



LEA/DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR TOOLKIT:

# Reviewing School Improvement Plans

*Every school. Every step.  
Every student succeeds.*

*Developed by*  
Statewide Team for School Improvement  
PDECSI@iu13.org

*Last revised 01/2024.*

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## Purpose of this Toolkit

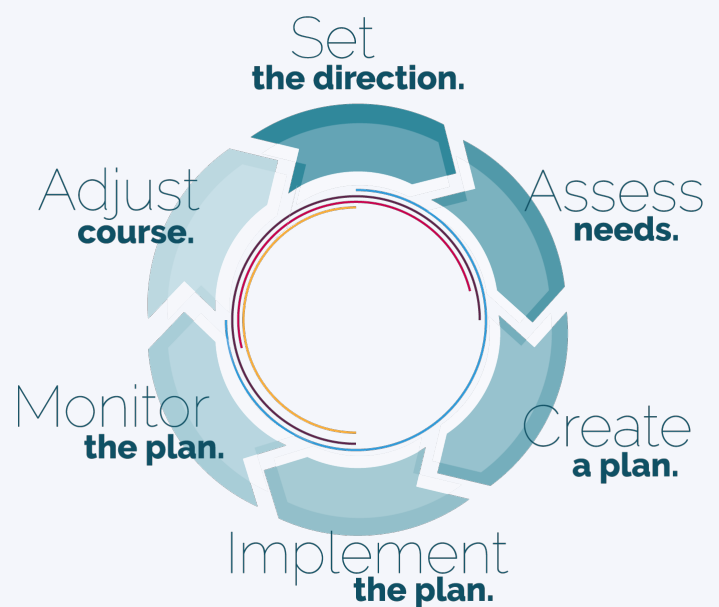
All schools within an LEA/district impact the likelihood of actualizing the LEA/district mission and vision. Quality school improvement plans focus the school’s efforts on developing systems that improve student achievement and growth by implementing evidence-based strategies that target specific underlying challenges.

LEA/district administrator involvement in both the development and review of a school improvement plan enhances the opportunities for:

- coherence between school level plans and LEA/district comprehensive plans
- strategic and equitable resource allocation—including time, fiscal, and human capital resources
- differentiated professional learning based on evidence-based practices and school needs
- ensuring engaged, healthy, safe students who are college, career, and community ready

This toolkit provides suggestions for when to review the work of the school committee and what to look for as the work is reviewed. It also provides a list of resources including informational documents and tools to guide the work.

For additional guidance on reviewing school improvement plans please email [PDECSI@iu13.org](mailto:PDECSI@iu13.org).



# Importance of School Improvement Plans

School improvement plans serve to develop the mission of the Pennsylvania Department of Education which is to ensure that every learner has access to a world-class education system that academically prepares children and adults to succeed as productive citizens. Further, the Department seeks to establish a culture that is committed to improving opportunities throughout the commonwealth by ensuring that technical support, resources, and optimal learning environments are available for all students, whether children or adults. (<https://www.frcpp.pa.gov/Mission/Vision>)

Through continuous school improvement, Pennsylvania learners will be prepared for meaningful engagement in postsecondary education; for workforce training; for career pathways; and to be responsible, involved citizens.

## Stages of the LEA/District Review Process

There are several stages of the school improvement planning process. It is recommended that LEA/district administrators are involved in and/or review the process and plan throughout the phases listed below.

The tables to follow provide guidance for each phase of planning, including:

- **the purpose** of each phase,
- **recommendations for what to look for** during the LEA/district review, and
- **resources** to provide information about the phase of the planning cycle as well as tools to guide the work.

Phases will be identified by their title in the Future Ready Comprehensive Planning portal (FRCPP) and by the phase of the [cycle of continuous improvement](#). Additional resources are available by logging in to <https://www.frcpp.pa.gov/Home/Resources>.



# Ready / Set the Direction

Establishing a clear and shared focus that all stakeholders across the school community agree upon is a necessary first step in developing a plan for continuous improvement. A succinct vision and mission statement, as well as an understanding of the educational community and values from various stakeholders, establishes a robust framework for developing a plan that is embraced by all internal and external stakeholders.

In the READY section, schools identify both internal and external stakeholders that play an integral part in the planning and operations of the educational and support programs. This school improvement committee will begin the planning process by creating a shared vision for learning to provide a deeper purpose and direction and for developing a plan for continuous improvement. (FRCPP)

<b>What &amp; When to Review</b> <i>*Based on June 30 submission date</i>	<b>Expected Quality</b>
<p><b>School Improvement Steering Committee</b> <i>Suggested Timeline for Review: *January</i></p> <p>Review/approve the school improvement steering committee membership before the committee begins to establish the vision or needs assessment.</p>	<p>For schools with a CSI designation, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires the inclusion of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chief School Administrator (CSA)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> principal</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other school leaders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> staff members</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> parents</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> community partners</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> students (if secondary level)</li> </ul> <p>The Statewide Team for School Improvement suggests that an LEA/district administrator is included in addition to the CSA, and that parents and community partners are not employees of the school or district.</p>
<p><b>Vision for Learning</b> <i>Suggested Timeline for Review: *January</i></p> <p>Review/approve the school vision statement before the committee begins the needs assessment.</p>	<p>The vision statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> aligns with the LEA/district vision</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> provides all stakeholders with a common direction for growth</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> is a coherent statement that articulates how the school will impact students' preparedness for college, career, and community</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> is clear enough to be understood by internal and external stakeholder groups</li> </ul>

## Ready/Set the Direction Resources

- [Pennsylvania Continuous Improvement Learning Modules](#)
- [Vision for Learning](#): Includes a link to a toolkit for developing and/or refining vision and mission statements
- [Establishing a Steering Committee](#)
- [Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA](#)
- [Creating Strategic Planning Teams](#)
- [Three Steps to Selecting Your Superhero Strategic Planning Team](#)



# Set / Assess the Needs

Conducting a thorough needs assessment is essential to establishing a successful improvement plan. A needs assessment is a **systematic process** that is used to **identify strengths and challenges** within the context and constraints of the organization and digs deeper into **root causes of these challenges**. The needs assessment **goes beyond student data to include data on the prevalence of effective practices**. It includes a thorough examination of practices, processes, and routines that impact teaching and learning. Through the needs assessment, the school should establish a deep understanding of the school’s context, including internal community (e.g., teachers, student groups) and external community (e.g., parents, local area) and how these internal and external factors impact achievement of the vision and attainment of long-term goals for students.

In the SET section, schools will conduct a thorough needs assessment by reviewing, analyzing and discussing a variety of relevant data sources. Throughout the needs assessment process, school strengths and challenges will be collected for review and prioritizing. (FRCPP)

<b>What &amp; When to Review</b> <i>*Based on June 30 submission date</i>	<b>Expected Quality</b>
<p><b>Needs Assessment</b>  <i>Suggested Timeline for Review:</i>  <i>*February</i></p> <p>Review/approve the needs assessment before the committee selects priorities and conducts the root cause analysis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The needs assessment included a thorough review of the recommended resources in the Essential Practices for Schools and Communities Toolkit.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Data points (achievement and growth) from state and local assessments are included.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Data points have been disaggregated by student groups including economically disadvantaged students, English Learners, students receiving special education services, and racial and ethnic groups.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The committee included an analysis of perception data (focus groups and surveys), and process data (schedules, attendance, behavioral, curricular, etc.)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The committee’s strengths and challenges are in congruence with the data analysis.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Conditions for Leadership, Teaching, and Learning</b>  <i>Suggested Timeline for Review:</i>  <i>*February/March</i></p> <p>Review/approve the ratings of essential practices and identified strengths and challenges and the selected priorities before the committee conducts the root cause analysis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The team can identify the multiple resources analyzed to determine the rating of each essential practice.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Data (listed under “needs assessment”), rubric descriptors, and indicators of operational status were used to inform the rating of each essential practice.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Consensus for ratings was developed among committee members as they all had a voice in the ratings.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The ratings are aligned with notable evidence from the district administrators’ perspectives. If there are differences, data is provided as rationale for the rating.</li> </ul>

## Analyzing Strengths and Challenges

*Suggested Timeline for Review:*  
*\*March*

Review/approve the identified strengths and challenges and the selected priorities before the committee conducts the root cause analysis.

- The school committee identified challenges that are most pressing at this time.
- It is clear that the selected challenges, if addressed, will have a pronounced impact on reaching the school vision.

## Set/Assess the Needs Resources

- [Pennsylvania Continuous Improvement Learning Modules](#)
  - Conducting a Needs Assessment
  - Using the PA Essential Practices
  - School Priorities for Improvement
- [Set: Complete a Needs Assessment](#)
- [Preparing for the Essential Practices Self-Assessment](#): Includes a list of data and sources of evidence to gather
- [Essential Practices for Schools and Communities Toolkit 2022](#): The toolkit includes conditions and essential practices for schools and their communities; rubrics, guiding questions, sources of evidence recommendations per essential practice; and indicators of operational status.

## Go / Create a Plan

A key aspect of ESSA is its commitment to the use of evidence-based approaches and continuous improvement to drive better outcomes for students. A cycle of improvement, when implemented well and grounded in evidence-based approaches, can both improve student outcomes and increase the return on educational investments as more resources are spent on programs and practices likely to have a positive impact.

Comprehensive planning is a continuous process used to ensure that all students are achieving at high levels. All schools can create better environments so that more students are successful. Ongoing planning is essential to providing increased student performance and quality results.

Critical factors in districts that demonstrate continuous growth include:

- innovative, evidence-based programs, coupled with professional development,
- focused and aligned resources,
- and stakeholder participation in planning.



In the GO section, schools develop their plans for improvement. Building upon the strengths and challenges identified in the SET section, planning teams will move to identify their most significant priorities to focus for improvement over the next year. From these priorities, measurable goals, evidence-based strategies, and action plans—inclusive of professional development and communication steps—are developed to guide the work for ongoing school improvement. (FRCPP)

<b>What &amp; When to Review</b> <i>*Based on June 30 submission date</i>	<b>Expected Quality</b>
<p><b>Prioritizing Strengths and Challenges</b></p> <p><i>Suggested Timeline for Review: *March/April</i></p> <p>Review/approve the alignment of the priorities and the needs assessment before the committee determines goals or selects an evidence-based strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The team conducted a root cause analysis for each of the selected challenges, and identified high leverage root causes that have led to the identified challenges.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The team has selected two-four priority challenges and developed priority statements for each. The priority statements clearly state the practice, structure, or system that needs to change.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> When reviewed, there is alignment between the data analysis, the essential practice ratings, the challenges, and the priority statements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal Setting</b></p> <p><i>Suggested Timeline for Review: *April</i></p> <p>Review/approve the goals and quarterly targets before they are entered into the portal.</p>	<p><b>Measurable Goal Statements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The plan includes at least two specific, feasible, and ambitious goal statements for each priority. The goals are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound, and they address equity concerns. The goals may articulate how this priority will impact adult beliefs, knowledge, practices, or behaviors. Consider the alignment between the school level goals and goals stated in the LEA/district comprehensive plan.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There is a reasonable relationship between the outcome category, the goal statement, and the expected results of the evidence-based strategy. Each goal statement identifies an outcome that will be the result of addressing the problem of practice previously identified and is backed by research of the selected evidence-based strategy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Quarterly Targets</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The quarterly targets serve as indicators of annual goal attainment and are directly related to the evidence-based strategy being implemented.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The quarterly targets are stated as measurable outcomes, not actions, and rely on data that can be collected and analyzed by the school team according to the required timeframes (end of October, January, April, July).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The quarterly target statements are clear enough that team members can easily explain them to others.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Action Plan: Evidence-Based Strategy</b></p> <p><i>Suggested Timeline for Review: *April</i></p> <p>Review/approve the selected evidence-based strategy before the committee begins defining action steps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The selected evidence-based strategy has an ESSA tier rating<sup>†</sup> of 1, 2, or 3 and research demonstrating an impact on the team’s identified challenge.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The LEA/district administrators are willing to endorse the implementation of this strategy.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The evidence-based strategy has been shown to impact results in the areas of the team’s goals.</li> </ul> <p><sup>†</sup>See resource list below for link to explanation of ESSA tiers of evidence.</p>
<p><b>Action Steps</b></p> <p><i>Suggested Timeline for Review: *April</i></p> <p>Review the action steps before the steps are entered into the FRCPP portal.</p>	<p><b>Action Steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The action steps are directly related to the selected evidence-based strategy and address necessary systems that may need to be developed to implement the strategy.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The steps are discrete enough that the plan can be followed even if leadership or committee members change.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Actions that team members will take to monitor implementation of the strategy are included in the plan. Actions that team members will take to monitor the impact of the strategy are included in the plan.</li> </ul> <p><b>Timeframes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Each action step has a clear start date and completion date. Timeframes do not span the school year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing actions include qualifiers for the number of times they will occur per quarter.</li> </ul> <p><b>Responsible Individuals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> There is a lead person/position for each action step.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The distribution of action steps to responsible parties is varied and not concentrated around a few people and/or groups.</li> </ul> <p><b>Materials/Resources and Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Specific materials, resources, or supports are listed. These dollar amounts will match what is entered into E-grants.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Supports provided from LEA, IU, or outside organizations are identified.</li> </ul> <p><b>Anticipated Outputs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> This list of outputs includes tangible products or observable shifts in practice that will serve as checkpoints for monitoring the implementation of the strategy.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A review of the evidence-based strategy informed the list of outputs and the items on this list are related to the action steps.</li> </ul> <p><b>Monitoring/Evaluation (People, Frequency, and Method)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The monitoring/evaluation plan clearly indicates who will be monitoring the plan, how often, and what methods will be used for monitoring and evaluating the plan.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Schools may include data that will be collected and used to guide the monitoring/evaluation routines.</li> </ul>



## Expenditure Tables

*Suggested Timeline for Review: \*May*

Collaboration between school leader and funding specialist will ensure accurate entries.

### *School Improvement Set Aside Grant*

- Each row contains an expenditure item that includes the following details:
  - **Expenditure Description:** A specific description of the expenditure is provided and is relevant to the strategy being implemented. For example rather than “supplies” it may list specific supplies needed.
  - **Action Plan:** The action plan/s that the expenditure is a resource for is checked.
  - **E-grant Budget Category:** The category that best matches the expenditure is selected. If a position is being funded the salary and benefits must be allocated separately.
  - **ESSA Tier:** The ESSA tier of evidence that matches the expenditure must be listed.
  - **Total Dollar Amount:** The amount is provided in whole dollars without commas or the dollar symbol.
- The amount in the “Total Expenditures” box matches the amount allocated to the school.

### *Schoolwide Title 1 Funding Allocation*

- All schools that receive schoolwide title funding must complete this table.
- Each row contains an expenditure item that includes the following details:
  - **Expenditure Description:** A specific description of the expenditure is provided and is relevant to the strategy being implemented.
  - **Action Plan:** The action plan/s that the expenditure is a resource for is checked
  - **E-grant budget category:** The category that best matches the expenditure is selected. If a position is being funded the salary and benefits must be allocated separately.
  - **Total Dollar Amount:** The amount is provided in whole dollars without commas or the dollar symbol.
- The amount in the “Total Expenditures” box matches the amount allocated to the school in E-grants.
- Non-schoolwide title 1 schools will have checked the box declaring they do not receive Schoolwide Title 1 funding.

## Professional Development

*Suggested Timeline for Review: \*April*

Review/approve the selected evidence-based strategy before the committee begins defining action steps.

- There is a clear alignment between the identified challenges, priority statements, evidence-based strategies, action steps, and professional development.
- The professional development listed is manageable based on the calendar/schedule, the staffing, and the funding.
- The LEA/district supports this professional development.
- The participants for professional development are identified as well as the tangible ways in which participants are expected to demonstrate their learning. Necessary funding is clearly stated and matches E-grant documents.

## Go/Create the Plan Resources

- [Root Cause Analysis](#)
- [Priority Statements](#)
- [Goal Statements and Targets](#)
- [Selecting Evidence-Based Strategies](#)
- [ESSA Tiers of Evidence Explanation](#)
- [Pennsylvania Continuous Improvement Learning Modules:](#)
  - Root Cause Analysis
  - Creating the Plan Based on the Needs Assessment and the Root Cause Analysis
  - High-Quality Goal Writing
  - Evidence-Based Strategies
  - Creating an Action Plan and Establishing Implementation Teams to Actualize the Plan
- [Pennsylvania Evidence Resource Center](#): This PA online collection of evidence-based strategies was curated to help educators make evidence-based decisions and implement strategies, interventions, and activities that are best fit for their needs and local context.

## Communication Plan

A communication plan is critical to ensure that stakeholders are aware of effective implementation and continuous improvement. By documenting a plan, the school team articulates ways in which they will communicate priorities, goals, and progress with stakeholders. The communication plan upholds the value of stakeholder engagement and should continue throughout the process.

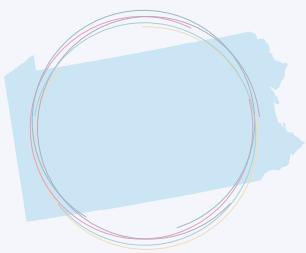
<b>What &amp; When to Review</b> <i>*Based on June 30 submission date</i>	<b>Expected Quality</b>
<b>Communication Plan</b> <i>Suggested Timeline for Review:</i> <i>*Before early May</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The communication plan includes strategies for continued inclusion of stakeholders in the improvement process.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Steps are included to communicate about progress and impact of the plan with a range of stakeholders, including staff, students, parents/guardians, school board, district administrator, etc., throughout the school year.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Specific topics are listed along with the modes of communication and the intended audience. It is clear that the mode of communication is appropriate for each intended audience.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clear beginning and ending timelines are articulated. If a type of communication is intended to be ongoing, the frequency has been noted.</li> </ul>

# Conclusion

This toolkit provided suggestions for when to review the work of the school committee and what to look for as the work is reviewed. It also provided a list of resources including informational documents and tools to guide the work.

A separate set of resources provides guidance, strategies, and resources for LEA/district involvement in school plan implementation, monitoring, and adjustment decisions.

For additional guidance on reviewing school improvement plans please email [PDECSI@iu13.org](mailto:PDECSI@iu13.org).



For more information about Continuous Improvement in Pennsylvania,  
contact the Statewide Team for School Improvement at [pdecsi@iu13.org](mailto:pdecsi@iu13.org).