



STATE REPORT IDAHO

OVERALL APPROACH

Equity: How well does the state’s approach to school improvement include focused attention on supporting underserved students and closing the achievement gap? Does the state require LEAs to maintain an equity focus in their school improvement plans, activities and resource allocations?

Equity can be inferred from the materials in the Idaho Accountability Framework as a Gap Closing

component of the measure, but is not explicitly apparent in the State Technical Assistance Team (STAT) model. The state’s planning rubric includes equity-oriented questions, but the equity thread is not as clear as it could be. Improvement plans are focused on key areas of need of the school as determined by the needs assessment but do not seem to call out subgroup achievement gaps as a priority area. The school improvement process will only happen if underserved students are supported properly.

Strengths: How is the state thoughtfully leveraging ESSA’s flexibility to put in place the necessary policies and procedures that create an enabling environment for effective and sustained school improvement, and that consider state/local lessons learned from past efforts? What parts of the state’s turnaround strategy or guidance to LEAs were strongest or exemplary?

Interactions between state and local teams are consistent and appear to have shifted from being compliance oriented to meaningful partnerships with an ongoing robust exchange. Guiding questions on the school improvement plan encourage districts to develop comprehensive turnaround plans that can maximize effectiveness. Although the lack of focus on equity and closing the achievement gap requires improvement, the format of the application encourages thorough planning. The state has given some thought to sustaining improvement, through high-touch interactions between the state’s STAT team and districts, and appears committed to stakeholder involvement at each step of the process.

Improvements: How can the state improve its turnaround efforts? What parts of the state’s strategy or guidance to LEAs were unclear? What risks and challenges might the state face with its current approach?

The mutual input from both the state and districts during periodic check-ins is essential for progress. The autonomy of check-ins should be more structured around the content of the strategies implemented for school improvement. Meaningful discourse and guidance about strategic resource allocation for the

TURNAROUND COMPONENT OVERVIEW

Coherent and Aligned Vision for Improving Outcomes **Needs Improvement**

Strategic Use of Funding and Alignment of Resources **Needs Improvement**

Rigorous Review Process **Adequate**

Continuous Improvement, Monitoring and Evaluation **Needs Improvement**

Evidence-Based Interventions **Adequate**

Capacity Building and Autonomy . . **Strong**

Engagement **Strong**

Sustainability **Adequate**

neediest students and schools will target efforts towards equity in School Wide Improvement Plans (SWIPs). The SWIP rubric provides clear expectations for a plan, but it appears the rubric is no longer required for plan evaluators. The state has made available several resources through state-sponsored networks and external partners yet it is not clear that those resources are being actively matched to districts and schools based on needs and capacity.

TURNAROUND COMPONENTS

Coherent and Aligned Vision for Improving Outcomes: How well does the state articulate a coherent vision or theory of action that drives their school improvement efforts? Is this vision aligned with the state’s accountability system and goals for closing the achievement gap?

N/A Weak **Needs Improvement** Adequate Strong Exemplary

While Idaho outlines a vision for improvement and sustainability, this vision is not well articulated throughout their school improvement work such as their applications or aligned with their continuous improvement systems. That said, Idaho has produced a short document which describes how the state, districts, and schools are mutually accountable for school improvement. The document outlines what support districts and schools can expect, including the roles of the state versus the districts and funding implications of being identified for improvement. Both the stakeholder checklists and logic model document indicate accountability at various levels of participation.

Collectively, a statewide goal is to have 90% of schools identified for comprehensive support make progress on at least two of their goals. Idaho developed a logic model that outlines the roles and responsibilities for each of the partners including state, district, schools, as well as external partners and how they can support improving student outcomes. The logic model breaks down the “outcomes – impact” for the state, external partners, and districts and schools. Districts, for example, should see increased student success by 2020–21 as measured by student attendance, behavior, achievement, engagement and graduation rate.

It appears that subgroup performance as an indicator for school improvement is the primary method by which Idaho is aiming to addressing the achievement gap. There is little evidence in the materials provided that demonstrates that the state is calling upon leaders to examine the gap within their school or district, unless Idaho is ensuring that districts and schools are using the data from that indicator to inform the development of their schoolwide improvement plan. The state should be commended for inclusion of external partners in its logic model and expectations about how those partners perform against the model.

Strategic Use of Funding and Alignment of Resources: Is the state allocating funding in a way that is strategic and maximizes resources? Are LEAs expected to prioritize improvement efforts that address the underlying performance issues?

N/A Weak **Needs Improvement** Adequate Strong Exemplary

Idaho adopted a formula allocation model to fund schools more efficiently, but this could hinder prioritizing districts with the highest need. States utilizing formula grants may bear a slightly higher burden to help districts develop creative ways to allocate resources across programs to fulfill their goals. It can also reduce incentives for districts to focus on improving school outcomes. Idaho’s school improvement application requires an annual budget for just comprehensive support and improvement schools, broken down by categories such as salaries, supplies and travel. Within the school wide improvement plan, districts must lay out a “few” key needs in instruction and the school program and the process by which they identified the key needs. The plan’s scoring rubric implies that the district “meets standard” if the budget is complete and the budget aligns with prioritized needs. Based on

Idaho’s ESSA plan, the state will prioritize targeted schools to receive resources first such as funding, expertise, math and English language arts coaches, leadership training, and assessment development. States utilizing formula grants, like Idaho, may have a higher burden to help districts develop creative ways to allocate resources across programs to fulfill their goals.

Rigorous Review Process: Is the state applying rigorous criteria and review processes to ensure resources will be used to support effective school improvement efforts? Is the state prioritizing funding to LEAs who demonstrate the greatest need for school improvement funding (including LEAs with a high percentage of CSI and TSI schools) and the strongest commitment to school improvement?

N/A Weak Needs Improvement **Adequate** Strong Exemplary

After evaluating the impact of the state’s 2017–2018 school improvement pilot, Idaho purposefully shifted away from using a rubric, given the emphasis on compliance serving functions, and instead focuses on forming a partnership between the districts and the state. As a result, the rubric used to evaluate school improvement plans is considered to be a supplemental tool rather than a requirement. For instance, the scoring rubric appears to focus on completion of each plan component, rather than quality.

The rubric does prompt the identified schools to describe the extent to which stakeholders, including tribal leaders, were involved in the development of the improvement plan. It also outlines a comprehensive needs assessment prompting the schools to review evaluate the curriculum and distribution of highly effective teachers, and requires the districts to describe their process for monitoring their progress, among many other elements. While these are key components to a review, it is difficult to gauge the steps that Idaho will take should a district submit a plan that is not comprehensive or rigorous.

Continuous Improvement, Monitoring and Evaluation: Does the state have a robust, data-driven process to monitor LEAs’ implementation of the school improvement plans within their district? Did the state establish clear milestones to ensure improvement over time, and within four years?

N/A Weak **Needs Improvement** Adequate Strong Exemplary

Idaho’s system of monitoring school improvement relies on check ins, or self-reporting, as a method to track progress. The monthly check-in process described by the state is intended to foster the state-district relationship as that of a partnership rather than evaluator. Although district and state check-ins appear to be robust and comprehensive, they may risk subjectivity and weakness in prioritizing highest need. For instance, the regular check ins include questions from the state to the district such as “share some feelings and thoughts about the work that has been done to date.” Fortunately, the state also asks what additional supports the district need as they develop their school improvement plans. Idaho also outlines the topics to be laid out during each progress check in.

In addition, Idaho developed a logic model and timeline that outlines annual outputs delineated by state, external partners, and districts and schools. Milestones or expectations of improvement over time are not clearly defined. Aside from regular check ins that suggest highlighting small success, it is unclear how the monitoring tool is connected to the theory of action to evaluate school wide improvement plans. It is also unclear what data the districts are using during their check in conversations. If the state is relying on the districts to evaluate success during these periodic meetings, is there sufficient capacity to sustain this?

Evidence-Based Interventions: To what extent is the state mandating LEAs use evidence-based strategies in their improvement efforts? Does the state provide guidance and supports to LEAs to help them identify and implement the most effective strategies based upon their needs?

N/A Weak Needs Improvement **Adequate** Strong Exemplary

There is clear indication within Idaho’s ESSA plan, logic model, and application that evidenced-based strategies should be used to drive improvement. The state has provided multiple resources for districts including evidenceforessa.org, U.S. Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse, as well as the Northwest Comprehensive Center and Regional Education Lab Northwest. Idaho also requires districts to provide evidence-based interventions for each prioritized need, identify the level of evidence and give a description of how the intervention meets the definition of evidence based on the state application.

Districts are required to detail the extent to which academic intervention programs demonstrate efficacy with the target population and how the interventions support the needs of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In addition, they must also detail what processes will be used to monitor and evaluate the plan for effectiveness. There is time dedicated specifically to discussing intervention strategies on the state timeline involving all members of State Technical Assistance Team (STAT), but available evidence does not provide any indication that there will be specific guidance and support for implementation for targeted populations. The STAT could conduct comprehensive needs assessments, define evidenced-based interventions, and conduct or evaluate periodic data collection.

Capacity Building and Autonomy: How well does the state articulate, delineate or set parameters around which interventions and responsibilities belong to the state, LEA and/or school? Does the state provide support or guidance to help LEAs identify and reduce barriers to school improvement? Does the state have a framework or process to support and monitor outside entities who partner with the state, LEAs or schools in school improvement efforts?

N/A Weak Needs Improvement Adequate **Strong** Exemplary

Idaho noted that each school is assigned a capacity builder improvement coach shortly after being identified for comprehensive support. The state describes capacity builders as the heart of the state’s school improvement system. They play an active role in supporting identified schools with their improvement efforts including supporting the school in developing an approvable SWIP, attending the check in phone calls with the state for feedback, and working to establish a school-based leadership team to sustain the work. Idaho should be commended for their efforts to support the capacity of the districts.

Idaho’s State Technical Assistance Team (STAT) logic model and timeline clearly illustrates the delineation of inputs, outputs and outcomes expected of the state, external partners and districts and schools. External partners are provided for districts and schools including the Superintendents Network, Building Capacity Project, Principals Network, Northwest Rural Innovation Student Engagement, Response to Intervention, Technical Assistance and Professional Development.

Idaho has not provided a framework or monitoring tool to measure the quality of outside providers, and has left it up to districts to describe the “rigorous review process.” External resources are also optional for districts and would be utilized best if STAT identifies and matches district and school leaders with the available supports that best meet the key priority areas identified in the needs assessment. This approach would reduce barriers to school improvement.

Engagement: Does the state require LEAs to engage with stakeholders such as parents and community members in the development and implementation of their school improvement plans? Does the state provide sufficient guidance and resources to LEAs to effectively do so, helping them foster local buy-in and promote sustainability?

N/A Weak Needs Improvement Adequate **Strong** Exemplary

Stakeholder engagement is evident in Idaho’s ESSA plan, needs assessment for a School Wide Improvement Plan, and rubric that outlines expectations. The state’s ESSA plan encourages stakeholder engagement in the School Wide Improvement Plan processes and instructs districts with low-performing schools to include the principal, teachers, and parents in the development and implementation. The needs assessment requires stakeholder positions be listed along with description and utilization within the School Wide Improvement Plan. Specific engagement plans and strategies must be outlined to identify the roles of each stakeholder. Although Idaho has a robust plan on encouraging stakeholders, there is no detailed guidance on how to effectively promote sustainability, which keeps this area from an exemplary rating.

Sustainability: Does the state have a plan in place to review the school improvement efforts statewide and evaluate the impact and effectiveness? Does the state have a process in place to support LEAs and schools by enhancing their capacity to maintain their improvement efforts upon exiting identification and intervention?

N/A Weak Needs Improvement **Adequate** Strong Exemplary

Idaho’s ESSA plan indicates that the state will require a written plan for sustaining improved student achievement to be approved by the State Technical Assistance Team (STAT). This sustainability plan will include goals, strategies and a monitoring plan, as well as an explanation of how the school will sustain improvement after no longer receiving improvement funds. The state asserts that state-sponsored professional development opportunities required of identified schools will still be available to schools that have exited from improvement status, and the logic model describes that STAT will monitor implementation and progress while a school is in improvement. Little could be found to indicate that this sustainability work has progressed yet, which makes it uncertain to what extent the state will continue supporting and enhancing the capacity of districts and schools once they have exited improvement.

The only documentation of statewide evaluation of improvement efforts was by progress monitoring at the district and school level through high-touch interactions. That said, the state does report that it has reached an agreement with their regional comprehensive center to conduct a third party, mixed-methods evaluation of the state’s capacity builder program, which should lead to useful information for the state to use.

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