



# STATE REPORT NEW YORK

## 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?

New York’s ESSA plan focuses on equity and ending segregation inequities, and indicates that the state is providing training for school boards on equity. One of the most powerful elements is the plan to create an Equity Report to shine a light on inequities in the state, particularly with regard to teacher effectiveness. New York also created their Socioeconomic Integration Pilot Program (SIPP) grant to help districts tackle socioeconomic integration and was very transparent about the problem the State has in this area and within particular schools. Annual accountability measures include areas that have demonstrated most achievement gap issues, and the state has done substantial messaging through its Equity in ESSA campaign.

However, because New York is still in the process of creating guidance aligned with its ESSA plan, the state’s focus on equity is not yet present in all of the materials reviewed. There are few references to equity in the state’s existing school improvement application, nor is there a strong link between the data examined and the any strategies selected. That said, the state’s SIPP grant does include a statement of purpose describing how it is intended as an equity tool, and communication from the state has included a strong equity focus. From New York’s ESSA plan and communications, it is likely that the equity focus in the school improvement materials themselves will strengthen in the future. New York could do a better job by compiling all ESSA documents in one location for ease of public consumption.

**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?

According to its ESSA plan, New York is building upon successful past practices in school improvement. School improvement will be approached as something the state will do in partnership with schools and districts, rather than imposing something on them. The state has an extensive needs assessment and adds state supports for turnaround. The state also aims to move school improvement to be focused at the local

## TURNAROUND COMPONENT OVERVIEW

Coherent and Aligned Vision for Improving Outcomes . . . . .	<b>Strong</b>
Strategic Use of Funding and Alignment of Resources . . . . .	<b>Adequate</b>
Rigorous Review Process . . . . .	<b>Adequate</b>
Continuous Improvement, Monitoring and Evaluation . . . . .	<b>Strong</b>
Evidence-Based Interventions . . . . .	<b>Strong</b>
Capacity Building and Autonomy . . . . .	<b>Strong</b>
Engagement . . . . .	<b>Strong</b>
Sustainability . . . . .	<b>Needs Improvement</b>

level and articulates the expectation of family and community engagement, in particular culturally and linguistically diverse families, in the school improvement process.

New York asks for extensive data analysis from its districts and schools in building school improvement plans, and requires that districts and school link the strategies they have chosen for school improvement to the evidence that led them to take that course of action. The state’s Diagnostic Tool for School and District Readiness (DTSDE) is quite strong, and most of the state’s school improvement materials are aligned to it.

The state has also invested considerable resources into creating documents to help parents and community members what to expect in the ESSA era.

**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?

While New York provides a comprehensive school improvement strategy outlined in its ESSA plan, it does not have a clearly stated theory of action on across its school improvement documents. The state’s DTSDE school improvement framework is high quality but it is not reflected its current school improvement application. While feedback from the state was helpful in understanding its current status and progress implementing its ESSA plan, there remains room for improvement by highlighting one clear theory of action throughout New York’s school improvement materials.

New York has given districts and schools greater autonomy and flexibility while grounding its turnaround efforts using collaboration, partnership and support, assuming that this will help schools improve and address achievement gaps. However, there may not be enough accountability from the state, such as milestones that are monitored, to track schools before they need to go into takeover by the state. Because plans set one year targets only, districts and schools in improvement may perceive a moving target.

## 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

In its ESSA plan, New York implies a theory of action that is primarily grounded in collaboration and support between the state and districts, and builds upon previous success in school improvement in the state. It explains that the state aims to drive school improvement by providing resources and exemplary examples to districts and working collaboratively with them. While New York does not appear to have put a theory of action statement front and center, this approach is implicit throughout the school improvement language in its plan.

New York does employ a strong school improvement framework called the Diagnostic Tool for School and District Readiness (DTSDE). This framework includes a set of six tenets, for which the state has a high quality rubric, and district and school planning guides reference and require that these tenets be addressed in improvement planning. The DTSDE has uses equity-oriented language throughout. New York has a dedicated website to the DTSDE which is reasonably easy to navigate, and includes tutorials, handbooks, and webinars.

**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

New York’s ESSA plan includes a well-documented flow of how Title I school improvement funds will support the schools most in need, including providing technical assistance to schools in targeted and comprehensive support and improvement. The state is also planning to incentivize a number of improvement efforts for schools to consider, such as socioeconomic integration and other competitive grants.

By and large, New York is using a formula model to allocate school improvement funds to schools and districts. The state’s school improvement application meets the letter of the ESSA law, however it reads as a compliance document with no alignment to any state-level strategy. State feedback has indicated that New York is in the process of creating a new school improvement application, which is a positive sign as it will likely do more to incorporate the strong DTSDE framework found elsewhere in school improvement guidance.

New York’s SIPP grant is an area where the state is encouraging schools and districts to pursue a specific strategic direction for school improvement. Under the program, districts may apply for planning and then implementation grants by describing how they will allow low income students in low performing schools to attend nearby schools with better outcomes. Based on the documented structure of this program, it seems likely that New York has made a commitment to integration as a driver of improvement. This program is a promising approach and one to watch as New York continues to implement it. It was noted, however, that while the SIPP grant should be a strong equity lever, it is not explicitly tied to a theory of action or New York’s DTSDE framework.

**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

New York describes a solid identification process for comprehensive and targeted schools, including requiring a comprehensive diagnostic needs assessment for comprehensive schools. All schools identified for improvement will receive funding. As noted before, the state’s DTSDE rubric is also strong. However, there is currently little evidence of the degree to which the rubric or the process described in the state’s ESSA plan is taking place in the field. In feedback from the state, New York did describe a review processes being put place to support effective school improvement efforts among districts, including on-site reviews, but no additional information is publicly available.

Based on the materials available, it is difficult to see how New York would be able to apply any rigorous review process or its DTSDE rubric to its school improvement applications and allocations. The school improvement application seems compliance oriented and, while it does reference alignment between activities and identified needs once, no it is not aligned to the DTSDE needs assessment. Again, a new application appears to be in development that should help to address this issue. New York’s SIPP grant does include a two-question needs assessment attachment, but it neither a comprehensive tool nor used by all schools and districts in improvement.

Schools and districts in New York are undoubtedly committed to school improvement, however this would be difficult to demonstrate using the available application materials. Districts are prompted to fill check boxes and provide brief narratives, which is not sufficient to articulate a coherent plan for improvement. In addition, schools and districts are prompted to set targets for one year, but not beyond,

meaning the state will not be able to determine whether local goals are in alignment with New York’s ESSA plan.

**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

New York’s ESSA plan explains that the state requires a progress review to assess the implementation of school improvement plans, review of state reported data, a resource allocation review, and a review of parent, staff, and teacher surveys. Feedback from the state indicated that all comprehensive schools are expected to receive on-site support during the first year. New York also explained that it plans to withhold funds from schools that fail to make gains until further technical assistance is provided. Schools that still fail to improve can be placed in the state’s receivership program, through which the state provides intense supports and oversight.

New York’s school current improvement application prompts districts and schools to examine a strong selection of data points in order to make a self-judgment on progress and articulate next steps. For example, districts and schools must review disaggregated student outcome data, both student and teacher attendance, and the number of discipline referrals. An attachment to this application asks for even more data, including both “leading indicators,” such as chronic absenteeism and teacher quality, and academic indicators. Setting aside some confusion over school improvement grant continuation versus a potential new comprehensive and targeted school identification under ESSA, it is clear that New York has put serious thought into the kinds of data in which the state expects districts and schools to plan for improvement.

These data points do not appear to be aligned with any state-level strategic direction or with other prompts in New York’s school improvement materials. In addition, districts and schools must only analyze historical data, not set targets for the future. This could be a missed opportunity for districts and schools to not only look backwards at existing trends but also be forward-thinking about how they want these data to show improvement. Again, a new school improvement application is forthcoming.

The state plans to use its DTSDE framework to monitor progress against improvement plans, and feedback indicated that teams of reviewers will visit schools as part of monitoring. The state’s SIPP grant application asks districts to self-report on progress, but no information could be found describing how the state will come to a conclusion on progress and to make decisions about future support and funding.

**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

According to New York’s ESSA plan, the State requires at least one evidence-based intervention and has identified evidence-based school improvement best practices for schools and districts. The state’s plan also identifies technical assistance providers that districts can access for support in evidence based interventions. New York provides a sizable resource guide to districts which contains potential strategies for district leaders to consider, aligned with the six tenets of the state’s DTSDE school improvement framework. This document appears to be a strong resource, as district leaders can use their DTSDE needs assessment to find strategies that will help target areas for improvement. While the link between identified needs and chosen strategies is therefore potentially strong, the current school improvement application will need to be revised to include this alignment as well.

**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

In its ESSA plan, New York articulates the different performance categories of schools and the interventions and responsibilities for each type of identified school, giving the schools autonomy and relying on them to be their own change agents. The state describes eight ways in which it will support comprehensive and targeted support and intervention schools, and makes it clear that schools and principals are responsible for improvement, and the state is a critical support. The state requires a review of principal capacity in identified schools as well.

While New York has publicly posted an impressive array of public-facing documents explaining the state’s plan under ESSA to the layperson, surprisingly nothing was found articulating and delineating school improvement roles and responsibilities for the state, districts, and schools. A brief document explaining these responsibilities to a district audience would be helpful.

The state does not appear to take a position on the extent to which local districts and schools should partner with external providers. It would be helpful for districts to know which providers they may consider, how to evaluate them, and the funding streams that can be used to pay for those services. Feedback from the state indicated that entities partnering with a school will be required to utilize the DTSDE rubric to focus their support, but it is not clear how the state would enforce this behavior.

**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

New York’s ESSA plan is clear about requiring annual parent, community and stakeholder engagement, as the use of an annual survey to gauge progress on engagement. It specifically articulates how the engagement of culturally and linguistically diverse communities is required and especially important. Expectations for creating safe and supporting learning environments were identified in order to promote local engagement, including the use of culturally responsive education. The state has certainly encouraged public engagement with school improvement in the ESSA era through its explanation documents designed for parents and community members.

While the state’s ESSA plan is strong in how it incorporates stakeholder engagement, it is yet unknown how this focus will translate to the field. When implemented, there may be concern regarding whether districts would have the capacity to engage in stakeholder engagement to the level described in the plan and, if they do not, what will occur. Feedback from the state indicates that further stakeholder engagement supports are being developed with involvement from stakeholders themselves, and that students will be required to participate in the school improvement planning process.

**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

While New York plans to have strong supports while a school and districts are in school improvement, little evidence was found on how the state plans to evaluate its statewide efforts. The state does describe in its ESSA plan that schools that make gains for two consecutive years will receive a supplemental allocation designed to assist the school in transitioning to improvement efforts that can be sustained, which is a promising approach. It seems the state has a strong school improvement framework in place on which to build an approach to long-term sustainability.

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