

Title I, Part A: School Support

- i. Continued Support for School and LEA Improvement (ESEA section 1111(d)(3)(A))
 - a. Exit Criteria for Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools. Describe the statewide exit criteria, established by the State, for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement, including the number of years (not to exceed four) over which schools are expected to meet such criteria.

Identifications for comprehensive support and improvement will be made every three years, based on data since the previous identification. To exit comprehensive support and improvement status, a school must meet both of the following criteria:

1. The school must not be identified for comprehensive support and improvement again.
2. The school must show improvement relative to itself on all indicators which led to its initial identification.

If a school does not exit comprehensive support and improvement status using the above two criteria, it remains in the comprehensive support and improvement status with more rigorous interventions.

Additionally, if a school exits comprehensive support and improvement status, but still remains below the 25th percentile of Title I schools in any Stage 1 indicator (math achievement, reading achievement, or progress toward English language proficiency), it will be moved to the targeted support and improvement status.

- b. Exit Criteria for Schools Receiving Additional Targeted Support. Describe the statewide exit criteria, established by the State, for schools receiving additional targeted support under ESEA section 1111(d)(2)(C), including the number of years over which schools are expected to meet such criteria.

A school identified under ESEA section 1111(d)(2)(C) is identified for additional targeted support because one or more student groups perform similarly to the identified lowest 5 percent of Title I schools.

Identifications for additional targeted support will be made every three years, based on data since the previous identification. To exit additional targeted support status, a school must meet all three of the following criteria:

- 1) The school must not be identified for additional targeted support again.
- 2) The student group for which the school was identified must show improvement relative to itself on all indicators which led to its initial identification.
- 3) The student group for which the school was identified must not perform below the performance of the lowest 25 percent of Title I schools in any Stage 1 indicator (math achievement, reading achievement, or progress toward English language proficiency).

- c. **More Rigorous Interventions.** Describe the more rigorous interventions required for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement that fail to meet the State’s exit criteria within a State-determined number of years consistent with section 1111(d)(3)(A)(i)(I) of the ESEA.

For schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement that fail to meet exit criteria by the end of the three-year school improvement timeline, Minnesota will implement increased supports and interventions aligned with state supports and requirements under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.11, commonly known as World’s Best Workforce. All Minnesota districts must adopt strategic plans to support and improve teaching and learning. Local strategic plans must be aligned with students meeting school readiness goals, having all third grade students achieving grade-level literacy, closing academic achievement gaps, having all students attain career and college readiness, and having all students graduate from high school. Under WBWF, districts must also ensure that students equitably have access to diverse, experienced, qualified and effective teachers. The commissioner “must identify those districts in any consecutive three-year period not making sufficient progress toward improving teaching and learning for all students ... and striving for the world’s best workforce.” The commissioner, in collaboration with identified districts, may require districts to use up to 2 percent of basic general education revenue to implement “commissioner-specified strategies and practices.”

Additionally, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) will conduct an external, in-depth needs assessment in each school reidentified. The goal of the assessment will be to inform the local comprehensive needs assessment and to identify more rigorous supports from the state, the Regional Centers of Excellence, and the district. The assessment will be facilitated by on-site teams of MDE staff, Regional Center staff, and practitioners from other districts. After the assessment, results will be used to identify root causes for not exiting (e.g., ineffective leadership, high attrition rates) in order to properly balance the use of consequences and more intensive supports. The assessment will specifically examine access to experienced, qualified and effective teachers for underserved students at the school and classroom levels.

Informed by the external assessment, districts will conduct new school-level needs assessments in order to amend school improvement plans to:

- Address reasons schools did not meet exit criteria, including whether schools implemented interventions with fidelity.
- Address results of new needs assessments.
- Establish other measures of progress in areas such as climate, culture, adult behavior change and leadership, and monitor these indicators during plan implementation and use them with more focus and in shorter feedback cycles for extended support.
- Update how they will continue to address previously identified resource inequities.
- Identify and address any new resource inequities.
- Implement additional interventions that:
 - Must be approved by MDE before implementation.
 - Must be more rigorous.
 - Increase access to experienced, qualified and effective teachers for underserved students at the school and classroom levels.
 - May be required to be from the state-developed list of evidence-based practices if appropriate to school needs and populations.

- May address school-level operations such as changes to budgeting, staffing, or the school day or year.

Additional interventions may include rigorous interventions, such as school closure, school conversion to a magnet or charter, significant staffing changes such as “fresh starting” the school, replacing leadership, requiring student support services, or providing students the choice to attend other schools.

Districts with reidentified schools will be required to implement strategies to increase access to experienced, qualified, and effective teachers for underserved students at the school and classroom levels. These strategies will be collaboratively identified by the state and district based on the external assessment and new school-level needs assessment.

There will be increased requirements for use of funds for reidentified schools. Schools will be required to set aside a minimum of 20 percent of Title I funds to support implementation of the amended school support and improvement plan. The district Title I plan will be reviewed to ensure alignment with school improvement support strategies and requirements, and to ensure that the plan contains evidence-based practices that will improve performance in reidentified schools and address root causes identified in the external audit.

MDE is designing and implementing an audit process focusing on implementation of school improvement plans to be used with a small percentage of schools identified for support and improvement. All reidentified schools will be audited annually using this process. The audit process will use a checklist of improvement plan requirements to monitor compliance as well as provide feedback on plan implementation.

- d. Resource Allocation Review. Describe how the State will periodically review resource allocation to support school improvement in each LEA in the State serving a significant number or percentage of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement.

The Minnesota Department of Education will regularly assess the allocation of school improvement resources to support districts serving schools identified for support and improvement by reviewing grant budgets and work plans and by implementing a comprehensive program evaluation. Results will be used to address inequities so that districts can better serve identified schools.

Annual Reviews of Grant Budgets and Work Plans

Minnesota will provide support to districts serving identified schools by using school improvement funds and state funds to: (1) make grants to the Minnesota districts serving the highest proportions of schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement and that have capacity to support pre-K through grade 12 school improvement activities in schools; and, (2) make grants to regional educational service agencies—the Minnesota service cooperatives—to serve schools implementing pre-K through grade 12 comprehensive and targeted support improvement plans through Minnesota’s Regional Centers of Excellence. MDE reviews resource allocations between grants to address inequities.

These grants are reviewed annually by MDE. The review process includes a full review and approval of grant budgets and work plans. Through the budget and work plan review MDE can ensure that resources are distributed between districts and support providers equitably based on planned activities to support schools and based on school needs.

Grantees are required to conduct full program evaluations in order to demonstrate results and revise work plan activities and budgets. Program evaluation reports are collected from grantees every six months.

Program Evaluation

The system of support offered to districts and schools by the Regional Centers of Excellence is evaluated and informed by a rigorous program evaluation conducted by an external evaluator from MDE. The evaluation has been designed to provide information in the areas of effort, fidelity and results. The program evaluation is based on the following measures:

1. Quarterly reviews of school leadership teams in identified schools using a rubric measuring quality of team functions.
2. Quarterly reviews of school improvement plans implementation using a checklist of requirements and using a rubric measuring quality of the implementation of continuous improvement activities.
3. Twice yearly administration of the Regional Capacity Assessment from the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-Based Practices Center.
4. Participants' evaluations of professional development.
5. Professional development participation data.
6. Annual surveys of school leadership teams.
7. Annual Regional Center staff focus groups and interviews on the implementation of practice profiles and schools' uses of fidelity measures and feedback loops to inform implementation.
8. Annual Regional Center staff focus groups and interviews on needs, challenges and successes.
9. Time and effort data from the program's online activity reporting system.
10. Standardized assessment results on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments in reading and math.
11. Results of Minnesota's accountability indicators under ESSA.
12. Annual Regional Center staff survey.

Evaluation results are reviewed monthly by MDE staff and Regional Center directors, and two times per year by stakeholders on the Regional Centers of Excellence Advisory Committee. The advisory committee makes recommendations for activities and resource allocations informed by evaluation results, and MDE and center directors determine final activities and allocations.

- e. Technical Assistance. Describe the technical assistance the State will provide to each LEA in the State serving a significant number or percentage of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement.

As part of ESSA school improvement planning and stakeholder engagement, Minnesota developed the following theory of action to guide the design of technical assistance for schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement:

School Improvement Theory of Action

If Minnesota:

- Partners with districts to facilitate school improvement.
- Focuses school improvement efforts on equity and underserved student groups.

- Builds districts' and schools' capacity to use the principles of active implementation.
- Delivers supports through on-site coaching, opportunities to network and leadership development.
- Meaningfully involves stakeholders in school improvement planning and implementation.
- Focuses school improvement on developing implementation infrastructures that include innovation-specific capacity, general capacity, and enabling context for implementation and continuous improvement.

Then:

- Districts and schools will be able to engage in comprehensive needs assessment to identify, name and eliminate inequities.
- Districts and schools will have the capacity to implement evidence-based practices using continuous improvement processes.
- All schools will have highly effective educators and instructional leaders.
- Educators and stakeholders will be meaningfully engaged in the improvement process.
- District and schools will be standards-focused and ensure educational quality.

And the result will be:

- Improved outcomes for all students.
- The elimination of achievement gaps between groups of students.
- Increased capacity of districts and schools to implement sustained continuous improvement processes.
- Increased educator effectiveness.
- Improved conditions for teaching and learning.

So that schools can meet the needs of each student and so that each student benefits from a high-quality school.

The theory of action defines priorities for how the state will approach supports for identified schools as well as reinforces the focus on eliminating achievement gaps and inequities while improving outcomes for all students. Technical assistance must be built and implemented in partnership with schools, districts and stakeholders. It is a priority that technical assistance for school improvement creates capacity in schools and districts and integrates what the state knows about implementation science through our partnership with the State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-Based Practices Center.

Minnesota will employ two strategies to provide differentiated technical assistance to schools and districts that helps them conduct comprehensive needs assessments, select appropriate evidence-based interventions and strategies, develop and implement school support and improvement plans, and address resource inequities. Minnesota will grant Title I school improvement funds to the districts serving the most significant numbers of identified schools and will provide direct supports to districts and schools that do not receive grants for school improvement.

Grants to Districts Serving Significant Numbers of Schools Identified for Support and Improvement

Minnesota will use a portion of the state's 7 percent Title I set-aside for school improvement to provide three-year grants to the state's districts that serve the highest proportions of schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement and that have capacity to support pre-K through grade 12 school improvement activities in schools. The grants will be renewed by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) each year through an application process that includes budget review, an updated work plan and program evaluation results to evaluate districts' use of school improvement funds.

To receive grants and have grants renewed annually, districts must submit applications that include:

- Statements of commitments to activities and an outline of the capacity districts have to support pre-K through grade 12 school improvement activities.
- Planning year activities in the first year of grants.
- Needs assessment results and identification of resource inequities for identified schools including review of:
 - Academic achievement information from math and reading MCAs for all students and for student groups.
 - Performance on all indicators of the state accountability system for all students and for student groups.
 - The reason(s) schools were identified for support and improvement.
 - Schools' unmet needs including those with respect to students, school leadership and instructional staff, quality of instructional programs, family and community involvement, school climate, and distribution of resources.
 - At the districts' discretion, performance on locally selected indicators that affect student outcomes.
 - Disproportionate rates of inexperienced, out-of-field or ineffective teachers.
 - Access and availability of advanced coursework.
 - Access to and quality of full-day kindergarten and to preschool programs.
 - Disproportionate rates at which students with disabilities, students of color, American Indian students, and other student groups are suspended and expelled.
 - Access to specialized instructional support personnel.
 - Per-pupil expenditures.
 - At the districts' discretion, district- and school-level budgeting and resource allocation, and access to instructional materials and technology.
- Descriptions of evidence-based interventions that will be implemented in schools.
- How districts will carry out responsibilities; address resource inequities identified by the needs assessment process; help schools develop support and improvement plans; monitor implementation of school improvement plans; recruit, screen, select and evaluate any external partners; align resources to carry out activities; and provide operational flexibility.
- Grant budgets with justifications.
- A summary of the program evaluation that will be implemented to evaluate supports for identified schools.
- Strategies that will be used to collaborate with the MDE to ensure alignment with other state supports for school improvement from the Regional Centers of Excellence.
- Assurances that schools will receive all of the state and local funds they would have otherwise received.

Grant recipients will submit school's improvement plans quarterly for review by the Minnesota Department of Education. The department also will conduct on-site reviews with district school improvement staff at least twice yearly to monitor grant and school improvement plan implementation.

One full-time equivalent position at MDE will be dedicated for technical assistance and grant administration. This position will review and approve grant applications, review school improvement plans quarterly, and conduct on-site monitoring visits. Quarterly, the position will approve expenditures by grant recipients to monitor recipients' use of school improvement funds. In addition, the position will provide direct technical assistance and professional development to identified schools in partnership with districts receiving grants.

Direct Support from the Regional Centers of Excellence

Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.115 establishes Regional Centers of Excellence “to assist and support school boards, school districts, school sites, and charter schools in implementing research-based interventions and practices to increase the students' achievement within a region.” The Regional Centers “establish a coherent statewide system of regional support, including consulting, training and technical support, to help school boards, school districts, school sites and charter schools effectively and efficiently implement the world's best workforce goals ... and other state and federal education initiatives.” Assistance and supports from the Regional Centers are built using the five active implementation frameworks from the National Implementation Research Network—implementation stages, linked implementation teams, operationalized usable interventions, implementation drivers and Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles. Minnesota's Regional Centers of Excellence deliver support and services straight to schools. Center staff deliver on-site coaching support and technical assistance, professional development, resources, and networking opportunities to districts and schools. Regional Centers are staffed by specialists with a full range of expertise, from math and reading to special education, English language development, implementation and data analysis.

Using state funds and the portion of the state's 7 percent Title I set-aside for school improvement not granted to districts with significant numbers of identified schools, Minnesota will provide direct support to the remaining districts with schools identified for comprehensive and targeted support and improvement under our ESSA accountability system through the Regional Centers. Under ESSA, Minnesota will expand center staffing to address specific improvement needs and ESSA requirements (e.g., reading, math, district support specialists, equity specialists, graduation support reform and dropout prevention specialists, and principal leadership specialists). Under ESSA, Minnesota will also redefine support strategies to include district roles and activities as well as school-level supports. The goal is to shift supports so that the district is entry point for supports, not just the schools.

Under Minnesota's approved No Child Left Behind flexibility waiver, MDE identified Priority and Focus schools every three years. Priority schools were the 5 percent most persistently low-performing Title I schools. Focus schools were the 10 percent of Title I schools with the largest achievement gaps. The designations, part of Minnesota's school accountability system under the waiver, were based on reading and math proficiency, student academic growth, reductions in achievement gaps, and graduation rates. Once designated, Priority and Focus schools created plans to increase student achievement with direct support from Minnesota's Regional Centers.

A collaboration between MDE and Minnesota’s educational service cooperatives, there are six Regional Centers of Excellence, located in Thief River Falls, Mountain Iron, Fergus Falls, Sartell, Marshall and Rochester. In addition to content expertise, center specialists offer an outside perspective on schools’ efforts to increase student achievement. They guide and support staff at identified schools through the process of needs assessment, building and strengthening leadership teams, and developing school improvement plans.

Of the first cohort of Priority schools, 74 percent showed improved student growth from 2011 to 2015, while 56 percent of the first cohort of Focus schools showed improved student growth from 2011 to 2015. Nearly 20 percent of schools designated Priority or Focus in 2012 that worked with the Regional Centers improved so much that they were recognized as Reward schools or Celebration-Eligible schools under the waiver three years later.

From 2014 to 2015, Regional Center specialists spent nearly 13,000 hours in direct service to 78 identified schools. As a result, 65 percent of Priority and 63 percent of Focus schools showed improved growth in just one year. Supported schools continued to outperform other Title I schools in growth in proficiency rates, student academic growth, and achievement gap reduction in 2016.

Under ESSA and based on Minnesota’s theory of action for school improvement, resources and supports have been designed based on the following formula for success:

Minnesota Statewide System of Support: Formula for Success

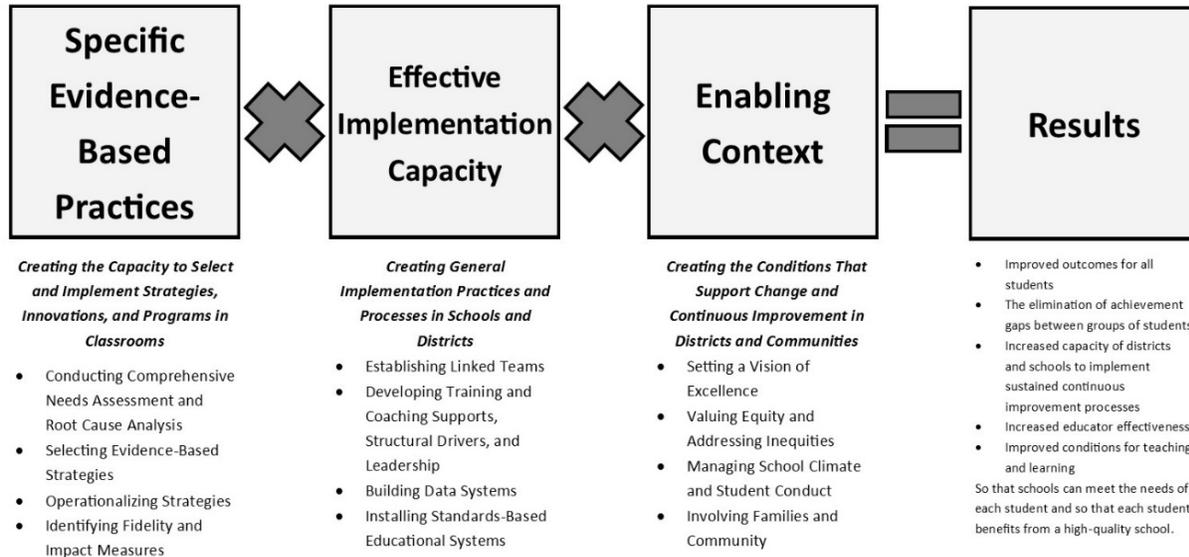
What X How X Where = Success

Minnesota's statewide system of support uses a stage-based framework with schools that incorporates three core support elements.

The three core elements are

1. Building and using implementation teams to actively lead implementation efforts,
2. Using data and consistent, frequent feedback loops to drive decision-making and promote continuous improvement, and
3. Developing an implementation infrastructure that includes innovation-specific capacity, general capacity, and enabling contexts for implementation and continuous improvement.

An effective implementation infrastructure is required for districts and schools to sustain meaningful change and improve outcomes for all students.

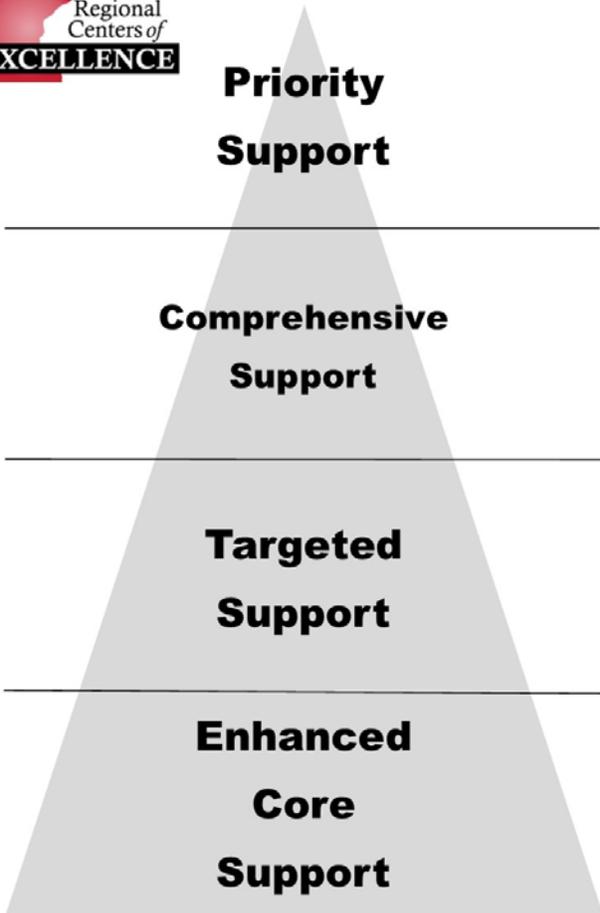


Regional Center of Excellence supports for districts and identified schools focus on facilitating improvement by establishing leadership teams, using continuous data and feedback loops to inform implementation of the school improvement plan, and developing implementation infrastructure at three levels as reflected by the formula. The formula demonstrates the fact that significant and sustainable improvement includes not only the implementation of specific evidence-based interventions, programs, and instructional strategies but also includes building the general capacity of districts to support schools in continually improving as well as creating an enabling context that supports continuous improvement. While identified schools must engage in a comprehensive needs assessment, select evidence-based practices and implement practices through a school support and improvement plan, they must also be supported in building overall capacity and conditions that support sustained improvement. The formula for success incorporates the five active implementation frameworks as well as Minnesota's Common Principles of Effective Practice—educational equity, school leadership teams, continuous improvement processes, learning teams of teachers, standards-based educational systems, family engagement, and teaching and learning conditions.

Supports, Tools and Resources

Intensity of supports from the Regional Centers of Excellence will be differentiated based on levels of identification under Minnesota's accountability system for ESSA and requirements under Minnesota's World's Best Workforce statute. As stated previously, under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.11, commonly known as World's Best Workforce, all Minnesota districts must adopt strategic plans to support and improve teaching and learning. And these local strategic plans must be aligned with students meeting school readiness goals, having all third-grade students achieving grade-level literacy, closing academic achievement gaps, having all students attain career and college readiness, and having all students graduate from high school. The commissioner "must identify those districts in any consecutive three-year period not making sufficient progress toward improving teaching and learning for all students ... and striving for the world's best workforce." The commissioner, in collaboration with identified districts, may require districts to use up to 2 percent of basic general education revenue to implement "commissioner-specified strategies and practices."

Minnesota has designed the following differentiated support model that aligns the identification of schools under ESSA with identification of districts under World's Best Workforce. The model increases supports for districts and schools as they move from targeted support and improvement to identification for comprehensive support and improvement under ESSA. The Regional Centers will develop differentiated supports and interventions in the differentiated support model based on accountability results and on district and school needs, and will create individualized service plans to determine support resource and personnel allocations.



These ***districts and schools*** will be prioritized for the most intensive comprehensive support. Both district WBWF plans and school improvement plans will be reviewed, and implementation will be monitored regularly. Under WBWF, district improvement strategies are selected by the Commissioner.

In addition to targeted supports, ***districts and schools*** identified for comprehensive support will receive intensive onsite technical assistance. School improvement plans will be reviewed, and implementation will be monitored regularly.

Districts with schools identified for targeted support will network and receive targeted professional development to support conducting needs assessments, selecting evidence-based interventions, developing and implementing school-level improvement plans, reviewing district- and school-level resources among and within schools, and identifying and addressing resource inequities that affect student groups.

Schools in the lowest 25% of Title I schools for math achievement, reading achievement, or progress toward English language proficiency and that are not otherwise identified for support will be supported by MDE under World's Best Workforce.

9/12/2017

All Minnesota districts will receive core supports, resources and tools from MDE. Tools will include needs assessment and continuous improvement planning resources, access to the Minnesota Early Intervention and Response System (MEIRS), and resources through the Minnesota Standards Portal supporting the implementation of instructional practices based on Minnesota's rigorous academic standards.

MEIRS is a tool that can be used to provide a snapshot of students in grade six and grade nine who are at increased risk of not completing high school in four years. Using validated research-based variables associated with dropping out of school (i.e., attendance, multiple enrollments, state accountability test scores and suspension/expulsion), supports can be developed and targeted to students who may need additional assistance to stay on track for graduation. The purpose of MEIRS is to screen for students who are at risk of not completing high school in four years and to facilitate student success by using the data to match appropriate supports to student needs. Each of the tools at the core support levels are supported by basic training and technical assistance provided by MDE and available to all districts.

Enhanced core support will be provided by MDE to Title I schools that are in the lowest 25 percent of Title I schools for any Stage 1 indicator (math achievement, reading achievement, or progress toward English language

proficiency) and that are not otherwise identified for support. These enhanced supports will be leveraged under World's Best Workforce requirements. These schools will have access to additional networking and training opportunities focused on needs assessment and continuous improvement planning and on using Minnesota's Standards Portal to implement standards-based systems. Additionally, schools in the lowest 25 percent of schools for progress toward English language proficiency will be recruited to participate in the English Learner Leadership Institute described below.

Targeted support will be provided to districts supporting the following schools:

- Category C schools: All public schools where any student group is performing similarly to the schools in Category A (schools with one or more low-performing student group).
- Category C schools that do not meet exit criteria to be removed from the Category C status.
- Category E schools: All public schools where any student group is consistently underperforming.
- Title I schools that are not identified in Category A because of consistent attendance (i.e., schools with low performance on Stage 1 and Stage 2 indicators but with consistent attendance higher than the threshold used to identify Category A schools).
- Category A schools that remain below the 25th percentile of Title I schools in any Stage 1 indicator (math achievement, reading achievement, or progress toward English language proficiency), but otherwise meet exit criteria.

Districts with schools identified for targeted support and improvement under ESSA will be supported through the Regional Centers of Excellence. The centers will offer these supports through three district support specialists. Additional supports will include access to more intensive professional development and access to networking opportunities. Training and networking opportunities will focus on helping schools establish school leadership teams, conduct comprehensive needs assessments, select appropriate evidence-based interventions and strategies, develop and implement support and improvement plans, and address resource inequities, pre-K through grade 12. Districts and schools will also receive training support using tools in the Minnesota Standards Portal and the MEIRS system and through the English Learner Leadership Institute.

ESSA requires that Category C schools (public schools where any student group is performing similarly to the schools in Category A [schools with one or more low-performing student group]) receive additional targeted support. ESSA requires that these schools review resources among and within schools and that they identify and address resource inequities that affect the low-performing student group(s). Equity and addressing gaps in achievement and access to resources is a priority for Minnesota. As a result, any school identified for targeted support in Minnesota's system will be supported in reviewing district- and school-level pre-K through grade 12 resources among and within schools, including, but not limited to, disproportionate rates of inexperienced, out-of-field, or ineffective teachers; access and availability of advanced coursework; and access to full-day kindergarten and preschool programs. Schools will identify and address resource inequities that affect the low-performing student group(s) in their school support and improvement plans.

Comprehensive support will be provided to districts supporting the following schools:

- Category A schools: The lowest 5 percent of schools receiving Title I, Part A funds.
- Category A schools that do not meet exit criteria to be removed from the Category A status.
- Category B: All public high schools with a four-year graduation rate below 67 percent overall or for any student group.

- Category D schools: Schools receiving Title I, Part A funds, where the student groups for which the schools were identified do not exit from Category C after three years.

The most support from the Regional Centers will be provided to schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement under ESSA. The centers will offer these supports at both the district and the school levels through content specialists in the areas of reading, math, equity, special education, implementation, graduation support and high school reform, English learning, and data. Schools and districts will receive intensive (2-4 instances of on-site coaching per month) levels of direct support from Regional Center specialists. On-site coaching will focus on identifying district activities that support school turnaround, helping schools establish school leadership teams, conducting comprehensive needs assessments, selecting appropriate evidence-based interventions and strategies, and developing and implementing support and improvement plans.

Additionally, as part of the comprehensive needs assessment, schools identified for comprehensive support will be required to identify resource inequities that affect low-performing student group(s). School support and improvement plans will be required to address pre-K through grade 12 resource inequities identified in the comprehensive needs assessment. Implementation of these schools' support and improvement plans will be monitored quarterly.

Within the model's comprehensive support level, levels of support will be further differentiated based on: (1) level of school challenge (i.e., demographics, teacher mobility, principal mobility, funding); (2) previous identification status, progress, and effectiveness of past support (e.g., Has the school previously been identified as a Priority or Focus school? Has the school failed to meet exit criteria? Has the school made academic progress with previous support activities?); (3) ESSA accountability results at the indicator levels; (4) WBWF data not included in the ESSA accountability system, such as school readiness, third-grade literacy, achievement gaps, graduation, and career and college readiness measures, (5) district and school willingness; and, (6) district capacity to support school improvement.

The Regional Centers also plan and facilitate professional development and networking for schools based on regional, school and district needs.

Priority support will be provided to schools in districts also identified under World's Best Workforce for not making progress toward improving teaching and learning for all students and meeting World's Best Workforce goals. Supports will be provided to districts and schools as described above for comprehensive support. Districts and schools at this level will be prioritized for intensive on-site coaching more frequently (2-3 times each month). Additionally, strategies in the districts' strategic plans are selected and approved by MDE.

MDE and the Regional Centers of Excellence will also be utilizing four school leadership specialists to support schools. The specialists will be implementing networking opportunities and professional development throughout Minnesota. Specific to schools identified for targeted or comprehensive support, the specialists will offer mentoring support for new principals and offer the Instructional Feedback Observation (IFO) process to support principal supervisors. Using IFO, principal supervisors collect evidence to coach principals in improving their skills delivering feedback. The IFO program will be available to all principals and principal supervisors in identified schools but will specifically target high school principals.

Implementation of the differentiated support model under ESSA will require MDE to partner with stakeholders and Regional Center staff to modify existing tools and resources and to develop new tools and resources to meet school support and improvement requirements in ESSA. MDE has established eight project groups focused on developing and modifying not only tools and resources used to support school improvement but also processes and activities.

1. The **high schools support** project group is developing supports for MEIRS, differentiating continuous improvement tools for high schools, and engaging stakeholders to develop differentiated supports for credit- and dropout-recovery schools.
2. The **three-year calendar** project group is creating an outline of the three-year cycle of school improvement (which outlines key activities, action steps, and deliverables) and creating the Initial Inquiry tool and protocol for identifying “quick wins” for school improvement in year one.
3. The **teaching and learning conditions** project group is embedding social-emotional and school climate indicators in the comprehensive needs assessment and other tools and is identifying tools for assessing teaching and learning conditions in schools and districts.
4. The **evidence-based practices** project group is creating a list of evidence-based practices for schools and districts and is designing protocols for districts and schools to identify evidence-based practices from the state list or practices not on the state list.
5. The **district supports** project group is creating a tool for the district to self-assess the conditions that support rapid school improvement, designing the training and networking aligned to the three-year cycle of school improvement support, and creating communications clearly defining school improvement roles and requirements. The self-assessment will support districts in identifying district activities that support school turnaround.
6. The **school leadership** project group is designing activities to support school leaders (especially high school principals) in the areas of school improvement, providing instructional feedback and instructional leadership, and is designing activities for new school leaders (especially new principals in identified and previously identified schools).
7. The **staff induction and development** project group is planning activities to support Regional Center staff in the transition to the ESSA school improvement activities and requirements.
8. The **document updating and alignment** project group is updating existing Regional Center tools and resources based on the ESSA school improvement activities and requirements and on the work other project groups. This group is designing the checklist of the requirements for school improvement plans, including a district process for stakeholder engagement in creation and approval of plans, which will be used by MDE and districts to review and approve school improvement plans. The team is also preparing guidance to districts for how to use the checklist and meet requirements to review and approve school improvement plans locally for schools identified for targeted support and improvement for consistently underperforming student groups.

The document updating and alignment project group will also redesign the comprehensive needs assessment process and tools to embed a focus on equity. The needs assessment will be used by districts to determine reasons why schools were identified and pre-K through grade 12 practices for schools’ improvement plans. Needs assessment data examples include district capacity to support school improvement; student academic data as required under ESSA; school readiness data; schools’ unmet needs; performance on locally selected indicators; partnerships with community and families; resource allocation, including teacher effectiveness, assignments, leadership, per pupil expenditures, and use of Title I funds; pre-K through grade 12 well-rounded education programming; school climate, student discipline data, and disproportionate rates of suspensions and expulsions; student engagement data; adult behaviors and mindsets; teaching and learning conditions; standards implementation; professional learning community performance; current continuous improvement

processes; student survey data; and review of district- and school-level resources among and within schools with respect to the following:

- a. Access to experienced, qualified, and effective teachers for underserved students at the school and classroom levels.
- b. Access and availability of advanced coursework.
- c. Access to full-day kindergarten and to preschool programs.
- d. Access to specialized instructional support personnel.
- e. Per-pupil expenditures.
- f. District- and school-level budgeting and resource allocation, and access to instructional materials and technology.

The eight project groups are coordinated by a core team at MDE that consists of the chief academic officer, director of school support, program manager for school improvement programs, and program manager for the Regional Centers of Excellence. The work of the project groups will continue through school year 2017-18 for implementation with school identifications in 2018.

Three-Year School Improvement Timeline

Minnesota will implement a three-year cycle of school improvement support and will design the first year as a planning year for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement. Using the first year of identification as a planning year will allow the Regional Centers to:

- Assess needs of identified schools and plan differentiated supports.
- Ensure that appropriate stakeholders are engaged.
- Provide adequate planning time.
- Check for strong and sustainable district and school leadership.
- Recognize balance between comprehensive and actionable school improvement plans.
- Connect districts and schools to sources and research on evidence-based practices.
- Establish a results versus compliance orientation for monitoring and support.
- Ensure that plans connect and coordinate with other state and district initiatives.

MDE is developing an outline of the three-year cycle of school improvement support that reflects stage-based implementation as defined by National Implementation Research Network for identified schools and which includes clear action steps and deliverables.

Year one will focus on exploration and installation of evidence-based practices, building effective implementation capacity, creating enabling contexts for improvement, and “quick wins.” Specifically, schools and districts in the first year of identification will establish leadership teams, engage stakeholders, complete comprehensive needs assessments and root-cause analyses, identify evidence-based practices that fit and are feasible, and submit two-year school improvement plans by March 1. The remainder of the year will focus on acquiring or repurposing the resources needed to do the work ahead, operationalizing evidence-based practices, usability testing, and preparing staff for new practices.

Identified schools will be required to implement evidence-based practices minimally for the areas for which they were identified. The comprehensive needs assessment and informed decision-making in choosing the most appropriate evidence-based practices for implementation in the school improvement plan are the key year-one activities. As outlined above, MDE is providing a comprehensive needs assessment template and process as well

as direct technical assistance through the Regional Centers. The Regional Centers also use multiple tools and processes (e.g., Hexagon tool, Initiative Inventory, needs assessment coaching process, state list of evidence-based practices) to facilitate a robust decision about evidence-based practices to choose for implementation. This decision is informed by the best balance of not only evidence but also fit, need, resources, capacity and readiness.

Training and Regional Centers specialists' on-site support in year one will also:

- Provide an orientation to the purpose, meaning, and calculation of the ESSA accountability system; the requirements for school, district, and state that result from designations; and the vision and design of the differentiated support model and opportunities.
- Build relationships among Regional Center, district and school staff.
- Clearly establish roles and responsibilities for the state, regions, districts and schools.
- Provide an opportunity to hear from school leaders and teachers who were previously supported by Regional Center staff.
- Share the three-year cycle of school improvement support that reflects stage-based implementation and discuss implications.
- Overview active implementation frameworks, the school improvement theory of action, the school improvement formula for success and other foundational information.
- Provide separate and unique events for high school leaders.
- Provide separate and unique events for district leaders responsible for supporting school improvement.

Year one will also include an initial inquiry process at schools and a self-assessment of district conditions that support rapid school improvement, both facilitated by Regional Center staff. These two processes will assess current conditions, inform needs assessment, and identify “quick wins” for the first year in the areas of standards implementation, teaching and learning conditions, district capacity to support school improvement, staffing, and instructional time. In the area of staffing, the first year will specifically include implementing strategies to ensure that identified schools and underserved students in identified schools have access to experienced, qualified and effective teachers.

Years two and three will focus on initial implementation and full implementation, as reflected in the two-year school improvement plan. The second year is when the identified evidence-based practices will be used for the first time. Leadership teams at the school and district levels will use feedback loops to assess fidelity of implementation and impact, and refine implementation using training and coaching supports, structural drivers and leadership. Results and progress will be continually recorded in the school improvement plan.

Identification of Evidence-Based Interventions and Practices

Identified schools will be required to implement evidence-based practices in their school support and improvement plans minimally for the areas for which they were identified. To assist schools and districts with identifying evidence-based interventions that are supported by the strongest levels of evidence available and that are appropriate to the needs of the schools and their student populations, MDE is developing a non-exhaustive list of evidence-based practices at evidence tiers I, II and III as defined in ESSA from which districts and schools may choose. Minnesota’s list will reflect practices in areas reflecting the indicators of the state accountability system—reading, math, progress towards English language proficiency, graduation and consistent attendance. It will also include practices for supporting special education students since preliminary data show

schools being identified for targeted support and improvement more frequently because of their special education student groups.

Minnesota stakeholders have provided the following recommendations regarding list development, purpose and implementation:

- Include practices beyond instruction such as leadership, organization and school climate that ensure educational equity.
- Consider grade spans, disciplines and social-emotional issues.
- Include practices on the list that the state and regions have the capacity to support (e.g., those with operationalized core components and tools developed to measure fidelity) to help ensure that practices are implemented as intended.
- Build and focus the capacities of MDE and partners to support practices on the list.
- When feasible, ensure that the list includes practices that have been studied at the high school level and represent secondary needs including, but not limited to dropout prevention, instructional and assessment practices, standards implementation, credit and course offerings, staffing and their roles (e.g., school counselors), special programming for transition years, wrap-around services, staff development to build relationships with students, and career and college readiness programming.
 - Include, highlight and support practices, interventions and programs that are targeted to increase graduation rates of specific student groups (e.g., students of color, American Indian students, students with disabilities).
 - To the degree that research is available, also include evidence-based practices that demonstrated success in alternative learning center and credit recovery settings.

We will assume that because Minnesota needs to close racial and economic achievement gaps by raising achievement for all students, educator and instructional quality is the foundation of any evidence-based practice.

Continuous improvement supports from the Regional Centers and tools and resources will help schools match evidence-based practices with needs based on the results of the comprehensive needs assessment and the review of resource allocations. Tools and processes will support schools and districts as they examine multiple evidence-based practices to determine the best balance of evidence, fit, need, resources, capacity and readiness.

Since Minnesota's list of evidence-based practices is non-exhaustive, MDE in partnership with the Midwest Comprehensive Center will provide a process for districts to select evidence-based practices not on the state list to best meet identified needs. School improvement plans that do not reflect evidence-based practices from the state list will demonstrate how they implemented the process (or another local process) to select practices that are evidence-based.

Differentiated Supports for High Schools and Schools Serving Primarily Credit-Recovery and Dropout Recovery Students

Identification of high schools for support and improvement will be new for many Minnesota high schools. In the accountability system under Minnesota's NCLB flexibility waiver, few high schools were identified since most do not receive Title I funds and because graduation was one of multiple indicators in the accountability system.

Since high schools will primarily be a new group of schools identified for support from the Regional Centers, MDE and center staff will provide clear communication for high schools and stakeholders regarding:

- The purpose, meaning and calculation of the accountability system for graduation rates.
- The requirements for school, district and state that result from the designation.
- The vision and design of the support model and the opportunities.

Based on stakeholder feedback around the needs of high schools, MDE and the Regional Centers will differentiate supports for identified high schools by including support for the MEIRS system and by emphasizing the capacity of secondary principals as instructional leaders.

Regional Center supports for high schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement due to low graduation rates will include use of MEIRS and training and technical assistance to help schools in these areas:

- Review and interpret MEIRS data to make decisions about how to support students who are at increased risk of not graduating in four years.
- Select strategies and practices that will better engage at-risk students.
- Use tools and guidelines to effectively implement practices and measure progress.

To build the instructional leadership capacity of high school principals, MDE and the Regional Centers will support principals and their supervisors using the Instructional Feedback Observation (IFO) process. Principals' abilities to deliver instructional feedback and conduct "critical conversations" with staff are essential instructional leadership skills that often need to be honed and improved. Working with the premise that you get what you measure, American Institutes for Research developed the IFO process to advance principals' skills as teacher evaluators. Using IFO, principal supervisors collect evidence, using videos of principals' post-observation conference meetings with teachers, to coach principals in improving their skills delivering feedback. MDE has piloted a train-the-trainer program to deliver statewide support for use of the IFO tool through the formal training and coaching of principal supervisors.

Finally, MDE is differentiating comprehensive needs assessment processes and tools for high schools to reflect relevant secondary data (e.g., course offerings, credit accumulation, MEIRS). This will include graduation data, college career readiness data, and other indicators of student success that MDE and districts have available.

Minnesota is convening a stakeholder group representing alternative learning center and credit- and dropout-recovery schools. This group's purpose will be to provide recommendations for differentiated services, materials, and other supports for alternative learning centers and credit recovery schools identified for support and improvement.

Review, Approval and Monitoring of School Support and Improvement Plans

MDE is providing a clear checklist of requirements for support and improvement plans including a district process for stakeholder engagement in creation and approval of plans. The checklist will include the following requirements for the approval of school improvement goals and plans:

- Plans must address accountability system indicators and be likely to improve student outcomes.
- Goals and plans must align with Minnesota's long-term goals.

- Plans must include at least one evidence-based practice that is aligned to accountability indicators of the state accountability system for which the school was identified, that is supported by the strongest level of evidence, and that is appropriate for the school and its population of students.
- Plans that do not include an evidence-based practice from the state list will reveal the local process used to select practices that are evidence-based.
- Practices and activities in plans are based on the school comprehensive needs assessments.
- Plans include strategies to increase access to experienced, qualified and effective teachers for underserved students at the school and classroom levels.
- Plans identify and address resource inequities identified in the comprehensive needs assessment.
- Plans are resourced appropriately.
- For schools identified for targeted support and improvement because of one or more consistently under-performing student groups, plans include district-defined exit criteria.
- Plans describe stakeholder involvement that is meaningful during needs assessment, plan development and plan implementation.
- Plans are approved by the school and district.
- Plans are public and posted with required materials under World’s Best Workforce.

MDE and the Regional Centers will review, approve and monitor school improvement plans for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement. The approval and monitoring process will be actively embedded in the on-site technical assistance provided by Regional Center specialists and implemented as a supportive coaching opportunity as opposed to a compliance activity. Schools that are meaningfully involved with Regional Center support activities meet requirements for approval of their school improvement plans as outlined above. School leadership teams regularly record feedback loop results, track implementation activities, and update implementation progress in their school improvement plans as an ongoing record of continuous improvement. Quarterly, center staff collect updated school improvement plans, review plans collaboratively, and plan ongoing coaching and supports for individual schools. Interventions for schools and districts not meeting requirements for center plan review and approval will be implemented by MDE.

Districts will review, approve, and monitor school improvement plans for schools identified for targeted support and improvement. Districts will use the checklist of requirements for support and improvement plans provided by MDE, and MDE will offer guidance for how to use the checklist and meet requirements to review and approve school improvement plans locally. Annually, every district must report publicly on its activities and progress towards goals under Minnesota World’s Best Workforce and must submit a summary of the report to MDE. Districts will confirm that plans approved locally have been reviewed and monitored through their annual World’s Best Workforce summaries.

As part of program evaluation and support for schools identified for targeted support and improvement, MDE is designing and implementing an annual audit process to be used with a small percentage of schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement, a small percentage of schools identified for targeted support and improvement, and all schools that have failed to meet exit criteria. The audit process will use the checklist of requirements to monitor compliance as well as provide process feedback to improve state and local improvement supports and planning.

Other State Strategies to Improve Low-Performing Schools

State Categorical Funding

Minnesota supports local schools and districts with numerous funding programs designed to support student achievement. These resources are frequently leveraged to support school improvement strategies. State categorical funding includes:

- English learner funding.
- Achievement and integration funds.
- Alternative teacher pay for performance system funding.
- American Indian aid.
- Literacy aid.
- Prekindergarten funds.
- Compensatory revenue that supports schools with high levels of economically disadvantaged students.

Prekindergarten-Third Grade Framework

Minnesota's pre-K through third grade framework focuses on transforming schools through four main goal areas:

- Expanding a high-quality voluntary prekindergarten.
- Increasing teacher and school leader effectiveness.
- Aligning of policies and practices across the pre-K through third grade learning continuum.
- Providing high-quality, job-embedded professional development for staff and administrators.

Under Minnesota's World's Best Workforce statute, districts must set goals in the area of school readiness.

Minnesota currently is implementing many of the early learning strategies noted by the U.S. Department of Education as evidence-based, effective school improvement strategies and includes transition programs or investing in professional development as a way to incorporate collaboration across grade levels.

Currently Minnesota is:

- Providing full-day kindergarten.
- Expanding access to high-quality voluntary prekindergarten programs.
- Providing educators, including prekindergarten teachers, with time for joint planning across grades to facilitate effective teaching and learning and positive teacher-student interactions.
- Using data to identify and implement an instructional program that is evidence-based, developmentally appropriate, and vertically aligned from one grade to the next (pre-K through third grade) as well as aligned with state early learning and development standards and state academic standards.
- Providing administrators and staff with ongoing, high-quality job-embedded professional development regarding subject-specific pedagogy, instruction that reflects a deeper understanding of the community served by the school, or differentiated instruction.
- Supporting the ability of effective charter schools to offer high-quality pre-K programs.

The following early learning strategies are being implemented to impact the performance of children, staff and administrators in state identified Title I schools:

- Strategy I: Increase access to high-quality voluntary prekindergarten in all Title I schools.
- Strategy II: Recruit all Title I schools to participate in the pre-K through third grade professional development activities.
- Series I: Pre-K through 3rd grade Principal Leadership Series focused on building community partnerships; creating socioeconomically diverse classrooms using multiple funding streams; effective transitions to kindergarten for children and families.
- Series II: Building Rigorous and Robust pre-K through 3rd grade Learning Environments: The Art of Communication in Classrooms for Young Children.
- Series III: Building pre-K through 3rd grade Systems: From Alignment to Coherence.
- Series IV: Building Rigorous and Robust pre-K through 3rd grade Family Engagement.
- Strategy III: Train all pre-K through third grade staff in Title I schools in the Kindergarten Entry Profile tools and provide ongoing coaching to appropriately analyze and use data to inform daily instruction. All tools are designed to be used pre-K through third grade.
- Strategy IV: Amend current WIDA contract to include intentional focus on training early childhood teachers in the WIDA Early Years Curriculum and assessments and strengthen the capacity of our WIDA preschool trainer cohort.

The framework is funded primarily with state funds.

English Learner (EL) Leadership Institute

The EL Leadership Institute works with schools with high EL populations to review EL student achievement and identify how ELs might be better supported. Principals, EL teachers, and classroom teachers from these schools participate in workshops that review EL evidence-based practices and review EL data. At the end of the year the schools submit an EL specific school improvement goal. The professional development cycle lasts for one year. The program is funded through state funds.

Project North Star

Project North Star is a three-year federal grant intended to elevate the identification and programming approaches provided for disadvantaged and underserved rural populations by preparing their teachers, school administrators and communities with the knowledge and skills their gifted students need to be successful in the greater world. The Minnesota Department of Education Division of Academic Standards, in collaboration with the department's Office of Indian Education, selected six Minnesota elementary schools in various regions to participate in Project North Star based on specific grant criteria including strong school leadership, high poverty rate and a significant American Indian population. The first three schools began the project in June 2016 as Group A, and the last three schools will begin in June of 2017. Project North Star is funded through the U.S. Department of Education Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program through August 2018.

Singing-Based Pilot Program to Improve Student Reading

The purpose of this state grant is to pilot the implementation of a research-supported, computer- and singing-based reading intervention designed to improve the reading performance of students in grades three through

five. The pilot is being conducted by the “Rock’n’Read Project.” The law states that pilot sites should represent “urban, suburban, and greater Minnesota” schools and “give priority to schools in which a high proportion of students do not read proficiently at grade level and are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.” This is funded by a one-time legislative appropriation of \$100,000.

Full Services Community Schools Grants

Full Services Community Schools is a state program established in 2015 that provides funding to eligible schools to plan, implement and improve full-service community schools. The program prioritizes schools identified for improvement. Additional funds were allocated in 2016 for expansion of the program. The current funding has provided grants to 13 schools—four in round one and nine additional schools in round two. Full service community school grant funds allow schools to partner with community agencies to provide on-site health and dental clinics, mental health services, family resource centers, college access information, out-of-school program information, and other family support services as outlined in Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.231.

Districts with Disproportionate Suspension Rates District Cohort

In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Rights, MDE has identified over 30 districts that have the highest rates of disproportionately suspending and expelling students of color and American Indian students and students with disabilities. An intervention and support model is currently being planned for the identified districts. These districts will collaborate with MDE in a cohort model to develop and implement strategies to address disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

MDE has provided training to schools and districts across Minnesota to support their implementation of school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) since 2005.

School-wide PBIS across multiple school buildings within the district helps improve consistency in behavioral practices and student experiences at school, particularly as they transition from one school building to the next. To date, 583 schools have participated in the state training, including 93 middle schools and 141 high schools or alternative learning centers.

PBIS is an evidence-based framework for preventing problem behavior; providing instruction and support for positive and prosocial behaviors; and supporting student’s social, emotional and behavioral needs. School-wide implementation of PBIS requires training, coaching and evaluation for school staff to consistently implement the key components that make PBIS effective:

- Establish, define, and teach 3-5 positively stated school-wide behavioral expectations.
- Develop and implement a consistent response system across staff with positive feedback when students demonstrate the school-wide expectations.
- Develop and implement a consistent response system for student behaviors that do not meet the school-wide expectations.
- Utilize data system to support decision-making related to behavioral practices.
- Implement a continuum of evidence-based interventions to support academic and behavioral success for all students.

- Utilize a team-based approach to support implementation and evaluation of outcomes.
 - f. Additional Optional Action. If applicable, describe the action the State will take to initiate additional improvement in any LEA with a significant number or percentage of schools that are consistently identified by the State for comprehensive support and improvement and are not meeting exit criteria established by the State or in any LEA with a significant number or percentage of schools implementing targeted support and improvement plans.

As stated earlier, under Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.11, commonly known as World’s Best Workforce (WBWF), all Minnesota districts must adopt strategic plans to support and improve teaching and learning. Local strategic plans must be aligned with students meeting school readiness goals, having all third grade students achieving grade-level literacy, closing academic achievement gaps, having all students attain career and college readiness, and having all students graduate from high school. Under WBWF, districts must also ensure that students equitably have access to diverse, experienced, qualified, and effective teachers.

Under the requirements of WBWF, the commissioner “must identify those districts in any consecutive three-year period not making sufficient progress toward improving teaching and learning for all students...and striving for the world’s best workforce.” MDE is aligning district identification time lines under WBWF with school identification time lines under ESSA, and is aligning indicators used to identify districts and schools under WBWF and ESSA.

The commissioner, in collaboration with identified districts, may require districts to use up to 2 percent of basic general education revenue to implement “commissioner-specified strategies and practices.” MDE will use authorities under WBWF to initiate additional guided improvement district activities for identified schools in the districts identified under WBWF. Specifically, MDE will review school and district improvement strategies in WBWF plans, collaboratively identify and approve strategies, and ensure strategies are resourced with general education revenue.