

Statewide System of Support Theory of Action

Minnesota's Statewide System of Support (SSOS) for Focus and Priority schools has been built in alignment with the goal in Minnesota's ESEA Waiver to close achievement gaps between students by helping schools that persistently underperform. Change in these schools is created by improving instruction through the implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies while simultaneously improving the infrastructures in the school. Only by facilitating change in both of these areas will the SSOS create change in schools that is both sustainable and meaningful.

Persistently underperforming schools lack infrastructures that support teaching and learning. The SSOS works with schools to develop processes for implementing academic standards; aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment; engaging families; providing and culture that support learning; and facilitating continuous improvement planning. These processes are implemented in schools through functional leadership teams and learning teams of teachers as they improve instructional practices.

With these outcomes for schools in mind, the SSOS has been built based on three fundamental principles—implementation frameworks, coordinated statewide systems, and coaching. The success of the system rests on keeping these three principles in mind throughout design and operation of the system. The implementation frameworks inform SSOS work by giving research-based strategies for defining interventions and practices, creating functional and linked teams, leveraging drivers for change, planning stage-based implementation, and refining work using continuous improvement cycles. Our coaching approach is based on the principles of equality, choice, voice, reflection, dialogue, and praxis. Coaching defines the service delivery of a coordinated statewide system of support to schools that is regional so the system is readily accessible to all schools and that is coordinated across the Minnesota Department of Education.

Schools are directly coached in this system by teams of educators who have two roles—advocates and specialists. Each school has one SSOS team member assigned who acts as that school's advocate. In the advocate role, SSOS team members connect schools to needed resources, act as communicators and liaisons, and facilitate planning and the improvement of school infrastructures. Each team member also has the role of a specialist for schools in the team's region. Specialists in the areas of reading, math, special education, data, English language learning, equity, and implementation directly support schools with identifying and implementing evidence-based instructional strategies.

SSOS team members work with schools for three years to improve infrastructures and improve instruction. Once Focus and Priority schools are identified, SSOS teams establish initial contacts with schools and conduct an initial inquiry process with schools. These activities define the roles and responsibilities in the process and begin to identify strengths and needs of each school. Capacity to support implementation (infrastructures) and instructional programming

(evidence-based instructional strategies) are both assessed as part of this initial inquiry process so that services can be planned for the school appropriately.

Another important first step is establishing a functional leadership team in the school. The school's leadership team plays the key role in leading processes for the implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies. The SSOS facilitates defining terms of reference that guide team operations and provides ongoing training for leadership teams.

With SSOS support, schools' leadership teams implement a continuous cycle of needs assessment and implementation of evidence-based practices. Through these cycles, both capacity to support implementation on an ongoing basis and instructional programming improve in schools. Needs assessment is grounded in reviewing multiple forms of data and conducting root cause analyses. Results inform the identification of interventions or instructional practices to be implemented by the school. Once interventions are identified, teams use a record of continuous improvement to plan and monitor implementation across several stages. As they lead implementation, leadership teams monitor progress in order to tweak implementation using implementation drivers in the areas of competency, organization, and leadership.

As they engage schools in this work, the regional SSOS teams are continually monitoring and refining services to the individual schools. Teams meet weekly for professional development, problem-solving, and school progress monitoring. SSOS teams have designed rubrics to define and assess infrastructures in schools, and they quarterly assess school infrastructures using these rubrics. Teams also review schools' records of continuous improvement to monitor their implementation of evidence-based practices. Each SSOS team member is also coached continually by a team coordinator and center director to reflect our belief in coaching as a key to professional learning and support.

Minnesota's statewide support system for schools creates sustainable, meaningful change in underperforming schools by using the implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies to improve school infrastructures. Informed by the research of implementation frameworks, the state has built a coordinated system that serves schools in the system using a coaching approach to build relationships, capacity, and collective efficacy in schools.

Implementation Frameworks Coordinated Statewide Systems Coaching

