

Every Student Succeeds Act

Topic Discussion Guide

Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Ohio will create a plan to better align our local, state and federal programs to help all students be successful.

The Ohio Department of Education is committed to meaningfully engaging a diverse group of stakeholders through a variety of methods and opportunities to solicit thoughts, opinions and recommendations concerning provisions in Ohio's state plan. Everyone's input is required to create a plan that is deeply rooted in the needs of Ohio's students.

Ohio is conducting a series of topic-specific webinars. Each topic will have a detailed discussion guide. The 11th topic, school improvement, is discussed below.

School Improvement

OVERVIEW

ESSA provides new flexibilities that require policy decisions at both the state and local levels. ESSA moves away from a one-size-fits-all approach to improving outcomes and opportunities for students by encouraging states to create systems that support continuous improvement.

A system with continuous improvement at its center starts with clear standards and expectations that inform high-quality and aligned assessments. This allows progress to be recognized through understandable measures. By establishing an accountability system that utilizes multiple measures to identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement, a tiered approach to identifying the need for comprehensive or targeted support can be implemented. Further, improvement activities selected from evidence-based strategies form the basis of a plan developed to meet locally selected improvement goals, leading to results and success that can inform future improvement efforts.

IDENTIFICATION

Currently, there are four identification categories for school improvement: *Targeted Support*, *Comprehensive Support*, *Independent Districts* and *Academic Distress Commissions*. As Ohio adapts to comply with both state and federal criteria, the goal will be to integrate both into a more unified system.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA

Comprehensive Support	Targeted Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I schools on state accountability index;• High schools with graduation rates less than 67 percent; and• Schools with underperforming subgroups that do not improve after a state-determined number of years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools with consistently underperforming subgroups, as defined by the state.

In addition to establishing criteria for identifying schools and districts for support, Ohio must set the timeline for subgroup improvement, establish exit criteria and decide how frequently to identify schools and districts.

The department also must review and potentially update how it recognizes school and districts. Currently, Ohio recognizes schools through programs such as Schools of Promise, Schools of Honor, Momentum Awards, Blue Ribbon Schools, and All A's.

IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Ohio is committed to growing a culture of improvement that provides each student with an opportunity to successfully participate as a productive citizen in a global economy. The culture of improvement requires school leadership and staff members to have a strong commitment to school improvement goals and activities. Leadership is a foundational principle of continuous improvement; however, the process also engages all stakeholders including parents, community members and local businesses in the improvement process.

The collaborative leadership structure focuses on instructional leadership, which builds the skills and competences of teaching to impact all learners. Continuous improvement planning and professional learning is a process for improving instructional practice, leading to higher achievement for the entire student population. There is a strong connection between schools and the communities they serve that allows for a multifaceted approach to improvement, ensuring academic and non-academic support for students and families. The goal is equitable access to high-quality instruction for all students.

ESSA requires the state to carry out the following key activities:

1. **Distribution of Title I school improvement funds:** Continues to be a major leverage point for states. See the webinar from Sept. 16, [Federal Funding Options and Flexibilities](#).
2. **Approval and monitoring of improvement plans:** The hard work of school improvement is going to happen at the district and school levels. The state's policies regarding the development and implementation of school improvement plans will have a broad and substantive impact on schools.
3. **Coordination:** The schools that are identified for comprehensive and targeted support serve many of the same students that are directly impacted by state policies regarding educator effectiveness and services to English language learners, special education students and other vulnerable populations. Strategies for supporting the lowest-performing schools and the use of Title I school improvement funds must be aligned with the other initiatives that support these same students and schools.
4. **Differentiated assistance:** States must identify how they intend to deliver support to identified schools and districts, including how comprehensive support differs from targeted support.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A needs assessment is a useful part of any planning process. A needs assessment is:

- A systematic process that identifies the difference between current and desired conditions – sometimes called a gap analysis;
- Used to identify strengths and areas for improvement;
- A tool to identify resource inequities; and
- Able to assist in setting organizational priorities.

The department currently has a number of tools to assist schools and districts in the planning process, including:

- Decision Framework;
- School Improvement Diagnostic Review;
- District review;
- Equity index;
- Data analysis; and
- Resource allocation analysis.

To assist schools and districts develop plans under ESSA, the department also is looking at additional data analysis and resource allocation tools.

LOCAL PLANS

All districts are required to submit local plans. Like identification, plan specifications will be based on accountability identification, and improvement plans will be integrated into basic district plans.

Local plan requirements include the following considerations:

1. Ensure that appropriate stakeholders are engaged;
2. Provide adequate planning time;
3. Check for strong and sustainable school leadership;
4. Recognize balance between comprehensive and actionable plans;
5. Connect districts to clearinghouses and research on evidenced-based practices;
6. Establish a results (vs. compliance) orientation for monitoring and support; and
7. Connect and coordinate with other state and district initiatives within the state's ESSA plan.

While developing local plans, the following considerations are necessary:

1. Needs assessment;
2. Long-term and interim goals;
3. Evidence-based strategies;
4. Developed with stakeholder input;
5. Approval at building- and district-levels; and
6. Support for special populations.

As mentioned previously, district plans must provide assurances that they follow all existing federal laws. For example, McKinney-Vento services for homeless students are effective Oct. 1, and foster care provisions are effective Dec. 10.

EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES

A major focus of ESSA is the utilization of evidence-based strategies. ESSA establishes definitions for evidence-based, including four standards of evidence. The most important funding stream impacted by these provisions is the 7 percent of Title I, Part A, funds that states must set aside to help school districts improve their lowest-performing schools. These funds can be used only for interventions that are supported by the top three tiers of research as defined in the bill.

Below are the four standards of evidence:

1. At least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;
2. At least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study;
3. At least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls;
4. Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of activities, strategies or interventions.

ESSA School Improvement Appendix A

Discussion Questions

The following is a series of discussion questions crucial to the planning and implementation of Ohio's system of school improvement under ESSA.

EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGY

- How will Ohio identify dropout recovery community schools for improvement?
- How will Ohio ensure districts and schools have access to approved evidence-based strategies and programs?
- What tools will the department of education provide?
- How will Ohio align the accountability and improvement systems around an evidence-based framework?
- How can Ohio better integrate district-level actions and activities into the school-level improvement process?
- Are there any unique strategies for community schools in general and for schools with unique populations? It seems like most strategies apply to almost all types of schools/districts; however, are there things that are unique to the community school environment (e.g., credit recovery)?

PLANNING FOR PARTNERSHIP

- What is the best tactic to get schools interested in building community partnerships and the districts to lend their support?
- What tools should the department provide during the planning, implementation and evaluation phases for schools that choose to develop community learning centers?
- What supports can the regional structure provide?
- Once a school decides to incorporate community resources, what are some anticipated barriers? What can be done to support schools in overcoming these barriers?
- Developing community partnerships will require much strategic planning and coordination. How do you see a school's work with community resources/partnerships fitting into the Ohio Improvement Process and the existing school and district improvement plans?
- Are there any schools already successfully leveraging resources and developing community partnerships?
- What funding streams can be leveraged to support community learning?
- How can this work be coordinated at the state level to ensure we are addressing the needs of the students with a holistic approach rather than in pieces? What can we do to create a systematic approach to address the needs of all students, particularly vulnerable youth (foster care, migrant students, English language learners, homeless, etc.)?

DISTRICT AND SCHOOL REVIEW

- Would we consider the district review and School Improvement Diagnostic Review additional data for the needs assessment?
- How can districts use the data and recommendations to build focused plans?
- What supports does the department provide to create and implement the focused plan created from the reviews?
- Do we need a peer review process for plans and implementation?
- How do we build the competencies of districts to conduct reviews on building implementation of improvement plans?
- How do we get more detailed data to districts for analysis? What supports can we offer to districts with data analysis?

- How can we provide support to linking present funding and resource allocation to these recommendations (such as linking practices to the CCIP funding)?
- How can we encourage schools and districts to see these as supports for the schools and districts rather than compliance or punitive activities?
- How does the district convey to the (community, media, etc.) that after having a district review, it does not mean that the district is in “distress”? How do we complete a “district review” without the connotation of a distress commission?
- Is it a best practice to advise districts to focus on two to three recommendations after receiving a district review report? How does a district determine which recommendations are priorities for steps toward improvement?
- Are there certain leverage points that a district can implement to impact several recommendations at once?
- What efforts are being made to train all state support teams, Ohio Department of Education staff members and transformation specialists in a more uniform fashion to align the impact of their work with the districts and buildings?

MCKINNEY-VENTO SERVICES FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

- How do we best roll out these important changes to the local level (in addition to the new, annual update/guidance that will go to all superintendents and homeless liaisons in a CCIP note)?
- **Absenteeism:** Explore how to provide guidance to assist districts in not only keeping homeless students out of truancy court but also how to address the issues that cause the absences.

FOSTER STUDENTS

- What is the integrity of the current data? Do districts know when a child is put in foster care to report it accurately? Do they report the start and end dates of the foster placement?
- Do districts have a mechanism for transferring records expeditiously, especially IEPs and course enrollment?
- If a student leaves foster care in the middle of the school year, should transportation be provided until the end of the year? What about summer school and extracurricular activities?
- McKinney-Vento funds cannot be used for transporting students in foster care — what about students who often transition between foster care and homelessness? Will this be an administrative burden on districts?

Sec. 1006: Local Educational Agency Plans

(a) Plans Required:

- a. Subgrants: Only if such agency has on file with state a plan approved by the state.
 - i. Developed in a timely manner with meaningful consultations from all stakeholders.
 - ii. Is coordinated with other federal programs under this act.
- b. Is submitted as part of a consolidated application.
 - i. Filed according to state schedule.
 - ii. State determines if plan:
 1. Meets the challenging state academic standards.
- c. Plan submitted for the first year for which the plan is in effect and shall remain for the duration of the participation of grant.
- d. LEA shall periodically review and revise plan.
- e. Consultation of the required stakeholders shall not interfere with timely submission of plan.

(b) Plan Provisions: All children receive a high-quality education and to close achievement gap.

- a. How the LEA will monitor student progress in meeting state academic standards.
 - i. Develop and implement well-rounded program of instruction.
 - ii. Identify students at risk of failure.
 - iii. Provide additional assistance to individual students.
 - iv. Identify and implement instruction strategies intended to strengthen academic programs and improve learning conditions.
- b. How the LEA will identify and address any disparities that result in low-income and minority students being taught at high rates by ineffective, inexperienced or out-of-field teachers.
- c. How the LEA will carry out its responsibilities in Section 1111.
- d. How the will LEA use poverty criteria to improve school attendance.
- e. How the LEA will support educational services outside such schools for children in local institutions for neglected or delinquent students.
- f. How the LEA will provide support for enrollment, attendance and success of homeless students.
- g. How the LEA will implement effective parent and family engagement.
- h. How the LEA will support, coordinate and integrate services with early childhood education programs.
- i. How the LEA will support schools in identifying targeted assistance programs to eligible children with the most need.
- j. How the LEA will implement strategies to facilitate effective transitions for students through the grade-level system and post-graduation.
 - i. Coordination with institutions of higher education employers and other partners.
 - ii. Access to early college, dual or concurrent enrollment opportunities or careers.
- k. How the LEA will reduce the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from classes or school.
- l. How the LEA will coordinate activities with academic, career and technical education content through coordinated instruction strategies to incorporate experiential learning opportunities or work-based learning opportunities and receive credit.
- m. Other Information about how the LEA proposes to use funds to meet the proposal.
 - i. Identify services for gifted and talented.
 - ii. Develop effective school libraries.
- n. Assurances that all students receive services.
 - i. Migratory and formerly migratory students.
 - ii. Students attending private elementary and secondary schools.

- iii. Participate in NAEP for grades 4 and 8 if selected.
- iv. Coordinate and integrate services to increase program effectiveness, eliminate duplication and reduce fragmentation of instructional program.
- v. Collaborate with child welfare services.
 - 1. Have a point of contact.
 - 2. Transport students to foster care givers to and from original school.
 - 3. Child welfare will provide one-half of the funds to the transporting LEA.
- o. Ensure teachers and paraprofessionals are state certified or licensed.
- p. Use funds for early childhood education — Head Start

(c) Parents Right to Know:

- a. Inform parents about the qualifications of teachers in the schools where their children attend.
 - i. State certifications or licenses.
 - ii. Teaching under emergency or provisional licenses.
 - iii. Teaching in appropriate grades or content areas.
 - iv. Services of paraprofessionals.
- b. Level of achievement by the schools
 - i. Achievement and progress with state assessments.
 - ii. Timely notice (four weeks) if student is not being taught by a licensed or certified teacher.
- c. Testing transparency
 - i. State or LEA policy for testing opt-out practices.
 - ii. Post all assessment policies on LEA website.
 - 1. Purpose and reason for assessments.
 - 2. Content areas assessed.
 - 3. Requirement for the assessment.
 - 4. Format and time of assessment.
 - 5. Scoring returns.
- d. Language requirements 30 days after beginning of school year.
 - i. Reasons for identifying students.
 - ii. Level of English proficiency.
 - iii. Methods of instruction.
 - iv. Identify needs of individual child.
 - v. Determine age-appropriate instruction.
 - vi. Exit process from program.
 - vii. IEPs for students with special needs.
 - viii. Parent rights to remove student from program.
 - ix. Outreach to parents to assist with learning at home.

Must have approved plan on file with state that:

- Is developed in consultation with stakeholders.
- Describes how the LEA will address disparities in teacher distribution.
- Describes how the LEA will meet its responsibilities related to school improvement.
- Describes how the LEA will coordinate and integrate services with preschool programs.
- Describes how the LEA will support efforts to reduce the overuse of discipline practices that remove students from the classroom.
- Describes how the LEA will coordinate academic and career and technical education content through instructional strategies, which may include experiential learning or work-based learning opportunities.

Parent information:

- LEA must inform parents that they can request information regarding the professional qualifications of their children's classroom teachers.
- Schools must provide parents information related to their children's academic achievement and notice if their students have been assigned teachers who do not meet applicable state certification or licensure requirements.
- LEA must notify parents of state or local policies regarding student participation in statewide assessments and post information on each assessment required.
- LEA must inform parents of English learners of the reasons their children were identified and the services for which they are eligible