

School Improvement Plan

Guiding Questions



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School Improvement

What is it?

A school that does not make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) for two consecutive years, as AYP is defined by the State's accountability system, must be identified for school improvement and enter into the school improvement process.

The school improvement process begins with a two-year comprehensive plan and includes specific interventions and sanctions as defined by NCLB. The school improvement plan addresses the academic issues that caused the school to be identified for improvement and must include the required components. Schools identified for improvement must also notify parents of the reasons for identification and ensure that public school choice is provided for children whose parents request a transfer. Additional sanctions are required as the school enters into subsequent years of improvement.

A school identified for improvement must make AYP as defined by the State's accountability system for two consecutive years to exit school improvement status.

Required Components

The school improvement plan must address the following nine required components:

- Incorporate strategies based on scientifically based research that will strengthen the core academic subjects and address the specific academic issues that caused the school to be identified for improvement;
- Adopt policies and practices that have the greatest likelihood of ensuring all students meet the State's proficient standards;
- Directly address the academic achievement problem that caused the school to be identified for improvement;
- Establish specific, annual, measurable objectives;
- Specify the responsibilities of the LEA and the SEA;
- Include strategies to promote parental involvement;
- Incorporate extended day/year opportunities;
- Incorporate strategies to promote high quality professional development; and
- Incorporate a teacher mentoring program.

In addition, school improvement plans must meet the following specifications:

- Provide an assurance that the school will spend no less than 10% of Title I, Part A funds for high-quality professional development;
- Be written within three months of identification;
- Be written in consultation with parents, school staff, the LEA serving the school and outside experts;
- Cover a two-year period; and
- Be approved by the LEA.

Additional resources for school improvement requirements can be found on the Oklahoma State Department Web site at <http://sde.state.ok.us/NCLB/Improvement.html>.

School Improvement

Needs Assessment

What is it?

A needs assessment is an examination of practices, processes and procedures in the school. Conducting a needs assessment is essential in determining the strengths and weaknesses of the school site. This assessment will provide information about the academic performance of student subgroups and academic gaps. Analysis of the data encourages creation of strategies that specifically target the areas of need.

Multiple sources of data should be collected and analyzed during the needs assessment. NCLB District and Site Report Cards along with benchmark assessment results, teacher quality data, parental involvement data and records of attendance, graduation rate and discipline referrals should be used. If available, data from the last three years should be compiled to identify trends.

How often?

The comprehensive needs assessment should be conducted **at least annually**. Additional data collection and analysis should occur regularly throughout the school year to determine the effectiveness of school improvement strategies.

School Improvement Team

In developing the school improvement plan, the school must consult with parents, staff, the LEA and outside experts. This leadership team should serve as technical assistants and partners with the school throughout the plan's implementation.

Documentation

The following documentation should be kept at school improvement sites for monitoring purposes:

- Copies of **site** NCLB Report Cards and evidence of dissemination to parents; and
- Data charts containing longitudinal data.

Guiding Questions

- How are multiple sources of data collected and analyzed?
- What subgroups or subjects caused the school to be identified as in need of improvement?
- What additional areas of need were identified through the data analysis?
- Has the data for the most recent three years been collected and analyzed?
- What trends were identified in the three year data? What contributes to the trends?
- What strategies can be implemented to meet these needs?
- Have parent, student or staff surveys been conducted?
- Has survey data been collected and analyzed to determine strengths and weaknesses?
- Have representatives from all stakeholder groups been invited to participate in the planning?
- What are the responsibilities of the school improvement team?

Component #1

Instructional Strategies Based on Scientifically Based Research

What is it?

The school improvement plan must include instructional strategies based on scientifically based research (SBR) that will strengthen the core academic subjects and address the specific academic issues that caused the school to be identified for improvement. Strategies grounded in SBR are those that have been demonstrated over time and have effectiveness that is documented by educational research.

Instructional strategies grounded in SBR provide students with opportunities to meet the proficient and advanced levels of the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCT) and End-of-Instruction Tests (EOI). These strategies should be aligned to *Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS)*, provide increased learning time and meet the needs of low-achieving students, especially the historically underserved populations.

Resources

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) provides valuable resources for schools in need of instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners. More information on the resources listed below can be obtained by contacting the Office of Standards and Curriculum or visiting the Web site at <http://sde.state.ok.us/NCLB/default.html>.

- *PASS*
- Oklahoma Nine Essential Elements
- Curriculum and Programming Information
- Curriculum Team Contact Information
- Master Teacher Project

Guiding Questions

- What instructional strategies are currently being utilized by the staff? Are these effective?
- What instructional strategies would be most effective in reaching the low-achieving students? What training and/or materials are needed to utilize these strategies?
- Are teachers encouraged to learn new instructional strategies?
- Does the school employ an Instructional Facilitator/Coach to model lessons and coach teachers?
- Are teachers encouraged to visit effective teachers in the classroom?
- Do Professional Development initiatives address the need for varied instructional strategies?
- What evidence is being collected to determine that SBR strategies are being utilized?
- Has an analysis of instructional time-on-task been conducted?
- What SBR intervention strategies, such as Response to Intervention (RtI), are being utilized?
- Are teachers encouraged to seek higher degrees and/or National Board certification?
- Have all OSDE resources been utilized?

Component #2

Policies and Practices

What is it?

School improvement plans should include policies and procedures concerning the school's core academic subjects that have the greatest likelihood of ensuring that all groups of students will meet the State's proficiency level of achievement. Policies and practices with the greatest likelihood of improving student achievement are those that affect the school's teaching and learning. These include those that build school infrastructure, such as regular data analysis, those that involve parents and teachers in decision making and those that allocate resources to support programs and school improvement goals.

Resources

Ideas for establishing and implementing policies and procedures to improve student achievement can be found in Oklahoma's Nine Essential Elements Document, specifically Elements 7, 8, and 9. Some examples are:

- Create Data Walls weekly, monthly, and/or quarterly to include disaggregated student achievement data that provides information for benchmarking and goal setting;
- Provide organizational direction by scheduling opportunities for collaboration between and among horizontal and vertical teams;
- Adopt policies and implement procedures to ensure that staff assignments are made to address specific student needs;
- Provide budget decisions that are data driven, intentional, and aligned with student performance goals;
- Provide reports to the school staff and other stakeholders as to the progress toward continuous improvement; and
- Present drafts of statements to the general public at open meetings, and encourage public comment for consideration prior to adoption.

Guiding Questions

- Are policy and procedure decisions data-driven?
- Do multiple stakeholder groups collaborate in the decision making process?
- Is data disaggregated to identify gaps in order to drive instruction and curriculum development?
- Do school policies and procedures have an intentional focus on student achievement?
- Do school policies and procedures remove barriers to learning?
- Does the school ensure a safe and effective learning environment?
- Does the school maximize resources for student achievement?
- Are resources distributed equitably?
- Are staffing and scheduling decisions based on student needs?
- Do policies and procedures protect instructional time to maximize learning?
- Is school improvement planning data-driven?
- Are the current policies and procedures reviewed and revised based on data and stakeholder feedback?
- Do policies and procedures provide time for collaboration between horizontal and vertical teams?

Components #3 and #4

Professional Development

What is it?

According to the Section 1116 (b)(3)(iii) of NCLB, school improvement schools must provide an assurance that the school site will spend **not less than 10% of Title I, Part A** funds on high-quality professional development that directly addresses the academic achievement problem that caused the school to be identified, meets the requirements for professional development as defined by NCLB, and provides increased opportunity for participating in professional development.

High-quality professional development, as defined by NCLB, is sustained and classroom-focused. It contributes to an increase in teacher knowledge of subject matter and the use of effective, SBR strategies to reach all students. High-quality professional development does not take on the form of a one-day workshop, but makes a lasting impact in the classroom and is an integral part of the school improvement plans.

The high-quality professional development offered to teachers at the school improvement site should directly address the academic achievement problems that caused the school to be identified for improvement. Professional development can include training focused on increasing content knowledge, using SBR instructional strategies, aligning curriculum with *PASS*, and training teachers to use data to inform instruction. The school improvement plan should address how these activities will be used to remove the school from school improvement status.

Resources

OSDE provides information and opportunities in the area of high-quality professional development. A Professional Development Toolkit entitled “How to Plan High Quality Professional Development” can be found at <http://sde.state.ok.us/NCLB/Toolkits.html>. It includes the Twelve Standards for High Quality Professional Development from the National Staff Development Council, Oklahoma Professional Development Guidelines from OSDE and sample templates and strategies for use by schools.

Guiding Questions

- Does the budget reflect **not less than 10% of Title I, Part A** funds to be spent for high quality professional development?
- Is there a written two-year professional development plan?
- Is planned professional development aligned with the needs of the school?
- Is planned professional development “high-quality” as defined by NCLB?
- Does professional development directly address the academic problems that caused the school to be identified for improvement?
- Do all staff/administrators have individual professional development plans?
- What procedures are in place to follow-up on each professional development activity?
- How are staff/administrators supported in implementing strategies and ideas learned during professional development activities?

Component #5

Specific, Annual, Measurable Objectives

What is it?

Specific, annual, measurable objectives, or goals, clearly articulate the intended outcomes of the school improvement plan. The ultimate purpose of setting measurable goals, as stated in the LEA and School Improvement Non-Regulatory Guidance, is to improve the school's ability to teach all children and achieve annual academic performance targets, resulting in removal from improvement status.

These goals should focus on student learning and be SMART:

- S**trategic
- M**easurable
- A**ttainable
- R**esults Driven
- T**ime Bound

The goals should be addressed and outlined in the written school improvement plan. All school improvement sites must set goals in the areas of professional development and parental involvement. Other goals should relate to the specific academic problem that caused identification: Reading, Math, participation rate, attendance rate or graduation rate.

Documentation

The school improvement school should keep the following documentation to assist in completion of the school improvement status report:

- An Action Plan for each goal (located in the School Improvement Template);
- Evidence of monitoring and evaluating progress toward established goals; and
- Data to support progress toward each goal.

Guiding Questions

- How was the leadership team or school staff involved in goal setting?
- What data was used to determine goals for the school?
- Are the goals established in the school improvement plan SMART?
- Are the goals clearly defined and understandable?
- Do the goals address the academic issues that caused the school to be identified for improvement?
- How do goals address the needs of the lowest-achieving students?
- How do the goals address the improved achievement of all students?
- How will progress toward goals be monitored regularly?
- What data will be collected and analyzed to measure the progress toward the goals?
- Have goals been established for the required areas of professional development and parental involvement?
- Do goals include measurable outcomes, timelines, identification of person responsible and methods of evaluation?

Component #6

Responsibilities

What is it?

The school improvement plan should specify the responsibilities of the school, the local educational agency (LEA) and the state educational agency (SEA).

According to the *LEA and School Improvement Non-Regulatory Guidance*, the LEA bears the primary responsibility for ensuring a school in improvement receives the necessary technical assistance. Schools in improvement must receive technical assistance in three areas: data analysis, identification and implementation of strategies and budget analysis. This assistance may be provided directly by the LEA or by another entity such as the SEA, an educational service agency, or another entity with experience in helping schools improve academic achievement.

The SEA must allocate Title I, Part A funds and create and sustain a system of support for schools. Specifically, the OSDE provides technical assistance through the Nine Essential Elements Guide, Windows on Curriculum training, videoconferences, point-to-point videoconferences, use of OSDE Web site, test blueprints, *PASS*, *PASSport II*, reading and math academies and school improvement professional development conferences. The OSDE also provides school support teams which review and analyze all facets of the school's operation, collaborate with school staff and the LEA to help the school meet improvement goals, monitor the implementation of the school improvement plan, and provide feedback about the effectiveness of personnel.

Additional information regarding responsibilities of the school, the LEA and the SEA can be found in the LEA and School Improvement Non-Regulatory Guidance on the OSDE Web site at <http://sde.state.ok.us/NCLB/Improvement.html>.

Documentation

School improvement sites should retain the following records for monitoring purposes:

- Professional development plans showing assistance provided by the LEA, the SEA and outside agencies;
- Evidence of assistance received in data analysis, identification and implementation of strategies and budget analysis; and
- School Support Team site visit reports (if applicable.)

Guiding Questions

- What technical assistance has been provided by the LEA?
- What technical assistance has been provided by OSDE?
- What technical assistance has been provided by outside entities such as institutes of higher education or educational service agencies?
- How has the technical assistance helped the school meet the school improvement goals?
- How has the technical assistance improved student achievement?
- How has the school support team assisted the school (if applicable)?

Component #7

Extended Day/Year Opportunities

What is it?

The school improvement plan must include, as appropriate, extended day/year opportunities. These include activities such as tutoring that occur before school, after school, during the summer or during an extension of the school year. These activities should address the school's core academic subjects and be grounded in scientifically based research. Extended day/year opportunities should also be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness regularly much like regular instructional programs.

Starting in year 2 of school improvement, schools must provide supplemental educational services (SES) for eligible children at no cost to the parents. These services include tutoring, remediation and other educational interventions and must take place outside the regular school day. In providing these services, an LEA must notify parents of the availability of services, help parents choose a provider, determine which students will receive services, enter into an agreement with the provider, assist the SEA in identifying potential providers and protect the privacy of students receiving SES.

More information regarding SES requirements can be found in the *Supplemental Educational Services Non-Regulatory Guidance* on the SDE Web site at <http://sde.state.ok.us/NCLB/SES.html>.

Documentation

School improvement sites should retain the following documentation for monitoring purposes:

- Notification of parents of the availability of SES;
- Evidence of dissemination of SES information to parents in understandable and multiple formats; and
- Evidence parents were offered a reasonable amount of time to investigate options and submit requests for SES.

Guiding Questions

- How have the extended day/year opportunities been structured? Does this meet the specific needs of students?
- How have the extended day/year opportunities been designed to help low-achieving students become proficient in reading and math?
- What procedures are in place to encourage attendance particularly for the lowest-achieving students?
- What procedures are in place to monitor student progress?
- How are the extended day/year opportunities evaluated for effectiveness?
- How is eligibility for SES determined?
- Have parents been notified of SES options? In multiple ways?
- Have parents been given enough time to investigate options and make decisions regarding SES?
- Have agreements been arranged with State-approved providers of services?
- Has 20% of the Title I, Part A district allocation been set aside to pay for SES and public school choice? (Only for schools in Year 2 and above.)

Component #8

Parental Involvement

What is it?

According to the *LEA and School Improvement Non-Regulatory Guidance*, the school improvement plan must address parental involvement in two ways: it must describe how the school will provide the parents of each student enrolled with written notice about the school's identification for improvement, and specify the strategies that will be used to promote parental involvement.

Parents must be notified promptly of a school identified for improvement. The notification must include an explanation of what the identification means, how the school compares to other schools served by the LEA, the reason(s) the school is being identified for improvement, an explanation of how parents can become involved and an explanation of the parents' option to transfer. At a minimum, the LEA must inform parents about the academic achievement level of students and the school and the schools to which their child may transfer. As with other parent notifications, it must be written in a language the parents can understand and disseminated in multiple ways.

Effective parental involvement strategies include those that engage the parents in regular, two-way, meaningful communications and activities involving student learning. Parents should be encouraged to become partners with teachers in educating their children and involved in decision making at the school.

More information about parental involvement can be found in the *LEA and School Improvement Non-Regulatory Guidance* and in the *Public School Choice Non-Regulatory Guidance* on the OSDE Web site at <http://sde.state.ok.us/NCLB/Title1PartA.html>.

Documentation

School improvement sites should retain the following records for monitoring purposes:

- Notification to parents of school improvement status including parents' option to transfer;
- Notifications to parents of parental involvement activities; and
- Evidence of parental involvement in decision making.

Guiding Questions

- Have parents been notified of school improvement status? Did the notification meet all requirements?
- Have all parents been notified of public school choice?
- How are parents encouraged to be involved with student learning?
- What parental involvement activities have been offered at the school? What activities are planned?
- How are parents involved in the decision making at the school?
- Are parents encouraged to serve on committees?
- Are parental involvement activities monitored for attendance? What other data is collected?

Component #9

Teacher Mentoring Program

What is it?

Recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers in a school improvement school is important for the consistency and sustainability of the school improvement initiatives. Therefore, the school improvement plan must address the strategies the school will use to retain qualified and experienced teachers. In addition to high quality professional development, schools should implement a mentoring program. Not only can teacher mentoring programs promote teamwork and collaboration, they can also provide practical support for inexperienced teachers and have a positive effect on the staff turnover rate.

In addition, LEAs and school sites should ensure that schools identified for improvement are not staffing a disproportionate amount of inexperienced teachers (0-3 years) as compared to higher performing schools in the district.

Documentation

School Improvement sites should retain the following documentation for monitoring purposes:

- Written plan for recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers;
- Charts and/or documentation showing the years of experience of teachers; and
- Evidence of retention efforts (i.e., teacher mentoring programs, incentives, teacher collaboration).

Guiding Questions

- What strategies are used to assist and support newly hired teachers and newly hired paraprofessionals?
- What strategies are used to retain highly qualified teachers and highly qualified paraprofessionals?
- Is time dedicated during the day for teacher collaboration and mentoring?
- Have process and procedures been developed to encourage collaboration?
- How do teachers collaborate both vertically and horizontally?
- How are teachers encouraged to obtain advanced degrees and/or additional certifications?
- How are teachers encouraged to become National Board Certified?
- What incentives are offered to teachers to work in schools identified for improvement?
- How are teachers encouraged to be part of the decision making process?
- Have charts been made to show the years of experience of the staff? What steps have been taken to equitably distribute experienced teachers?

Example

Number of Certified Teachers	Years of Experience					
	0-3	3-5	6-10	11-15	15-20	20+