

**North Carolina Department of Public Instruction  
Exceptional Children Division (ECD) Strategic Plan 2021-26**

**Goal I – Eliminate opportunity gaps by 2026**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Indicators/Evidence of Success</b>
<p>Objective 1 – Decrease the proportion of low performing <u>Public School Units</u> (PSUs=all public, charter and state operated program schools) identified based on exceptional children program sub-population</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide customized professional development (PD) and technical assistance (TA) for low performing Exceptional Children (EC) programs in low performing districts, to include communication of resources, models of best practice</li> <li>● Promote access and lower barriers to participation of students with disabilities in advanced-level programs and courses</li> <li>● Promote access and lower barriers to promote proportionate access to Governors’ School</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All consultants in the EC Division are using the full <u>coaching continuum</u></li> <li>● <u>NC State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)</u> indicators - higher fidelity of evidence-based practices, higher proportion of teachers trained in evidence-based practices</li> <li>● Indictors of how EC Division actions has changed work in Local Education Agencies (LEAs)</li> <li>● Indicators of how EC Division work has changed student outcomes</li> <li>● Stakeholder perception data</li> <li>● Increased identification, enrollment and participation in Governor’s School</li> </ul>
<p>Objective 2-Decrease practices resulting in significant disproportionality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide professional development and technical assistance to public school units on identifying and responding to root</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Aligned <u>Annual Performance Report (APR)</u> indicators across the <u>Local Education Agency Self-Assessment (LEASA)</u></li> </ul>

	<p>causes associated with significant disproportionality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determinations</li> <li>• Strengthen implementation efforts to support Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS) plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in disciplinary events</li> <li>• State performance plan including annual performance report - indicators around significant disproportionality for category of eligibility, setting, discipline</li> <li>• Public school unit determinations</li> <li>• Oak Grant outcomes around significant disproportionality</li> </ul>
Objective 3- Collaborate with other divisions to increase access to the full continuum of school mental health supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide implementation support for Project <u>AWARE/ACTIVATE</u> sites to develop model and scalable local school mental health plans</li> <li>• Provide professional development and technical assistance to public school units to support implementation of local school mental health plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of public school units submitting local plans</li> <li>• Proportion of public school units completing training requirements of State Board of Education (SBE) policy</li> <li>• Proportion of schools having universal supports for mental health or social emotional learning (SEL)</li> <li>• Proportion of schools doing mental health or social emotional learning screening</li> <li>• Improve staffing ratios of specialized instructional support personnel, specifically school psychology</li> </ul>
Objective 4-Increase the high school graduation rate for students with disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to improve fidelity of implementation of <u>NC State Systemic Improvement Project (SSIP)</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Five (5)-year Graduation rate improves to close the gap between special education and general education</li> </ul>

<p>Objective 5- Increase accessibility of evidence-based practices and services to low-incidence and related service populations in hard-to-staff public school units</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement regionalization of hard-to-staff low incidence services and/or provide assistance to public school units to build capacity within</li> <li>● Implement regionalization of hard-to-staff related services</li> <li>● Develop a plan to support public school units as they recruit, hire and retain hard to fill staff positions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reduction in teacher and related service provider vacancies in public school units</li> <li>● Increase number of public school units hired low-incidence and related service professionals leading to improve cost effective provision of related services</li> <li>● Implementing accessible educational materials in a timely manner</li> </ul>
---	---	--

**Goal II – Improve school and district performance by 2026**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Indicators/Evidence of Success</b>
<p>Objective 1 - Continue to develop and provide universal tailored and customized professional development and to EC programs to support implementation of evidence-based practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Problem solve with internal and external stakeholders around application of tiered support</li> <li>● Apply the full <u>coaching continuum</u> as the EC Division provides technical assistance and professional development to general and special education staff</li> <li>● Improve strategies for developing, scheduling communicating, and evaluating professional development provided by the division</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● All consultants in the EC Division are using full coaching continuum</li> <li>● Public school units are getting customized, tiered support based on needs, <u>NC State Systemic Improvement Project (SSIP)</u> data, etc.</li> <li>● Increased efficiency in division response to local education agency (LEA) assessment data</li> </ul>
<p>Objective 2 - Implement coherent monitoring strategies for programing and fiscal compliance to promote effective practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop integrated monitoring strategies to enhance policy to practice feedback loops</li> <li>● Implement integrated monitoring strategies</li> <li>● Develop Comprehensive Local Education Agency Report (CLEAR) utilizing data collected through the Every Child Accountability Tracking System (ECATS)</li> <li>● Risk Rubric is developed as a tool for local education agency (LEA) Determinations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Local education agency (LEA) self-assess improvement plans are combined with grant applications</li> <li>● Public school units submissions informs monitoring activities</li> </ul>

<p>Objective 3-Increase students with disabilities' proficiency in pre-math and math skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accessible educational materials</li> <li>● Increase the use of evidence-based practices through EC Division initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Blended model <u><i>Foundations of Math</i></u></li> <li>○ Data-based individualization using support from the <u>National Center on Intensive Intervention (NCII)</u></li> <li>○ <u><i>Specially designed instruction (SDI)</i></u> and high-leverage practices</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <u><i>Understanding Specific Learning Disabilities in Math</i></u></li> <li>● <u>Significant Disabilities - Adapted Curriculum Initiative</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increases in summative assessments</li> <li>● Scaled use of four (4) action items</li> <li>● Integrated monitoring strategy is aligned with math Individual Education Program (IEP) goals</li> </ul>
<p>Objective 4-Increase students with disabilities' proficiency in pre-reading and reading skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Accessible educational materials</li> <li>● Increase the use of evidence-based practices through ECD initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Blended model of <u><i>Reading Research to Classroom Practice (RRtCP)</i></u></li> <li>○ <u><i>Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)</i></u> and high-leverage practices</li> <li>○ <u><i>Deep Dive into Dyslexia</i></u></li> <li>○ <u>Significant Disabilities-Adapted Curriculum initiative</u></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increases in summative assessments</li> <li>● Scaled use of three action items</li> <li>● Integrated monitoring strategy is aligned with reading goals on individualized education programs (IEP)</li> <li>● <u><i>Reading Research to Classroom Practice</i></u> course is accredited from International Dyslexia Association</li> <li>● Increase number of <u>Dyslexia Delegates</u></li> </ul>

**Goal III – Increase educator preparedness to meet the needs of every student by 2026**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Indicators/Evidence of Success</b>
<p>Objective 1- Strengthen the skill set of EC Division staff to problem-solve with regional teams and collaborative groups within the division</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analyze and create action items to address current organizational efficiencies:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Enhance meeting structures</li> <li>○ Improve general communication</li> <li>○ Align professional development of staff</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Develop capacity of staff to utilize systematic processes and tools for problem solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Meeting perception data</li> <li>● Staff evidence of use of problem-solving structures</li> <li>● Number of regional team objectives met</li> <li>● Crosswalk of local education agency (LEA) self-assessment data to professional learning provided by EC Division staff</li> </ul>
<p>Objective 2 -Increase EC Division staff knowledge and effective application of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), federal regulations, state EC policy and implementation of practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish the baseline knowledge for EC Division staff regarding IDEA, federal regulations and state policies</li> <li>● Provide consistent professional development to increase capacity of policy knowledge and skill set</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evidence of professional development completed</li> <li>● Evidence of increased comfort level of staff by reduced phone calls to other staff for information on policies</li> <li>● Professional Development created by consultants include accurate applications of regulations and policy, in consultation with Policy, Monitoring and Audit staff</li> </ul>
<p>Objective 3- Increase capacity to provide system-level instructional and organizational leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide opportunities for staff to increase knowledge base of implementation science</li> <li>● Provide professional development, coaching/</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The development and implementation of coaching plans with new initiatives/professional development</li> </ul>

	<p>support and guidance documents around system-level leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The development and implementation of guidance documents to support policy, and programming</li> <li>● Documented growth demonstrated in data used as evidence in <u>local education agency self-assessments (LEASA)</u></li> </ul>
<p>Objective 4- Increase culturally inclusive and equity-focused professional learning opportunities for <u>public school units</u> (PSUs)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide Division training on equity and unintentional bias</li> <li>● Provide professional development and technical assistance to public school units addressing social-emotional learning</li> <li>● Professional learning and support to address factors contributing to significant disproportionality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evidence of completed Division training</li> <li>● Evidence of addressing equity in professional development</li> <li>● Evidence that equity is being addressed in actions from Sections</li> <li>● Reduction of significant disproportionality (placement, identification, discipline)</li> </ul>
<p>Objective 5-Increase support for early career staff (to include special education teachers and related service providers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implement a career-support program for newly licensed and Residency pathway Teachers of special education</li> <li>● Increase funding to support tuition reimbursement of newly licensed special education staff</li> <li>● Provide funding opportunities to low wealth public school units for the licensure of low incidence special education staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evidence of program implementation</li> <li>● Number of special education staff participating in EC Division incentive program</li> <li>● Increase in funding opportunities for tuition reimbursement</li> <li>● Increase in applications for tuition reimbursement</li> <li>● Reductions in special education staff vacancies and increase staff retention</li> </ul>

<p>Objective 6-Strengthen relationships with Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) special education preparation and related service programs to foster collaboration and better teaching</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Engage all special education teachers and related service programs in the Cooperative Planning Consortium</li> <li>● Develop a combined institutions of higher education listserv to share EC Division guidance, policy and initiatives with all special education teacher and related service provider programs</li> <li>● Support recruitment and retention efforts for more diverse representation of educators (administrators, teachers, related service providers, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Increase Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) participation in Consortium and Division activities</li> <li>● Institutions of higher education listserv, to include evidence of two-way communications</li> <li>● Collaboration and with national technical assistance centers and IHEs on special projects</li> </ul>
---	--	---



**Goal IV –Optimize Collaboration and Engagement with Internal and External Stakeholders by 2026**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Indicators/Evidence of Success</b>
<p>Objective 1 - Implement best practices in planning, facilitating and engaging in collaborative work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create and implement a clear EC division standard operating procedure for stakeholder representation and engagement</li> <li>● Ensure internal and external communication includes feedback loops for all stakeholders</li> <li>● Refine and implement communication protocols for stakeholder groups with fidelity</li> <li>● Develop staff capacity to utilize systematic problems solving processes and tools in facilitating and engaging in collaborative work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Standard operating procedures document</li> <li>● Evidence of usage of standard operating procedures by all sections in the Division</li> <li>● Evidence of two-way communication (i.e. portal use analytics, etc.)</li> <li>● Documented refined communication</li> <li>● Review of plans and protocols</li> <li>● Consistent use of standard operating procedures of stakeholder selection and participation</li> </ul>

## GLOSSARY

- **ACTIVATE** (Advancing Coordinated and Timely InterVentions, Awareness, Training, and Education) – Federally funded grant awarded to NCDPI and NCDHHS to develop school mental health initiatives.
- **Annual Performance Report (APR)** – The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires each state to develop a state performance plan/annual performance report (SPP/APR) that evaluates the state’s efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of the IDEA and describes how the state will improve its implementation. The SPP/APRs include indicators that measure child and family outcomes and other indicators that measure compliance with the requirements of the IDEA.  
A state is required to submit a state performance plan (SPP) at least every six years. Each year, states must report against the targets in its SPP in an annual performance report (APR).
- **AWARE** (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) – North Carolina’s ACTIVATE project, which is being piloted in three local education agencies.
- **Coaching Continuum** – North Carolina’s initiative to promote connected, coordinated and technology-enabled professional development, for the purpose of building capacity to identify and solve professional practice problems and promote improved student outcomes.
- **Cooperative Planning Consortium** - This Consortium is comprised of Institutes of Higher Education in North Carolina who offer a special education program, and is coordinated by the EC licensure specialist from the EC Division and Section Chief. This group meets quarterly and works to align preservice special education programs with current policy needs and requirements.
- **Comprehensive Local Education Agency Report (CLEAR)** -Data reports generated from information captured through ECATS, individualized by each LEA.
- **Coordinated Early Intervening Services (CEIS)** – IDEA Regulations at 34 CFR §300.226 provides that an LEA may use up to 15 percent of allotted IDEA Part B grant funds for any fiscal year, to develop and implement coordinated, early intervening service for students in kindergarten through grade 12. If an LEA is determined to have significant disproportionality, they are required to use 15 percent of their allotted IDEA Part B grant funds.
- **Decoding Dyslexia** – a network of parent-led grassroots movements across the country concerned with the limited access to educational interventions for dyslexia within the public education system. For more details, visit: <https://dyslexiaida.org/decoding-dyslexia/>.
- **Deep Dive into Dyslexia** - Dyslexia impacts an estimated 5-20% of the population. While dyslexia exists on a continuum from mild to severe, it is one of the most prevalent types of a specific learning disability. To increase the capacity of educators to assess, identify, and educate students experiencing core difficulty with word recognition, fluency, spelling and writing, otherwise known as dyslexia, participants will increase their knowledge of the science of reading, including an understanding of why children experience reading difficulty, including dyslexia; the causes and characteristics of dyslexia and reading disabilities; components of word recognition including phonological

awareness decoding and encoding, and sight word recognition related to dyslexia; and evidence informed instructional and assessment practices in reading specific to students with dyslexia.

- **Dyslexia Delegates** – North Carolina has trained Dyslexia Delegates who provide professional development on dyslexia. For more details, visit: <https://ec.ncpublicschools.gov/disability-resources/specific-learning-disabilities/dyslexia-and-dyscalculia>.
- **Every Child Accountability Tracking System (ECATS)**- is a data management system, consisting of three separate but integrated modules: Special Education is a case management and data analysis module that allows for the efficient capture of statewide Exceptional Children data; Service Documentation module is a user-friendly documentation platform for capturing IEP service delivery for related services; Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) module provides a format to collect and report on the instruction and interventions a school uses to support students.
- **Foundations of Math (FOM)** – Professional development courses developed by the NC DPI Exceptional Children Division and subject matter experts in the field of mathematics to promote research-based mathematics instruction for students with disabilities. FOM is one component of the *North Carolina State Improvement Project (NCSIP)* funded by the Office of Special Education Programs in the US Department of Education.
- **Local Education Agency Self-Assessment (LEASA)** – the process and document used by local education agencies (LEAs) to assess their own performance in improving outcomes for students with disabilities, in accordance with SPP goals. The purposes of the LEASA, and its resulting Continuous Improvement Process, are to: support problem-solving, improvement planning, and implementation; drive decision-making at the LEA, regional and state level; and bridge improvement efforts within and among LEAs, the regions and the state.
- **National Center for Intensive Intervention (NCII)** – NCII is housed at the American Institutes for Research, and works in conjunction with many of the nation's most distinguished data-based individualization (DBI) experts. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and is part of OSEP's **Public School Unit (PSU)** – As noted in North Carolina General Statute 115C-5, a Public School Unit is: a local school administrative unit (e.g., public school system); a charter school; a regional school; or a school providing elementary or secondary instruction operated by the State Board of Education (e.g., in the Innovative School District) or the University of North Carolina (e.g., university laboratory schools)
- **Reading Research to Classroom Practice (RRtCP)** – Professional development courses developed by the NC DPI Exceptional Children Division and subject matter experts in the field of reading to promote research-based reading instruction for students with disabilities. RRtCP is one component of the *North Carolina State Improvement Project (NCSIP)* funded by the Office of Special Education Programs in the US Department of Education.
- **Significant Disabilities-Adapted Curriculum Initiative** – A series of professional learning courses that promote evidence-based practices for improving outcomes of students with significant cognitive disabilities. These courses include: Effective Mathematics Instruction (EMI), Framework for Literacy, and Foundations of Communication.
- **Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)** and high-leverage practices - Within the session, participants will define Specially Designed Instruction (SDI), describe how Specially Designed Instruction (SDI) fits in a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) for improved outcomes for students with disabilities, identify and discuss High Leverage Practices (HLP) in Special Education, and examine how to incorporate High Leverage

Practices (HLP) in Special Education within lesson planning to increase access & progress in the general curriculum for students with disabilities.

- **State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)** – The comprehensive multi-year plan that focuses on improving results driven accountability for students with disabilities, as one of the indicators listed in the SPP and reported on in the APR.
- **Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network (TA&D)**. The Mission of the NCII is to build capacity of state and local education agencies, universities, practitioners, and other stakeholders to support implementation of intensive intervention in reading, mathematics, and behavior for students with severe and persistent learning and/or behavioral needs.
- **Understanding Specific Learning Disabilities in Math** - In recognition of the need to increase the capacity of North Carolina Public School educators per House Bill 149 to ensure that ongoing professional development opportunities are made available to teachers and other school personnel on the identification of and intervention strategies for students with dyslexia, dyscalculia, or other specific learning disabilities, the NC Department of Public Instruction's (NC DPI) Exceptional Children Division in collaboration with Bradley Witzel have created this course to help educators identify needed research-based practices and/or instructional methods to increase the percentage of students who respond to core math instruction alone, improve outcomes for students receiving supplemental and intensive intervention, including students with a Specific Learning Disability in math, identify and intervene early with students exhibiting characteristics of mathematics difficulty, and facilitate collaborative communication with parents and other community stakeholders around the topic of Specific Learning Disability in mathematics including dyscalculia.