

STATE PLAN CONSIDERATIONS: LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

ESSA gives states latitude to tailor school and district improvement strategies more so than under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Based on that, state leaders need to identify the level of support they will provide to districts and schools along the spectrum of need. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides states with significant flexibility to reimagining how to provide supports for low-performing schools, which the law categorizes as comprehensive improvement and support and targeted improvement and support schools.

The plan considerations below identify how a support and improvement system could be laid out and what a state must do or could do under ESSA within each category. This document is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all ESSA requirements pertaining to school improvement, but instead highlights the major new requirements under the law and opportunities provided.

Key Considerations in School Supports & Interventions

1. School and District Diagnostic Reviews	
<p>ESSA Requirements</p> <p><i>Each state MUST...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that LEAs conduct a “school-level needs assessment” for comprehensive support and improvement schools.
<p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<p>School-level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create <u>model school-level needs assessments</u> for optional use by LEAs and build local capacity to conduct these assessments and analyze the data they provide. Consider whether assessments need to be more comprehensive in some or all cases to <u>understand root causes or engage beyond-school partners</u>, e.g. assess early childhood access and quality, health services, housing, etc. Classify schools and/or districts by their level of need – from requiring only light touch tweaks to more intensive supports and intervention – and target resources and support across the SEA accordingly. <p>District-level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct deeper diagnostic reviews at the <u>district level</u> to identify strengths and areas of improvement and to ensure more nuanced, targeted, and timely supports and interventions.

1. School and District Diagnostic Reviews

Continued Sample Deep-Dive Questions

- What role will the state, district, and school play in developing and implementing these processes? Will this look different depending on the capacity of the district?
- What approaches currently exist for implementing deeper analyses and diagnostic reviews that connect to accountability determinations/classifications and related supports and interventions?
- What models should states use in engaging stakeholders meaningfully and productively in a school-level needs assessment and other periodic reviews?
- How will the SEA support look different for very small or rural/isolated LEAs or in very large, urban LEAs?

2. Differentiated supports and interventions

ESSA Requirements

Each state MUST...

- Ensure that school improvement plans include “evidence-based interventions.”
- Develop an SEA process to periodically review resource allocations for supporting school improvement in each LEA that serves a significant number of schools identified for either comprehensive support and improvement or targeted support and how the SEA will provide technical assistance to each such district.
- For districts with schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement:
 - Approve the district plan for school improvement. SEAs must determine the plan approval process and what is required for approval. They must also develop the process by which the state will provide ongoing monitoring and review of the plan.
 - Decide if they will permit differentiated improvement activities for high schools that predominantly serve students who are either retuning back to school after dropping out, or who are significantly off-track to graduate.
 - Decide if they will permit high schools with a total enrollment of less than 100 students to forgo the otherwise required improvement activities.

2. Differentiated supports and interventions	
<p><i>Continued.</i> ESSA Requirements</p> <p><i>Each state MUST...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For districts with schools identified for <u>targeted support and improvement</u>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Notify districts annually if they have any school where any subgroup of students is consistently underperforming ○ Decide what constitutes “consistently” and “underperforming” and how frequently to identify these schools.
<p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<p><i>Through using the 7% state set-aside for school improvement funds or through other means:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus of SEA support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Based on the results of a deeper diagnostic review or other assessment of LEA needs, identify <u>districts with less capacity</u> to intervene in low- performing schools or a history of not exiting schools from low- performing status in the past and provide those districts additional supports, coaching, and technical assistance. ▪ Delivery System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Build a <u>clear delivery system and strengthen capacity</u> (state, district, external) to help the full range of schools and districts, as appropriate. Consider networks in this regard. ○ Consider how these systems can promote the kinds of <u>shifts in teaching, learning, and supports</u> necessary to help all students master college- and career-ready knowledge and skills – including shifts toward personalization, competency-based pathways, focus on cognitive and non- cognitive skills, and shifts to further build professional capacity and growth. ○ Identify standards-aligned instructional practices that <u>improve outcomes for targeted subgroups</u>, such as English learners (ELs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). ▪ Evidence-based Interventions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Establish <u>alternative evidence-based interventions</u> that can be used by LEAs in comprehensive improvement schools. ○ Consider how the <u>state will research/evaluate</u> what has or has not worked with school improvement efforts previously and use that evidence to drive what interventions are used locally.

2. Differentiated supports and interventions	
<p><i>Continued.</i> Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Human Capital <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify and improve, in partnership with districts, the <u>specific competencies that teachers and principals need</u> in order to successfully lead school improvement efforts. ○ Develop a statewide or regional <u>human-capital pipeline</u> to fill instructional and leadership gaps in the lowest-performing schools. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize the Teacher and Leader Academies program opportunity in Title II. ○ Creating <u>networks of districts/schools to share best practices</u>, regardless of their status.
<p>Sample Deep-Dive Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the most effective state role? What do districts, schools, and stakeholders most need from a statewide system of support? ▪ How can the state help districts in creating strong improvement plans with their school(s) by providing technical assistance or models/examples of elements of effective plans? ▪ What do we know about and how can the SEA best promote or facilitate evidence-based, comprehensive activities as part of these statewide systems of support (including through delivery systems, use of intermediaries, etc.)?
3. Exiting school improvement status and when more rigorous action is needed	
<p>ESSA Requirements</p> <p><i>Each state MUST...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exiting schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify what it means to “exit” comprehensive support and improvement status, e.g. how much growth a school must make and what conditions must be in place to exit.

3. Exiting school improvement status and when more rigorous action is needed	
<p><i>Continued.</i> ESSA Requirements</p> <p><i>Each state MUST...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More Rigorous Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Decide how many years (not to exceed four) <u>comprehensive support and improvement schools</u> will be identified for status in order to meet the criteria for continued support. ○ For comprehensive support and improvement schools, decide <u>which</u> “<u>more rigorous</u>” actions must be taken by such school (which may include addressing school-level operations) if improvement isn’t seen within the state-determined number of years. ○ For <u>targeted improvement and support schools</u>, determine the number of years after which such schools will instead be identified for comprehensive support and improvement. ○ Take actions to <u>initiate additional changes in LEAs</u> where either a significant number of schools are consistently identified for comprehensive school improvement and are not meeting the state’s exit criteria or a significant number of targeted improvement and support schools exist.
<p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exiting status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Taper off coaching and monitoring to schools that are improving, rather than having them lose external support all at once, when exiting improvement status. ▪ More rigorous action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Place the school in a school district run directly by the state, charter management organization (CMO), or a recovery/achievement school district. ○ Implement a broader approach to turnaround efforts in the most challenged schools and communities, following the example of the Harlem Children’s Zone with deep community engagement, expansion of access to quality early childhood experiences, mental health services, social services targeted to family needs, and out-of-school time opportunities. ○ Provide school choice options for families.
<p>Sample Deep-Dive Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What kind of rigorous actions should the state use if improvement isn’t seen within the state-determined number of years for a comprehensive support and improvement school?

4. Direct Student Services	
<p>ESSA Requirements</p> <p><i>Each state MUST...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give priority to LEAs with the largest percentage of schools in comprehensive or targeted support and improvement.
<p>Opportunities for State Leadership</p> <p><i>Each state COULD...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set aside up to 3 percent of their Title I funds in order to establish a program of direct student services, which include academic courses not otherwise available at a student’s school, career and technical education, credit recovery and acceleration, courses and exams (such as AP and IB), “components of a personalized learning approach,” and transportation for students to transfer to another public school. ▪ Support LEAs and schools in how to target these direct student services funds in ways that will most positively impact performance.
<p>Sample Deep-Dive Questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Should your state pursue this opportunity? If so, what types of direct student services should the SEA use in its school improvement approach for such schools?