

# **Description and Introduction of Utah System of Support for Districts in Improvement and Corrective Action**

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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 district support teams are services of the USOE that fulfill this aspect of the law.

Recent research shows that districts play a large role in facilitating student achievement, especially through their leadership, visions for success, support processes for educators and students, communication and reinforcement of expectations for staff and students, external relationships, and strategies for working with the neediest schools. States can help districts to improve their approaches by offering a support system with expertise, information, tools, and other resources.

The Utah System for District Support was developed in response to the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). At the request of the district superintendents, the system goes beyond NCLB expectations to provide support for excellence for all school districts.

## **Purpose**

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

The goals of the appraisal process and district 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 five key categories of district success:

- Curriculum
- Teaching and Learning
- Leadership
- Resource Management
- Culture/Climate

### **Process for Districts Identified as in Need of Improvement**

**The process is mandatory for districts identified as in need of improvement** under NCLB and optional for all other districts. Districts identified for improvement are those that did not make adequate yearly progress in English/language arts or mathematics overall or for particular subpopulations such as English language learners or students identified for special education services and specific grade spans as delineated in Section 1-4 of this handbook.

**All districts identified for improvement must set aside 10% of their Title I allocation for professional development.** These funds are to be used to address the reasons for which the LEA was identified in need of improvement.

**All districts identified for improvement must complete the district improvement plan.** These districts are also strongly encouraged to use the USOE appraisal system described below.

For information and tools to meet the requirements of the law, please go to <http://www.schools.utah.gov/TitleI/districtresources.htm>.

### **Process for Districts Identified for Corrective Action**

**Districts identified for corrective action**—that is, those districts that have been identified for improvement for three consecutive years **must** use the USOE appraisal system and support teams.

### **USOE District Appraisal Process and District Support Teams**

**Those districts identified for corrective action** (and districts in improvement that choose to do so) **must engage in the district improvement process.**

**Step 1:** Districts identified for corrective action are notified by the USOE. After verifying their status, districts will be contacted by the USOE staff and asked to participate in the selection of a district support provider from the USOE approved consulting organizations list. The team will be comprised of at least three individuals with expertise in district improvement and in the areas in which the district was identified for improvement (i.e., English/language arts, math, working with subpopulations).

**Step 2:** The team is chosen from the list of USOE approved consulting organizations and plans the appraisal calendar and tasks within 90 days of district identification for improvement.

**Step 3:** The district prepares for an appraisal visit by January or February, using the checklist to gather information and by helping the team to schedule all data collection events such as interviews and focus groups.

**Step 4:** The district support team conducts the appraisal in January or February by gathering information from district personnel, external stakeholders such as the Board, parents, and community members, and selected school staff, and by examining documentation. Data are used to provide ratings on the USOE district appraisal rubrics. The rubrics are based on the research on exemplary district practices to support student achievement.

**Step 5:** The support team members prepare the district appraisal report and share the report with the district leaders, staff, and others as appropriate and determined jointly with the district.

**Step 6:** The district uses the information collected to decide whether to maintain, change, or enhance the composition of the district support team to help them to develop their revised district improvement plan.

**Step 7:** The newly constituted district support team works with the district to revise the district improvement plan and present the plan to the district Board and send the completed plan and signature pages electronically to Ann G. White, [ann.white@schools.utah.gov](mailto:ann.white@schools.utah.gov) by March 31st.

**Step 8:** The district support team works with the district to implement the improvement plan and monitor progress.

**If the district makes adequate yearly progress for two years,** the district will no longer be identified for improvement.

**If the district does not make adequate yearly progress,** the district **must** continue the USOE corrective action process.