



## 2018-19 State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Summary Derby Public Schools

### Background Information

During the 2017-18 school year Derby Public Schools was identified for Tier II SSIP support based on an analysis of 1) the number of students with disabilities taking the statewide assessment; 2) the performance of students with disabilities; and 3) the gap in performance between students with disabilities and their typical peers. The district was then identified for Tier III support based on their scores on the District Literacy Evaluation Tool (DLET), a self-assessment provided by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). This support consisted of focused technical assistance and learning activities in the 2017-18 school year, and five days of additional technical assistance in the 2018-19 school year. The focus for technical assistance provided in the 2018-19 school year was developed by the district in collaboration with the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) and the State Education Resource Center (SERC). Derby Public Schools decided to focus on the alignment and gaps between general education and special education instruction. Technical assistance was provided by Janet N.Y. Zarchen, SERC Consultant.

### District Plan

The following plan was developed by the district.

#### November 2, 2018 (Bradley School) and November 9, 2018 (Irving School)

SERC consultant will meet with a representative team of general and special educators, reading specialists, and administrators to review the DLET, and observe reading instruction of a student in both the general education and special education settings.

#### January 30, 2019 (Bradley School) and January 31, 2019 (Irving School)

SERC consultant will observe grade level data teams facilitated by district coach and Hill for Literacy consultant.

#### March 29, 2019

The original plan was to meet at each school to observe and discuss the implementation decisions made at the data team meetings. This was changed to a meeting with Shelly Sheridan, Tracey Quartiano, and representative teams from both schools to review the DLET results from 2017-18, identify any changes in practice, and consider next steps.

### Notes from Technical Assistance Visits

#### November 2 and 9, 2018

- Special education students have access to a variety of programs and instructional approaches for reading instruction from special educators, reading specialists, general educators, tutors and paraprofessionals.
- Teachers stated that there is alignment between special education instruction and general education instruction in the following ways:
  - Reinforcement of strategies in phonics and word work

- Use of the same stories, decodable books, and activities in general and special education
- Pre-teaching of some content such as vocabulary
- Support provided by paraprofessionals and tutors
- Teacher gave the following as possible reasons that students with disabilities are not achieving at the same levels as their peers:
  - not enough staff
  - intervention strategies are not carried throughout the day – students are not generalizing the strategies, teachers are not supporting (prompting for) the strategies
  - emotional needs of students
  - students have disabilities
  - scheduling of school day/not enough time
  - student demographics/characteristics – free/reduced lunch, transient population, level of family support, etc.

#### January 30 and 31, 2019

- Grade level data team meetings were led by Tracey Quartiano and Kelly Soule, a consultant from Hill for Literacy.
- Data had already been reviewed individually with most teachers. The purpose for the meetings was to determine instructional focus, groupings, instructional approach/program and intervention provider.
- There was a clear process for the meetings. The spreadsheet contained all the necessary information and served as a way to record decisions made by the team.
- Teachers were able to use the meeting as a way to make collaborative decisions about instruction for students.

#### March 29, 2019

- Most of the people in attendance had not taken the original DLET survey.
- After discussing the DLET indicators, the team felt that progress had been made in some areas, but that there is still work to be done.
- Teachers made the following comments:
  - Some teachers may need more information about reading assessments beyond DIBELS, especially diagnostic assessments.
  - Other data, such as student work, should be considered as part of the decision-making process in addition to DIBELS. Some students may be capable, but just not perform well on DIBELS.
  - The district does not have an English Language Arts curriculum.
  - Some teachers worry that students are being misidentified as having a disability.
  - Use of differentiated instruction has improved.
  - Universal design for learning (UDL) is just good teaching. Standardized tests do not follow UDL guidelines.
  - Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) has not been explicitly addressed.
  - Desired student outcomes are not always stated in specific, observable and measureable language.
  - There has been an improvement in students with disabilities having access to the core curriculum, but teachers would like to know more about what this should look like. They are concerned that behavioral issues may prevent this from happening. Another

concern is that students may just be sitting in the general education classroom rather than being truly engaged.

- Students with disabilities do not always receive Tier 3 instruction due to case load and scheduling.
- There has been improvement in students receiving reading intervention from staff with specific skills, training, and knowledge.
- Assistive technology and accessible education materials are being used more.
- There are more professional learning opportunities and coaching is occurring.
- Data teams are in place.
- There are opportunities for family engagement, but it is not always targeted and strategic.

### **Recommendations and Next Steps**

- Continue to work on the alignment of special education and general education instruction through these actions:
  - Increase the amount of time and the ways students with disabilities apply skills and strategies to authentic reading activities.
  - Increase the amount of time general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals and tutors have to collaboratively discuss and plan for instruction.
  - Clarify the alignment of the roles and responsibilities of the general education teacher and the special education teacher.
- Continue to refine the coaching model in order to build teacher capacity.
- Continue to provide professional learning opportunities in the area of reading.
- Consider making adjustments to the schedule as needed, perhaps by creating schedules for special education teachers.
- Continue to refine the SRBI process.
- Increase the opportunities students with disabilities have to show their strengths.
- Consider training for teachers in co-teaching, universal design for learning, culturally relevant pedagogy, and strategies to support students with disabilities in the general education classroom.
- Develop the English Language Arts curriculum.