

Description and Introduction of Utah System of Support for Schools in Improvement

The mission of the Utah State Office of Education Title I School Improvement Process is to help build capacity for schools and districts to improve student achievement.

The Title IA section of No Child Left Behind requires the state educational agency to assist schools and districts in analyzing and improving student achievement. Support for the appraisal process and the training of school support teams are services of the USOE that fulfill this aspect of the law.

Purpose

The School Improvement Appraisal Process uses best practices and research-based rubrics to highlight strengths and weaknesses in a school that will lead the school to adopt practices that are more effective. The training of School Support Teams ensures quality delivery of services by highly qualified practitioners using research-based practices.

The goals of the appraisal process and school system of support are:

- To provide credible and knowledgeable support.
- To build capacity for sustainable student achievement.
- To build supportive partnerships with all stakeholders.

The system will be:

- A clear and fair process that ensures compliance.
- Rigorous and comprehensive.
- Practical, relevant, and efficient.

The appraisal system will focus on seven key categories of school success:

- Curriculum
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment
- Professional Development
- Leadership
- Parent/Community Involvement
- School Culture/Climate

Process

Schools identified in Year 1 of School Improvement (did not make AYP for two consecutive years in a single category) will be required to participate in the School

Appraisal Process. A School Support Team using the USOE appraisal rubrics or a similar comprehensive research-based appraisal system will conduct this process. The SST will be hired by the school and trained by the USOE. The appraisal process will be primarily funded by the school in need of improvement through Title I School Improvement grant. Schools not identified for improvement may use the USOE rubrics to conduct their own self-study. The process has three parts.

The school must create a leadership team. Members could include administrators, the Title I director, department or team leader teachers, parents, and para-educators/support staff. The principal will lead this group. The school community council could serve as the leadership team.

1. Preparation

Before the appraisal, the school will:

- Select a School Support Team within 30 days of notification.
- Assure that all SST members have attended USOE training.
- Secure written agreements with support team members.
- Determine the reimbursement procedures for the SST.
- Set a date so that the appraisal will be completed within 60 days of notification of school improvement status.
- Review the current School Improvement Plan and data to identify potential weaknesses for consideration during the appraisal.
- Review the construct list.
- Identify and gather supporting evidence as requested by the SST.
- Set a schedule for the SST to conduct the appraisal.
- Prepare necessary documentation, including copies of the School Improvement Plan, copies of the previous appraisal (if any), teacher schedules, a school map, and copies of evidence to accurately appraise the school.
- Recruit parents and select a cross-section of students for focus groups.

2. The Appraisal

During the appraisal, the School Support Team will:

- Conduct administration and teacher interviews.
- Perform classroom observations.
- Conduct parent and student focus groups.
- Request supporting documentation.
- Prepare a report to share with the administration and staff.
- Use data to understand trends and challenges.

3. Follow-Up

After the appraisal, the school staff should:

- Reevaluate and revise the school plan.
- Present the revised plan to the local school board and submit the plan to the USOE.
- Implement the revised school plan with the ongoing assistance of the School Support Team.
- Continue to monitor progress through data analysis and reference to the appraisal rubrics.

Schools identified for Corrective Action will be subject to a re-appraisal monitored by a USOE specialist on the Title I School and District Improvement team, using the USOE appraisal rubrics. The SST *must* be chosen from the approved USOE list. This process will be funded by the school in need of improvement through Title I School Improvement grant. See Section 9.

Title I Part A, NCLB Section 1116 (b)(7)(C)

Corrective Action

If a school fails to make AYP by the end of the second full school year after identification, the district ***must***:

- Continue to make public school choice available.
- Continue to make supplemental services available.
- Continue technical assistance.
- Identify the school for corrective action and ***take at least one*** of the following actions:

Possible corrective actions

- Replace school staff relevant to the failure
- Institute and implement a new curriculum
- Significantly decrease management authority in the school
- Appoint outside experts to advise the school
- Extend school year or school day
- Restructure internal organization of the school

Schools identified for Restructuring will select one of the following, according to No Child Left Behind:

Restructuring

When a Title I school has not made AYP for 7 years, the LEA must implement one of the following alternative governance arrangements:

- Reopen the school as a charter school;
- Replace all or most of the school staff (which may include the principal) who are relevant to the failure to make AYP;
- Enter into a contract with an entity, such as a private management company, with a demonstrated record of effectiveness, to operate the public school;
- Turn the operation of the school over to the state, if permitted under state law and agreed to by the state; or
- Carry out any other major restructuring of the school's governance arrangement that makes fundamental reforms, such as significant changes in the school's staffing and governance, to improve academic achievement in the school. The actions must have substantial promise of enabling the school to make AYP.

Other Major Restructuring (The U.S. Department of Education has further defined examples of "other major restructuring" actions.)

- Changing the governance structure of the school in a significant manner that either diminishes school-based management and decision-making or increases control, monitoring and oversight of the school's operations and educational program by the LEA.
- Closing the school and reopening it as a focus or theme school with new staff or staff skilled in the focus area (for instance, math and science, dual language, communication arts);
- Reconstituting the school into smaller autonomous learning communities (such as school-within-a-school model, learning academies, etc.);
- Dissolving the school and assigning students to other schools in the district;
- Pairing the school in restructuring with a higher-performing school so that grades K-3 from both schools are together and grades 4-5 from both schools are together; and
- Expanding or narrowing the grades served by, for example, narrowing a K-8 school to a K-5 school.