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STATE SUPPORT TEAMS IN OHIO

Evaluation Report

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Executive Summary



Why we were asked to do this evaluation

As required by Ohio Revised Code 3312.09(B), the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (the Department) conducts an annual external evaluation of Ohio’s State Support Teams (SSTs). For its evaluation of SST services during the 2023–24 school year, the Department engaged the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) and its small business partner, Marzano Research. The Department requested this evaluation to better understand the features of SST services, the perceptions of local administrators who experience these services, the alignment between services and local improvement planning, and the outcomes of services for educators and students.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the Department uses these and other data to inform system changes. Indeed, SST services implemented in 2024–25 already incorporated some revised practices. For example, the 2023–24 Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) template listed *measures* a general “Overall Impact” section which asked respondents to describe end results and their connection to the Local Education Agency (LEA) One Plan. However, unclear expectations for this section led to variation in whether (and how) adult and student measures were reported. In response, the Department revised the 2024–25 SDA template to include distinct headers for “Adult Implementation SMART Goals” and “Student Outcome SMART Goals,” clarifying expectations and aligning with the Department’s evaluation objectives.

To address the Department’s evaluation objectives for the 2023–24 school year, the evaluation team conducted surveys of LEA and school leaders in both traditional and community schools receiving SST services, interviewed a selection of these LEA and school leaders, reviewed documents including SDAs and LEA One Plans, and analyzed extant student outcome data. The surveys achieved an overall response rate of 50%, with regional rates ranging from 29% to 68%. Statewide findings reflect input from all 16 SST regions.

Surveyed administrators reported a median of **28** hours of SST services during the 2023–24 school year.

81% of surveyed administrators reported receiving SST services related to the school improvement process.

What we found

Examining key features of SST services provides insight into their delivery and how they are experienced. Administrators provided their perceptions of three dimensions of SST services: (a) service intensity, measured by the average estimated number of hours of SST services received; (b) the topics addressed; and (c) the types of services provided, such as online resources, group trainings, individualized support, and networking or peer support.

Surveyed LEA and building administrators estimated receiving a median of 28 hours of SST services during the 2023–24 school year.

Surveyed LEA and building administrators reported receiving a median of 28 hours of services during the 2023–24 school year (with the middle 50% reporting between 12 and 53 hours). LEA administrators reported receiving more hours of SST services (a median of 33 hours) than building administrators (a median of 18 hours). LEA and building administrators indicated receiving SST services in multiple formats. Individualized support (reported by 78%) and group training (60%) were more frequently reported than networking and peer support (43%) and online resources (33%).

School improvement was the most common topic for SST services.

Statewide, 81% of surveyed LEA and building administrators reported receiving SST services related to school improvement, including Ohio’s improvement process and ED STEPS, during the 2023–24 school year. Other commonly reported topics included literacy (58%), students with disabilities (51%), absenteeism (50%), and climate and culture (48%). Workforce and graduation pathways (28%), early childhood (16%), and English learners (11%) were the least frequently reported SST service topics.

Administrators expressed generally positive perceptions of the quality of services provided by SSTs during the 2023–24 school year.

Administrators' engagement with SST services is strongly shaped by their perceptions of service quality, which can influence whether they embrace or resist external support. Key dimensions of quality include provider **fit**, which encompasses an understanding of school needs, relevant expertise, and rapport; service **timeliness**, characterized by promptness in execution and adherence to deadlines; and **responsiveness**, evidenced by active listening, addressing challenges, proactively following up, and delivering valued input.

Surveyed LEA and building administrators expressed similar and positive perceptions across all three dimensions. In interviews and open-ended survey responses, LEA and school leaders praised their SST representatives for providing technical guidance and targeted professional development, particularly around implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), supporting literacy development, and addressing the needs of students with disabilities. As one survey respondent wrote,

“

I receive monthly, in-person, one-on-one time with my SST consultant [who] is an invaluable resource to me. I also frequently reach out via email or phone calls, in between our monthly meetings, with questions regarding all aspects of running our school. I am so grateful to have this support.

Most surveyed administrators also reported that they learned from their SST services and changed their practice as a result.

Surveyed administrators positively rated the *fit, timeliness, and responsiveness* of SST services.

63% of school administrators and **64%** of district administrators reported that SST services influenced improvements.

However, positive perceptions of SSTs did not consistently align with reported school-level improvements.

Statewide, most surveyed administrators reported that their district or school experienced improvement during the 2023–24 school year across nine topics, the top three of which were school climate, student achievement in English language arts (ELA), and graduation rates. School administrators credited SSTs with having at least a moderate influence on 63% of their reported improvements, while LEA administrators did so for 64% of reported improvements. The topics on which administrators perceived SST consultants to be the most influential included early literacy, student achievement in ELA, and school climate, with about three-quarters of respondents attributing improvements in these areas to SST services. One survey respondent, for example, described how support with PBIS implementation contributed to improvements in school climate:

“

The PBIS service was very useful for a team of new teachers and staff members. It helped to give a greater understanding of how positive interventions [are] not only important school-wide but also necessary in the classroom. [It] helped teachers to understand that PBIS was more effective and better for students and school culture than suspensions.

Lower percentages of respondents (about half) attributed improvements in graduation rates and college and career readiness to SST services. Descriptions of less effective SST services underscored the inconsistency observed across the state. For example, one respondent noted,

“

Frankly, the SST was fairly hands-off in the 23–24 school year. By the time they arrived to the school, I had more information than the coordinator was able to provide.

Roughly one quarter of grant activity strategies lacked clear alignment with LEA One Plan goals.

SST services, as documented in SDAs, are intended to directly support the strategies and goals outlined in each LEA's comprehensive improvement plan, known as One Plans. If services are off target, LEAs and schools may not be receiving assistance in their areas of greatest need, potentially limiting the impact of these services.

A statewide comparison of SDAs and LEA One Plans found that over half of the SDA entries (54%) were *fully aligned* with LEA goals. However, 27% showed *weak alignment* with LEA One Plans, signifying that services documented in these SDAs did not clearly connect with or support the goals and strategies in LEA One Plans, limiting their capacity to drive improved outcomes. The remaining 19% were *partially aligned*, indicating that they addressed the same general priority but differed in scope or focus. For instance, an LEA One Plan might lack the explicit focus on students with disabilities that the SST service provided.

While most student measures described in SDAs and LEA One Plans partially aligned, many adult measures were weakly aligned.

When looking specifically at the alignment of *measures* between SDAs and LEA One Plans, student outcome measures were more consistently aligned than those for adult practices. Statewide, about 84% of student measures showed full or partial alignment between the two documents. In contrast, nearly half of adult measures (49%) were weakly aligned, meaning that they addressed different core topics or were missing from one of the documents. This pattern is not entirely unexpected given the broad guidance provided in the 2023–24 SDA template, where expectations—particularly for adult measures—were not clearly defined. This likely contributed to the observed variation in alignment. These findings underscore the importance of clearly

27% of SDA grant activity strategies were *weakly aligned* with LEA One Plan goals.

84% of student measures described in SDAs and LEA One Plans were rated as *aligned* or *partially aligned*.

49% of adult measures were rated as *weakly aligned*.

31% of schools made enough progress on all targeted One Plan outcomes to stay on track to meet their goals within the planned timeframe.

articulating expectations for both student and adult measures to support coherence across planning documents and drive meaningful school improvement.

In 2023–24, few schools attained the improvement targets documented in One Plans.

As part of the school improvement planning process, LEAs and schools receiving support services are required to develop and document goals, described in LEA One Plans as “SMART” goals. Of the 695 goals extracted from 240 LEA One Plans, over half (52%) did not target outcomes included in the Ohio Report Card or were too ambiguous to evaluate. Because data were only available up to the 2023–24 school year, a steady, year-to-year rate of improvement was assumed to assess whether schools had made sufficient progress within 1 school year to meet their goals within the specified time frames. Of the 333 goals that referenced measurable outcomes documented in the Ohio Report Card, 31% of Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools, Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools, and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools had not improved enough from 2022–23 to 2023–24 to meet the goals set out in their LEA One Plans.

Achievement in ELA was the most frequently targeted outcome in LEA One Plans. Of the 87 CSI, TSI, and ATSI schools in LEAs that set ELA achievement goals, 31% demonstrated enough progress between 2022–23 and 2023–24 to remain on track. Graduation rates were the area with the highest rate of progress toward goal attainment: 53% of CSI, TSI, and ATSI schools in LEAs that targeted graduation rates had improved enough from 2022–23 to 2023–24 to be on track to meet their stated goals by the specified dates. For CSI, TSI, and ATSI schools in LEAs targeting attendance or chronic absenteeism, 34% improved enough to meet the goals in the stated timeframes.

Reflections

The evaluation of services for low-performing schools in Ohio revealed both strengths and challenges. SST consultants were highly regarded by local administrators, and the intensity of services they provided was considered sufficient to potentially influence practices. Moreover, most LEA and school administrators reported some improvement—most commonly in areas such as school climate, student achievement in ELA, and graduation rates—which they sometimes attributed to SSTs. However, processes appeared to falter in the documentation phase. While the available data do not allow us to determine definitively whether this reflects a lack of clarity in expectations stemming from the broadly framed 2023–24 SDA template or more substantive shortcomings in implementation, the evidence suggests it may be a combination of both. Although the content of SDAs and LEA One Plans should align, the alignment was often weak, raising questions about whether documented services addressed local needs. Additionally, many LEA One Plan goals included metrics that were unclear or difficult to measure. Of the goals that could be evaluated, few were achieved. As a result, while rapport between local administrators and SST consultants may be genuine, actual services may be insufficient to catalyze improved outcomes.

Introduction



State Support Teams and the need for evaluation

The Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (the Department) manages 16 regional State Support Teams (SSTs)—a critical component of the statewide system of supports detailed in Ohio Revised Code (ORC) 3312 (see Exhibit 1). Composed of veteran educators, SSTs provide coaching and direct support to districts and schools, particularly those identified by state and federal accountability systems as in need of improvement. For schools and districts receiving the most intensive support, SSTs co-create a Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) that outlines specific services to be provided.

Exhibit 1.
Map of Ohio's 16 State Support Team regions



Continuous improvement in action

While this evaluation focused on SST service delivery during the 2023–24 school year, the Department began implementing refinements prior to its completion. For example, the 2023–24 SDA template included a general “Overall Impact” section, which led to inconsistent reporting of adult and student outcomes. In response, the Department revised the 2024–25 SDA template to include separate sections for “Adult Implementation SMART Goals” and “Student Outcome SMART Goals,” clarifying expectations and aligning with the Department’s evaluation priorities.



Data collection methods

The evaluation was informed by four key data sources:

- **Surveys** conducted with Local Education Agency (LEA) leaders—including community school sponsors—who received SST services in 2023–24, and with school leaders from schools identified for improvement in those districts. The surveys achieved an overall response rate of 50% (with regional rates ranging from 29% to 68%) and included responses from all 16 SST regions.
- **Interviews** conducted with 18 LEA leaders and school leaders who responded to the survey and expressed interest in participating in follow-up interviews. Participants represented 11 of the 16 SST regions.
- **A document review** of essential materials, such as SDAs and LEA One Plans for 240 LEAs, including 166 traditional districts and 124 community schools.
- **Extant data analysis** of student performance metrics (e.g., achievement, graduation rates) and school characteristics.

A key component of this system is the legal requirement for oversight. In accordance with ORC 3312.09(B), the Department must evaluate performance contracts implemented under the SST Grant Agreement and make the results public. In response to this state mandate, the Department commissioned the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) and its small business partner, Marzano Research, to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the entire SST system for the 2023–24 school year. The primary objective was to illuminate the system’s effectiveness by examining its service features, understanding how local administrators perceive those services, evaluating their alignment with local improvement plans, and analyzing their effects on educators and students.

A multi-faceted approach to evaluation

To address the evaluation’s core objectives, the AIR and Marzano Research evaluation team employed a multifaceted, mixed-methods approach. This comprehensive strategy was designed to address key questions about the features, perceptions, alignment, and outcomes of SST services delivered during the 2023–24 school year.

By combining quantitative data with qualitative insights, the evaluation captured a holistic and nuanced view of the SST system’s implementation and impact.

Throughout the process, the team collaborated closely with the Department to ensure that all data collection was effective, valid, and sensitive to the Ohio context. An overview of data collection methods is provided in the sidebar. Additional methodological details can be found in Appendix A.

What the report covers

The remainder of this report is organized into four sections, each addressing a key dimension of SST services during the 2023–24 school year. The first section, *Features of Support*, describes the types of services SSTs provided, how those services varied across regions and school contexts, and the intensity, topics, and formats in which services were delivered. The second section, *Administrator Perceptions of SST Services*, explores how LEA and school administrators perceived the quality, responsiveness, and relevance of SST services, and how those perceptions may influence engagement and outcomes. The third section, *Alignment of SST Services*, assesses the extent to which SST activities documented in SDAs aligned with the goals, strategies, and measures outlined in LEA One Plans. The final section, *Outcomes*, presents two analyses: one examining statewide trends in academic and student engagement indicators using Ohio Report Card data, and another evaluating whether CSI, TSI, and ATSI schools in LEAs receiving SST services made sufficient progress to be on track to meet the goals outlined in their LEA One Plans. Together, these sections provide a comprehensive picture of how SSTs supported school improvement efforts across Ohio.

Features of Support



Examining the key features of SST services offers valuable insight into how they are delivered and experienced. This section addresses two core evaluation questions:

- What services do SSTs provide?
- How do services differ across regions and by district and school characteristics?

The analysis draws on survey data from LEA and building administrators from all SST regions, supplemented by interviews with administrators representing 11 of the 16 SST regions. These perspectives shed light on three dimensions of SST services: service **intensity**, measured by the estimated number of hours of services received; the **topics** addressed; and the **types** of services provided, including online resources, group trainings, individualized support, and networking or peer support.

Surveyed LEA and building administrators estimated receiving a median of 28 hours of SST services during the 2023–24 school year.

Statewide, surveyed LEA and building administrators reported receiving a median of 28 hours of services during the 2023–24 school year, with the middle 50% reporting between 12 hours and 53 hours. LEA administrators reported a higher median number of service hours (33 hours) than building administrators (18 hours). Similarly, leaders from traditional schools reported receiving more hours of SST services (median of 30 hours) than those from community schools (median of 18 hours).

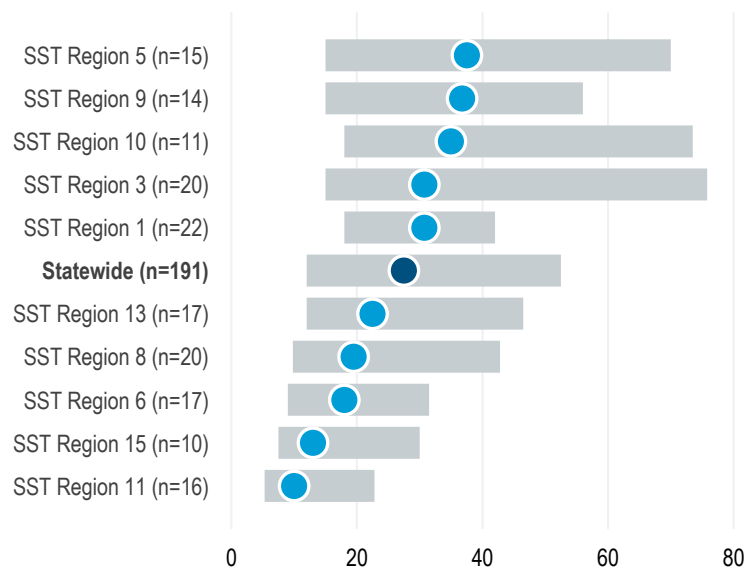
Median SST service hours ranged from 10 hours to 38 hours across regions, with a statewide median of 28 hours.

Patterns across SST regions revealed clear differences in service intensity. Administrators in Regions 1, 3, 5, 9, and 10 reported median service hours above the statewide median, with Region 5 reporting the highest, at 38 hours. Administrators in Regions 6, 8, 11, 13, and 15 reported fewer hours than the statewide median, with Region 11 reporting the fewest, at 10 hours (see Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2.

Administrators in SST Regions 1, 3, 5, 9, and 10 reported higher median service hours than the statewide median during 2023–24.

Reported # of hours of direct SST services



Source. Ohio SST evaluation, LEA and building administrator surveys, fall 2024.
 Note. LEA = local education agency. SST = State Support Team. Total direct service hours were calculated for each respondent by multiplying the reported number of service days by the mid-point of the reported hourly duration range for those services, based on survey data. Gray bars indicate the typical range of direct service hours LEA and building administrators reported receiving from their SST, representing responses from the 25th percentile to the 75th percentile. All SST regions are included in statewide figures. Individual region-level data are not shown for Regions 2, 4, 7, 12, 14, and 16 due to low response counts (fewer than 10 survey respondents in the region). See Appendix Exhibit B-1 for detailed results, by region.

The number of contact hours required to build adult learning is unclear, but rigorous studies suggest that a higher number of hours is beneficial.¹ Wide variation in the number of service hours received suggests that administrators and educators in some regions had more opportunity to learn from SST services than others.

Individualized support was the most frequently reported type of support.

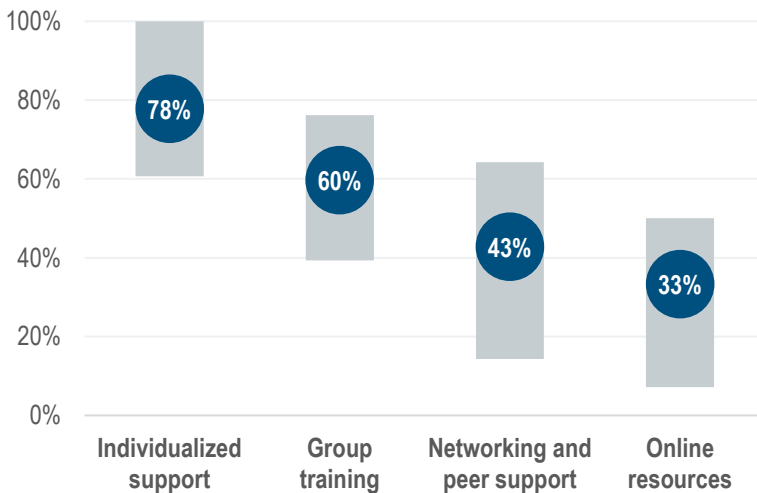
Surveyed LEA and building administrators reported receiving SST services through various modes, with individualized support and group training the most common. Statewide, over three quarters of surveyed administrators (78%) reported receiving individualized support, with regional rates ranging from 61% to 100%. Group training was reported by 60% of administrators, with SST regions reporting between 39% and 76%. In contrast, fewer than half of the surveyed administrators reported receiving networking and peer support (43%) or accessing online resources (33%; see Exhibit 3). For a full summary of responses by SST region, see Appendix Exhibit B-2.

78% of surveyed administrators reported receiving individualized support.

Exhibit 3.

Administrators most often received individualized support and group training, with fewer reporting access to peer or online resources.

% of surveyed LEA and building administrators who reported receiving SST services



Source. Ohio SST evaluation, LEA and building administrator surveys, fall 2024 (n = 243).

Note. LEA = local education agency. SST = State Support Team. Gray bars represent the full range of average percentages reported across SST regions. Regions 2, 4, 7, 12, 14, and 16 are included in statewide averages (blue dots) but are excluded from the regional range because they had fewer than 10 survey respondents.

81% of surveyed community school administrators reported receiving individualized support, compared with **76%** in traditional LEAs and schools.

81% of surveyed administrators reported receiving SST services related to the school improvement process.

On average, administrators received more SST services in person (21 hours) than remotely (9 hours). During interviews, many emphasized the value of in-person support. As one administrator explained,

“

That would be probably my number one resource that has been helpful, having them here to be in my building, accompany me on walkthroughs. To talk through what they're seeing and what I'm looking at and what I should be looking at and [providing] principal training. That's been helpful to me as a new administrator.

Administrators in community schools were more likely than those in traditional LEAs and schools to report receiving individualized support (81% vs. 76%) but less likely to receive group training (57% vs. 61%).

School improvement was the most common topic for SST services.

Statewide, 81% of surveyed LEA and building administrators reported receiving SST services related to school improvement, including Ohio's improvement process and ED STEPS, during 2023–24. However, the frequency of reported support varied by region, ranging from 61% in Region 6 to 95% in Region 9.

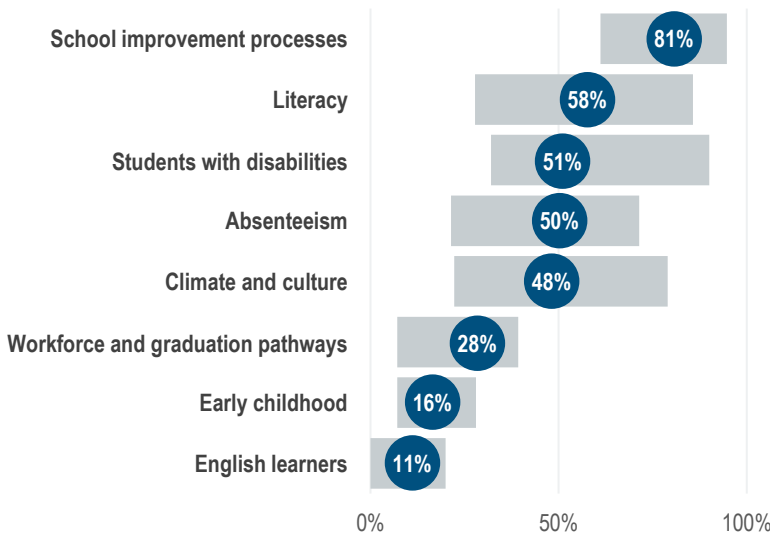
Administrators also commonly reported receiving services related to literacy (58% statewide, with regional rates ranging from 28% to 86%), students with disabilities (51% statewide, ranging from 32% to 90% regionally), absenteeism (50% statewide, ranging from 21% to 71% regionally), and climate and culture (48% statewide, ranging from 22% to 57% regionally). Other topics were reported less frequently, including workforce and graduation pathways (28%), early

childhood (16%), and English learners (ELs; 11%; see Exhibit 4). For a full summary of responses by SST region, see Appendix Exhibit B-3.

Exhibit 4.

Statewide, SSTs prioritized school improvement processes in their services.

% of surveyed LEA and building administrators who reported receiving SST services



Source. Ohio SST evaluation, LEA and building administrator surveys, fall 2024 (n = 243).

Note. LEA = local education agency. SST = State Support Team. Gray bars represent the range of average percentages reported across SST regions. Regions 2, 4, 7, 12, 14, and 16 are included in statewide averages (blue dots) but are excluded from the regional range because they had fewer than 10 survey respondents.

Beyond service availability across multiple topics, some interviewees emphasized the value of SST consultants being able to adapt and tailor topics to meet the specific needs of schools or LEAs. As one building administrator explained,



When [SST consultants] first came in ... they were very literacy driven ... I told them I can't even begin to work on literacy until we get behavior under control. We really need help with that. And they listened, and they shifted, and they were able to work with me on developing that PBIS [Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports] system, which then improved the behavior and let us get into literacy.



Considerations for the Department

- **Encourage in-person service delivery when appropriate and feasible to strengthen trust and better align services with local needs.** Surveyed administrators reported receiving more in-person services on average (21 hours), compared with remote services (9 hours). Interviewees emphasized the value of SST consultants visiting their buildings, noting that these interactions helped build stronger relationships and better align services with local needs.
- **Further expand services to groups of teachers to address classroom-level needs.** Evaluation findings suggest that SST services primarily provide services to LEA and school administrators rather than directly to teachers. For example, individualized services were the most frequently reported type of SST service, while school improvement processes were the most frequently reported topic of support. Services for individual administrators are likely essential for setting up effective teaching conditions, but may only be the first step toward improving student outcomes.

Administrator Perceptions of SST Services



Administrators' engagement with SST services is strongly shaped by their perceptions of service quality.² Prior research has identified several features of school improvement support that may affect how recipients judge its quality and usefulness. For instance, recipients often emphasize the importance of a *good fit* between support providers and their schools, meaning that providers bring relevant expertise and build productive, trusting relationships with school leaders and staff. Research also underscores the importance of school improvement support being both *timely* (evidenced by promptness in execution and adherence to deadlines) and *responsive* (evidenced by active listening, addressing challenges, proactively following up, and delivering valued input; Boyle et al., 2009). These perceptions matter. If stakeholders do not view support as useful and high quality, they may disengage and ignore, avoid, or even resist it (Le Floch et al., 2011). In this way, perceptions may act as a filter, shaping how stakeholders interact with support services and ultimately influencing whether those services lead to meaningful changes in adult practice and student outcomes.

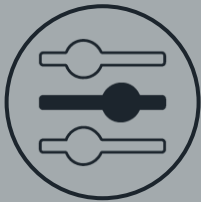
The findings in this section are based on an analysis of survey and interview data and address the following evaluation questions:

- How satisfied are schools and districts with the services provided by SST consultants?
- To what extent do perceptions of the quality of these services differ by region and across district and school characteristics?

- To what extent do LEA and school leaders believe that services provided by their SST helped improve educator practices?
- To what extent do LEA and school leaders believe that services provided by their SST helped improve student achievement?

Administrators expressed generally positive perceptions of the quality of services provided by SSTs during the 2023–24 school year.

Statewide, surveyed LEA and building administrators expressed generally positive perceptions of their SST services’ fit, timeliness, and responsiveness (see Exhibit 5). This was true across all SST regions and for both traditional and community schools, where, on average, respondents agreed or strongly agreed that services were of high quality across all three dimensions.



Developing survey scales

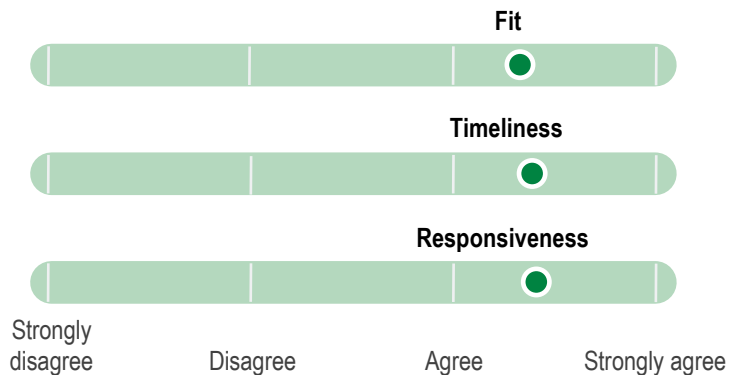
To convey reliable information on the three dimensions of service quality, AIR and Marzano’s questionnaire included multiple validated survey items for each dimension. Survey results based on multiple items are more reliable than those based on a single item (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012; Loo, 2002; Nunnally, 1978; Sarstedt & Wilczynski, 2009).

Responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree were assigned point values from 1 to 4. Analysts then averaged administrators’ answers for clusters of items, resulting in an overall numeric score for each scale.

Exhibit 5.

Administrators generally agreed that SST services had elements of high quality: fit, timeliness, and responsiveness.

Average SST quality rating



Source. Ohio SST evaluation, LEA and building administrator surveys, fall 2024 (n = 193)

Note. LEA = local education agency. SST = State Support Team. Composite scales for each construct were created by averaging scores from relevant individual survey items. See Appendix Exhibit B-4 for detailed results, by region.

While statewide averages provide a general picture, they can obscure important regional differences. For example, perceptions of service quality were higher than state averages in Regions 1, 5, and 8, with responses in these regions consistently leaning towards strong agreement. In contrast, Regions 3, 11, and 15 were below state averages, although perceptions in these regions generally still reflected agreement.

80% of surveyed administrators reported changing their practice as a result of SST services around school improvement processes.

Qualitative data reinforced these survey findings. Interviewed LEA and school leaders praised their SST representatives for providing technical guidance and targeted professional development. Open-ended survey responses added further insight into participants' perceptions, which were mostly positive. One respondent shared,

“

I receive monthly, in-person, one-on-one time with my SST consultant [who] is an invaluable resource to me. I also frequently reach out via email or phone calls, in between our monthly meetings, with questions regarding all aspects of running our school. I am so grateful to have this support.

Only eight survey respondents submitted explicitly negative comments about their experiences with SST supports. For example, one respondent's comments highlighted concerns about fit and responsiveness:

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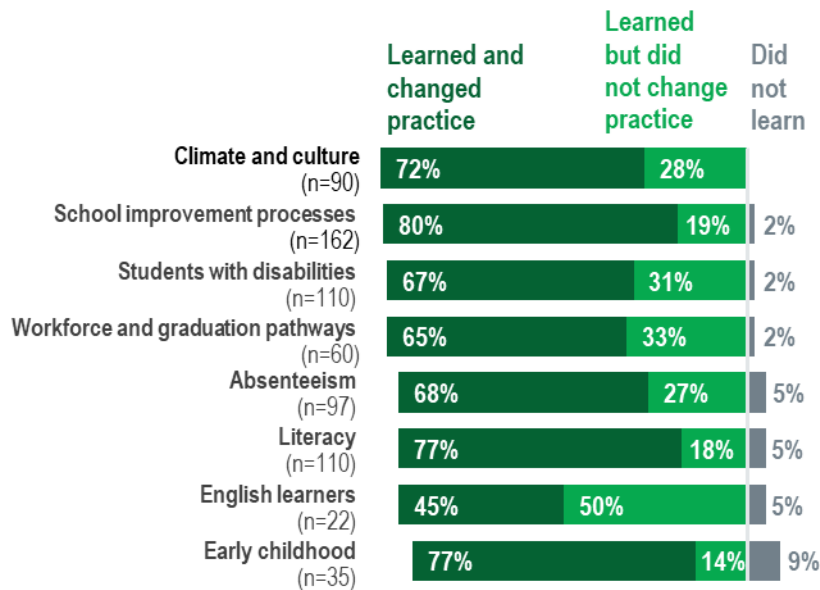
The support specialist assigned to work with our special education department had not researched our school before working with us and making suggestions. Therefore, incorrect assumptions were made, resulting in poor recommendations from the specialist. As a result, we requested to discontinue services for this technical assistance.

Most surveyed administrators reported learning from SST services across all topics of support. In addition, for most topics—with the exception of ELs—the majority of respondents indicated that they had changed their practice as a result of the SST services received. Changes in practice were more frequently reported for school improvement processes (80%), early childhood (77%), literacy (77%), and climate and culture (72%; see Exhibit 6). When asked about the topics on which they most appreciated receiving SST services, administrators most frequently mentioned continuous improvement processes, followed by literacy, special education, and PBIS.

Exhibit 6.

Most surveyed administrators indicated that they had learned from and/or changed practice as a result of SST services.

% of surveyed LEA and building administrators, by learning outcome



Source. Ohio SST evaluation, LEA and building administrator surveys, fall 2024.

Note. LEA = local education agency. SST = State Support Team. Data for each topic reflect responses from LEA and building administrators who indicated that their LEA or building received SST services on that topic during the 2023–24 school year. See Appendix Exhibit B-5 for detailed results, by region.

However, positive perceptions of SSTs did not consistently align with reported school-level improvements.

Statewide, most surveyed administrators reported that their district or school experienced improvement across nine topic areas during the 2023–24 school year (see Exhibit 7). The top three areas of reported improvement were school climate (71%), student achievement in ELA (66%), and graduation rates (65%).

71% of surveyed administrators reported improvements in school climate—the most frequently cited area of perceived progress statewide.

Nearly two thirds of surveyed administrators reported that SST services played at least a moderate role in the improvements their LEAs and schools experienced.

Writing about school climate, one school administrator noted,



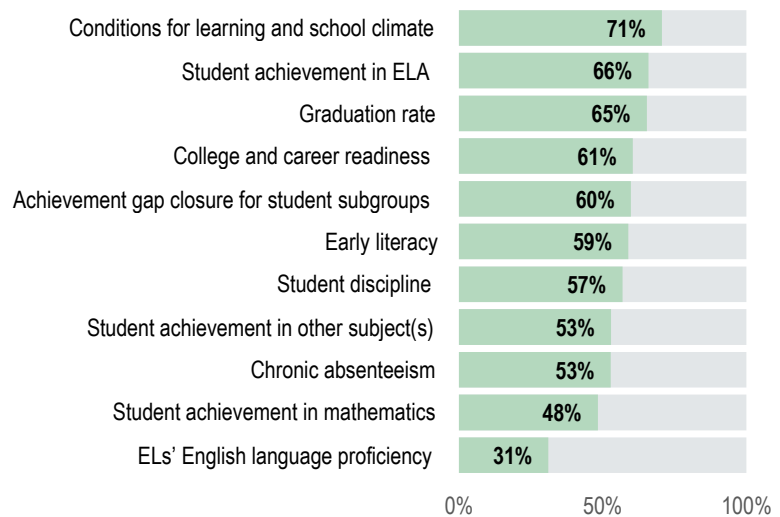
The PBIS service was very useful for a team of new teachers and staff members. It helped to give a greater understanding of how positive interventions [are] not only important school-wide but also necessary in the classroom. [It] helped teachers to understand that PBIS was more effective and better for students and school culture than suspensions.

In contrast, fewer than half of the surveyed administrators reported improvement in student achievement in mathematics (48%) and ELs’ English language proficiency (31%). School administrators credited SSTs with having at least a moderate influence on 63% of improvements they reported. This finding closely mirrored responses from LEA administrators, 64% of whom attributed similar influence to SST services.

Exhibit 7.

Most surveyed administrators reported that their district or school experienced improvement during the 2023–24 school year across nine topics.

% of surveyed LEA and building administrators reporting improvement



Source. Ohio SST evaluation, LEA and building administrator surveys, fall 2024 (n = 178).

Note. ELA = English language arts. ELs = English learners. LEA = local education agency. SST = Student Support Team. The percentage of respondents reporting improvements for each area is based on all surveyed LEA and building administrators. See Appendix Exhibit B-6 for detailed results, by region.

Considerations for the Department

- **Explore new approaches for recruiting and retaining SST consultants to ensure LEAs and schools receive support from the highest caliber of professionals.** While it is encouraging that LEA and building administrators generally view SST services positively, survey data reveal regional differences. Concerns about SST consultants' expertise suggest that their capacity to catalyze improvement may be limited, especially in a support system that depends heavily on human capital. Initiating recruitment well before the upcoming school year could help attract the widest pool of candidates, increasing the likelihood of securing expertise aligned with district and school needs, particularly if current timelines are limiting access to top talent.



Alignment of SST Services



Effective school improvement hinges on systematic processes, sequential actions, and strategic planning. Formal plans are critical tools that provide a roadmap to focus improvement efforts, guide resource allocation, and ensure accountability in addressing educational challenges.³ In Ohio, LEA One Plans establish district-level strategic priorities, while SDAs formalize the targeted services provided by SSTs. By design, this complementary relationship is intended to ensure that SST services function as direct enablers of district- and school-specific improvement goals, maximizing their potential to drive positive change. Conversely, if services are off target, LEAs and schools may not receive assistance in their areas of greatest need—potentially limiting the overall impact of these services.

This section explores how well these services align with LEA priorities by examining two key evaluation questions:

- To what extent do the grant activities, action steps, and overall impacts outlined in SDAs align with the goals, strategies, and outcomes identified in LEA One Plans, and how does this alignment vary across regions?
- How well do the SDAs' stated impacts align with the adult and student measures included in LEA One Plans, and how does this alignment vary across regions?

To address these questions, the evaluation team reviewed 2023–24 SDAs and LEA One Plans from 240 LEAs, including 166 traditional school LEAs and 124 community school LEAs. The analysis assessed alignment across three dimensions:

- **SST service area to LEA One Plan alignment:** Comparing the focus of SST grant activities and required strategies in SDA entries with goals and strategies in LEA One Plans

- **Adult measure alignment:** Assessing how expected changes in adult practices (e.g., implementation of PBIS frameworks, data-informed decision making) are defined and tracked in both documents.
- **Student measure alignment:** Assessing how student success outcomes are defined and tracked in both documents

Each dimension was rated as aligned, partially aligned, or weakly aligned, based on coherence and consistency between the two documents. Exhibit 8 provides the definitions for each alignment rating across the three dimensions. Additional details on the analytic approach are available in Appendix A.

Exhibit 8.

How we rated alignment across key dimensions

	SST grant activities and strategies documented in SDAs and LEA One Plans	Adult measures documented in SDAs and LEA One Plans	Student measures documented in SDAs and LEA One Plans
Aligned	The SST grant activity and its required strategies directly correspond to an LEA One Plan goal, sharing the same primary focus and target population (e.g., students with disabilities, if applicable).	Measures share a core topic area, are at a compatible level (e.g., both are at the system level or classroom level), address a similar function (e.g., both relate to planning or implementation), AND focus on similar target student groups.	Measures share a core topic area, reference the specific metric or assessment tool, AND focus on similar target student groups.
Partially aligned	The SST grant activity shares a core content area with an LEA One Plan goal but differs in scope (e.g., broader or narrower focus); OR , for grant activities focused on students with disabilities, the One Plan goal lacks a specific focus on students with disabilities.	Measures share the same core topic area but differ in one or more key aspect: level, function, or target student group.	Measures share the same core topic area but differ in one or more key aspect: the specific metric or assessment tool or the target student group.
Weakly aligned	The SST grant activity does not align with any relevant LEA One Plan goal, OR no corresponding One Plan goal could be identified.	Measures address different core topic areas, OR one measure is missing from either the SDA or the LEA One Plan.	Measures address different core topic areas, OR the measure is missing from the LEA One Plan. <i>Records where the SDA was missing a student measure were excluded from analysis.</i>

Note. LEA = local education agency. SDA = Service Delivery Agreement. SST = State Support Team.

Roughly one quarter of grant activity strategies lacked clear alignment with LEA One Plan goals.

Statewide ratings reveal that while just over half of SDA entries (54%) were rated as fully aligned with LEA One Plan goals and strategies, a substantial proportion showed weak alignment. Specifically, over a quarter of entries (27%) demonstrated weak alignment, meaning

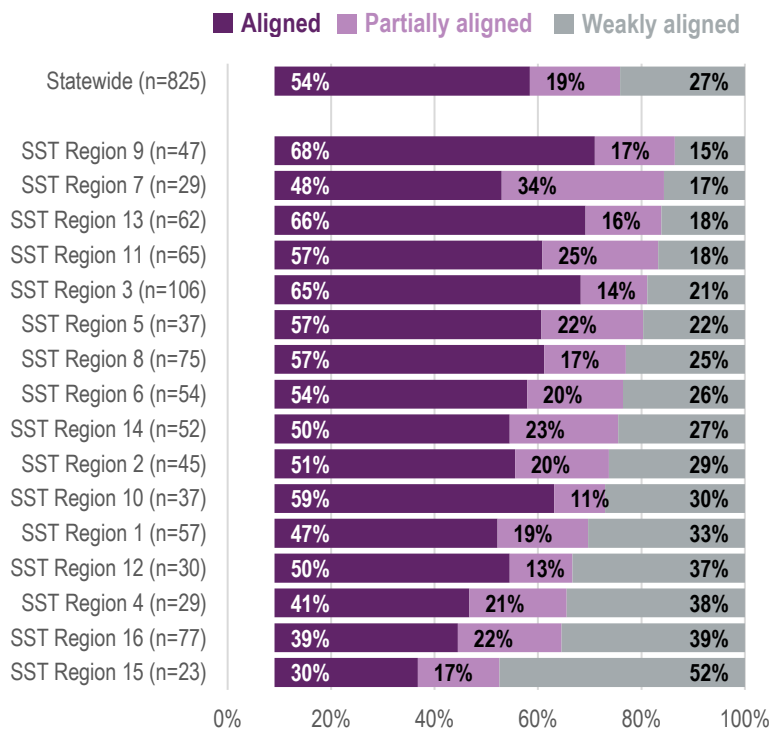
27% of SDA grant activity strategies were *weakly aligned* with LEA One Plan goals.

that services documented in the SDAs did not clearly connect with or support the goals and strategies of the LEA One Plans. The remaining entries (19%) were rated as partially aligned, indicating that services addressed a similar priority but differed in scope or specificity. For example, an SDA might describe a grant activity focused on college and career readiness specifically for students with disabilities, while the related One Plan goal refers more broadly to college and career readiness for all students (see Exhibit 9).

Exhibit 9.

Most SST grant activity strategies were aligned with LEA One Plan priorities, though about one quarter demonstrated weak alignment.

% of SDA entries



Source. SST Service Delivery Agreements and LEA One Plans, 2023–24.

Note. LEA = local education agency. SDA = Service Delivery Agreement. SST = State Support Team.

When examining alignment across regions, most SST regions generally mirrored the statewide trend: The majority of services were at least partially aligned, with few regions

identified as having more than 40% of entries rated as weakly aligned. SST Regions 3, 9, and 13 exhibited the highest levels of alignment between SST services and LEA One Plan goals. In these regions, roughly two thirds of SDA entries were rated as aligned (65%, 68%, and 66%, respectively). Weak alignment was less commonly observed.

Regions 4, 10, 15, and 16 showed lower rates of alignment. In Region 15, more than half of the SDA entries (52%) were rated as weakly aligned, with only 30% rated as aligned. Regions 4, 10, and 16 showed similar patterns, with the proportion of entries rated as weakly aligned ranging from 30% to 38%.

While most student measures described in SDAs and LEA One Plans were found to align at least partially, many adult measures demonstrated weak alignment.

When examining how well *measures* aligned between SDAs and LEA One Plans, a clear pattern emerged: Student outcome measures were more consistently aligned or partially aligned than adult practice measures. Statewide, about 84% of student-focused measures were at least partially aligned, indicating a shared focus on student goals. Only a small portion of student measures (17%) showed weak alignment (see Exhibit 10).

In contrast, about half of the adult-focused measures (49%) were weakly aligned, either addressing different priorities or missing from one of the plans altogether (see Exhibit 11). This variation might be due to the structure of the 2023–24 SDA template. At that time, the template included an “Overall Impact” section which broadly asked for intended results and their connection to the LEA One Plan. However, the plan template did not clearly differentiate between student and adult measures. As a result, expectations—particularly for adult-focused entries—were inconsistently interpreted, contributing to the observed variation in alignment.

84% of student measures described in SDAs and LEA One Plans were rated as *aligned* or *partially aligned*.

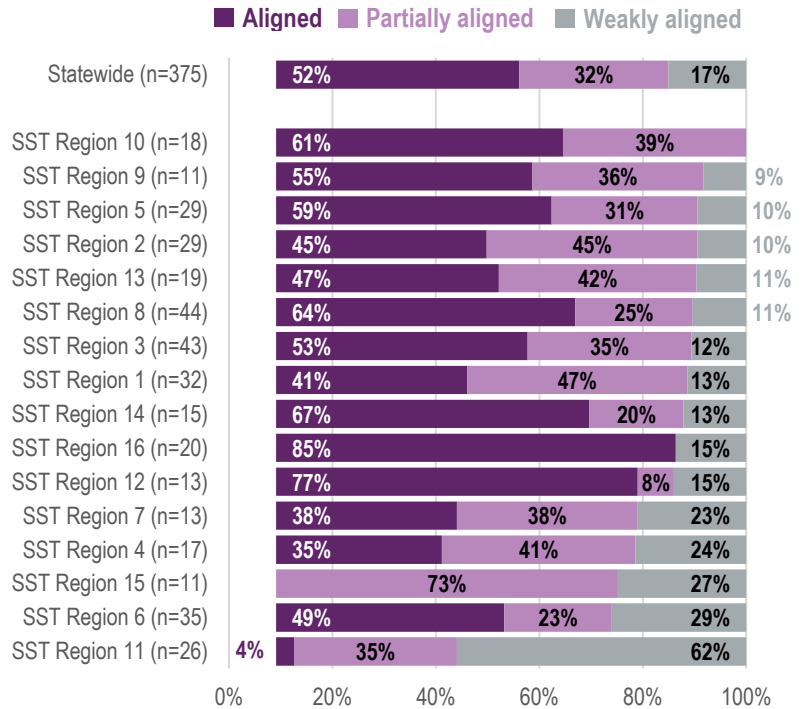
49% of adult measures were rated as *weakly aligned*.

Across all 16 SST regions, SDA entries demonstrated stronger alignment in student measures than adult measures.

Exhibit 10.

Most student measures demonstrated at least partial alignment.

% of SDA entries



Source. SST Service Delivery Agreements and LEA One Plans, 2023–24.
 Note. LEA = local education agency. SDA = Service Delivery Agreement. SST = State Support Team. The analysis of student measures was based on the subset of SDA entries that were rated *aligned* or *partially aligned* with LEA One Plan goals in the initial review of grant activity alignment.

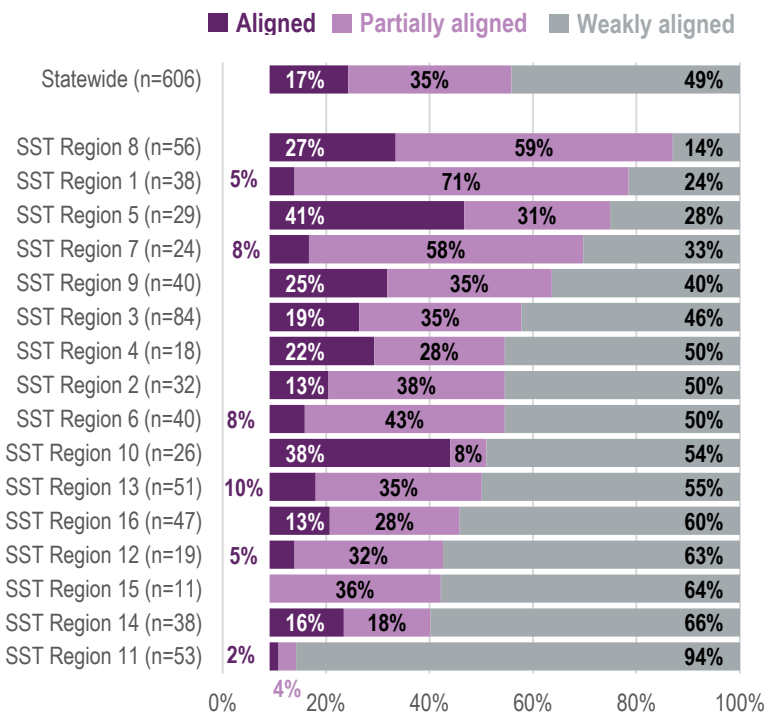
Across all 16 SST regions, student measures more frequently showed at least partial alignment across documents than adult measures, although the degree of alignment varied. Some SST regions, such as Regions 1, 5, 7, and 8, demonstrated relatively strong alignment, with most adult and student measures rated at least partially aligned. In Region 8, for example, 89% of student measures and 86% of adult measures fell into the aligned or partially aligned category—one of the highest levels of consistency observed statewide. Conversely, in several SST regions, including Regions 2, 4, 6, 10, 11, 13, and 15, over half of the adult measures were found to be weakly aligned, highlighting a need for clearer articulation of adult-focused outcomes. Region 11 demonstrated particularly low alignment levels,

with only 6% of adult measures and 38% of student measures rated as partially aligned or aligned. This likely stems from highly redundant phrasing observed in Region 11’s SDAs. Many “Overall Impact” statements featured identical, generic descriptions that lacked specifics. This points to a “copy-and-paste” approach for meeting compliance requirements, rather than a genuine effort to craft plans responsive to the unique needs of the individual needs of individual LEAs and schools. Additionally, nearly half of Region 11’s SDA entries did not include any adult outcome measure at all.

Exhibit 11.

Nearly half of adult measures demonstrated weak alignment.

% of SDA entries



Source. SST Service Delivery Agreements and LEA One Plans, 2023–24.
 Note. LEA = local education agency. SDA = Service Delivery Agreement. SST = State Support Team. The analysis of adult measures was based on the subset of SDA entries that were rated *aligned* or *partially aligned* with LEA One Plan goals in the initial review of grant activity alignment.



Considerations for the Department

- **Encourage SSTs to develop and refine logic models that clearly articulate how their services are expected to influence adult practices and, ultimately, student outcomes.** The Department’s 2024–25 revisions to the SDA template—introducing separate sections for “Adult Implementation SMART Goals” and “Student Outcome SMART Goals”—represent an important step forward. To build on this progress, SSTs should be encouraged to use logic models to map how specific services are intended to lead to changes in adult behavior and, in turn, improvements in student outcomes. When used meaningfully, logic models can help clarify the purpose of each service, assess whether proposed activities are likely to lead to desired outcomes, and identify key indicators of progress at different stages. However, without thoughtful engagement, there is a risk that logic modeling becomes a compliance exercise, adding complexity to planning documents without enhancing their usefulness. To increase the likelihood that logic models strengthen the planning process, the Department could provide practical guidance, examples from the field, and opportunities for SSTs to reflect on and revise their models over time.
- **Provide targeted technical assistance to help SSTs build and apply logic models, in ways that strengthen—not complicate—their planning processes.** Developing robust logic models can present unique challenges, especially given the wide range of services SSTs provide, from providing direct technical assistance and professional development to facilitating continuous improvement processes. Capturing the full scope of these services and their intended pathways in a coherent logic model requires specific skills in program theory, evaluation design, and the articulation of causal pathways—areas that may not be part of SST staff’s core training. External facilitation, in particular, can play a central role by helping teams clarify their goals, challenge assumptions, and synthesize diverse perspectives.

Outcomes



The main goal of a statewide system of support is to change adult behavior and improve outcomes. This section presents two sets of outcome-related analyses. While these analyses do not permit causal conclusions, they offer important context for understanding the services provided and may inform future planning.

The first analysis used publicly available outcome data from the Ohio Report Card for the years 2021–22 through 2023–24 to examine trends in school-level averages for reading and math proficiency in Grades 3–8, High School English II proficiency, High School Algebra I proficiency, High School Geometry proficiency, 4-year graduation rates, and chronic absenteeism, comparing schools receiving SST services with all schools statewide. The second assessed whether CSI, TSI, and ATSI schools within LEAs receiving SST services were on track to achieve the goals outlined in LEA One Plans, focusing on the percentage of schools meeting targets for outcomes (using publicly available data from the Ohio Report Card) and disaggregating goal attainment by the specific outcomes targeted.

Trends in student outcomes for schools receiving SST services largely reflect overall statewide trends.

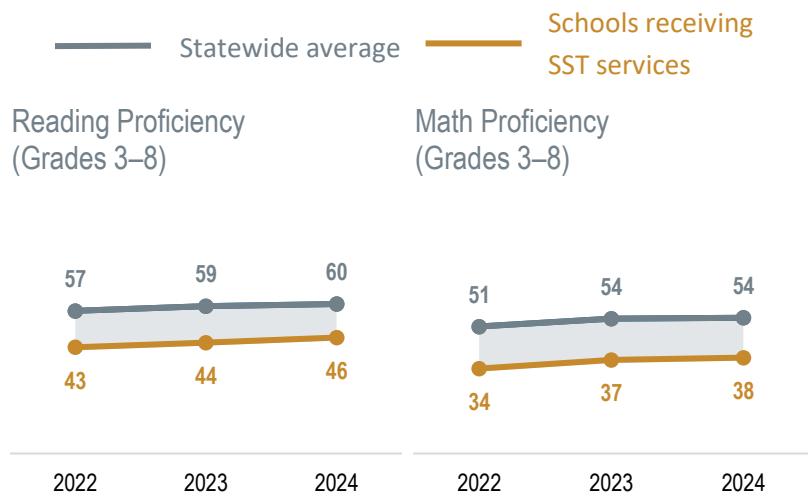
Changes in average school-level student outcomes between 2021–22 and 2023–24 were generally similar between schools receiving SST services and schools across the state. Reading proficiency in Grades 3–8, High School Algebra I proficiency, and chronic absenteeism rates improved at the same rate in both

Math proficiency in Grades 3–8 rose **3 points** statewide and **4 points** in schools receiving SST services.

groups. Math proficiency in Grades 3–8 also improved for both groups, with schools receiving SST services showing a slightly greater gain. Specifically, statewide math proficiency increased from 51% to 54%, while proficiency rates among schools receiving SST services rose from 34% to 38%. However, High School English II proficiency, High School Geometry proficiency, and 4-year graduation rates remained largely flat among both sets of schools (see Exhibits 12 and 13).

Exhibit 12.

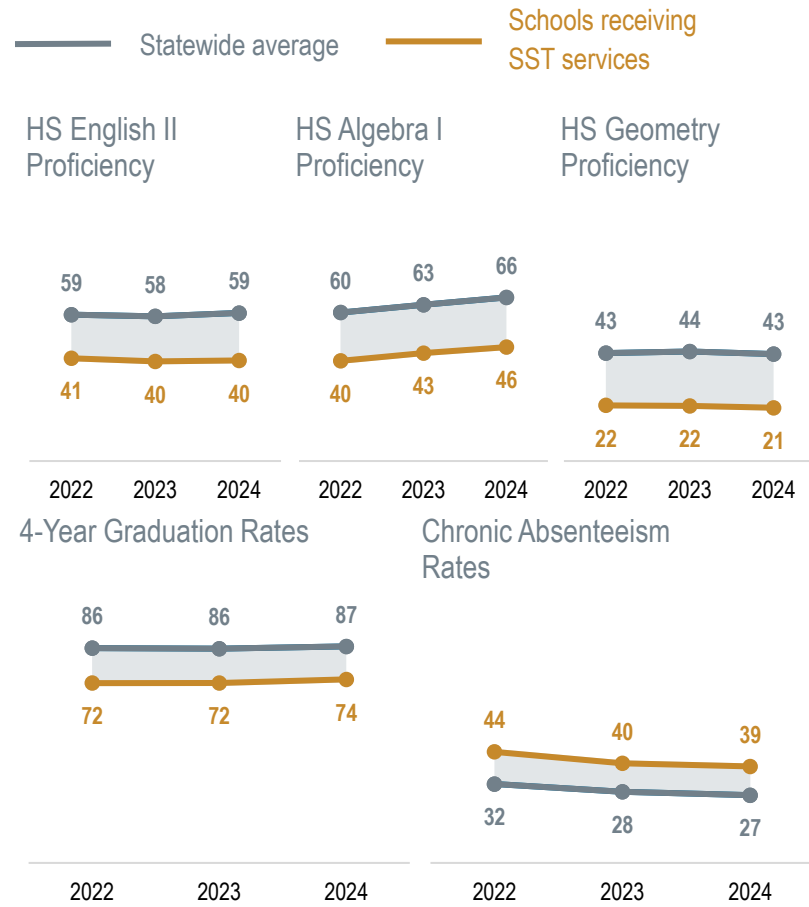
Reading and math proficiency in Grades 3–8 showed similar upward trends among schools receiving SST services and schools statewide.



Source: Ohio Report Card data, 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24.
 Note: SST = State Support Team.

Exhibit 23.

Schools receiving SST services and schools statewide exhibited similar trends in high school proficiency in core subjects, graduation rates, and chronic absenteeism.



Source. Ohio Report Card data, 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24.
 Note. HS = High School. SST = State Support Team.

Nearly one third of schools in LEAs made sufficient progress to meet goals articulated in One Plans across all targeted outcomes.

To evaluate One Plan goal attainment, the evaluation team focused on the proportion of CSI, TSI, and ATSI schools within LEAs receiving SST services that demonstrated sufficient progress toward meeting their LEA One Plan goals. An overview of this analysis is provided in the sidebar. Additional methodological details can be found in Appendix A.

31% of schools made enough progress on all targeted One Plan outcomes to stay on track to meet their goals within the planned time frame.



Assessing One Plan goal attainment

Drawing from LEA One Plans, the evaluation team compiled a data set of 695 goals, capturing the targeted outcomes, expected amount of improvement, and intended completion date. Goals were excluded from analysis if they lacked any of these elements, referenced outcomes not available in Ohio Report Card data, or if schools were missing outcome data for a given school year. Since this analysis was based on whether schools were meeting goals outlined in LEA One Plans, some goals were applied to multiple schools within the same LEA. After removing goals with insufficient information and making additional adjustments based on LEA- and school-level information, 333 goals remained for analysis.

To illustrate the evaluation process, consider a specific goal: “By June 30, 2026, attendance for all students in all grades will increase by 15%”. The evaluation team assumed a consistent annual growth rate, which accounts for how each year’s gains build on the last, with improvements creating a higher starting point for subsequent outcomes. To accurately reflect this cumulative growth and achieve a 15% total increase over three years, the attendance rate would need to improve by roughly 4.76% annually. Therefore, if School A had an attendance rate of 85% in 2022–23, an attendance rate of 89% would be needed in 2023–24 to remain on track to achieve the overarching goal of 15% improvement by June 2026.

Statewide, nearly one third of schools (31%) made sufficient progress across all outcomes targeted in their LEA One Plan to meet goals in the stated time frame. Just under 69% of schools did not make enough progress.

Among the outcomes targeted, improving graduation rate was the most frequently attained goal: Over half of schools (53%) in LEAs that prioritized graduation rates improved enough to meet their One Plan targets by the specified deadline. Just over one third of schools in LEAs that focused on attendance or chronic absenteeism improved enough to meet goals over the 2-year period.

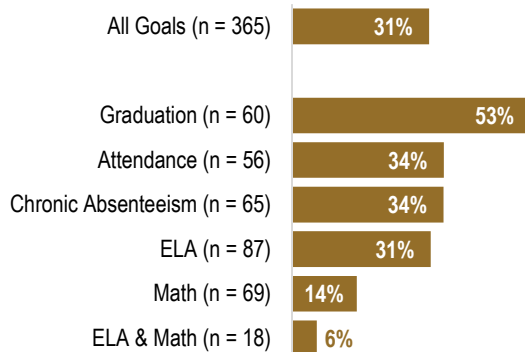
ELA proficiency was the most frequently targeted outcome in LEA One Plans, with 26% of goals focused on this area. Among schools in LEAs with ELA goals, 31% of schools made enough progress in a single year to meet goals in the stated time frame. In math, 14% of schools in LEAs made enough progress to meet goals articulated in One Plans.

For LEAs that established goals in more than one tested subject, the analysis employed an approach that examined whether schools made sufficient progress toward the stated goals for each tested grade and subject by the specified dates. This method allowed for a more comprehensive view of school performance, enabling the evaluation team to understand more precisely where progress was being made. Using this approach, only 6% of schools in LEAs targeting both ELA and math made enough progress to remain on track to meet the goals articulated in One Plans (see Exhibit 14).

Exhibit 14.

Most goals articulated in LEA One Plans were not met.

% of LEA One Plan goals met, by targeted outcome



Source. 2023–24 LEA One Plans, 2022–23, 2023–24 Ohio Report Card data.

Note. ELA = English language arts. LEA = local education agency. Goals targeting “all tested subjects” and math course credits earned were evaluated in fewer than 10 schools and are therefore not presented individually, though they are included in the evaluation of “All Goals.”

Of the schools that did not attain goals in all targeted subjects, nearly two thirds made enough progress in at least one assessment to meet the goal articulated in their One Plan.

Many LEA One Plan goals targeted multiple grade levels and/or subject areas, making them inherently more challenging to achieve as schools had to demonstrate sufficient progress across all targeted areas. To better understand progress under these more complex conditions, a follow-up analysis was conducted to examine these multifaceted goals most closely. This provides additional context for the earlier findings and highlights areas of partial progress that may otherwise have been overlooked.

Overall, 65% of goals targeting improvement in multiple grade levels or subject areas were partially met, meaning that schools made sufficient progress in at least one subject-grade or end-of course assessment, even if the full goal was not achieved. Among schools in LEAs that targeted improvement in math or in both ELA and math but did not make enough progress across all targeted subjects to meet the full goal, about three quarters (76%) made enough progress in at least one subject-grade or end-of-course assessment. Among

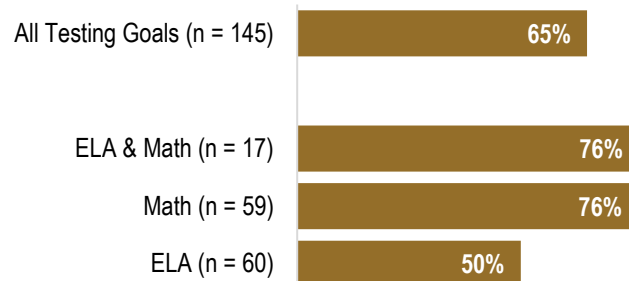
65% of multi-grade or multi-subject goals were partially met, with schools showing progress in at least one area.

schools in LEAs that targeted only ELA proficiency and did not meet the full goal, only half made sufficient progress in at least one grade level (see Exhibit 15).

Exhibit 15.

Most goals targeting improvement in multiple grade levels or subject areas were partially met.

% of performance goals met for at least one grade-level or end-of-course assessment



Source. 2023–24 LEA One Plans, 2022–23 and 2023–24 Ohio Report Card data.

Note. ELA = English language arts. LEA = Local Education Agency. Goals targeting “all tested subjects” were evaluated in fewer than 10 schools and are therefore not presented in the disaggregated outcomes. They are included in the overall evaluation of “All Testing Goals.”



Considerations for the Department

- Conduct a more rigorous analysis of outcomes in schools receiving SST services that allows for causal inference.** While the current evaluation included a limited set of outcomes and did not assess whether SST services directly influence student outcomes, applying methods such as regression discontinuity or propensity score matching could enable a more robust assessment of the statewide system of support. Such an assessment would strengthen the validity of findings and provide clearer insights into the effectiveness of SST services.
- Expand the scope of analysis by incorporating additional outcomes beyond those available in the Ohio Report Card.** Many LEA One Plan goals target areas that are not captured in publicly reported data, such as school climate and student well-being. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of SST consultant activities, the Department could explore opportunities to collect new data, such as school climate surveys.

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¹ Yoon et al.'s (2007) review of over 1,300 studies found that teachers who received an average of 49 hours of substantial professional development could boost their students' achievement by about 21 percentile points. While this review highlighted the impact of significant contact hours, it also noted that studies with 5–14 hours of professional development showed no statistically significant effects on student achievement. More recent work by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) reviewed 35 rigorous studies and affirmed that effective professional development is of sustained duration (among other characteristics), supporting the continued relevance of earlier findings on the importance of allowing sufficient time for teacher learning. Although both studies focus on teacher professional development, they underscore the broader principle that sustained, high-quality support—whether for teachers or administrators—can contribute meaningfully to improved educational outcomes.

² Le Floch et al. (2011), for instance, found that if school administrators do not view external support as useful or high quality, they often ignore, avoid, or even actively resist that support, indicating that perceptions act as a filter shaping engagement. See also Boyle et al. (2009), which emphasizes that support services need to be timely and responsive to school needs; and Bryk and Schneider (2002), which examines how relational trust (closely tied to perceived quality and respect) between school staff and external partners is critical for sustained engagement in school improvement efforts.

³ While the existence of formal improvement plans is foundational, these plans alone are not enough to positively impact change and improvement. Indeed, prior studies underscore that the quality of the planning process itself is key to guiding impactful, systemwide efforts around school improvement (Fernandez, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2006; Strunk et al., 2016).