

# School Improvement Common Language

## Accountability

The process by which educators are held responsible for performance or outcomes. These expectations can be set at the classroom, school, district, state, and/or federal level.

## Achievement Data

These data tell us what students have learned. These include classroom-level, benchmark, interim, and formative assessment data, as well as summative data, such as standardized test scores from annual district and state testing.

## Action Plan

A formalized plan for achieving an objective that includes strategies, activities, timelines, resources, roles, and responsibilities.

## Annual Meaningful Differentiation

ESSA requires all states to implement a system of Annual Meaningful Differentiation (AMD) to differentiate overall performance and quality of all public elementary and secondary schools. The purpose is to identify the state's lowest and underperforming schools and prioritize funding accordingly.

## Annual Summative Designation

A school's annual summative designation describes how well an individual school is meeting the needs of all its students. The designations recognize schools with strong overall performance across a range of academic and student success indicators. Schools with greatest need receive the most support. IL has five summative designations: Exemplary School, Commendable School, Targeted School, Comprehensive School, and Intensive School.

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/2023-Annual-Summative-Designations.pdf>

## Assessment

Methods and instruments used to collect data and evaluate student performance. To capture a complete and accurate picture of student achievement, multiple data sources are strongly recommended.

- Balanced Assessment System – A rigorous and fair system of measuring student achievement growth using

summative, interim, and formative assessments.

- Formative Assessment – measures learning that occurs concurrently with instruction and is used to provide specific feedback to teachers and students for the purpose of adjusting instruction.
- Interim Assessments – given periodically throughout the school year which provide information to educators about student learning (e.g., grade-level/course assessments).
- Summative Assessments – measure learning that summarizes what students have learned at the conclusion of an instructional segment (e.g., unit tests, final exams, and culminating projects). State assessments are considered summative assessments.

## Behavioral Expectations

Expectations for appropriate behavior that have been defined, taught, and modeled.

## Benchmark

As a noun, it means “a standard by which something can be measured or judged.” As a verb, it means “to measure according to a specified standard to compare and improve student outcomes.”

## Benchmark Assessments

Assessments that are given periodically (e.g., at the end of every quarter, three times a year, or as frequently as once per month) throughout a school year to establish baseline achievement data and measure progress toward a standard or set of academic standards and goals.

## Cohort

Identifies schools identified for improvement status by year and type of designation.

- RC19 Comprehensive in Implementation Phase Year 3 – Comprehensive designation on Report Card 2019 (from spring 2019 assessments)
- RC19 Targeted in Implementation Phase Year 3 – Targeted designation on Report Card 2019 (from spring 2019 assessments)
- RC22 Comprehensive in Implementation Phase 1 – Comprehensive designation on Report Card 2022 (from spring 2022 assessments)

- RC22 Targeted in Implementation Phase 1 – Targeted designation on Report Card 2022 (from spring 2022 assessments)
- RC23 Intensive in Planning Year – Intensive designation on Report Card 2023 (from spring 2023 assessments)
- RC23 Comprehensive in Planning Year – Comprehensive designation on Report Card 2023 (from spring 2023 assessments)
- RC23 Targeted in Planning Year – Targeted designation on Report Card 2023 (from spring 2023 assessments)

### **Collaborative Team**

A group of individuals who share common objectives, tasks, resources, responsibilities, and leadership. The main purpose of a collaborative team in schools and districts is to improve teaching practices to increase student achievement.

### **Community Financial Meeting Toolkit (CFMT):**

A set of resources for districts to build transparency and engage their communities in financial decision-making. The toolkit includes a [facilitator's guide](#), a [presentation template](#), and an [FAQ on Illinois school finance topics and ESSA](#). The CFMT materials leverage real data on district finances and student outcomes, allowing leaders and stakeholders to participate in informed discussions pertaining to student equity and financial planning.

### **Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Schools**

A school that has been identified by its state agency as:

- A school with overall performance in the bottom 5 percent of Title I-eligible schools statewide
- All high schools with a graduation rate of 67 percent or below
- Schools that have completed a full Targeted Support school improvement cycle, where the performance of one or more of the originally Targeted student groups remains at or below the level of the “all students” group in the lowest-performing 5 percent of Title I-eligible schools at the end of the four-year improvement cycle

### **Continuous Improvement**

A process by which staff engages in collaborative inquiry, focused on implementing, assessing, monitoring, adjusting, and evaluating to increase student achievement.

### **Culturally Responsive**

Using the diverse cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them by teaching to and through the strengths of students.

### **Curriculum**

Standards-aligned Tier 1 core instructional materials.

### **Data**

Captured information organized for analysis or used to make decisions. Types of data include student achievement/outcome, perception, process, and demographic data.

### **Data Analysis Process**

Studying data, including looking for patterns and trends, for the purpose of making decisions.

### **Data-Based Decision-Making**

The practice of using an institution's past performance information by reviewing, utilizing, and evaluating available data to make operational and academic decisions.

### **Data-Driven Culture**

The processes and decisions within a building or district are driven and supported by data.

### **Demographic Data**

Data that provides descriptive information about the school community. Examples may include enrollment, attendance, grade level, race/ethnicity, gender, students with disabilities, English Learners, socio-economic status, graduation rate, suspensions/expulsions, etc.

### **Developmentally Appropriate**

A desirable feature of programs, curriculum, materials, and instruction that suits the ages, performance levels, and needs of students.

### **District Leadership**

Leaders at central office (e.g., superintendents, assistant superintendents, business directors, special education directors, curriculum directors, intervention coordinators, and parent/community coordinators), who provide support across schools in a district; also includes school-level leaders who are assigned district responsibilities as described above.

### **District Leadership Team (DLT)**

A team of individuals who promote a culture of common expectations or commitment by maintaining a districtwide focus on high achievement for all students, including all student subgroups.

### **Equitable and Inclusive**

Providing all students with access to appropriate curriculum and learning opportunities.

### **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

The federal K-12 education law of the United States. ESSA, which was signed into law in 2015, and replaced No Child Left Behind. ESSA extended more flexibility to states in education and laid out expectations of transparency for

parents and communities.

### **ESSA Conference**

This annual conference serves Illinois educators who seek high-level professional development in line with current federal and state education priorities. The Illinois State Board of Education and other educational associations have a major role in the development of the conference agenda. The program includes keynote speakers, concurrent sessions, workshops, and meetings focused on high-quality instruction, continuous improvement, and engagement of schools with parents and others in the community.

### **Evaluation**

Collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about programs and practices, particularly about their effectiveness and efficiency in producing an intended effect. Evaluation includes the analysis of adult implementation and student achievement results.

### **Evidence-Based**

Educational research or metrics pertaining to school, teacher, and/or student performance used to inform decisions related to school improvement.

### **Evidence-Based Funding (EBF)**

EBF is the formula that Illinois uses to allocate school funding. EBF sends more resources to Illinois' most under-resourced students and takes the necessary first steps toward ensuring all schools have the resources they need to provide a safe, rigorous, and well-rounded learning environment for all students. <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/EvidenceBasedFunding.aspx>

### **Evidence-Based Practices (EBP)**

An activity, strategy, or intervention that demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes. Practices in Tiers I-III demonstrate

- I. Strong evidence based on at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study.
- II. Moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study.
- III. Promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study.

Tier IV practices demonstrate a rationale based on a strong theory of action or logic model, and there is a plan in place to study its impact on outcomes.

Schools identified for Comprehensive or Targeted support and improvement must implement at least one Evidence-Based Practice that meets the criteria for Tiers I, II, or III.

### **Evidence Tiers**

The ESSA Tiers of Evidence Framework provides districts

and schools with a guide for determining which programs, practices, strategies, and interventions work in which contexts and for which student. <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Finding-Evidence-Based-Practices.pdf>

### **External Evaluator**

An outside organization hired by ISBE to measure the progress of Local Education Agencies and their schools for improving student outcomes and exiting improvement status, and measure the statewide performance of School Improvement.

### **Fidelity**

The accurate and consistent provision or delivery of instruction in the way it was designed or prescribed according to research findings and/or developers' specifications. Five common aspects of fidelity include adherence, exposure, program differentiation, student responsiveness, and quality of delivery.

### **Grant Application**

The annual School Improvement e-grant application is hosted by the electronic Grants Management System (eGMS) in the ISBE Web Application Security (IWAS) system. Notification of annual application release is published via IWAS Blast to district superintendents and school principals. School officials are reminded to keep grant contact information current with ISBE so notifications of initial and continuing applications are received.

### **Grant Term**

Defines the up-to four-year term of the School Improvement grant program. The grant term and improvement status begin concurrently with an initial summative designation of Comprehensive or Targeted and continue through the remaining part of the year in the planning phase of the grant and are followed by three consecutive years of implementation. Grant funding and improvement status continue for up to four years regardless of changes in annual summative designations.

### **Implementation Phase**

Years 1, 2, and 3 after a school receives either a CSI or TSI designation where schools and districts work to implement the School Improvement Plan created during the planning phase.

### **Illinois Quality Framework (IQF)**

A framework that sets out a series of standards and indicators that represent research findings about school performance. The guiding principle of the framework is to provide educational equity, providing all students with the educational rigor, the unique academic and social-emotional supports, and the resources they need to

succeed.

### **Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric (IQFSR)**

Companion document to the Illinois Quality Framework that breaks each standard into scaled performance levels. The rubric is used as the initial, school-level needs assessment for all schools except Chicago Public Schools. It helps leaders collect and analyze performance data and identify local needs.

### **Illinois Report Card**

An annual report released by the Illinois State Board of Education that shows how the state, and each school and district, are progressing on a wide range of educational goals.

### **Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)**

Administers public education in the State of Illinois. The Board sets educational policies and guidelines for public and private schools, preschool through Grade 12. The Board consists of nine members who are appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate.

### **Illinois State Board of Education Web Application Security (IWAS)**

A password-protected portal that allows ISBE internal and external clients the ability to access systems developed by ISBE.

### **Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)**

The primary mechanism for implementing distributive leadership within a school, expanding the impact of the vision and goals for student outcomes beyond the principal to other stakeholders. The ILT is responsible for ensuring that the vision and goals for the school are well established.

### **Instructional Staff**

All staff in a school who have the responsibility of providing and supporting instruction to students, including, but not limited to, teachers, interventionists, paraprofessionals, and administrators.

### **Intensive Support and Improvement (IS) School:**

A school that has completed a full Comprehensive Support school improvement cycle, but whose performance remains in the lowest-performing 5 percent Title I eligible schools in Illinois or is a high school that has a graduation rate of less than 67 percent or less at the end of the four-year improvement cycle.

### **Job-Embedded**

Learning that occurs while teachers and administrators engage in daily work. They learn by doing, reflect on their experiences, and have shared dialogue about their

insights with their colleagues (grade-level meetings, team meetings, staff meetings, professional learning communities, etc.).

### **Learning Community**

A place where critical inquiry and discussion is practiced by collegial partners who share a common vision and engage in shared decision making.

### **Learning Partner**

An organization that works with a school to provide services and support aligned with its School Improvement Plan and to address the needs identified by the school's needs assessment conducted in Year 1 of designation.

- Approved Learning Partner – High-quality organizations approved to contract with the state and school districts based on their abilities to offer specialized services to schools and their demonstrated expertise in supporting improvement efforts to Comprehensive and Targeted schools.

### **Local Education Agency (LEA)**

A public Board of Education or other public authority legally constituted within a state for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform service functions for, public elementary or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a state.

### **Measurable Objective**

A statement of a desired outcome that is student-focused, linked to a particular goal and content area, and states who will be able to do what, by when, as measured by what.

### **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**

A framework for continuous improvement that is systemic, prevention-focused, and data-informed, providing a coherent continuum of supports responsive to meet the needs of all learners.

### **Non-Academic Data**

Information about students and schools that helps create a context for understanding student academic/learning data. Non-academic data includes attendance, retention, dropout, suspensions, expulsions, graduation, involvement in extracurricular activities, free/reduced-price lunch, etc.

### **Planning Phase**

The timeframe after a school receives either a CSI or Targeted Support and Improvement School (TSI) designation where schools and districts work to create the School Improvement Plan to be implemented in Years 1, 2, and 3.

## **Process Data**

Information about the practices and procedures schools use to plan, deliver, and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

## **Professional Learning Community (PLC)**

An ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improve learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators.

[www.allthingsplc.info/about](http://www.allthingsplc.info/about)

## **Progress Monitor**

Monitoring involves regularly collecting and analyzing data to track progress against targets and goals. Progress monitoring can help identify whether an intervention is meeting interim goals and milestones and suggests ways the intervention could be changed for continuous improvement.

## **Quarterly Expenditure Report (QER)**

A financial document submitted and approved by the grantee that reflects the funds utilized by the grantee by function and object for a specified period.

## **Resource**

Funding, staff, programs and services, time, and other assets that can be used to help a school function effectively.

## **Resource Allocation Methodology**

The process in which districts distribute available resources to schools within their district.

## **Resource Allocation Review (RAR):**

ESSA specifies that states must periodically review resource allocation in districts that serve a significant number of schools identified for comprehensive or targeted support and improvement. States have discretion in how they define the terms "periodically" and "significant number."

## **Root Cause Analysis**

A systematic process for identifying the underlying (or "root") causes of the challenges that organizations or institutions face. A root cause analysis is an approach to problem solving through discussion to dig deeper than the surface symptoms and uncover the underlying causes.

## **School Improvement**

A continuous, collaborative process through which staff/ stakeholders identify strengths and weaknesses of the entire school program and use the information as a basis

for making deliberate, positive, cohesive, and observable changes in measurable student outcomes.

## **School Improvement Framework**

A set of strands, standards, and indicators that describe a high-performing school.

## **School Improvement Plan (SIP)**

A tool for creating and managing change. This written plan identifies student performance goals based on data, measurable objectives, instructional strategies, and the activities needed for readiness, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the strategies.

## **School Improvement Report (SIR)**

A system in IWAS that supports schools' improvement planning by allowing each to report on their planning and progress toward their school improvement goals. Additionally, it allows ISBE to collect aggregated information to better understand the needs of the field and respond appropriately.

## **School Improvement Status**

Defines the up-to four-year term that runs concurrently with the School Improvement grant program. Status begins with an initial summative designation of Comprehensive or Targeted and continues through the remaining part of the year in the planning phase of the grant and is followed by three consecutive years of implementation. Improvement status and grant funding continue for up to four years regardless of changes in annual summative designations because School Improvement is structured to support local efforts over a substantial period of time (i.e., four years). Scaffolded support of sufficient size and longevity is a fundamental tenet of Illinois' Statewide System of Support designed to assist LEAs with establishing a stable foundation to effectively implement selected school improvement practices.

## **School Leaders**

Staff who are recognized as carrying out leadership activity focused on school improvement and student learning. This leadership includes the formal leader(s) of a school (e.g., principal, assistant principal, headmaster). It also includes shared or distributed leadership across all staff in a school.

## **School Leadership Team (SLT)**

A group of school-level staff whose focus is to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate the School Improvement Plan.

## School-Level Needs Assessment

The school-level needs assessment is administered during the planning year of newly designated comprehensive and targeted schools to allow for early and responsive School Improvement resources and launch their school improvement planning processes. This early intervention is designed to ensure that initial school improvement plans are developed on high-quality data and that every comprehensive and targeted school has access to effective needs assessment instrument.

## SMART Goals

A goal is much more than simply saying that you want to learn about and/or improve on something; rather, it more specifically describes what you want to achieve. SMART goals, with their detailed structure, provide focus as well as a clear idea of what you want to achieve. This structure makes it easier to:

- plan relevant action steps/activities
- measure progress toward achieving the goal
- know when you have met your goal

## Staff

Adults who support school improvement and student learning at the school level. Staff includes, but is not limited to, administrators, teachers, support staff, paraprofessionals, interventionists, academic support staff (e.g., counselors, therapists, media specialists, social workers, etc.).

## Stakeholder

For school improvement purposes, stakeholders are defined as having an interest in the actions of a district or school. Stakeholders may include students, staff, families/parents, community members, and partnering agencies.

## Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG)

The SAG is a group of all stakeholders impacted by the success of the school community. Typically, a SAG would include representation from teachers, students, school leaders, parents, local business, and community members.

## State Education Agency (SEA)

A state-level government organization within each U.S. state or territory responsible for education. ISBE is a State Education Agency.

## State Fiscal Year

A one-year period used for financial reporting and budgeting. In Illinois, the state fiscal year is July 1-June 30.

## Student Group

Any student demographic group with at least 20 students worth of data in at least 5 out of the 8 scored indicators, one of which must be a school quality and student success

indicator (e.g. chronic absenteeism).

## Supplant

State or federal funds that are received and expended to replace funds the grantee would have expended in the absence of state or federal funds.

## Supplement

State or federal funds that are received and expended in addition to funds the grantee would have expended in the absence of state or federal funds.

## Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) Schools

Any schools with one or more consistently underperforming student groups within the state.

## Vertical and Horizontal Articulation of Curriculum

Vertical and horizontal articulation of curriculum amongst teachers provides an opportunity to identify gaps that students are having in their learning based on the learning standards. This practice helps teachers implement effective instructional practices.

- Vertical articulation facilitates content specific collaborative conversations amongst teachers across grade level bands and courses (e.g., 1st and 2nd grade teachers meet to discuss English language arts, pre-algebra and algebra teachers meet).
- Horizontal articulation facilitates content specific collaborative conversations amongst teachers at the same grade level or course (e.g., two biology teachers teaching the same course).

## 5Essentials Survey

5Essentials is an evidence-based system designed to drive improvement in schools nationwide. It reliably measures changes in a school organization through the 5Essentials Survey and provides individualized, actionable reports for each school. The survey is taken by all prekindergarten through 12th-grade teachers and all fourth- through 12th-grade students and usually takes about 30 minutes to complete. Information collected through the survey is rigorously reviewed and analyzed to generate a 5Essentials Report for each school that includes a breakdown of teacher and student responses and provides a comprehensive picture of the school environment based on five essential areas critical for school improvement. [www.isbe.net/Pages/5Essentials-Survey.aspx](http://www.isbe.net/Pages/5Essentials-Survey.aspx)