



Support and Improvement Timeline

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this tool is to provide an anticipated timeline for school support and improvement that corresponds to the three-year identification cycle under Minnesota’s consolidated Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan. The timeline provides users with a broad sense of the activities that schools identified for support would pursue along with their district¹, the state, or both. This sequence of opportunities, when implemented well, will lead to improved outcomes for children. Ultimately, this tool is a process and progress guide for districts and schools to ensure the work of school improvement is moving toward achieving its goals.

School and district leadership teams might also use this timeline as part of their ongoing communication efforts with stakeholders including but not limited to students, families, communities, staff, and board members. All of the school support and improvement efforts can and should be aligned with district and charter World’s Best Workforce efforts.

For comprehensive support and improvement schools supported by the Regional Centers of Excellence (RCE), the timeline also indicates opportunities for on-site support, professional development or coaching provided by RCE staff.

Outcomes

Districts and schools will be able to plan and execute specific tasks at the appropriate time and sequence throughout the three-year cycle.

Leadership teams will provide a graphic and narrative representation of the support and improvement timeline as part of their communications with stakeholders.

Preparation and Materials

Several additional tools and resources are referenced throughout this document and are available through the [Regional Centers of Excellence Resource Site](#) or from a Regional Center staff member. Other supporting documents are available on the [School and District Accountability page on the Minnesota Department of Education \(MDE\) webpage](#).

¹ For the purposes of this document, the term “district” is used in place of the federal language of “Local Educational Authority (LEA)” and is meant to refer to both public school districts and public charter schools.

Who Should Be Involved

The timeline should be shared and discussed widely throughout the school and district community. As educators and the community engage in support and improvement activities, this timeline can assist in setting a direction, strategy, and expectations for the work ahead.

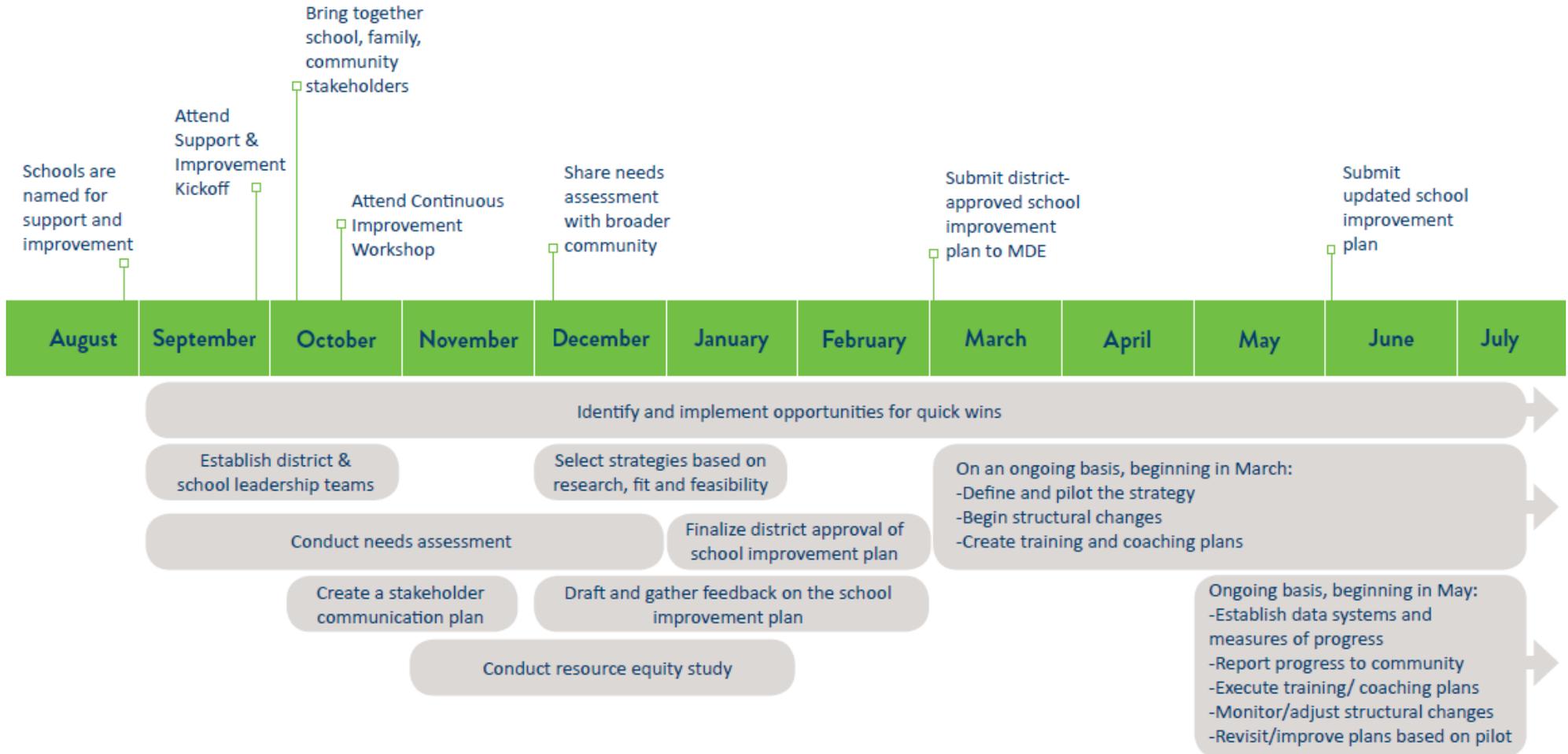
Time

The timeline provides an example range of time for each activity. With that said, each school and district has unique assets that cannot be represented in a generic tool. Additionally, deep, systemic change does not occur in predictable ways or time periods. While there are certain deadlines clearly indicated throughout the timeline, MDE encourages leadership teams to adapt as they go and commit to continuous school improvement.

For example, the timeline indicates that a school leadership team should be established between September and October. For some, this is a task that has already been accomplished or might simply need refinement using a tool like the [leadership team rubric](#). For others, this task may represent a new leadership model and might take longer than two months. Consequently, the timelines described in the tool are approximations and should be treated as such. At the same time, it should not take ten months to assemble a leadership team.

Note: there are certain required activities and due dates that must be completed by identified schools, districts, and the state. Most notably, *all identified schools must have an improvement plan approved by the school and district by March 1 of the first year of identification*. For schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement, the improvement plan must be submitted to MDE by March 1. Visit the [Resources for Identified School webpage](#).

Minnesota Support and Improvement Timeline: Year 1



Minnesota Support and Improvement Timeline

Establish district and school leadership teams

Linked teams that include voices of educators, staff and community are critical to school improvement efforts. They are accountable for making the school improvement work happen and for assuring that effective strategies and methods are in use to produce intended outcomes for children and families. Teams can [use this leadership team rubric](#) to discuss critical features of leadership teams and to evaluate and celebrate improvements.

Attend Events: Support and Improvement Kickoff and Continuous Improvement Events

Designed for district and school leadership teams, these events are a critical first step to understanding Minnesota's new school support and accountability system under ESSA and to understand and dig into the data. More information about these events will be sent directly to district and school leaders when schools are identified for support and improvement. Additional, optional training opportunities will be offered throughout three-year cycle.

Bring together school, family, community stakeholders

Create a stakeholder communication plan

Share needs assessment with broader community

Report progress to broader community

The meaningful engagement of stakeholders (e.g., students, families, communities, teachers, education assistants, staff, board members, administration) is more than a legal requirement; it is a professional and moral obligation. Stakeholders will have several questions about the school accountability system, the data itself, what actions leaders are taking, and how stakeholders can be involved to name a few. It is the responsibility of the district and school leadership teams to ensure that transparent communications and meaningful involvement exists among stakeholders.

Conduct needs assessment

Conduct resource equity study

Reviewing and analyzing multiple evidence sources and data sets (including demographic, perception, student learning, school process, and fidelity data) in relation to each other allows a school system to understand how they are getting their results (what is working and what is not working), including what factors or root-causes are at play that lead to those results. When done well, a needs assessment allows for the prediction of new or modified adult actions, processes, and programs that best meet the learning needs of all students. Schools identified for support and improvement are required to engage in a comprehensive needs assessment (CNA), and schools are encouraged to use this [CNA Summary Report](#) to document and communicate key ideas, reflections, and next steps.

As part of the CNA process, districts with schools identified for support and improvement must also review district- and school-level resources among and within schools including equitable access to teachers, to programming (e.g., pre-K, advanced coursework) and other areas. A tool to support the resource equity study is available on the [Resources for Identified School webpage](#).

Select strategies based on research, fit and feasibility

Following the root cause analysis stage of the needs assessment, leadership teams select a strategy(ies)—which may be an instructional practice, a program, a policy, or other systemic or instructional shift—that is designed to change adult and organizational practices in a way that addresses the root cause(s) identified by the team. ESSA requires that at least one strategy is considered “evidence-based.” Minnesota will publish and continue to refine a non-exhaustive list of evidence-based strategies that leadership teams may use along with other research sites.

In addition to research support, a key step in selecting a strategy is to assess the degree to which the strategy(ies) fits your local context and are feasible to implement. Leadership teams should use the [National Implementation Research Network’s \(NIRN\) “Hexagon Tool”](#) which provides a process for leadership teams to review the need, fit, resources, evidence, readiness, and capacity needed to implement a given strategy.

Draft and gather feedback on the school improvement (SI) plan

Finalize district approval of SI plan

Submit district approved SI plan to MDE (comprehensive only)

In partnership with stakeholders including the school leadership team, the district has a responsibility to design, approve, implement and review a school improvement (SI) plan for schools identified for support and improvement. For schools identified for *comprehensive* support and improvement, the state must also approve plans and periodically monitor the implementation of plans. For more information about requirements for school improvement plans, visit the [Resources for Identified School webpage](#).

All comprehensive needs assessments and school improvement plans must be fully approved by the district by March 1 of the first year of identification. Checklists have been developed for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement schools. By using the checklist, district leadership can plan activities, track progress, and submit required documentation. Checklists are available at the [Resources for Identified School webpage](#).

Minnesota believes that effective planning is more of a process than an event; consequently, implementation of the school improvement plan must be regularly monitored using a Record of Continuous Improvement. The Record is designed to provide a place where leadership teams can document activities, needs assessment results, student outcome goals, communications, and regularly updated action plans to achieve results. By using the Record, schools will have a tool to ensure legal compliance that also reflects a commitment to continuous school improvement.

Define and pilot the strategy

Establish data systems and measures of progress

Revisit and improve plans based on pilot

Beginning with the process that lead to selection of the improvement strategy (ies), leadership teams should further define the strategy so that it can be implemented effectively. In other words, teams cannot implement something that is not clearly defined. There are key several key steps that must be accomplished in the first year of identification, before embarking on schoolwide or districtwide implementation. These steps include creating:

- A clear definition of the strategy and its core components.
- Descriptions of what that strategy looks, sounds and feels like when implemented as expected.
- Plans for communicating among school, district, and community.
- Data systems that help the leadership team monitor progress and adjust implementation.

To get started, leadership teams are encouraged to pilot the strategy on a smaller scale, to monitor what works and what needs adjusting, and to use the results of the pilot as the teams prepare for broader implementation in year two.

Begin structural changes

Monitor and adjust structural changes

District and school leaders will need to adjust certain structures (e.g., internal processes, practices, resources, policies, schedules) to create and maintain a hospitable environment to support the new way(s) of working. This change driver uses data and proactively solicits feedback to look for ways to make the day-to-day work of teachers, school staff and administrators more effective and less burdensome. Some structures are not within an individual school's control to address, so school leadership teams should bring issues to the attention of those who can address such barriers. A key part of communications strategy and structural change is the use of feedback loops that allow practice to inform policy (PIP) adjustments and policy to enable new practices (PEP). Leadership teams must use PIP/PEP feedback loops regularly.

Create training and coaching plans

Execute training and coaching plans

According to the [National Implementation Research Network](#), "training" is defined as "purposeful, skill-based, and adult-learning informed processes designed to support teachers and staff in acquiring the skills and information needed to begin using a new program or innovation" and "coaching" is defined as "regular, embedded professional development designed to help teachers and staff use the program or innovation as intended." Both competency drivers are essential components of any change initiative. Leadership teams must create, execute, monitor and adjust training and coaching plans throughout the implementation of the new ways of work.

Identify and implement opportunities for quick wins

As schools spend their first year assessing needs, building leadership teams, and creating their plans for improvement, communication and training; it is important for stakeholders to see more immediate, tangible changes. That is why leadership teams should also be identifying quick wins throughout the three-year identification period that can be implemented right away and are noticeable across the school community. They provide a tangible demonstration of and commitment to improvement efforts, as well as more immediate markers of success to celebrate with staff and communities.