and the interventions that have been proven to be effective. The initiatives and strategies from de SSIP are part of the operational objectives from the PCEA of every school.

PRDE will support the implementation of the Evidence Based Practices (EBPs) with the strategies presented below. These strategies will be evaluated by the SPC at monthly meetings to determine if they are being effective. Evidence of these meetings are recorded by the school director in the PCEA platform. If it is identified that the strategies are not effective, amendments can be made to PCEA at any time during the year.

The PCEA allows each school to:

- document student achievement, staffing, and available resources for the current year using data available through the PRDE central data system
- document the analysis of trends in student achievement, identify root causes for poor student performance, and propose strategies for improving student achieving
- outline school-wide professional development needs and specify additional professional development necessary to meet the needs of specific subgroups of students within the school
- plan activities that reflect the interests and needs of parents, plan initiatives to engage parents in the school's educational processes and promote strong and effective family-school relationships
- plan for the use of local and federal funds for the current school year

Authentic Comprehensive School Plan Online Guide (ACSPOG)

To contribute on the development of the PCEA, PRDE established the Authentic Comprehensive School Plan Online Guide (ACSPOG). This guide supports the school director to establish systematic and rigorous processes that lead to fostering the development of all students. The PCEA contains four fundamental principles that make up the TIAR Models. The TIAR model is: the transformation of the operational aspects; integration of students, mothers, parents, guardians, teachers, school principals, community, government agencies, nonprofit organizations and the private sector to educational management;

expansion of educational offerings; and revision or creation of educational policies.

In the Authentic Comprehensive School Plan Online Guide (ACSPOG) is presented the exercise that should be done by each school director to identify the needs to be included in its PCEA. The school needs assessment is composed of two major areas: identification and the analysis of the school's needs. Both components are described in the table below.

The Analysis	Assures that:
Internal and external factors that prevent schools from achieving the desired expectations are identified during the investigation state	Ø A thorough study needs the five steps of data: student performance, processes, demographic, perception and physical and technological infrastructure.
	Ø A clear definition of the issue, situation, or problem we have to solve in order to measure their reach.
	Ø Specify the nature and magnitude of the need subsequently determines the actions to follow.
	Ø Establish priorities between different needs and determine most urgent issues within the same need.
	Ø Identify viable and realistic goals and objectives.
	Ø Determine the appropriate interventions to address the need.
	Ø Determine the time the required actions take
Ø Determine the necessary resources to meet the needs, both human and economic.	

The exercise presented above considers the school needs and is a way to assure the best fit for the coherent improvement strategies. Also, the school has a School Intervention Plan (PIE) which establishes the strategies and additional interventions. The PIE contains all subject matter Evidence Based Practices.

Evidence Based Practices (EBP)

The Authentic Comprehensive School Plan Online Guide (ACSPOG) contains the definition and the Evidence Based Practices (EBP) that the PRDE has adopted to guide the school director in the drafting of its PCEA. This way PRDE assures that the school PCEA is aligned to comply with its requirements. As defined in the ACSPOG the evidence based practices that PRDE selected "are based on scientific research", which means that when possible, the educational interventions being used must be strongly supported by evidence from well-conducted research studies. Strategies selected should be those that strengthen academic programs, increase the amount and quality of instructional time, and address the particular needs of the population[2]. The ACSPOG contains the six criteria of evidence-based research in order to clarify and compliment the EBP definition. The six criteria are; systematic empirical methods, rigorous data analysis, based on measurement that provides valid and replicable evidence, experimental or quasi-experimental research designs, studies are clearly detailed in order for them to be easily replicable and reviewed and accepted by independent experts.

Likewise the Guide establishes the characteristics of an evidence-based research instructional program which are that:

- The program theory, strategy, or design should be evidence-based.
- Program effectiveness assessment based on evidence.
- Earnings should be evaluated by an external evaluator (consultant, researchers, state, district, team evaluation).
- The program should have been studied for at least one year and have been implemented for three years to be considered rigorous.
- The study should be able to be replicated.
- Professional development should be continuous.

Specifically, for **math** which is our main component in the SIMR, PRDE established the following EBPs to address their individual needs for students with disabilities: concept development, integration of technology, contextualized instruction, problem-based learning (PBL), curriculum integration, and research in action, differentiated instruction and focus on problem-solving. Other strategies that are included in the school's participating PIE's are: an extended learning time program, job embedded professional development plan, parent and community involvement strategy, and data driven decision making. The chart below present de EBP's that is selected for math:

Description of the EBPS Strategies for the math

- **Problem Based Learning (PBL)**

1.

This student-centered method is through which the problems of daily life are resolved to merge the different areas of knowledge necessary to solve problems. The work is done collaboratively in small groups until the problem arises to its solution. Learning is self-directed; students share their learning experience, practice skill development and its reflection on the process. Proponents of ABP believe that learning is both to know and do. Problem based learning (ABP, by its acronym in Spanish) program designers are based on the premise that students gain knowledge in each learning experience. They also consider that students are better able to learn when the following conditions are met:

- Prior knowledge is activated and encouraged to incorporate new knowledge.
- Students are given numerous opportunities to apply this knowledge
- Learning new knowledge occurs in the context in which it will be used later.

Problem-based learning is a teaching strategy – which helps with knowledge acquisition, development of skills and attitudes that are important. ABP in a small group of students meets with the facilitation of a tutor, to analyze and solve selected problems or specially designed to achieve certain learning objectives.

- **Contextualized Instruction**

1.

Teaching is based on making content relevant to students. Contextualized teaching considers the processes and uses understanding, discovery and connections in teaching. Learning is based on the construction of knowledge. The context refers to an event, situation or problems arising from reality and is meaningful to the student.

- **Concept Development**

A concept is a category that is used to group events, ideas, objects, or similar people. Learning concepts suggests that in our mind we have a prototype, example: an image that captures the essence of a given concept.

The components of a lesson for teaching concepts are:

- Examples and counterexamples
- Relevant and irrelevant attributes
- Name of the concept
- Definition of the concept
- Diagrams or maps

The concepts significantly facilitate the process of thinking. Instead of labeling and categorizing separately each new object or event, simply existing concepts are incorporated. The concepts allow you to group objects or events that share common properties and respond in the same way to each example of the concept.

- **Technology Integration (TI)When the teacher uses digital technology, you can get students interested in their own learning and problem solving applied to subject matter or desired. For students, technology is a tool of their choice and commonly used. The Internet is used as a tool to approach knowledge that the teacher doesn't have on hand.**

1. This is the more traditional approach, which views Internet and TI as tools to implement the usual educational practices. The goal is to work directly on the network, building activities and energizing conversations that move the classroom to the Internet. This includes active work of students in blogs, social bookmarking, social media campaigns, collaborative subtitling videos, etc.
2. This technique incorporates technology into the classroom as an additional tool that will help enrich the teaching-learning process. The technology will be used for individualized teaching and as a strategy of inclusion. It is a tool that will also be used in offering tutorials, practice and troubleshooting using educational material previously evaluated. If the cultural paradigm is used in the design of educational activities mediated by digital technology, the student learns to handle and appropriate knowledge, whether in the area of natural and social sciences, mathematics, geography or Spanish.

- **Curricular Integration**

Students learn best when knowledge is organized in complete units rather than isolated units. This practice presupposes that knowledge is integrated and not isolated. Classrooms should be learning communities in which all contribute to the intellectual development of their peers. Courses designed in an integrated manner, generally interest students more. Curriculum integration of prior knowledge of the child, personal experiences, reasoning, strategies, attitudes and habits should also be incorporated. The curricular integration is planned by the teacher according to the needs and interests of their students.

Strengths and the content of the subjects which are then related to the study of the subject. Through thematic units the curricular in integration promotes the development of research capacity, creativity, problem solving, language development and humanism in childhood.

Curricular integration include means for differentiating instruction for students with disabilities. Curricular maps establish performance tasks with alternative strategies for teachers to be used with students with disabilities. PRDE has only one curriculum for each content area and that curriculum applies to all students. Professional development activities highlight aspects of the curricula so that every classroom teacher has a repertoire of tools for adjusting standards-based instruction to address every student's needs.

Curriculum integration is supported by Michael Halliday's study from 1975, in which he found that children learn best to read and write when their learning contexts include significant experiences with real purposes. Instead of emphasizing the teaching of reading in isolated and decontextualized skills, children should be provided with meaningful learning experiences. Similarly, researchers like Sue Bredekamp (1987) have argued that curriculum integration works because it makes maximum use of the capacity of the brain. The human brain detects patterns and is more effective when processing meaningful information.

- **Research in action**

Research in action is an interactive inquiry process that balances problem solving skills in a collaborative context. Moreover, action research is designed and conducted by practitioners who analyze the data to improve their own practice.

The different movements born out action research point to the following as essential steps in the process:

- Reflection on a problem area, for example, students' not paying attention in class
- Planning and implementation of alternative actions to improve the problematic situation, such as the approach of new activities, new group dynamics, etc.,
- Evaluation of the results of the action taken in order to undertake a second cycle or loop of three stages. To follow the same example, the assessment of the effects caused by new activities and organization of groups proposed in the students' attention. This assessment involves the approach of new problems, as could be, the role of the teacher in the classroom.
-

- **Differentiated Instruction**

This strategy is an extension of a high-quality curriculum and not a replacement. The main role of the teacher is to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of students and to help them use it; to build meaning of the ideas of disciplines and apply them to the world around them. Differentiated instruction maximizes the potential of each student. The teaching-learning process includes or may be directed to the whole class, small groups or individually. Teachers use the time, space, materials and educational strategies flexibly according to the needs of the students. The classrooms are conceived as learning communities and these students share with teachers the responsibility for its growth. The main function is that students achieve their educational goals through channeling and teacher support.

Coherent Improvement Strategies

As previously mentioned in Component 1 (Infrastructure), as part of PRDE's efforts to strengthen its infrastructure to comply with its ESSA Flexibility, PRDE continues partnered with external providers, known as Differentiated Support Network (*Red de Apoyo Diferenciado* or RAD by its acronym in Spanish). The RADs are external providers that have the responsibility of offering services aimed at school transformation and school turnaround. The efforts are to be focused on increasing the academic achievement of students and teacher professional development, taking into consideration the specific needs of each school, including the needs of students with disabilities.

The RADs continue offering individualized administrative and academic support to address the specific areas of need for each school. The RADs also continue help schools in planning and implementation of the interventions designed to result in school transformation. Each school community, in cooperation with its assigned external service provider (i.e., its RAD), works to implement the EBP's and other interventions in order to achieve the goals established in the school's intervention plan (which is a component of the school's PCEA). This intervention plan contains and addresses the school's needs and the specific reasons for why the school has been identified as focus.

PRDE understands that in order to obtain the expected results in the ESSA Flexibility and the SSIP, it is important the coordination and teamwork between different units impacting the special education students. For this, the SAEE continues

joined forces with the Undersecretary of Academic Affairs and the Yabucoa School District with the goal of carrying out coordinated work to address both Flexibility and the SSIP initiatives. Quarterly meetings/working sessions were coordinated to analyze the planned interventions in the selected schools, along with employees of the school district and the RADs.

Besides working with the district, SAEЕ also joined forces and has worked together with the RAD’s Director in order to assure that the selected schools receive the services that were contracted and that the RAD count with specialized resources to impact special education teachers.

As we mention in the Infrastructure Component, the SAEЕ also developed a series of improvement strategies in collaboration with different units and offices from PRDE. Among these efforts are:

- During October 2015 the SAEЕ in coordination with the RAD’s Office Director, held meetings island wide. The participants were all the focus schools RAD’s, the District Special Assistants and focus schools directors, to provide orientation about the SSIP initiative and the capacity of its current infrastructure to support improvement, scale-up and sustain the use of EBPs. With the main focus of improving math performance for students with disabilities on elementary focus school in their region.
- As established in our SIMR, that “providing professional development for both general and special education teachers with regard to serving students with disabilities that will be sure to address concerns identified in the needs assessment”. The SAEЕ in joined efforts with the Yabucoa District and as a continuum of training from the Planning Training provided last year and discussed in Phase I, SAEЕ offered an orientation for Differentiated Instruction on March 2016. The training was provided by Prof. Felipe Olmeda from special education technical assistance unit on the Central Level. The professor was selected as the resource to provide such training because of his expertise in special education and experience as a Special Education Teacher, School Director, Municipality Facilitator, District Facilitator and Special Education Facilitator at the SAEЕ Monitoring and Compliance Unit for a total of 26 years in the public service. The training was design in collaboration with the Yabucoa Math Facilitator, Prof. Elizabeth Rodriguez, who also has a vast experience in this academic subject. As a stakeholder input to evidence the acquisition of knowledge a pre and post-test had to me submitted to the audience. The construction of the pre and post-test was created jointly with various TA Facilitators at the central level to ensure validity of the test. The results of this training will be presented at the Evaluation Component.

As mentioned, PRDE has developed a series of platforms in order to benefit the schools, the district and the central level. With these technology platforms the multiples units and office in the PRDE also can ensure that the steps and the implementation of interventions that are being developed at the school level and district levels occur within the timelines. These new technology platforms are: PCEA Live, SAMA (Support and Academic Monitoring System platform), and RAD.

[1] From the 2015-2016 school year PRDE new system for evaluating students called META-PR, *Measurement and Evaluation for Academic Transformation of Puerto Rico*. In the evaluation component we explained in detail this change.

[2] Page 45 of the ACSPOG

Evaluation

(a) Specify how the evaluation is aligned to the theory of action and other components of the SSIP and the extent to which it includes short-term and long-term objectives to measure implementation of the SSIP and its impact on achieving measurable improvement in SIMR(s) for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

(b) Specify how the evaluation includes stakeholders and how information from the evaluation will be disseminated to stakeholders.

(c) Specify the methods that the State will use to collect and analyze data to evaluate implementation and outcomes of the SSIP and the progress toward achieving intended improvements in the SIMR(s).

(d) Specify how the State will use the evaluation data to examine the effectiveness of the implementation; assess the State’s progress toward achieving intended improvements; and to make modifications to the SSIP as necessary.

Component #3: Evaluation

With the purpose of evaluating the alignment of PRDE’s theory of action and other components of the SSIP/ESSA Flexibility, PRDE has established several internal and external evaluation processes. Each evaluation process will be discussed. For your reference, provided below is a brief summary of PRDE’s theory of action and SIMR as described in Phase I.

PRDE’s State-Identified Measurable Result (SIMR) is aligned to APR Indicator 3C and focuses on improving the performance of students with disabilities on the PPAA. Specifically, the SIMR is an increase in the percentage % of special education students from the 6th grade who score proficient or advanced on the regular assessment for math from the selected schools in the Yabucoa School District.

Through the SSIP, PRDE believes that IF it implements the combination of the following interventions (Theory of Action):

- Conducting a school specific needs assessment for serving students with disabilities; (addressed in Phase I)
- Providing professional development for both general and special education teachers with regard to serving students with disabilities that will be sure to address concerns identified in the needs assessment (in a coordinated fashion between the SAEE, the RADs and the school district);
- Assignment of additional resources such as ensuring a district level special education facilitator is in place as well as those services provided to the school by the RAD (discussed above); and,
- An Academic Monitoring plan carried out by the district to ensure compliance with the ESSA Flexibility and SSIP,

THEN, the result will be in improved performance of students with disabilities taking the PPAA[1] at the participating schools. To illustrate the interrelation between the theory of action with the SSIP evaluation plan, SAEE presents the Logic Model. The Logic Model outlines the short and long term outcomes that will be reached by implementing the coherent improvement strategies, established in Phase I and applied in Phase II.

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes	
	Strategies	Participation	Short-Term	Long-Term
Professional development for general education teachers with regard to serving students with disabilities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide professional development for strengthening school leadership, improve teaching, and increase student learning. 2. Provide Individual Coaching 3. Provide Group Coaching 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SAEE 2. Special Education Facilitators 3. RAD's 	Teachers will have the tools to offer differentiated instructions.	
Strengthen instructional planning of special education teachers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide professional development in instructional planning for special ed teachers 2. Provide Individual Coaching 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SAEE 2. District (Math and Special Ed Facilitators) 3. RAD's 	Special Education teachers will strengthen their academic planning skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers gain in Knowledge 2. Improved academic achievement of special education students 3. Reduction in academic gaps between the special education subgroup and all students.
Increase communication between the teacher from the general education classroom and the special education teacher.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide Group Coaching 2. Learning Communities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. District 2. RAD's 	Have better communication between the teacher from the general education classroom and the special education teacher.	
Schools utilizing data based strategies in making educational decisions.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide professional development (workshops) on Data Driven Decision Making 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. District (Math and Special Ed Facilitators) 2. RAD's 	Increase the capacity of schools to use data in decision making	
Have all Special Education Facilitator in the municipalities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assignment of resources to support academic 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SAEE 2. Humacao 	Increase the TA assistance that the Special Education	

Inputs	Outputs		Outcomes	
	Strategies	Participation	Short-Term	Long-Term
and the district to support the schools	management/oversight.	Region	Facilitator provided to schools	

With the purpose of evaluating the alignment of the theory of action and other components of the SSIP/ESSA Flexibility PRDE has established internal and external evaluation processes. We will discuss first the internal evaluation process. The evaluation process described below comes from ESSA Flexibility, as it directly impacts the subgroups including special education subgroup. Also, it impacts the work performed by the special education teachers and district facilitators.

Internal Evaluation

1. *Accountability System*

As mentioned above, the SIMR impacts the elementary focus schools at the Yabucoa District. It is important to note that each focus school has established a PCEA. Focus school PCEAs emphasize analysis of student need data to determine the interventions necessary to address the achievement gaps that caused the school to be identified as focus. Each school director, in conjunction with their school's PCEA Working Committee, establishes the activities and interventions that the school has developed and/or revised for every school year in order to improve the academic achievement of its students.

As part of the PCEA, each school prepared a School Intervention Plan (PIE). The PIE established strategies and additional interventions that will be implemented in the schools based on the results from the needs assessment and input from the school community, the district and an external service provider (RAD). The PIE contains all subject matter EBPs. For **math**, the participating schools selected the following EBPs to address their individual needs for students with disabilities: concept development, integration of technology in the classroom, curriculum integration, learning communities, and differentiated instruction. Additionally, other strategies that are included in the PIE are: an extended learning time program, job embedded professional development plan, parent and community involvement strategy, and data driven decision making, as discussed in on the second component.

The PCEA presents from each school:

- The achievement of students, personnel, and other resources available for the year, utilizing the available data.
- The analysis of student achievement tendencies, identifying root causes of low academic achievement, and propose strategies for improving student academic achievement.
- Summarizes school professional development needs for specific student subgroups (including special education students) within the school.
- Plan initiatives to involve parents in educational processes of the school and promote strong and effective relationships between families and the school.

School Level

In order for the school to assure compliance with its PCEA they have to create a Planning Committee. This planning committee is composed of a representative of each area and grade of the school and their mayor responsibility is to assure that the PCEA is being implemented in accordance to the requirements of the Department of Education.

The committee has to meet at least once a month and provide evidence to the district, region and central level. The evidence of the meetings are uploaded at the Platform of the PCEA. The platform requires evidences of these meetings such as: meeting minutes, attendance sheets and agenda in order to accept the meeting as done. The results/report from this meeting has to be aligned with the objectives and strategies goals of the PCEA. At the district level the Academic Superintendent is in charge of monitoring these meetings.

District Level

At the district level, monthly meetings are held with district staff including school directors to ensure the system's ability to

meet grade level requirements. During these meetings, the district also facilitates discussions between schools to share best practices and develop intervention strategies. The district level staff provides support through technical assistance to the school director.

The Superintendent of Academic Support is also in charge of monitoring the visits of the academic facilitators. This school year the Yabucoa Academic Superintendent completed a monitoring of the technical assistance visits made from the academic and special education facilitators. From the visits identified, the 85% were related to administrative aspects. The other 15% was related to direct assistance to classroom teacher, which was an identified need. This is an important observation of the evaluation process of the district level that was addressed immediately. To assure the academic support and technical assistance at the school level, the academic superintendent establish an aggressive corrective action plan with the district facilitators. This plan includes monthly meetings to evaluate the interventions of these personnel in the participating schools. At this moment, the percent of direct assistance to the classroom has increased in a 87%.

As part of the requirements of ESSA Flexibility, each district has to complete the Supporting Effective Instruction and Leadership (Principle III). This process starts at the school level with the school director who has to meet with all the teachers and evaluate their performance and needs areas. After the meeting with the teacher the school director jointly completes a summary of the intervention required for each teacher. Then, the Superintendent of Academic Support refers the teacher to the academic facilitator in order for them to provide focus technical assistance. Specifically, at the Yabucoa District each academic and special education facilitator has to complete an individual action plan for each referred teacher, which is a cycle of targeted academic technical assistance with a minimum of 2 visits per teacher.

If a teacher has more than six visits and the facilitator establishes that the interventions are no longer effective, the school director initiate the regular teacher evaluation. If the teacher is evaluated as low performing, they have to establish an action plan that contains the activities to address their needs.

Central Level

As we mentioned in the Component 1, in order to support the school's compliance with PRDE's ESSA Flexibility Plan and the SSIP, PRDE has developed a series of platforms that benefit both schools and external suppliers. The Undersecretary of Academic Affairs and the Associate Secretary of Special Education (SAEE) use these platforms RAD and SAMA to ensure and evaluate the implementation of interventions that are being developed at the school and district level.

Is important to establish that at the SAEE the Compliance Officer and all Technical Assistance Facilitator have access to those platforms and continuously monitor the progress of the participating schools. In addition, SAEE working group have regular meetings with the Yabucoa District staff to ensure and evaluate the progress of the district initiatives that impact the participating schools. The SAEE working group is composed by Compliance Officer, SAEEs TA Facilitator, Special Assistant of the Under-secretariat of Academic Affairs and Yabucoa's Academic Superintendent.

External Evaluation

- *External Evaluation at the District Level*

In its initial ESSA Flexibility and as mentioned on the Phase I of the SSIP, PRDE planned to hire an external evaluator to work on evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of PRDE's differentiated system of accountability. The goal for this initiative was to ensure that services were provided to priority, focus, and 5% of schools with the lowest academic achievement in Title I, and those schools that have not been classified yet. However, given PRDE's experience with the implementation of ESSA Flexibility during the 2014-2015 school year, PRDE has decided that the original focus of this services, offered by external evaluators, is no longer appropriate. PRDE has designed and implemented new processes and technological platforms that facilitates the monitoring from the Central level. PRDE has developed these online systems that help ensure that interventions at the school level are: 1) aligned to the needs of the school and 2) implemented with fidelity.

As such, PRDE has changed the scope of the external evaluator to provide technical assistance and management support staff performance at the district level. The external service provider has visited some selected regions and has submitted reports that include an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and recommendations to the central level and / or school district. These reports are submitted to the Secretariat for Academic Affairs and shared with key PRDE areas including SAEE. The selection of the districts to evaluate are made by identifying the ones with more needs, based on the results of the monitoring process made by Office of Academic Affairs in the SAMA platform. This external evaluator has visited various district and has offered technical assistance. This technical assistance is offered by using as a basis the good practices of some districts in those districts that have deficiencies in these same areas, which has been beneficial for them. PRDE SAEE is coordinating with the Office of Academic Affairs the inclusion of the Yabucoa District as part of the visits of the external evaluator.

Through the School Transformation Unit (UTE, by its acronym in Spanish) PRDE has designed an assessment procedure to evaluate the performance of external providers in terms of quality of services in compliance with program requirements. This evaluation process allows for the analysis of the impact of services provided by suppliers and the ability to take appropriate and timely action on the necessary changes required to ensure the effective implementation of the school improvement plan. The provider establishes short- and long-term objectives in order to achieve a positive impact on indicators measuring the progress of schools.

In order to evaluate and monitor providers in priority and focus schools, PRDE developed a request for proposals for selecting an external evaluator to carry out an external evaluation that focuses on assessing compliance with administrative, programmatic and academic priority areas.

- *Evaluations of External Providers (RAD)*

PRDE's criteria for evaluating external suppliers was developed using the Guide to Work with External Providers (Learning Point, 2010). PRDE used this guide to create a conceptual framework to involve, manage and evaluate external providers. The providers are evaluated using the following criteria:

- Whether the Provider understands PRDE's needs and their ability to align products and services with these specific needs.
- The proven success of the provider to achieve positive impacts in the process of teaching and learning.
- The extent to which professional development from the provider is based on scientific research and its alignment with the academic, curricular and academic goals of PRDE.
- The extent to which the providers products and services can be customized.
- The ability of the provider to demonstrate how professional development activities are part of a long-term strategy to improve teaching and learning.
- The provider's ability to focus on specific content that teachers need in order to teach and students need in order to learn
- The provider's ability to link academic strategies based on scientific research that addresses specific challenges identified by schools
- The extent to which service providers are aligned with other major initiatives currently under development at PRDE and the degree to which the provider's services support the services currently offered by the staff from PRDE

The goal of this evaluation system is to promote continuous improvement and enable the development of internal capacity related to the selection and supervision of service providers. The supplier evaluation is aligned with PRDE's broader accountability system (i.e. assessment results, graduation rates) but also includes intermediate measures of progress. These intermediate indicators indicate the degree to which the services are required and if annual academic achievement goals are being met.

On December 2015, PRDE released a memorandum titled "Visits for the external evaluations of the RADs". Through the memo PRDE notifies to the academic community that an external evaluator has been contracted to perform visits to the schools that receive RAD services such as, priority No-SIG, and focus schools. The visits have the main purpose to evaluate the services provided to the schools by the RADs. From the total of 195 schools that received such services, a representative sample of 74 schools has been selected randomly. Regarding to the Yabucoa District, considering the SSIP initiative, two of our participating schools were part of that sample. The schools are: María T. Delgado and Eugenio M. de Hostos. Both schools were visited on March 14, 2016. The evaluation includes the following process: interview to the school director, teachers, parents, and RAD personnel; observation of process in the classroom and different types of surveys. PRDE has requested the preliminary report by the end of the visit cycle.

Additional methods for evaluating the performance and services from the providers includes an online questionnaire to school staff so they may provide their feedback. An example of the questions are:

- Were there any problems during implementation?
- Did the supplier establish and maintain a good relationship with the school and district?
- Did the provider deliver services as expected?
- Was there a gap between the needs of the school and provider services?
- Were there any logistical challenges? If there was, was it resolved quickly and efficiently?
- Did the service provider align to content standards and assessment practices provided by PRDE?
- Did the service provider come into conflict with some of the local requirements?
- Did the supplier participate in a continuous and open communication with all relevant stakeholders?
- Did the supplier respond to concerns / conflicts in a timely manner and efficiently?

Specifically, for the Yabucoa District RAD questionnaire all schools participating on our SIMR have reported satisfaction with the performance and services provided by the external supplier. As a result, this evaluation is part of the criteria to consider the

extension of the supplier's contract.

PRDE pretends to use internal evaluation processes as a short-term option to identify achievements and areas of needs, allowing to address them promptly. Moreover, the evaluation that is made by external providers wants as a long-term, to validate that the different levels of support from PRDE through the RADs, have been implementing strategies aligned to the standards and expectations previously established and demonstrate improvement in the achievement of all students.

SAEE's Analysis

PRDE SAE, in order to evaluate the SSIP's selected improvement strategies, created an instrument which includes the interventions received by the selected focus schools from the different entities that are providing support and/or technical assistance. This instrument is nourished from different tools developed by PRDE, mentioned previously in this section. Among which are the following, SAMA, PCEA, RAD, district working sessions and interventions made by the SAE. This evaluation process, also includes, the growth in student's achievement between the 10 and 20 weeks of classes. This instrument was approved by the stakeholder group, who also recommended that it may be carried out by the SAE working group.

This exercise is done previous to the evaluation of the PPAA results, in order to monitor every 10 weeks the achievement of the students of the participating schools. PRDE SAE plan to do this evaluation 2 times a year. First, comparing the results of the 10 and 20 weeks. And at the end of the school year using the results of the 30 and 40 weeks.

In the graph below, will be presented the results of the analysis of the students scoring in their grades "A's, B's or C's" in math.

The results in the evaluation of students with disabilities from the participating schools shows for 4th grade an improvement of 5% in the 20 weeks. For 5th grade it shows a progress of 1% and for the 6th grade demonstrate a decrease of 2%. This reduction in the academic progress was identified in two of the participating schools, which are Jorge Rosario del Valle and SU Isidro Vicens (Quebrada Honda). To address the particular needs of these two schools the SAE and the Yabucoa District determined to increase the technical assistance provided from the district to identify their needs and establish the strategies that will impact their progress.

As a recommendation from our stakeholder group and part of our evaluation process the SAE evaluated the professional development titled "Differentiated Instruction for Students with Disabilities". As mentioned in component #2, our SIMR establishes that "providing professional development for both general and special education teachers with regard to serving students with disabilities that will be sure to address concerns identified in the needs assessment". It is important to note that the facilitators that provided the orientation are highly qualified. The assistance of teachers from special education, math, and school directors was perfect. To measure the knowledge acquired a pre and post-test was submitted to the participants. Also, a satisfaction questionnaire was utilized to measure their complacency with the training. Below will be discussed in first-hand the results of the pre and post-test and after will be discussed the results of the satisfaction questionnaire.

Summary of the pre and post test results:

From the satisfaction questionnaire it can be concluded that the instructor demonstrated mastery on the subject and considered that the information prepared them for their personal and professional development.

The following objective was achieved at the training the differentiated instruction as part of the public policy of the PRDE, is considered as an educational strategy, with usefulness in teaching and the learning process for students with disabilities.

SAE and SSIP stakeholder group can conclude that the constant communication and monitoring of the Yabucoa District has impacted significantly the performance of the academic and special education facilitators focusing the provision of their technical assistance on academic aspects and visits to the classroom. Also, they have impacted the RADs, assuring that the implementation of all the initiatives are taking place in a coordinated manner and as establish in PRDEs ESSA Flexibility and SSIP. This has been, based on SAEs evaluation, the key to having surpassed the goal of our SIMR. The function of the district of overseeing the new transforming vision of PRDE has been beneficial to the SSIP and for the implementation of the ESSA Flexibility. Also, addressing the district need of having a special education facilitator in place, has strengthen the technical assistance provided to the schools, which is beneficial for the students.

Given that the results of the evaluation were satisfactory, the SAE sees no need to make major changes or modifications to the SSIP for this phase. However, considering the changes that will occur by the restructuring of PRDE (during the next school year 2016-2017), if necessary to make changes to the SIMR, the SAE undoubtedly will discuss with the stakeholders so that the changes will be made taking into account the best interests of our students.

Changes in Puerto Rico Assessment from PPAA to META-PR

The evaluation process of students is integral and necessary to ensure the quality and effectiveness of educational processes taught in school. The proper use and interpretation of the evaluation process contributes significantly to improve student learning. Given this, and as part of the restructuring and academic transformation with longitudinal view, DEPR has instituted the test called META-PR, *Measurement and Evaluation for Academic Transformation of Puerto Rico* as the new system for evaluating students. The previous system the PPAA, was one of accountability based on the proficiency of students. This new system META-PR, is a multilevel system of support and accountability. META-PR academic achievement is measured in the areas of Spanish, Math, English as a second language and science. These tests are aligned with the fundamental concepts and skills contained in the Standards and Expectations Grade 2014, established by the DEPR. The results of META-PR will allow the Department to implement effective and relevant pedagogical decisions that help improve our students authentic learning.

As part of this new evaluation system, the DEPR convert the result that students obtain in META-PR assessment in another grade that will be included in the final academic progress report for each student. For this year, only Spanish will be include in the final report as a pilot project. Starting next school Math would be included as a pilot project. Each subsequent year a new course would be added.

Stakeholder Involvement (Family and Community Involvement)

Family and community involvement has historically been a challenge for the PRDE due in part to the passive role these two stakeholders have played in the past. Over the past two years, the participation of families and communities at the school level has become a priority. In 2013 the PRDE has issued several administrative policies to encourage parental and community member involvement such as the Curricular Letter # 15 from 2013-2014 published in July 20, 2013. PRDE use the National Standards for Parent Involvement, based on the model of Joyce Epstein (2001) as a guide. This model includes six standard collaborations between families, schools and community. These include: facilitating the proactive participation of parents and the community to strengthen the integration of parents and the community in the decision-making process; establish alliances and relationships with schools that will benefit students, among others. Current PRDE policies support the implementation of PRDE ESSAs Flexibility as it prioritizes the participation of the parents of special education students and LLE students.

At school level the PRDE disseminate information about ESSA flexibility and gather feedback from stakeholders through the school councils. After performing an event with parents and community members, school directors send information describing the event and reporting a summary of the feedback received to the District Special Assistant and at the same time they send the information to the Central Level. (No significant suggestions have been received)

For students with disabilities, the Special Education Services Center (CSEE), released information about the ESSA Flexibility Plan and SSIP to parent's island wide. This strategy has been particularly effective because CSEE is already a resource that parents regularly use. At the Center, parents are given access to all information and can make recommendations or comments. Additionally, there were monthly parent meetings for those who visited CSEE. At these meetings, parents receive information and have the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any issues or concerns. Parent feedback collected during these meetings was shared with the SAEE at Central Level and at the same time the SAEE personnel share this information with the Office of Academic Affairs.

In addition to the meetings in the CSEE, the Associate Secretary of Special Education has been meeting with various groups of special education students' parents to share information about the ESSA Flexibility and SSIP. Specifically, there was a meeting between the Associate Secretary, the parents of the Committee of Special Education, the Special Education Advisory Committee (CCEE) and the APNI (Support for Parents of Disabled Children).

As we previously mentioned, PRDE uses a standard platform for PCEAs, which assists and guides schools with the development of their PCEAs. Various stakeholders were involved in the process of updating the design and platform used by schools to create their PCEA. During this process PRDE received feedback, questions and suggestions that were incorporated into the final design of the PCEA. There have been extensive discussions with stakeholders regarding how schools complying with all indicators, except significant gaps, can change their classification. The Under Secretariat for Academic Affairs and the Auxiliary Secretary of Transformation, Planning and Performance have considered the recommendations of school administrators in developing workshops and establishing the adequate changes in the documents to support and respond to the needs of stakeholders.

As mentioned in the introduction, PRDE SAEE held various meetings with its stakeholder group and received their input regarding all three Phase II SSIP components, which includes the evaluation processes. The stakeholder group for the Phase II was composed including: Academic Superintendent of the Yabucoa School District, Special Assistants/Compliance Officers,

ESSA Waiver Coordinator (Flexibility), SAEE Special Education Academic Facilitators, parents of students with disabilities and relevant consultants. For identification of the instruments to be used as part of the evaluation process, the stakeholder's participation was essential. As mentioned before, the stakeholder was part of the design of our instrument to evaluate the SSIP. They also, collaborated in the analysis made of the results of the PRDE's regular assessment and also the comparison of the growth on student's achievement on the 10 and 20 weeks of classes.

[1] As previously mentioned, from the 2015-2016 school year PRDE new system for evaluating students called META-PR, *Measurement and Evaluation for Academic Transformation of Puerto Rico*. In the evaluation component we explained in detail this change.

Technical Assistance and Support

Describe the support the State needs to develop and implement an effective SSIP. Areas to consider include: Infrastructure development; Support for EIS programs and providers implementation of EBP; Evaluation; and Stakeholder involvement in Phase II.

Technical Assistance and Support

PRDE has determined the better use of its existing resources. With this in mind it was determined as a stakeholder input that the alignment with the ESSA Flexibility was necessary to combine the efforts of the SAEE and the Under-secretariat of Academic Affairs. Even though grate input has been received from the stakeholder group, the SAEE identified as a barrier the stakeholder involvement in the development of Phase II. Trying to meet all the group together and focusing the meetings was difficult. This is why the SAEE would like assistance on strategies to better involve stakeholders.

The support that PRDE has received from OSEP on clarifying doubts and being available at any time has been very beneficial. Also a key point in our accomplishment has been the technical assistance of NCSI members as such Katherine Bradley and Pakethia Harris for the development of the PRDE logic model, in the evaluation process and the elaboration on the Component #2 EBP's for math. The math collaborative have helped in recognizing other States with the same needs as PR and using these States experience as reference. SAEE would like to continue with the technical assistance received as it has shown to be effective. We understand that in order to be effective and successful in Phase III this technical assistance would be significant on the on-going evaluation process.

Also, as soon as the Phases of the restructuring of PRDE are fully implemented for next school year, SAEE will evaluate the impact at the school level. When SAEE acknowledges the complete information on how they could affect the participating schools would be beneficial to receive technical assistance on how to manage the impact on the Phase III of the SSIP.