

Maryland SRCL Grant: Year 1 Executive Summary

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Initiative addresses the literacy concerns among all children, especially those living in poverty, English learners, children with disabilities, and others at risk for academic failure. MSDE recognizes that students do not begin the process of learning to read upon entering school, but the learning process starts well before they enter the schoolhouse. Standards aligned instruction from birth to secondary school is essential for providing students the coherence and support they need to develop effective literacy skills.

Following an independent peer review of applications, MSDE awarded SRCL subgrants to all twenty-four Maryland LEAs in amounts ranging from \$300,000 to \$1 million for Year 1. Applications were ranked according to alignment to priority objectives. Due to state procurement guidelines, two SRCL grant positions included in our application would not be filled in year 1, so additional headquarters funds were allocated to subgrantees.

As a result of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment, MSDE developed a Comprehensive Literacy Plan that established five keys as essential to increased literacy achievement for all students. For year one of our grant implementation, Maryland has used several of these keys to constitute the specific performance measures that will be used to demonstrate progress toward our project goals and ultimately our GPRA measures. For Year 1, it is important to note that due to the timeline of grant notice of awards, districts had three months of implementation.

Key: Instructional Leadership:

To develop instructional leaders able to identify and encourage teacher leaders; provide opportunities for regular literacy meetings, data dialogues, and joint planning; and monitoring and assessing progress.

Specific Performance Measure #1: Increased participation in professional learning opportunities in literacy targeted to school based instructional leaders.

During Year 1, there was progress made toward this measure. Professional learning was provided to school-based administrators targeting effective literacy practices and tiered systems of support in the literacy block. Several districts provided training for all administrators, supervisors, principals, vice principals, deans, specialists, and literacy coaches to deepen their knowledge of the ELA standards and connect research-based strategies to exemplary instructional practices. Based on their needs assessment and the summer professional learning provided, several districts hired and trained Instructional/Literacy Coaches to provide follow up training and support for all administrators and teacher leaders. One large urban district alone hired and trained 20 Literacy Coaches to support the implementation of their new evidence-based ELA curriculum, Wit and Wisdom. Regular meetings have been scheduled between Coaches and administrators to discuss coaching cycles, problems of practice, and review student data.

Key: Strategic Professional Learning:

Together state and local teams will establish and disseminate needs-based professional learning in a variety of mediums to local educational agencies, K-12 educators, Birth to 5 programs, and local communities.

Specific Performance Measure #2: Increased participation in professional learning opportunities targeted to Early Childhood providers and teachers PreK-12 that is based on a needs assessment. During Year 1, there was significant progress made toward this measure at both the state and district level. Between July 1, and September 30, 2018 professional learning opportunities were offered at the state level to educators of children birth through grade 12. A two-day Symposium was presented in three regions around the state where educators, birth through grade 2, learned about essential evidence-based literacy practices. In response to a need for adolescent literacy support, Three-day Adolescent Literacy Workshops for middle and high school teachers were presented in four regional sessions.

Several SRCL districts collaborated with their Early Childhood Advisory Councils to provide professional learning opportunities for Early Childhood providers and PreK teachers on evidence-based programs such as Raising a Reader and Connect 4 Learning. Teachers in grades K-12 participated in many one to three day professional learning workshops and trainings on the implementation of grant funded evidence-based programs and interventions such as Read 180, LLI, 100 Book Challenge, Orton Gillingham, and Corrective Reading.

The Birth-5 portion of the grant presented a new challenge for school districts as many had not yet developed working partnerships with community-based programs. This grant has provided an opportunity for districts to begin to include these programs in planning for initiatives that will result in significant improvement in oral language of 4 year olds. In addition to continued professional learning opportunities, MSDE plans to support to subgrantees in the form of regular grant manager briefings, webinars, site visits, and resource development.

Key: Comprehensive System of Assessments:

A comprehensive system of assessments includes state, local, school, and teacher assessment data. This data is analyzed in collaborative teams to guide and refine evidence-based instruction and allow for strategic data-informed decision making to meet the needs of the individual student.

Specific Performance Measure #3: Increased participation in school based data-informed decision making activities.

During Year 1, there was some progress made toward this goal. In several districts, Elementary ELA supervisors worked with all elementary principals and specialists to analyze PARCC data, and plan professional development based on the data. One district identified and hired an Instructional Data Specialist to develop infrastructure for data analysis, data integration, data dissemination – promotes strategic data-informed decision making. Several districts are awaiting end of Q1 data to complete analysis of baseline data. An additional challenge for districts related to this performance measure has been identifying and implementing a valid and reliable tool to use to measure significant progress in oral language of 4 year olds. At this time, we have no data to support GPRA Measure #1, however, MSDE is currently surveying districts to determine what

if any assessments are being administered. We are currently identifying valid and reliable measures of oral language. We will work with our assessment office to determine the best way to compile and analyze this data, and plan to be able to report on this data during the 2018-2019 performance period. Several districts have already identified an evidence based early learner assessment to establish baseline data for oral language proficiency/growth. One district has identified and purchased a universal screening/monitoring tool for Grades 6-12 to identify and predict at risk readers, progress monitor, and guide instruction.

Key: Tiered Instruction and Interventions:

Maryland has adopted regulations for the inclusion of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in all classrooms. The state's tiered system of support will continue to be refined and include all children and will provide enrichment and intervention models to achieve comprehensive literacy for all.

Specific Performance Measure #4: Increased use of instructional materials and interventions supported by strong and moderate evidence.

MSDE has provided professional learning statewide on identifying and evaluating instructional materials and programs according to the ESSA evidence levels. As a result, during Year 1, districts were able to make significant progress toward this measure. Districts have adopted programs which are research based and have received high marks from Ed Reports such as Great Mind's Wit & Wisdom, Bookworms, and Wilson Reading, including programs for EL students like Achieve 3000. Several districts have funded new positions to work with middle and high schools on implementing evidence-based programs such as Read 180, Corrective Reading, and Read to Achieve with fidelity. Literacy Coaches have been trained in the identified intervention programs and are monitoring implementation fidelity through learning walks, lesson planning, coaching and data analysis.

The Maryland Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) is the focus of our continuous implementation and improvement process. Maryland's CLP gathered input from a variety of constituents through a needs-based assessment. Once the information was gathered and processed, results were shared. Maryland used statewide testing from the 2017-2018 school year to evaluate instruction across districts. The state's Research division created several presentations to stakeholders regarding evidence-based strategies and how levels are determined. Work on how to read various reports in order to determine the best strategies, and practices to improve student performance was shared and districts were encouraged to investigate practices in order to make informed choices with an emphasis on disadvantage populations. In order for districts to apply for SRCL funds, each had to submit a comprehensive literacy plan that aligned to Maryland's plan. This plan was not only the basis for the state's performance measures but also each district's performance measures. The Maryland State Department of Education is currently gathering district information in order to provide feedback and guidance on methods of improvement. All subgrantee progress toward our identified progress measures will be monitored and reported using such data as state assessments, surveys, aggregated data from classroom observations, instructional coaches and/or mentor records, and/or agendas from data dialogues.

