State Systemic Improvement Process (SSIP) meeting held on March 10, 2015 at the Quest Business Center at Polaris. There were about 40 people in attendance.

Sue Zake opened the meeting. The work of the team will involve a focus on results driven accountability. We are now in Phase 1. Next year is Phase 2 and then there is a multi-year phase lasting until 2020. The process will involve shared learning, partnerships, and innovative practices.

The strategic focus that was selected is on Early Literacy. This goes up through grade three and begins at the preschool level or ever before. Sue and Kara Waldron talked about the background of the process thus far. There were two surveys starting in August 2014, a meeting in September, and another in October. This is the 3rd meeting of the whole team although there have been meetings of the core team during the interim.

Ann Skaggs presented many charts and graphs proving information about factors which influence progress made by students. Among the most influential, in both negative and positive terms, was the student’s level of poverty.

A new term is SIMR: State-Identified Measurable Results. Wendy Stoica described the process of identifying and setting SIMRs. Part of the challenge is to define subcategories of SWDs that will be priorities. Certain school districts will be targeted for involvement in the process. There was small group discussion of SIMR and its rationale and an opportunity for brief sharing at the end of the session.

Next, Sue talked about improvement strategies and “Theory of Action”. Improvement strategies addressed identifying the root causes of low performance in reading & literacy. Using data analysis, in small group discussions we talked about how improvement strategies would address needs and build capacity within school districts. We also talked about implications at the state, district and school levels.

The Theory of Action we worked on takes into consideration the five areas known as “deep drivers” (highly influential to success): Parent Partnerships; Teacher Capacity; Collaborative Structures; Multi-Tiered Systems of Support; and Characteristics of Effective Schools.

During an earlier small-group session, each group identified factors within one of the five above categories that would be improvement strategies. Poster sheets listing these factors were placed on the walls around the room. The whole group then walked around the room and each person had a sticker/marker to place on the element on each of the poster sheets that he/she felt was the most critical. These were analyzed and discussed.

Wendy and Jo Hannah Ward gave a presentation on infrastructure analysis. What are the factors within particular organizations that either have a positive or a negative impact. In small discussion groups we then talked about infrastructure strengths that should be leveraged by OEC and also what weaknesses or barriers need to be addressed. Also included was a discussion on national, state and local infrastructure resources and supports needed to improve performance results in the area of early literacy.

Sue concluded the meeting by summarizing what we accomplished during the sessions and also looking at next steps. OEC will be submitting the final report for Phase 1 by April 1st. The SSIP team will continue to meet on a quarterly basis. Targets will need to be set for our SIMR. It is expected that an early literacy measure will be added to “district determinations” so progress can be tracked on an annual basis.

Submitted by Dr. John Opperman, OAPSA Executive Director