IL-EMPOWER

Planning Year Report (2018-2019)

December 2019

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Prepared for
Illinois State Board of Education

by

MI® **MEASUREMENT**
INCORPORATED

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Executive Summary

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) aims to ensure that students receive a quality education. It places emphasis on equity of opportunity for all students, a broad spectrum of outcomes to assess school performance, and more state autonomy in developing locally-relevant accountability and school identification systems.

In accordance with ESSA, the Illinois State Board of Education created a state plan that includes rigorous goals, various academic and student success indicator data to measure school progress towards meeting state goals, and a system for identifying schools in need of improvement. To support identified schools, the state instituted an educator-led, differentiated support system, called IL-EMPOWER. The system operates under various guiding principles that give schools choice and voice in developing an improvement plan and identifying resources that are authentically aligned to the needs of their students. It also outlines a framework—dubbed the Illinois Quality Framework (IQF)—that contains seven standards drawn from research on healthy school systems that are associated with positive outcomes for students.

Under IL-EMPOWER, all public schools in the state engage in a system needs assessment that involves a review of their data and the completion of the Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric (IQFSR). [1] The IQFSR is a self-evaluation tool that allows schools to examine their evidence and determine levels of performance on each of the IQF standards so that they can identify strengths and gaps in their system that would be influencing student results. Schools then develop, implement, and monitor a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that addresses areas of concern identified in the needs assessment. Schools designated as lowest-performing are eligible for comprehensive supports that include additional federal funds and the requirement to work with a state-approved Learning Partner (LP) and a designated School Support Manager (SSM) to support their improvement efforts. In CPS, Instructional Support Leaders (ISLs) are district office staff that function in the same manner as a Learning Partner staff to support schools in the CPS improvement system. Schools that are identified as underperforming are eligible for targeted supports that includes additional federal funds and the opportunity to contract with a Learning Partner (though not a requirement) and access to a SSM via a Hotline telephone service.

In 2018, 195 schools were identified for comprehensive supports and 550 schools were identified for targeted supports under IL-EMPOWER. These schools participated in an ESSA-sanctioned planning year during the 2018-2019 school year. This report summarizes data from an external evaluation on the planning year that was conducted by Measurement Incorporated,

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[1] Chicago Public Schools engage in a parallel process using the School Excellence Framework (SEF) that results in the development and implementation of a Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP).

in partnership with Censeo Group. It is organized around the areas bulleted below and provides answers to the questions identified within each area.

- **Support for School Improvement**: To what extent were structures in place to support school improvement planning efforts? For example, in what ways did schools leverage the support of their district, SSMs/ISLs, and Learning Partners?

- **School Improvement Planning**: In what ways did the planning year help schools to 1) identify areas of system improvement via the Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric (or School Excellence Framework in Chicago Public Schools); 2) align their School Improvement Plan and resources with priorities identified by the needs assessment; 3) exercise educator-led choice and voice to examine data and identify resources to address students' needs to ensure equity of opportunity for all students; and 4) prepare to implement an improvement plan over the next three years?

- **School Performance on Student Academic and School Quality/Student Success Indicators**: What was IL-EMPOWER schools' baseline performance during planning on indicators that were used to determine their ESSA school designation?

The report ends with an outline for the evaluation beyond the planning year that includes a list of research questions, the evaluation conceptual framework, and data collection activities. This plan is designed to provide findings to help ISBE monitor implementation efforts while also assessing the degrees of system- and student-level changes resulting from IL-EMPOWER and school improvement efforts.

The primary data collection tools for the evaluation of the planning year included extant databases that were provided by ISBE (i.e., needs assessment data, Learning Partner budget reports, and 2019 Illinois Report Card datasets) and online surveys that were developed by the evaluators and distributed to districts, schools and Learning Partners.

Following are key summary findings pulled from the report, which are organized by the report sections.

Support for School Improvement

The evaluation found that districts' implementation of high-impact practices that are supportive of school improvement and aligned with IL-EMPOWER guiding principles was mixed. On the plus side, many districts gave authority to schools to identify resources to achieve their goals, which aligns with IL-EMPOWER's guiding principle of choice and voice. Conversely, fewer districts demonstrated high implementation of other important practices that align with the guiding principles, such as prioritizing educational equity, modeling a data-driven culture, and following through to ensure excellence was achieved.

Districts were supportive, however, of schools' efforts to complete the IL-EMPOWER deliverables. This was coupled with support from SSMs/ISLs, who also assisted schools (and districts) in the completion of deliverables such as the needs assessment, grant application, and data collection for the needs assessment. Equally important, SSMs/ISLs helped to clarify IL-EMPOWER requirements for schools. According to school and district reports, meetings conducted on a monthly or every other month basis with SSMs/ISLs were deemed as adequate.

All of the comprehensive Rest of State (ROS) schools met the requirement of partnering with a Learning Partner during the planning year. Data were not available on CPS schools. School's selection of LPs was based on a variety of factors such as district recommendation and LP/IL-EMPOWER websites. The types of supports and activities that were provided through the partnership also varied but could be categorized into two general areas that were deemed appropriate for the planning year. These included support for IL-EMPOWER deliverables (i.e., needs assessment and SIP) and feedback/coaching/professional development on systems- or specific content-areas. Learning Partners provided feedback on factors that contributed to the success of the partnership, which included strong collaboration with schools, a clear scope of work and timelines, consistent on-site support, and encouragement from districts. The absence of these factors hindered the success of the partnership in addition to changes in the scope of the work.

School Improvement Planning

Comprehensive and targeted schools were able to use the needs assessment process to identify system strengths and focus areas for improvement. Not surprising, focus areas that were identified for improvement by most schools included practices that were closest to student outcomes, e.g., curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The fact that schools generally scored lower on these standards is consistent with their lower student academic and school success quality data outcomes, hence their ESSA summative designation.

Beyond the needs assessment process, the findings showed mixed results related to the extent to which schools' aligned their SIP and resources to priority areas identified in the needs assessment and the degree to which they were prepared to implement their SIP going into the 2019-2020 school year. Feedback from the schools point to time and funding-decision constraints that hindered their efforts.

School Performance on Student Academic and School Quality/Student Success Indicators

The student academic and school quality/student success indicator data for the planning year showed consistent patterns of underperformance in comprehensive and targeted schools. For example, students from comprehensive schools performed lower on all academic indicators compared to their peers from other schools across the state. Also noteworthy is the higher rate of chronic absenteeism among students from comprehensive schools compared to the state. Targeted schools also performed lower than the state averages. When outcomes were disaggregated by relevant student subgroups, the data revealed various achievement gaps. The

general pattern was higher performance for White students and lower performance for Black, English Limited, and Students with disabilities on proficiency rates, high school graduation rates, and percentage of 9th graders on track to graduate. It should also be noted that proficiency rate achievement gaps existed among student subgroups in comprehensive schools.

I. Introduction

In 2018, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) replaced its single-provider statewide system of support with an educator-led, differentiated system called IL-EMPOWER. With the new system came a shift in focus from district to school improvement to support change efforts closest to student outcomes. This shift also signified more choice and voice to schools to ensure that improvement plans were authentically aligned to the needs of their students. IL-EMPOWER operates under the *guiding principles* that are listed below.

- Capacity development in the seven standards of the Illinois Quality Framework[1]
- Differentiated supports, customized for local context
- Focus on equity within every school and for each and every child
- Data informed by a collaborative inquiry process
- Peer-to-peer learning opportunities
- Continuous growth and development for results as an iterative process
- Shift from doing to schools to doing with schools
- Educator-led, state supported
- Assumes positive intent

Box 1. ISBE ESSA Goals

Every child in each public-school system in the State of Illinois deserves to attend a system wherein
- All kindergartners are assessed for readiness.
- Ninety percent or more of 3rd grade students are reading at or above grade level.
- Ninety percent or more of 5th grade students meet or exceed expectations in mathematics.
- Ninety percent or more of 9th grade students are on track to graduate with their cohort.
- Ninety percent or more of students graduate from high school ready for college and career.
- All students are supported by highly prepared and effective teachers and school leaders.
- Every school offers a safe and healthy learning environment for all students.

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[1] With the exception of Chicago Public Schools that had approval from ISBE to continue utilizing their improvement framework.

IL-EMPOWER also aligns with ISBE's goals for their ESSA Plan (see **Box 1. ESSA Goals**) and the state's mission to "provide leadership and resources to achieve excellence…in formulating and advocating for policies that enhance education, empower districts, and ensure equitable outcomes for all students." It does so by providing a structure of support for school improvement, which is depicted in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1. School Improvement under IL-EMPOWER
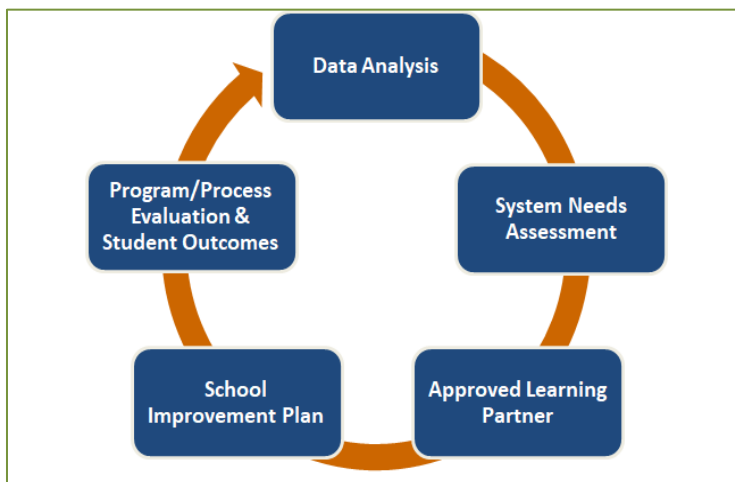
Source: ISBE Webinar, January 2019

Starting at the top with *data analysis*, all public schools in the state review analyze data on their system, student academic and school success quality data, as well as any local student data. They engage in a *system needs assessment* that includes completion of the Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric (IQFSR).[2] Depending on their designation and eligibility for additional supports through IL-EMPOWER (description to follow) they can contract with an *approved Learning Partner*. Schools then develop a S*chool Improvement Plan* (SIP)[3] that addresses areas of concern identified in the needs assessment. Concomitantly, their districts apply for additional federal funds through the Title I School Improvement—1003(a) Grant so that schools can fund the implementation of their SIP. Districts may also provide supports to schools throughout the needs assessment process. Finally, schools implement and monitor their improvement plans and conduct a *program/process evaluation and student outcomes* using an iterative process of data-based decision-making.[4]

Throughout this process, schools have the opportunity to use federal funds to contract with a state-approved Learning Partner (LP); a list of approved vendors and information on each is maintained on the IL-EMPOWER website. LPs are vetted through the state but are individually contracted by schools. LPs could include external vendors that have a specialty/expertise in systems improvement, teaching, or learning area. LPs could also include Illinois schools (and

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[2] The IQFSR is explained in Chapter III of the report. Briefly, the IQFSR is a tool to help schools self-evaluate implementation of systems-level practices associated with the Illinois Quality Framework.

[3] During the 2018-2019 planning year, the plan was referred to as the Work Plan for School Improvement.

[4] Chicago Public Schools engage in a parallel process that results in the development and implementation of a Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP).

Chicago Public Schools) that are referred to as Peer LPs. Peer LPs have been vetted by the state and have a demonstrated track record of school improvement and student outcome success.[5]

In addition to Learning Partners, IL-EMPOWER leverages the support of state-designated School Support Managers (SSMs). SSMs serve as thought partners to schools that are designated as lowest-performing and located outside of Chicago Public Schools (CPS). They provide guidance to district and/or school leadership through the school improvement process as well as clarification on the participatory components of IL-EMPOWER that are outlined in **Figure 1**. In CPS, Instructional Support Leaders (ISLs) are district office staff that function in the same manner as a Learning Partner staff to support schools in the CPS improvement system.

Schools with the ESSA designations of lowest-performing (i.e., lowest-performing 5% of eligible Title I schools statewide and those high schools that have a graduation rate of 67% or less) and underperforming (i.e., one or more student demographic groups performing at or below "all students" in the lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools) are required to design and implement a 3-year School Improvement Plan (SIP). They are also eligible for IL-EMPOWER; participatory supports and requirements for both groups are listed below.

- Schools designated as lowest-performing are eligible for *comprehensive* supports that include $15,000 during the planning period and an additional $200,000 during the three implementation years. Through the state's equity formula, schools can receive additional funds based on weighted student enrollment and district funding adequacy. They are required to select a Learning Partner and work with a designated SSM to support improvement efforts.

- Schools identified as underperforming are eligible for *targeted* supports that include $15,000 during the planning year and an additional $60,000 during the three implementation years (plus funding through the state equitable formula). They have the opportunity to contract with an LP (though not a requirement), and access to a SSM via a Hotline telephone service.

IL-EMPOWER Evaluation

In September 2018, ISBE contracted Measurement Incorporated (MI) and Censeo Group, to conduct a three-year, independent evaluation of IL-EMPOWER. Over the course of the evaluation, the study will assess the effectiveness of IL-EMPOWER in supporting school improvement efforts aimed at addressing the needs of the whole child. It will also identify elements of the system that are impacting students—and those that are not—for the purposes of strengthening service delivery for better results.

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[5] The first round of vetted Peer LPs occurred in April/May of 2019; therefore, they are not represented in the data for this report.

This report provides a summary of findings gleaned from the first year of IL-EMPOWER, which was a federally sanctioned planning year under ESSA. It provides answers to the questions bulleted below.

- **Support for School Improvement**: To what extent were structures in place to support school improvement planning efforts? For example, in what ways did schools leverage the support of their district, SSMs/ISLs, and Learning Partners?

- **School Improvement Planning**: In what ways did the planning year help schools to 1) identify areas of system improvement via the Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric (or School Excellence Framework in CPS); 2) align their School Improvement Plan (or CIWP in CPS) and resources with priorities identified by the needs assessment; 3) exercise educator-led choice and voice to examine data and identify resources to address students' needs to ensure equity of opportunity for all students; and 4) prepare to implement an improvement plan over the next three years?

- **School Performance on Student Academic and School Quality/Student Success Indicators**: What was IL-EMPOWER schools' baseline performance during planning on indicators that were used to determine their ESSA school designation?

To help answer these research questions, the evaluation collected information from various sources, which are listed and described in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Evaluation Data Collection Activities

Activity	Description
IL-EMPOWER materials/documents	Review of ISBE-related materials and documents including webinars, IL-EMPOWER website, and school improvement deliverables; Learning Partner budget spreadsheet
District Survey	Online survey that was emailed in the Spring of 2019 to Superintendents from 211 districts that had comprehensive and targeted schools. The survey probed district practices that support school improvement, the support that was provided to schools around IL-EMPOWER, and frequency of meetings with SSMs/ISLs. A total of 116 districts completed the survey (55% response rate).
School Survey	Online survey that was distributed in the Spring of 2019 to 184 comprehensive schools and 469 targeted schools to be completed by the school administrator.[6] The survey probed

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[6] Some schools experienced administrator turnover during the data collection period; therefore, we were unable to survey the school.

Activity	Description
	perceptions about the supports that were provided by the district and SSMs; engagement with Learning Partners; school improvement planning and outcomes of the planning year. A total of 79 comprehensive schools (51 Rest of State and 28 CPS schools) submitted a survey, resulting in a 43% response rate. Of the 469 targeted schools, 210 (i.e., 131 Rest of State and 79 CPS schools) submitted a survey, resulting in a 45% response rate.
Learning Partner Survey	Online survey that was emailed to 39 Learning Partners (including 13 Peer Learning Partners). The survey measured the effectiveness of outreach strategies; LPs' capacity to support schools; supports provided to schools and the nature of the partnership and activities conducted during the planning year. A total of 31 LPs completed the survey (79% response rate).
Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric (IQFSR) ratings and CPS' School Excellence Framework (SEF) ratings databases	ISBE database that included Rest of State (ROS) schools' ratings on the IQFSR, which were completed in January, 2019. The database included 92 comprehensive and 318 targeted schools. Chicago Public Schools (CPS) provided a database that included CPS schools' ratings on the SEF, which were completed in February, 2018. The database included 71 comprehensive and 162 targeted schools.
Student Academic and School Quality/Student Success Indicators	The 2019 report card database was downloaded from https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Illinois-State-Report-Card-Data.aspx. The database included 195 lowest performing/comprehensive and 550 underperforming/targeted schools. Academic indicator data that was extracted included: grades 3-9 ELA growth and proficiency rates, math growth and proficiency rates; science proficiency rates; English Learner progress to proficiency; and high school graduation rate. School quality/student success indicator data that was extracted included: chronic absenteeism rate, percentage of 9th graders on track to graduate and student participation in the 5Essentials Climate Survey.

Findings included in this report are organized around the three aforementioned research questions. At the end of the report, we provide an overview of the evaluation model and data

collection activities that will be employed over the following two years.[7] Collectively, the evaluation will provide ISBE with vital information to help them monitor implementation and document school and student outcomes in schools.

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[7] The evaluation contract is for two additional years with the option of a one-year extension.

Measurement Incorporated   6

II. Support for School Improvement

This section of the report summarizes findings on supports that were available to and utilized by comprehensive schools[8] during the planning year. The nature of the assessment for each is briefly described below. Following are a summary of findings.

- District: Support from districts was operationalized at two levels. One, the evaluation measured districts' implementation of high-impact practices that create the best conditions for effective and sustained school improvement.[9] Two, the evaluation probed the supports that districts provided to schools that were specific to IL-EMPOWER.[10]

- School Support Managers (SSMs)/Instructional Support Leaders (ISLs):[11] The evaluation assessed the nature of the relationship between SSMs/ISLs and schools, the frequency of meetings with schools and districts, and the supports that were provided to schools.

- Learning Partners: The evaluation collected data on Learning Partner participation during the planning year and the amount of funding that was budgeted to LPs. It also examined schools' LP selection process, the supports that LPs provided, and factors that helped and hindered the partnership.

District Support

Districts rated their implementation of practices that support school improvement using a 5-point rubric that included: not at all, planning, partial, routine, or sustained implementation. Table 2 lists these high-impact practices and the percentage of districts that reported high levels of implementation.[12]

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[8] Targeted schools did not receive supports from SSM and were less likely to contract with an LP; therefore, they were excluded from this chapter in order to keep the summary findings consistent to comprehensive schools.

[9] The evaluation drew from credible research sources including West Ed, the Wallace Foundation, and the Carnegie Foundation that have conducted extensive studies on district practices and school improvement efforts.

[10] With the exception of completing the Title I School Improvement—1003(a) Grant, districts did not have any other specific requirements for supporting IL-EMPOWER-eligible schools. Nevertheless, the evaluation included an assessment of district support for the purposes of understanding the context for schools' implementation of IL-EMPOWER deliverables.

[11] Data on ISLs is grouped with SSMs for this report; however, the role of the ISL has since shifted to that of a Learning Partner.

[12] Defined as a rating of routine or sustained where implementation of the practice is consistent and fully integrated throughout the district.

Table 2. District Practices in Support of School Improvement

Percentage of Districts reporting Routine or Sustained Implementation of Practices

	% Routine/Sustained Implementation
Provides/supports ongoing, collective learning opportunities/PD	83%
Ensures that schools have sufficient authority to achieve improvement goals	81%
Guides schools in implementing curriculum and instruction aligned with ILS	81%
Prioritizes improvement and communicates its urgency	75%
Organizes and engages school board in supporting improvement efforts	74%
Institutes intentional, rigorous and prioritized hiring of quality educators	74%
Prioritizes educational equity by increasing student access to excellence & high expectations	66%
Models and reinforces a data-driven culture that prioritizes responsiveness, urgency and individual student needs	63%
Ensures strategies and methods for achieving excellence are carried out	62%
Provides strategic and tailored resource utilization to support improvement efforts	61%
Implements multiple outreach strategies to families and community members	42%

Source of data: MI district survey, n=116

From the table above one can see that over 80% of districts were at high levels of implementation for providing a) PD/learning opportunities, b) authority to schools to identify resources to achieve goals and c) guidance to schools in the implementation of curriculum and instruction aligned with Illinois Learning Standards. Many (~75%) were also at high levels for prioritizing and communicating improvement efforts, enlisting school board members to support improvement efforts, and hiring practices for quality educators.

Fewer districts (between 61%-66%) were regularly following practices that are aligned to IL-EMPOWER guiding principles such as prioritizing and ensuring educational equity and modeling a data-driven culture, to name a few. Another significant finding is that less than half of the

districts (42%) routinely engaged in multiple outreach strategies to families and community members.

Table 3. District Support for IL-EMPOWER

Percentage of Comprehensive ROS and CPS Schools

	% of ROS Schools	% of CPS Schools
The district completed the Title I School Improvement—1003(a) grant application for designated schools.	84%	55%
The district provided data to schools that would help inform the needs assessment process.	84%	65%
The district provided assistance with the development of the school improvement plan.	76%	61%
The district collaborated with schools during the needs assessment process with the Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric.	75%	n/a
The district served as a thought partner in the selection of a Learning Partner.	72%	42%
The district collaborated and met with the School Support Manager (SSM) to help schools with the IL-EMPOWER transition.	63%	n/a
The district solicited input from schools on the grant application and the specifics of available funding.	61%	48%

Source of data: MI school survey, ROS n=51, CPS n=28

Specific to IL-EMPOWER, **Table 3** above shows that a large majority of comprehensive Rest of State (ROS) schools reported that their districts completed the Title I grant application[13], as expected. According to school reports, most districts also provided additional supports that were not required. These included data to inform the needs assessment process (84%), assistance with the IL-EMPOWER deliverables (e.g., needs assessment process (75%), and Learning Partner selection (72%)).

The table also shows that many CPS schools (61%-65%) received support from their Networks in the areas of needs assessment and school improvement planning. This data aligns with the designated roles of the Networks in the CPS school improvement model.

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[13] The grant application was a requirement. Schools might not have been aware that their district completed the grant, hence the reports of lower than 100%.

School Support Manager/Instructional Support Leader

Comprehensive schools also received IL-EMPOWER supports from designated School Support Managers (SSMs) and Instructional Support Leaders (ISL) as depicted in **Table 4**.

Table 4. Supports Provided by SSMs and ISLs
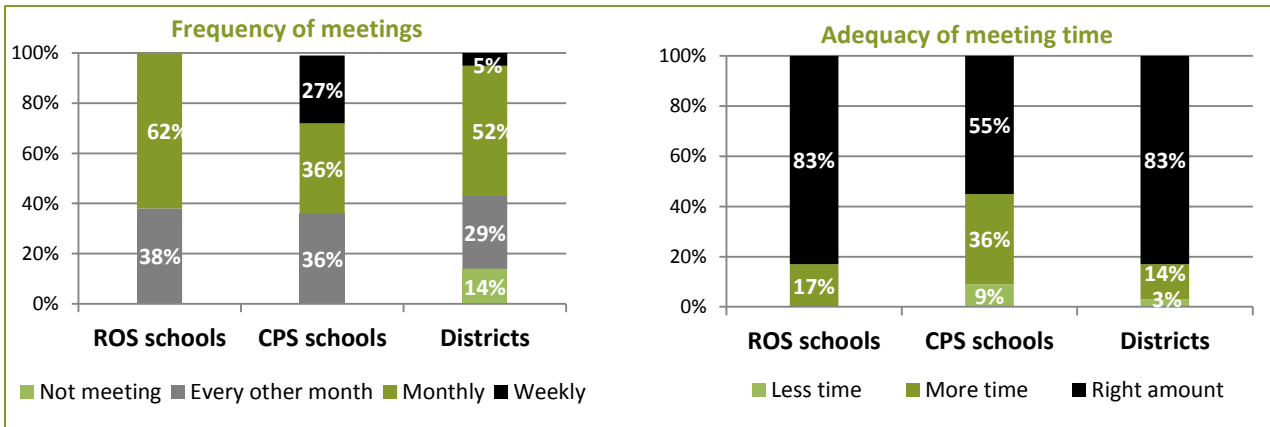*Percentage of Comprehensive ROS and CPS Schools*

	% of ROS Schools	% of CPS Schools
Clarification of IL-EMPOWER requirements	96%	64%
Title I School Improvement— 1003(a) grant application process	83%	18%
Needs assessment process	75%	36%
Data identification for the needs assessment	71%	36%
Development of school improvement plan	71%	46%
Data analyses and interpretation	67%	55%
School improvement thought partner (e.g., attend School Improvement Team meetings)	50%	18%

Source of data: MI school survey, ROS n=51, CPS n=28

Specifically, nearly all of the SSMs helped ROS schools by clarifying school requirements for participation in IL-EMPOWER. SSMs also provided guidance and support to most ROS schools on the IL-EMPOWER deliverables (i.e., Title I grant application, needs assessment, and the school improvement plan). Finally, half of the schools reported that their SSM served as a regular thought partner. Alternatively, more CPS schools received assistance in the clarification of school requirements for IL-EMPOWER and data analyses and interpretation from their ISL than any other supports.

Figure 2 (following page) reports out on the frequency of meetings between SSMs/ISLs and schools and their districts as well as the adequacy of meeting time. Specifically, SSMs met with ROS schools *monthly* or *every other month*, whereas meetings with districts varied. The frequency of meetings between ISLs and CPS schools were also more varied. Even still, the figure shows that the vast majority of ROS schools and districts felt that the frequency was adequate, while just over half of CPS schools agreed. Not shown in the figure, additional analyses indicated that all of the schools/districts that reported less frequent meetings, i.e., every other month or less, also reported that they would like more meetings.
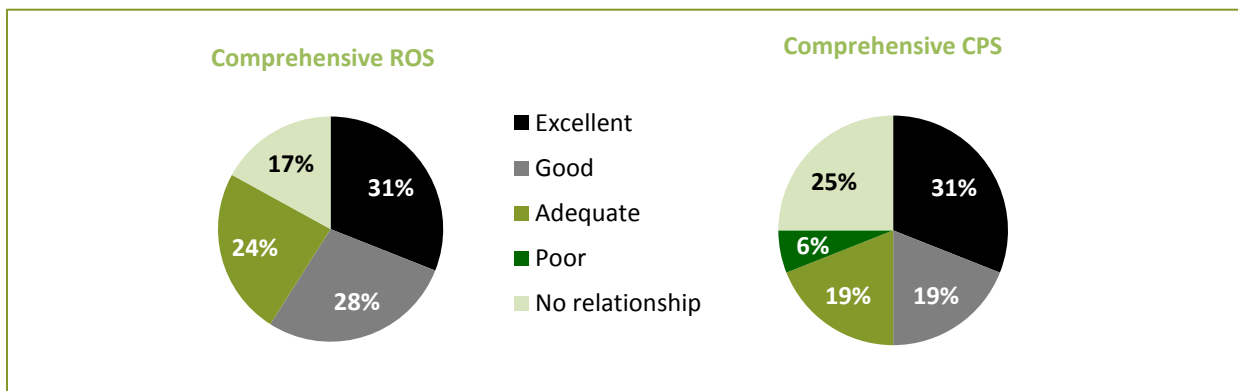
Figure 2. Frequency and Adequacy of Meetings with SSMs/ISLs

Percentage of Comprehensive ROS and CPS Schools and their Districts

Frequency of meetings

	ROS schools	CPS schools	Districts
Weekly		27%	5%
Monthly	62%	36%	52%
Every other month	38%	36%	29%
Not meeting			14%

Adequacy of meeting time

	ROS schools	CPS schools	Districts
Right amount	83%	55%	83%
More time	17%	36%	14%
Less time		9%	3%

Source of data: MI school survey, ROS n=51, CPS n=28, District Survey n=116

Finally, the evaluation assessed the nature of the relationship between schools and SSMs/ISLs, which is summarized in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3. Nature of Relationship with SSMs/ISLs

Percentage of Comprehensive ROS and CPS Schools

Comprehensive ROS

- Excellent: 31%
- Good: 28%
- Adequate: 24%
- No relationship: 17%

Comprehensive CPS

- Excellent: 31%
- Good: 19%
- Adequate: 19%
- Poor: 6%
- No relationship: 25%

Legend:
- Excellent
- Good
- Adequate
- Poor
- No relationship

Source of data: MI school survey, ROS n=51, CPS n=28

The figure shows that about 60% of ROS schools and 50% of CPS schools rated their relationship with their SSM/ISL as *excellent* or *good*. A small percentage of schools (17% of ROS and 25% of CPS) reported that that had not worked with an SSM/ISL. These schools indicated that they were not aware of the SSM/ISL or that the SSM met with district staff. One other school reported that they were receiving similar supports from their LP.

Learning Partner Supports

During the planning year, all of the comprehensive ROS schools contracted with a Learning Partner. Some schools contracted with more than one LP, i.e., 25% of the schools contracted with 2 LPs and another 21% contracted with three or four LPs. The Learning Partners that

worked with schools are listed in **Table 5** along with the number of schools per LP and the total amount of funding that schools budgeted to each LP.

Table 5. Number of Schools and Total Amount of Funding Budgeted to LPs

Learning Partners	# of Schools	Funding Total
American Institute of Research (AIR)	32	$1,441,298
Urban Learning and Leadership Center, Inc.	12	$1,014,314
Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents (IARSS)	39	$870,352
Consortium for Educational Change (CEC)	8	$667,979
Academy for Urban School Leadership	5	$315,853
District Management Group	16	$240,000
Atlantic Research	4	$194,819
Ed Direction	5	$193,479
IL Multi-Tiered System of Supports Network	4	$157,657
Silver, Strong & Associates	2	$123,000
Cambridge Education	2	$121,372
ECRA Group, Inc.	18	$110,523
UMOJA Student Development Corporation	2	$67,000
AdvancED	1	$38,500
Roosevelt University	2	$37,796
Midwest PBIS	1	$28,700
95 Percent Group	3	$19,985
Respond Ability	1	$8,550
Illinois Principals Association (IPA)	2	$3,194
Northeastern Illinois University	1	$900
TOTAL		**$5,655,271**

Source of data: ISBE database; does not include CPS schools and Peer LPs

As seen in the table, IARSS and AIR contracted with the highest number of schools (i.e., 39 and 32, respectively). AIR also had the highest funding/budget amount compared to the other LPs,

i.e., $1,441,298. Additionally, the Urban Learning and Leadership Center, Inc. had over $1 million in contracts. All told, $5.6 million dollars was budgeted to LPs during the planning year.

Table 6 lists the various factors that influenced schools' selection of LP(s). More than half of the schools reported that their selection of LPs was influenced by their district's recommendation (57%). Information gathered on the LP's or IL-EMPOWER's website was also influential to 48% of schools. Learning Partners were more likely to use their own website (73%) and IL-EMPOWER website (67%) for outreach purposes. Both groups were in agreement that direct contact was influential (45% of schools and 46% of LPs). Finally, LPs were more likely than schools to report that prior experience with the school (or district) was an effective method for outreach. It is possible that district recommendations were based on prior experience with the LP.

Table 6. Factors Influencing School Selection of Learning Partners

Percent of Schools using each Selection Method		Percent of LPs using each Outreach	
District recommendation	57%		
IL-EMPOWER website	48%	IL-EMPOWER website	67%
Interviews with LPs	45%	Direct contact with schools	46%
Information from LP website	41%	Information from LP website	73%
Previous work with LP	38%	Previous work with schools	58%

Source of data: MI school survey, ROS n=51, Learning Partner Survey n=31

The evaluation was also interested in learning about the ways in which schools engaged the expertise of Learning Partners. Listed below are the supports and activities provided by Learning Partners and the percentage of schools that reported each. While not specified below, Learning Partners reported similar findings as the schools.

- Feedback, guidance, and coaching to leadership and school improvement teams (28% of schools)
- Developing school improvement plans (26% of schools)
- Professional development in areas such as curriculum mapping, family engagement, restorative practices, to name a few (21% of schools)
- Data collection and analyses (21% of schools)
- Needs assessment process (19% of schools)
- Feedback on instruction and curriculum alignment (19% of schools)

To add, Table 7 shows that many schools contracted with LPs to support their improvement efforts in the Illinois Quality Standard 1: Continuous Improvement (63%) and Standard 7: Student and Learning Development (49%). That proportion declined with respect to the number

of schools who reported LP support for the following year. It is possible that the schools were not at the contract stage at the time of the survey.

Table 7. Learning Partner Support related to the Illinois Quality Framework (IQF) Standards
Percentage of Comprehensive ROS Schools

IQF Standards	2018-2019	2019-2020
S1: Continuous Improvement	63%	45%
S2: Culture and Climate	43%	31%
S3: Shared Leadership	35%	25%
S4: Governance, Management and Operations	22%	10%
S5: Educator and Employee Quality	31%	22%
S6: Family and Community Engagement	45%	41%
S7: Student and Learning Development	49%	33%

Source of data: MI school survey, ROS n=51

Learning Partners were asked for input on the partnership and in particular, to identify factors that contributed and hindered the success of the partnership. Positive partnerships were attributed to the following factors:

- Ongoing and pro-active communication, including review of goals and progress
- Collaborative approach based on data and tied directly to school needs
- Clear scope of work and timeline with specific dates for work completion
- Encouragement from the district office and leadership setting the tone for improvement
- Consistent on-site support with flexibility and availability on dates school has available
- Information from ISBE team to clarify issues or update LPs – "Being well-informed allowed us to best support our school teams."

Conversely, in terms of challenges to the process, the biggest hindrance was adjustments that were made to the original work plan, which was reported by 43% of LPs. Nevertheless, 92% of LPs indicated that schools were able to meet timelines and conduct the work that they needed despite the adjustments. Other hindrances are listed below.

- Timelines – starting too late in the year or not having enough time to focus on work
- Leadership not supporting the work
- Staff turnover
- Lack of clarity on the part of the district about LPs role

- ◆ District agendas competing with school based work
- ◆ Lack of understanding/capacity of district grant management of the contracting/business process

Finally, most partnerships had not yet started measuring progress towards success, although, some had begun to lay the groundwork to measure outcomes.[14] These included collecting baseline data, taking field notes about the process, and collecting survey data. Moreover, LPs reported that they were monitoring implementation, measuring baseline data, and assessing progress towards completion of the planning process. Below are various quotes from LPs related to progress monitoring and data collection.

> ℘ "At this stage, we've measured our progress against deliverables, observation data, and MAP scores to determine PD impact. We are waiting for summative student assessment results."

> ℘ "Keeping copious documentation…taking extensive field notes during site visits, pictures of classrooms and the environment. Documenting each and every accomplishment."

Summary of School Improvement Supports

Looking across the data presented in this section, what conclusions can be made about the supports that were provided to comprehensive schools during the planning year? Were the supports sufficient to ensure schools were prepared to develop a school improvement plan that was based on data and priority areas identified in their needs assessment? We provide an overall assessment of the implementation findings and recommendations for improvement below.

First, district implementation of high-impact practices that create the best conditions for effective and sustained school improvement was mixed. On the plus side, many districts gave authority to schools to identify resources to achieve their goals, which aligns with IL-EMPOWER guiding principle of choice and voice. To add, districts were at high levels of implementation in terms of prioritizing improvement and garnering support from key constituents, such as school board members.

On the flip side, fewer districts demonstrated high implementation of other important practices that align with the guiding principles, such as prioritizing educational equity, modeling a data-driven culture, and following through to ensure excellence was achieved, to name a few. Based on these findings, schools will be less likely to leverage district support as they implement their SIPs within the context of IL-EMPOWER guiding principles. Moreover, if district practices fall short of supporting school's efforts to implement and monitor a data-informed SIP—one that is intended to increase equity opportunities for students—then it will be difficult for schools to sustain their efforts beyond IL-EMPOWER. We recommend that additional supports be

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[14] As reported by LPs on the survey.

provided to districts. This might include another layer of SSM/ISL supports that are more focused on districts. We also recommend that districts complete a systems-level assessment of practices similar to the needs assessment process completed by schools. This will help to shed light on priority areas that can be addressed at the district-level.

Districts were supportive, however, of schools' efforts to complete the IL-EMPOWER deliverables. This was coupled with support from SSMs/ISLs, who also assisted schools (and districts) in the completion of deliverables such as the needs assessment, grant application, and data collection for the needs assessment. Equally important, SSMs/ISLs clarified IL-EMPOWER requirements. According to school and district reports, meetings conducted on a monthly or every other month basis were deemed as adequate. Based on the information collected, we recommend that SSMs/ISLs meet at least monthly with schools and districts. For high density areas, this might require the hiring of additional staff in order to meet these minimum meeting requirements and to ensure high-quality supports are equitable.

Finally, all of the comprehensive ROS schools met the requirement of partnering with a Learning Partner during the planning year. Data were not available on CPS schools. School's selection of LPs was based on a variety of factors such as district recommendation and LP/ IL-EMPOWER websites. The types of supports and activities that were provided through the partnership also varied but could be categorized into two general areas that were deemed appropriate for the planning year. These included support for IL-EMPOWER deliverables (i.e., needs assessment and SIP) and feedback/coaching/professional development on systems- or specific content-areas. Learning Partners provided feedback on factors that contributed to the success of the partnership, which included strong collaboration with schools, a clear scope of work and timelines, consistent on-site support, and encouragement from districts. The absence of these factors hindered the success of the partnership in addition to changes in the scope of the work.

Based on a review of the data, we have several recommendations regarding Learning Partner supports. One, encourage Learning Partners to revise the information that is provided on the IL-EMPOWER website. There are inconsistencies in the amount of information that is provided and in some cases, the information is vague. This may lead schools to pass over a potentially good match. LPs could also specify the types of activities and supports that they can offer to schools that are organized around the Illinois Quality Framework standards. Two, better communicate the role of the district in the partnership and in particular, the contracting and business process. Finally, encourage schools and LPs to routinely monitor the work plan, timeline, and outcomes so that they can proactively identify and address issues that might impede the work of the partnership.

III. School Improvement Planning

This section of the report summarizes findings on the school improvement planning process during the planning year for all four IL-EMPOWER school groups: comprehensive ROS, comprehensive CPS, targeted ROS and targeted CPS schools. Specifically, the evaluation set out to determine the benefits of the planning year (and accompanying supports) on the following school outcomes listed below.

◆ Identifying priority areas for system improvement as per the Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric (IQFSR)/School Excellence Framework needs assessment

◆ Aligning School Improvement Plans and resources with priorities identified by needs assessment

◆ Empowering schools to examine data, identify resources, supports and/or interventions to address student needs to ensure equity of opportunity for all students

◆ Preparing schools to implement the School Improvement Plan

The Illinois Quality Framework provides a system-wide approach to improving student outcomes (**Figure 4**).

Figure 4. Illinois Quality Framework Standards

Source: Illinois Quality Framework and Supporting Rubric Infographic

The framework includes seven standards that are drawn from research on healthy school *systems*; each of these standards is further delineated into indicators (not shown in the figure). The IQFSR is a self-evaluation tool that allows schools to examine their evidence and determine levels of performance on each of the indicators so that they can identify strengths and gaps in

their system that would be influencing student results. During the planning year, schools outside of Chicago completed the IQFSR as part of the needs assessment process. They used a 5-point rubric[15] to rate their school's performance along each of the indicators.

Schools that were part of Chicago Public Schools implemented a different improvement framework[16] that was parallel and aligned to Illinois Quality Framework, called the School Excellence Framework (SEF). The SEF includes four dimensions (or standards) of improvement that are presented in **Figure 5**.

Figure 5. CPS' School Excellence Framework
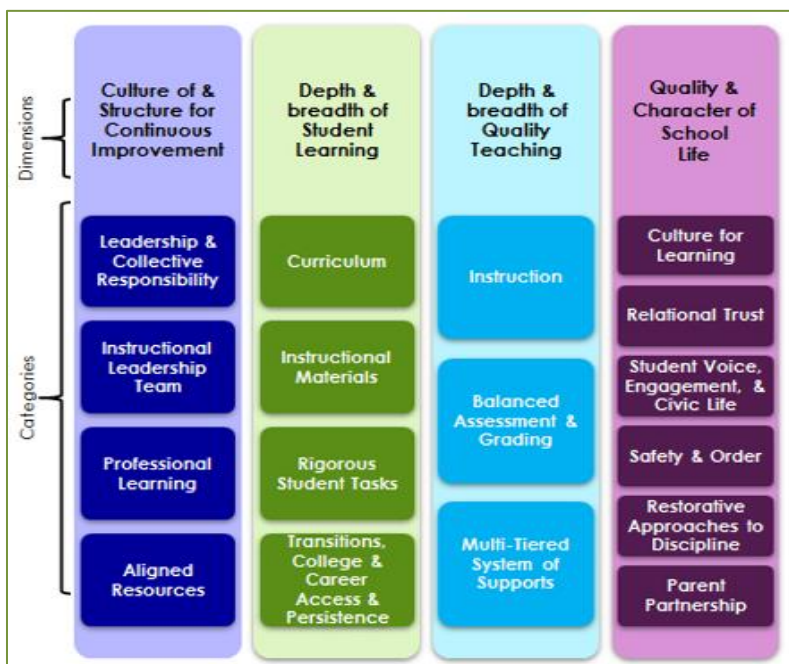
Source: PowerPoint presented to schools in February, 2018

Similar to the IQF, each of the SEF dimensions are further defined into 17 indicators that help to define high-impact practices that are associated with improved outcomes. CPS schools engaged in a parallel needs assessment process where they completed a self-evaluation of their school's performance on the high impact practices related to the indicators, using a 4-point scale.[17] Using their ratings and a review of school- and student- performance data, CPS schools also developed improvement plans to address gap areas.

Figures 6 through **9** display schools' average ratings[18] for each of the standards on the IQFSR and the SEF.

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[15] The scale included: n/a, ineffective, emerging, accomplished, and exemplary

[16] CPS initiated their framework one year prior to IL-EMPOWER. An independent study determined that the framework was aligned to IQF, therefore, the state gave CPS permission to continue its use of SEF.

[17] The scale included none, few, most, or nearly all of practices consistently evident

[18] For ease of interpretation, the indicator ratings were aggregated to the standard level. Presented in the figures are schools' average rating across all indicators within each standard.

Identifying Priority Areas

According to **Figure 6**, many comprehensive ROS schools (44% to 62%) rated themselves within the *emerging* level for all of the seven standards. Standards 1: Continuous Improvement and 7: Student and Learning Development had the highest percentage of schools (63%-66%) at the lower performance levels (i.e., *ineffective* and *emerging*). Conversely, Standards 4 and 5 had the highest percentage of schools (48%-51%) at the higher performance levels (i.e., *accomplished* and *exemplary*).

Figure 6. IQFSR: Percentage of Comprehensive ROS Schools at Each Rating Level by Standard
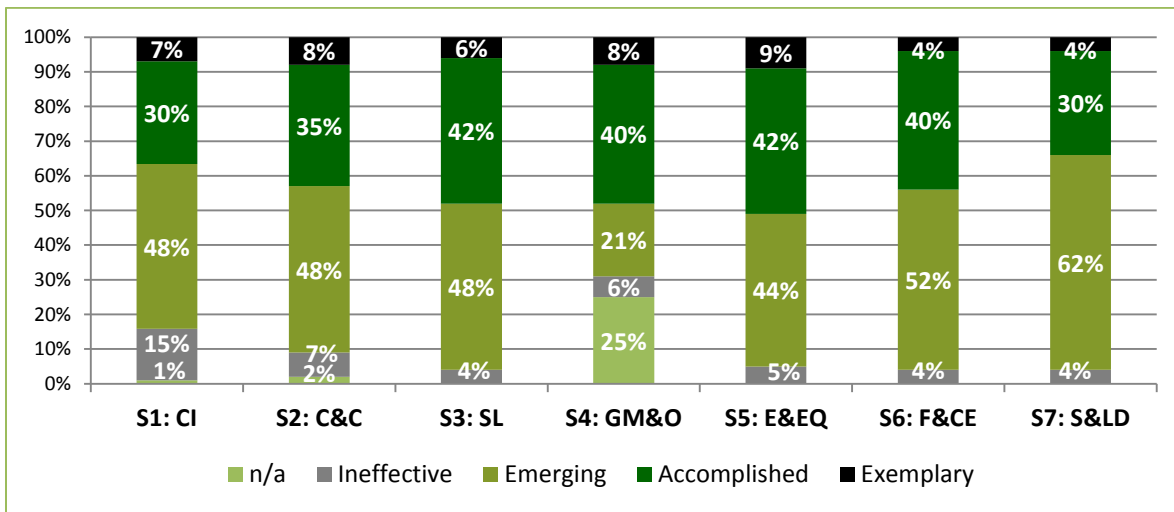
Source of data: ISBE IQFSR database, n=92

As shown in **Figure 7**, over half of the comprehensive CPS schools rated themselves lowest on Dimensions 2: Student Learning and 3: Quality Teaching. Specifically, between 55% and 63% of schools indicated having *none* or *few* of the high-impact practices for these dimensions consistently in place. Alternatively, 67% of schools rated the Continuous Improvement dimension relatively high compared to the other three.

Figure 7. SEF: Percentage of Comprehensive CPS Schools at Each Rating Level by Standard

Source of data: CPS SEF database FY18-20, n=71

In **Figure 8** below, more targeted ROS schools fell within the *accomplished* range across all seven standards compared to comprehensive ROS schools. Yet even targeted schools had room to grow with respect to meeting Continuous Improvement and Student & Learning Development standards.

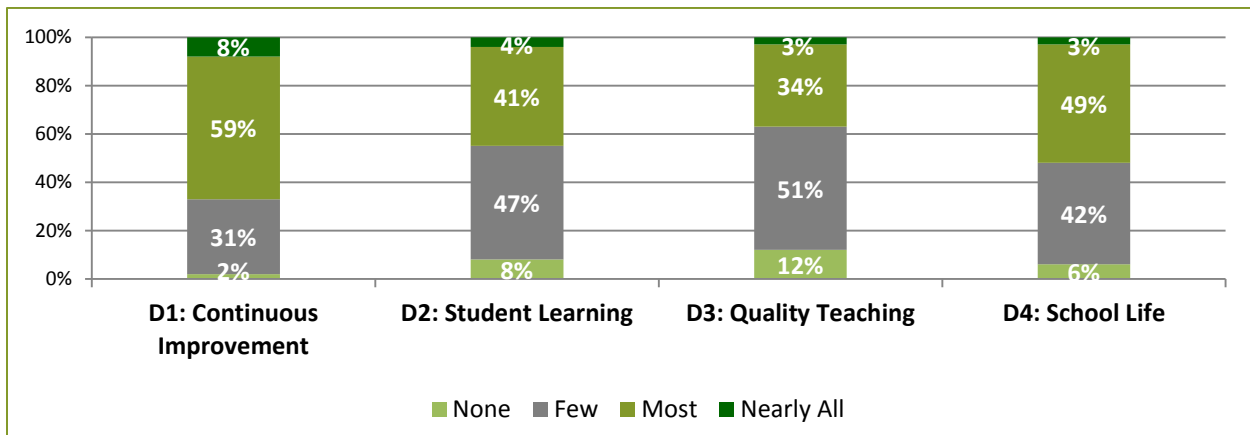**Figure 8. IQFSR: Percentage of Targeted ROS Schools at Each Rating Level by Standard**

Source of data: ISBE IQFSR database, n=318

Finally, in **Figure 9**, a higher percentage of targeted CPS schools rated themselves as having *most* or *nearly all* of high impact practices consistently in place across all 4 SEF dimensions compared to comprehensive schools. One area where schools rated lower compared to the other dimensions, however, was D3: Quality Teaching (51% of schools).
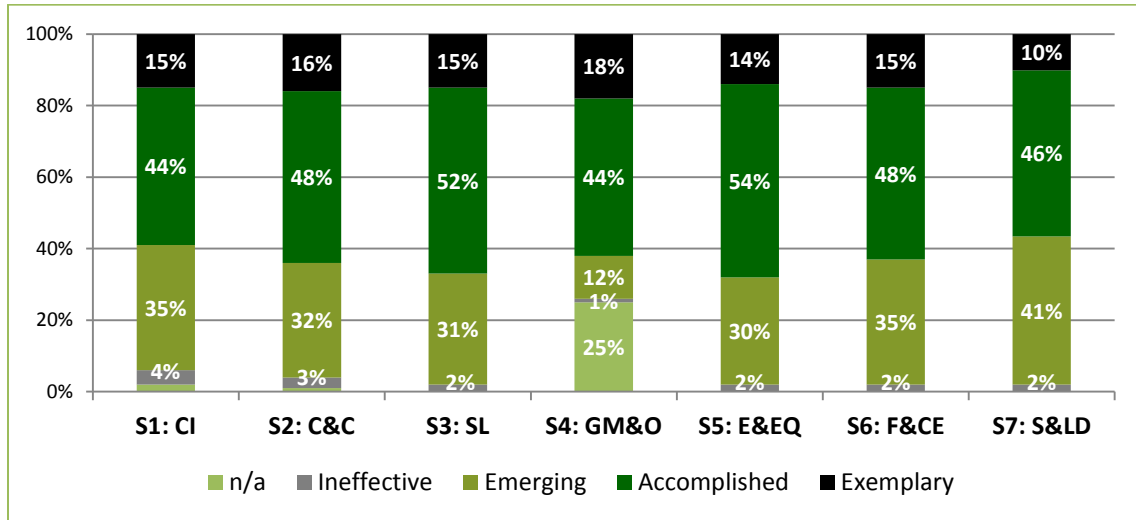
Figure 9. SEF: Percentage of Targeted CPS Schools at Each Rating Level by Standard
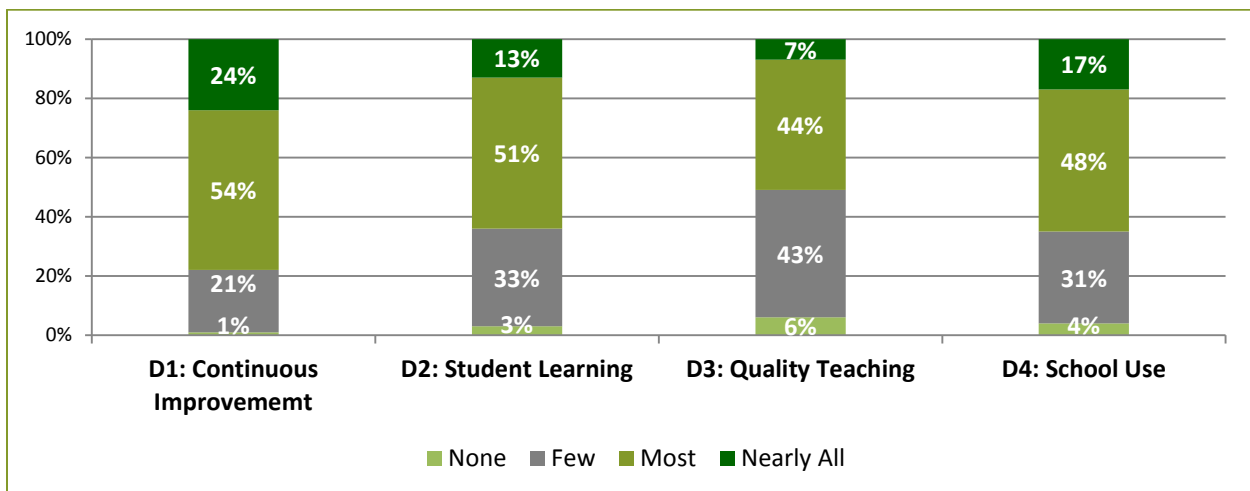
Source of data: CPS SEF database FY18-20, n=162

Aligning School Improvement Plan and Resources

As mentioned previously, the needs assessment process—including the IQFSR—was designed to facilitate a process of identifying strengths as well as gaps in performance that would become priority areas for future school improvement. Schools used this information to develop a School Improvement Plan (SIP) that included resources, supports, and funds to address priority areas related to the IQFSR/SEF. Schools designated for comprehensive supports were also required to contract with a Learning Partner to support their improvement efforts.

When asked on the survey if schools' SIP and resources were aligned to priorities identified by IQFSR/SEF needs assessment, the results from schools varied. Seen in **Figure 10**, over half of comprehensive ROS schools (55%) and fewer CPS schools (i.e., 48%) reported that their SIP was aligned to the IQF priority areas to a *great extent*. Less than half of targeted schools (both ROS and CPS schools) reported the same. Across all groups, close to 40% or more of the schools reported that the SIP was *moderately* aligned to priority areas.

Figure 10. Extent to which the School Improvement Plan was aligned to Priorities Identified by IQFSR/SEF Needs Assessment

Percentage of Comprehensive ROS and CPS Schools and Targeted ROS and CPS Schools
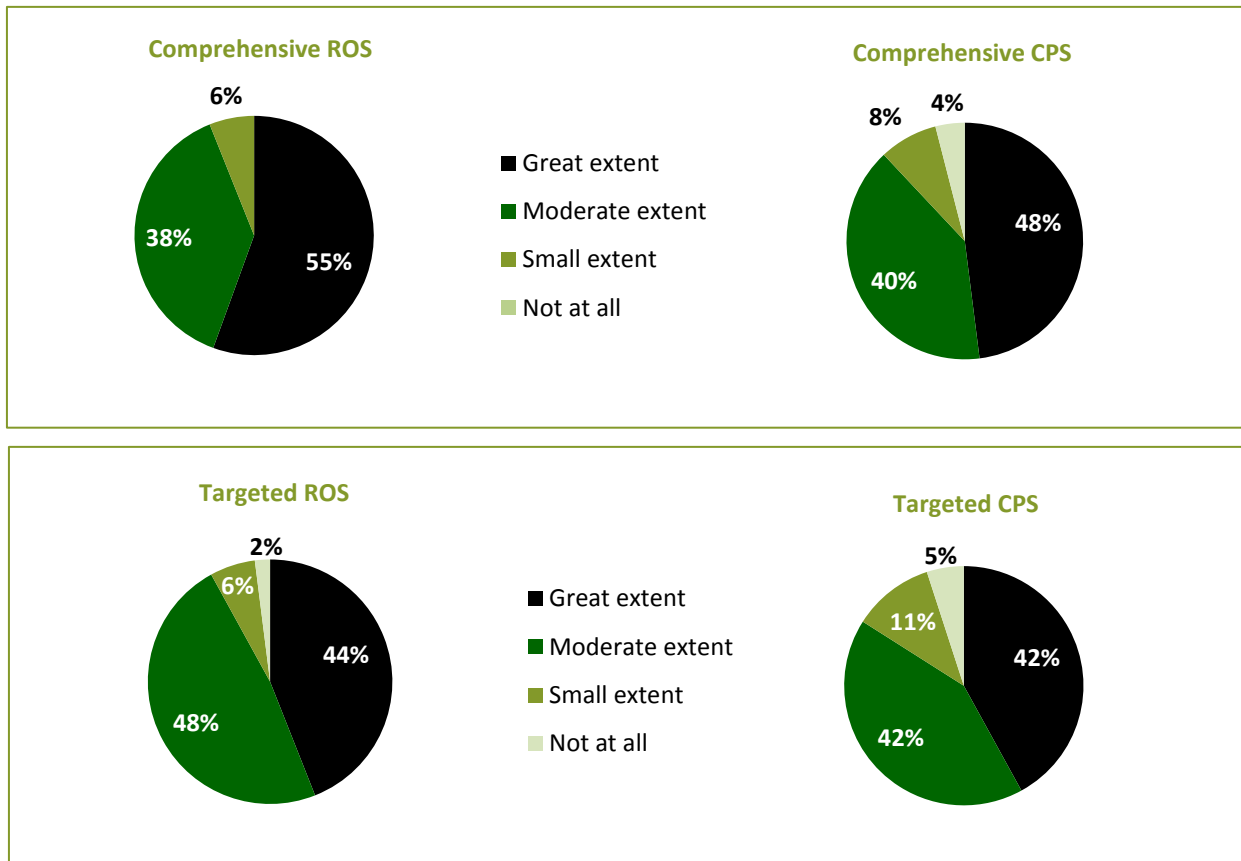
Source of data: MI school survey, ROS n=182, CPS n=107

Similarly, results were mixed when schools were asked to rate the extent to which resources and funds were aligned to priority areas. With the exception of targeted CPS schools, **Figure 11** shows that less than half of the schools in the other groups reported that resources were aligned to a *great extent*. Many other schools reported alignment to a *moderate extent.*

Percentage of Comprehensive ROS and CPS Schools and Targeted ROS and CPS Schools

Source of data: MI school survey, ROS n=182, CPS n=107

Empowering Schools

The planning year (and needs assessment process) was also intended to empower schools to track, examine, and reflect on data and identify root causes and system-level contributors to low student performance. Consequently, schools could identify resources, interventions and external supports to address gaps in student outcomes. **Table 8** presents the median response[19] by schools in each of the four IL-EMPOWER groups when they were asked to rate the extent to which the planning year produced the abovementioned outcomes.

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[19] Response set included a 4-point Likert scale: not at all, small extent, moderate extent, and great extent

Several conclusions can be gleaned from the table. One, most schools in all groups reported positive outcomes in all areas. The extent to which they experienced these outcomes, however, varied across the groups. Specifically, CPS schools reaped more benefits from the planning year compared to ROS schools. For example, over 50% of CPS schools became more reflective of student needs and identified root causes that were impacting student performance to a *great extent*. It should be noted that most comprehensive ROS schools also reported that they become more reflective of student needs. Furthermore, most targeted CPS schools identified interventions and/or resources to address gaps in student performance and were better able to look at priority areas from a systems perspectives to a *great extent*. They also felt that they had more choice and voice in selecting resources and leading improvement efforts. Comprehensive CPS schools became more adept at tracking accountability data.

Table 8. Planning Year Outcomes

Median school response for all four IL-EMPOWER groups

Outcomes	Comprehensive ROS	Comprehensive CPS	Targeted ROS	Targeted CPS
Identified root causes affecting attainment of desired goals for underperforming student groups	Moderate extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Great extent
Looked at priority areas as part of a system rather than in isolation	Moderate extent	Moderate extent	Moderate extent	Great extent
Became more adept at tracking accountability data related to student outcomes	Moderate extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Moderate extent
Became more reflective of student needs	Great extent	Great extent	Moderate extent	Great extent
Identified interventions/ resources to address achievement gaps	Moderate extent	Moderate extent	Moderate extent	Great extent
Made decisions about working with external providers to assist with school improvement efforts	Moderate extent	Moderate extent	Moderate extent	Moderate extent
Felt that they had more choice and voice in selecting resources	Moderate extent	Moderate extent	Moderate extent	Great extent
Felt empowered to lead their school improvement efforts	Moderate extent	Moderate extent	Moderate extent	Great extent

Source of data: MI school survey, ROS n=182, CPS n=107

Preparing Schools to Implement an Improvement Plan

Finally, schools were asked to report on the extent to which they were ready to implement their school improvement plan for 2019-2020. Seen in **Figure 12**, 19% of comprehensive schools (ROS and CPS) were *completely ready* to implement their SIPs. Another 60% of ROS schools and 54% of CPS schools were *quite ready*, meaning that they had developed most of the components of their plans for the planning year. Between 21%-27% were *somewhat* or *hardly ready*.

Figure 12. Readiness to Implement SIP for 2019-2020 School Year

Percentage of Comprehensive ROS and CPS Schools and Targeted ROS and CPS Schools
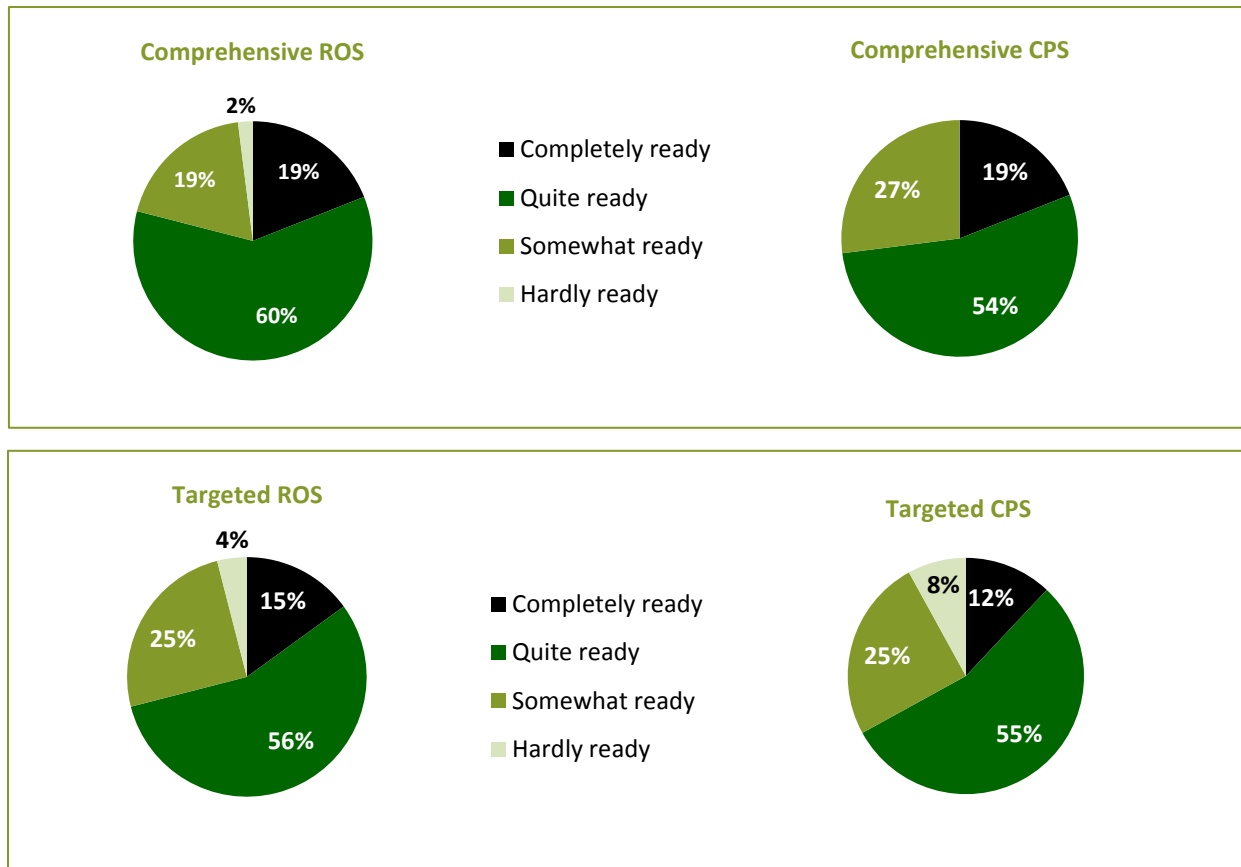
Source of data: MI school survey, ROS n=182, CPS n=107

Fewer targeted schools reported high levels of readiness by comparison to comprehensive schools. Specifically, only 12%-15% of these schools were *completely ready* to implement their SIP and another 55%-56% reported being *quite* (or almost) *ready*. Close to 30% or more of schools were *somewhat* or *hardly ready*. Recall that targeted schools did not have a designated SSM and were not required to contract with a Learning Partner, which may have contributed to the lower percentages of schools that were ready to implement their SIP.

Many schools representing all four groups reported that they did not have an adequate amount of time to thoughtfully complete the needs assessment, develop a SIP, align resources, and select a Learning Partner for the 2019-2020 year. Others were unsure about whether or not they would continue to receive funding into the next school year, which made it difficult for them to make decisions about selecting a Learning Partner and aligning resources. Below are comments that capture the general sentiment of schools' concerns regarding time constraints and continued funding.

- "The grant was awarded late in the year and money has to be spent by Aug 31st. We didn't have the time needed to use the funding to best support our plan…We asked that our money be extended and we were told it was not a possibility. We would be in a better situation if we could have spent the money in the 2019-20 school year."

- "With the changes in our curriculum, more time to prepare the staff in the change would have been beneficial. I believe the money we received was very helpful, but having to have made decisions on the use was difficult coming into this as a new administrator. It put me in a very difficult position to get teacher buy-in to some of the decisions that needed to take place. Allowing more time to aid in our curriculum discrepancies would have been helpful. I believe the School Support Manager and our Learning Partner have helped us in the transition, but also believe the planning year should have been a little more planning than a rush after getting all of our steps completed."

- "I would like clarification on how the whole process works each year going forward. For example, what if we get out of lowest-performing next year, does our funding go away and if so does that mean that our designation title changes as well?"

- "The timing is important. We need to know when we will have the funds so that we can create a calendar and activities ahead of time. This year was very rushed and we were not able to spend all of our money due to strict budgeting guidelines but minimal time to budget."

- "I think the timing was bad. We were given our rating late in the fall, the rules changed multiple times as to what we had to do and when it needed to be done. We managed to meet each guideline thanks to our Learning Partner but it was rushed. In my opinion, the details should have been worked out long before it was implemented."

Upon further investigation, the evaluation found that comprehensive schools that were *completely ready* to implement their SIP were also likely to report the supports listed below.

- Excellent/good relationships with their SSM
- Multiple areas of assistance from their SSM

- Learning Partner support in high priority areas including Standard 1: Continuous Improvement and Standard 7: Student and Learning Development

- District support in completing the needs assessment

- Input from the district on the selection of a Learning Partner

- Input on Title I School Improvement—1003(a) grant application and the specifics of funding

Summary of School Improvement Planning

This chapter of the report set out to determine the extent to which the planning year helped schools to 1) identify priority areas for system improvement, 2) align their SIP and resources to needs assessment data, 3) empower them to examine data, identify resources, supports and/or interventions to address student needs to ensure equity of opportunity for all students, and 4) prepare to implement their SIP for the 2019-2020 year. Following are conclusions and recommendations based on our review of data.

The IQFSR/SEF needs assessment process, by all accounts, was successful in helping schools in all four groups to identify strengths as well as focus areas for improvement. On the strength side, ROS schools in both groups rated themselves higher on Educator and Employee Quality compared to other standards. In other words, schools had evidence to demonstrate that educators "participate in processes of self-reflection, collaboration, and evaluation that lead to professional growth and development in order to create and maintain a high-quality learning community."[20] CPS schools in both groups scored relatively higher on the continuous improvement dimension. For example, schools had high-impact practices in place to implement a shared vision of success which was supported by leadership, professional learning, and resources.

Conversely, all school groups tended to rate lower on standards that included practices closest to students, i.e., IQF's Student and Learning Development and SEF's Student Learning. To give an example, practices under Student and Learning Development include monitoring and adjusting curriculum, instruction, and assessment to respond to the varying needs of students. The fact that schools generally scored lower on these standards is consistent with their lower student academic and school success quality data outcomes, hence their ESSA summative designation.

Success during the planning year, however, became more varied beyond the needs assessment process. Specifically, the data show inconsistencies in the extent to which schools aligned their SIP and resources to priority areas identified in the needs assessment. To add, there were mixed reports on the extent to which schools identified resources to address student needs, including partners to support their efforts moving forward into the implementation years.

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[20] Excerpt from the IQFSR.

Feedback from the schools point to time and funding-decision constraints that hindered their efforts. Factoring in these concerns, the evaluation concludes that schools' efforts and thoroughness were reflective of the amount of time that they had to assess systems and student data and to develop their SIP. This would help to explain why many schools were almost ready, but not completely ready, to implement their SIP for the 2019-2020 year. The fact that 20% to 30% of schools across all groups were barely ready to implement their SIP, however, is worth noting.

Moving forward into the implementation years, we provide several recommendations to ensure that schools implement a well-designed and aligned SIP. One, communicate the value of the SSM/ISL to schools and encourage them to leverage the support of their designated SSM/ISL. Recall, ROS schools that had better relationships and more supports from their SSM also reported higher levels of readiness to implement their SIP. Additional staff to fill the role of the SSM will ensure that monthly meetings, which were recommended previously, are honored and that quality of supports are maintained, both of which will support strong relationships.

Similar to our recommendation in the previous chapter, ensure that LPs are transparent and clear about the type of supports that they can provide around the IQF/SEF standards. Schools that were ready to implement their SIP also *matched* LPs supports to high priority areas. Schools that weren't as successful in identifying and matching supports to needs might have been less clear about how LPs could support their SIP.

Finally, improve clarity of funding and timelines for IL-EMPOWER deliverables. It is difficult for schools to plan professional development, order programs/resources and/or enter into contracts with Learning Partners if they are not clear on the amount and timing of funding that will be available to them. If funding timelines cannot be improved then adjustments should be made to expectations and timelines for school requirements.

IV. School Performance on Student Academic and School Quality/Student Success Indicators

Illinois' ESSA plan includes multiple indicators that are used to describe how well an individual school is meeting the needs of students. A school's performance on the indicators determines their summative designation under the state's ESSA plan and subsequently, their eligibility for IL-EMPOWER.[21] The indicators are listed and described in **Box 2**.

Box 2. Student Academic and School Quality/Student Success Indicators

Academic Indicators (school levels)   Description

English Language Arts proficiency (K-8, HS)   Percentage of students who met or exceeded
Math proficiency (K-8, HS)   state standards
Science proficiency (K-8, HS)

English Language Arts growth (K-8)   Percentile representing student growth from
Math growth (K-8)   one year to the next compared to peers
English Learner (EL) proficiency (K-8, HS)   Percentage of EL students who are English proficient
High School graduation (HS)   4-6 year high school graduation rates

School Quality/Student Success Indicators   Description

Chronic Absenteeism (K-8, HS)   Percentage of students who miss =>10% days
9th graders on track to graduate (HS)   Percentage of 9th grade students who are on track
Climate survey participation (K-8, HS)   Percentage of students participating in the
                                                                             5Essentials Survey

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This chapter summarizes indicator data from the planning year for the four IL-EMPOWER school groups.[22] This data will serve as a baseline or "jumping off" point from which school performance during the IL-EMPOWER implementation years will be compared in order to determine the effectiveness of schools' improvement efforts and IL-EMPOWER. Moreover, the evaluation will track schools' progress towards improvement on their summative designation status.

Tables 9-**11** in this section present indicator data for comprehensive ROS and CPS schools. **Table 9** provides data on K-8 schools (combined elementary and middle schools) and includes statewide averages as a point of comparison. **Table 10** includes data on high schools along with state averages. **Table 11** shows ELA, mathematics, and science proficiency rates for student subgroups across the K-12 grade span and state averages.

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[21] See https://www.isbe.net/summative for more information about summative designations and calculations.
[22] With the exception of English Learner proficiency which was not publicly available at the time of this report.

Table 12 summarizes indicator data for targeted ROS and CPS schools. The table shows schoolwide and student subgroup data, the latter of which was used to identify schools for targeted eligibility status.

Looking at **Table 9**, students from comprehensive schools in both ROS and CPS areas performed lower on all academic indicators compared to their peers from other schools across the state. Noteworthy are the low ELA and math proficiency rates. Specifically, only 12% of students from ROS schools and 10% of students from CPS schools were proficient on ELA standards compared to 38% of students from schools located across the state. Switching to math, only 9% of students from ROS schools and 7% of students from CPS schools were proficient compared to the 32% of students, statewide. Also noteworthy is the higher rate of chronic absenteeism among students from comprehensive schools (i.e., 37% in ROS and 25% in CPS schools) compared to 17% in the state.

Table 9. Planning Year: Academic and School Quality/Student Success Indicator Data

Mean Percentage of Students (except growth percentile) in Comprehensive K-8 ROS and CPS Schools and K-8 Statewide Schools*

Indicators	ROS K-8 schools	CPS K-8 schools	Statewide
English Language Arts growth percentile	45	38	50
English Language Arts proficiency	12%	10%	38%
Math growth percentile	42	43	50
Math proficiency	9%	7%	32%
Science proficiency	27%	20%	54%
Chronic absenteeism**	37%	25%	17%
Climate Survey student participation**	53%	83%	83%

* Dataset included 92 ROS schools and 55 CPS schools. Sample sizes for each indicator varied based on school data availability. For example, schools with a small number of students might not have data on a particular indicator.

** The chronic absenteeism and climate survey baseline state data for K-8 were weighted average approximations based on school and district level measurements.

Table 10 on the following page also shows particularly low proficiency rates (10% or less) for high school students in ELA, math, and science compared to the state averages. Moreover, comprehensive schools did not fare well on high school graduation rates compared to other high schools across the state. Specifically, the average 4-6 year graduation rates at the state level ranged from 86%-88% while the rates at comprehensive schools ranged from 47%-64%. Finally, similar to K-8 schools, comprehensive high schools had high chronic absenteeism rates. Specifically, 63% and 88% of students from ROS and CPS schools, respectively, were absent at least 10% of the school days or more during the year.

Table 10. Planning Year: Academic and School Quality/Student Success Indicator Data

Mean Percentage of Students in Comprehensive ROS and CPS High Schools*
and Statewide High Schools

Indicators	ROS High Schools	CPS High Schools	Statewide
English Language Arts proficiency	10%	3%	37%
Math proficiency	6%	2%	35%
Science proficiency	9%	3%	36%
High school 4-year graduation rate	62%	47%	86%
High school 5-year graduation rate	64%	53%	88%
High school 6-year graduation rate	63%	51%	88%
Chronic absenteeism**	63%	88%	19%
Climate Survey student participation**	66%	69%	79%
9th graders on track to graduate***			
◆ White	72%	n/a	91%
◆ Black	54%	73%	74%
◆ Hispanic	66%	75%	83%
◆ Multiracial	50%	n/a	87%
◆ English Limited (EL)	66%	80%	77%
◆ Students with disabilities	51%	74%	79%
◆ Students from low-income	58%	75%	79%

*   Dataset included 8 ROS high schools and 37 CPS high schools. Sample sizes for each indicator varied based on school data availability. For example, schools with a small number of students might not have data on a particular indicator.

**   The chronic absenteeism and climate survey baseline state data for 9-12 were weighted average approximations based on school and district level measurements.

*** The overall percentage of 9th graders on track to graduate was not included in the public dataset. In lieu of the overall percentage, the table provides percentages by relevant student subgroups.

Student proficiency rates by student subgroup shown in **Table 11** highlight the achievement gaps that exist in comprehensive ROS and CPS schools, as well as in schools located across the state. In all three subject areas, White students outperformed students from all other racial/ethnic groups. Conversely, Black students performed the lowest compared to other racial/ethnic groups. The differences between student subgroups were statistically significant.

Table 11. Planning Year: ELA, Math and Science Proficiency Rates
All Comprehensive ROS and CPS Schools* and Statewide Schools
Mean Percentage of Students who were Proficient by Subgroup

Indicators	Comprehensive ROS	Comprehensive CPS	Statewide
English Language Arts proficiency			
◆ White	18%	23%	48%
◆ Black	6%	6%	18%
◆ Hispanic	13%	8%	26%
◆ Multiracial	11%	n/a	40%
◆ English Limited (EL)	4%	6%	10%
◆ Students with disabilities	3%	4%	14%
◆ Students from low-income	10%	7%	23%
Math proficiency			
◆ White	13%	16%	42%
◆ Black	4%	4%	12%
◆ Hispanic	8%	6%	20%
◆ Multiracial	8%	n/a	34%
◆ English Limited (EL)	3%	5%	11%
◆ Students with disabilities	3%	3%	13%
◆ Students from low-income	7%	4%	17%
Science proficiency			
◆ White	41%	29%	61%
◆ Black	14%	12%	22%
◆ Hispanic	26%	17%	36%
◆ Multiracial	24%	n/a	53%
◆ English Limited (EL)	10%	11%	15%
◆ Students with disabilities	9%	7%	24%
◆ Students from low-income	22%	14%	33%

*Dataset included 100 ROS and 92 CPS schools. Sample sizes for each indicator varied based on school data availability. For example, schools with a small number of students might not have data on a particular indicator.

Finally, **Table 12** presents indicator data for targeted ROS and CPS schools with statewide data also provided as a point of comparison. Several conclusions can be made about the data in the table. One, most of the indicator data for targeted ROS and CPS schools, with the exception of growth percentiles and chronic absenteeism rates, are typically lower than the state averages. Two, student subgroup data revealed various achievement gaps. The general pattern is higher performance for White students and lower performance for Black, EL, and Students with disabilities on proficiency rates, high school graduation rates, and percentage of 9th graders on track to graduate.

Table 12. Planning Year: Academic and School Quality/Student Success Indicator Data

Targeted ROS and CPS Schools* and Statewide Schools
Mean Percentage (except growth percentiles) of Students by Subgroup

Indicators	Targeted ROS	Targeted CPS	Statewide
English Language Arts growth percentile	49	41	50
◆ White	50	42	52
◆ Black	46	40	44
◆ Hispanic	49	42	49
◆ Multiracial	47	48	50
◆ English Limited (EL)	49	40	47
◆ Students with disabilities	43	38	45
◆ Students from low-income	48	41	47
English Language Arts proficiency**	27%	21%	38%
◆ White	33%	36%	48%
◆ Black	15%	16%	18%
◆ Hispanic	23%	22%	26%
◆ Multiracial	27%	54%	40%
◆ English Limited (EL)	6%	10%	10%
◆ Students with disabilities	7%	8%	14%
◆ Students from low-income	20%	18%	23%
Math growth percentile	47	46	50
◆ White	48	49	51
◆ Black	43	45	45

Indicators	Targeted ROS	Targeted CPS	Statewide
◆ Hispanic	47	47	50
◆ Multiracial	46	51	50
◆ English Limited (EL)	46	46	49
◆ Students with disabilities	44	41	46
◆ Students from low-income	46	46	48
Math proficiency**	20%	16%	32%
◆ White	26%	32%	42%
◆ Black	8%	10%	12%
◆ Hispanic	15%	18%	20%
◆ Multiracial	19%	47%	34%
◆ English Limited (EL)	6%	11%	11%
◆ Students with disabilities	6%	7%	13%
◆ Students from low-income	13%	15%	17%
Science proficiency**	45%	31%	49%
◆ White	57%	61%	61%
◆ Black	24%	23%	22%
◆ Hispanic	39%	35%	36%
◆ Multiracial	43%	n/a	53%
◆ English Limited (EL)	14%	15%	15%
◆ Students with disabilities	19%	14%	24%
◆ Students from low-income	36%	30%	33%
High School 4-year graduation rate	76%	75%	86%
◆ White	69%	51%	91%
◆ Black	73%	79%	76%
◆ Hispanic	73%	72%	82%
◆ Multiracial	79%	n/a	87%
◆ English Limited (EL)	61%	67%	72%

Indicators	Targeted ROS	Targeted CPS	Statewide
◆ Students with disabilities	58%	69%	74%
◆ Students from low-income	73%	75%	78%
High School 5-year graduation rate	77%	81%	88%
◆ White	79%	61%	92%
◆ Black	74%	86%	78%
◆ Hispanic	71%	75%	84%
◆ Multiracial	72%	n/a	87%
◆ English Limited (EL)	61%	65%	76%
◆ Students with disabilities	62%	74%	74%
◆ Students from low-income	76%	81%	80%
High School 6-year graduation rate	78%	77%	88%
◆ White	83%	69%	92%
◆ Black	72%	82%	79%
◆ Hispanic	84%	77%	85%
◆ Multiracial	78%	n/a	87%
◆ English Limited (EL)	65%	67%	78%
◆ Students with disabilities	66%	61%	76%
◆ Students from low-income	69%	78%	81%
Chronic absenteeism	19%	17%	18%
◆ White	18%	18%	13%
◆ Black	28%	23%	31%
◆ Hispanic	18%	17%	19%
◆ Multiracial	24%	19%	20%
◆ English Limited (EL)	17%	15%	17%
◆ Students with disabilities	28%	24%	25%
◆ Students from low-income	24%	18%	25%
Climate Survey Student Participation*	57%	85%	79%

Indicators	Targeted ROS	Targeted CPS	Statewide
9th graders on track to graduate			
◆ White	74%	82%	91%
◆ Black	56%	74%	74%
◆ Hispanic	65%	75%	83%
◆ Multiracial	71%	n/a	87%
◆ English Limited (EL)	53%	75%	77%
◆ Students with disabilities	53%	70%	79%
◆ Students from low-income	62%	75%	79%

* The dataset included 364 ROS and 186 CPS schools. There were only 7 ROS and 4 CPS high schools. Sample sizes for each indicator varied based on school data availability. For example, schools with a small number of students might not have data on a particular indicator.

** Statistically significant differences between student subgroups for ROS and CPS schools.

*** Student subgroup data not available.

Summary of School Performance on Student Academic and School Quality/Student Success Indicators

The student academic and school quality/student success indicator data for the planning year shows consistent patterns of underperformance in comprehensive and targeted schools. For comprehensive schools, the ELA and mathematics proficiency rates were below 15%. Growth data showed more promise; however, students from these schools will need to make significant growth gains in order to catch up to their same-aged peers. To add, chronic absenteeism was high, particularly at the high school level. Chronic absenteeism is associated with lower academic achievement and high school graduation rates. The high rates of chronic absenteeism seen in comprehensive schools is likely impacting other indicator data.

While targeted schools performed better than comprehensive schools, their data was below state averages. What's more, there were significant achievement gaps across student subgroups. Black, English Limited, and Students with disabilities, in particular, underperformed compared to other groups of students.

All told, the data underscore the need for school improvement plans that will address system gaps that are undermining equity of opportunities for all students. The school improvement process and guiding principles of IL-EMPOWER provide the structure for schools to continue forward into the implementation years of their SIP. Moreover, the findings presented in this report show that Learning Partners and SSMs are valued and important partners to schools' improvement efforts. ISBE can continue to play an important oversight role by clarifying roles

and expectations for key constituents, ensuring reasonable timelines for deliverables, and monitoring support and improvement efforts.

V. Evaluation Plan for IL-EMPOWER Implementation Years

This report ends with a plan for evaluating IL-EMPOWER over the next few years. The evaluation will answer a series of research questions—listed below—that include both formative and summative components. It will provide findings to help ISBE monitor implementation efforts while also assessing the degrees of system- and student-level changes resulting from IL-EMPOWER and school improvement efforts.

RQ 1. To what extent were structures in place to support school improvement efforts? For example, in what ways do districts, SSMs/ISLs, and Learning Partners support schools? What was the perceived quality of these supports?

RQ2. Do School Improvement Plans address priority areas identified by IQFSR/SEF? In what ways are Learning Partners supporting SIPs?

RQ3. To what extent are school improvement efforts marked by differentiation, educator-led choice, and a lens on equity?

RQ4. How do IL-EMPOWER Learning Partners and/or Peer Learning Partners contribute to meaningful changes in school improvement practices and the achievement of student outcomes?

RQ5. To what extent are schools that are participating in IL-EMPOWER producing worthwhile changes in their capacity for improvement and implementation of best practices related to IQF Standards?
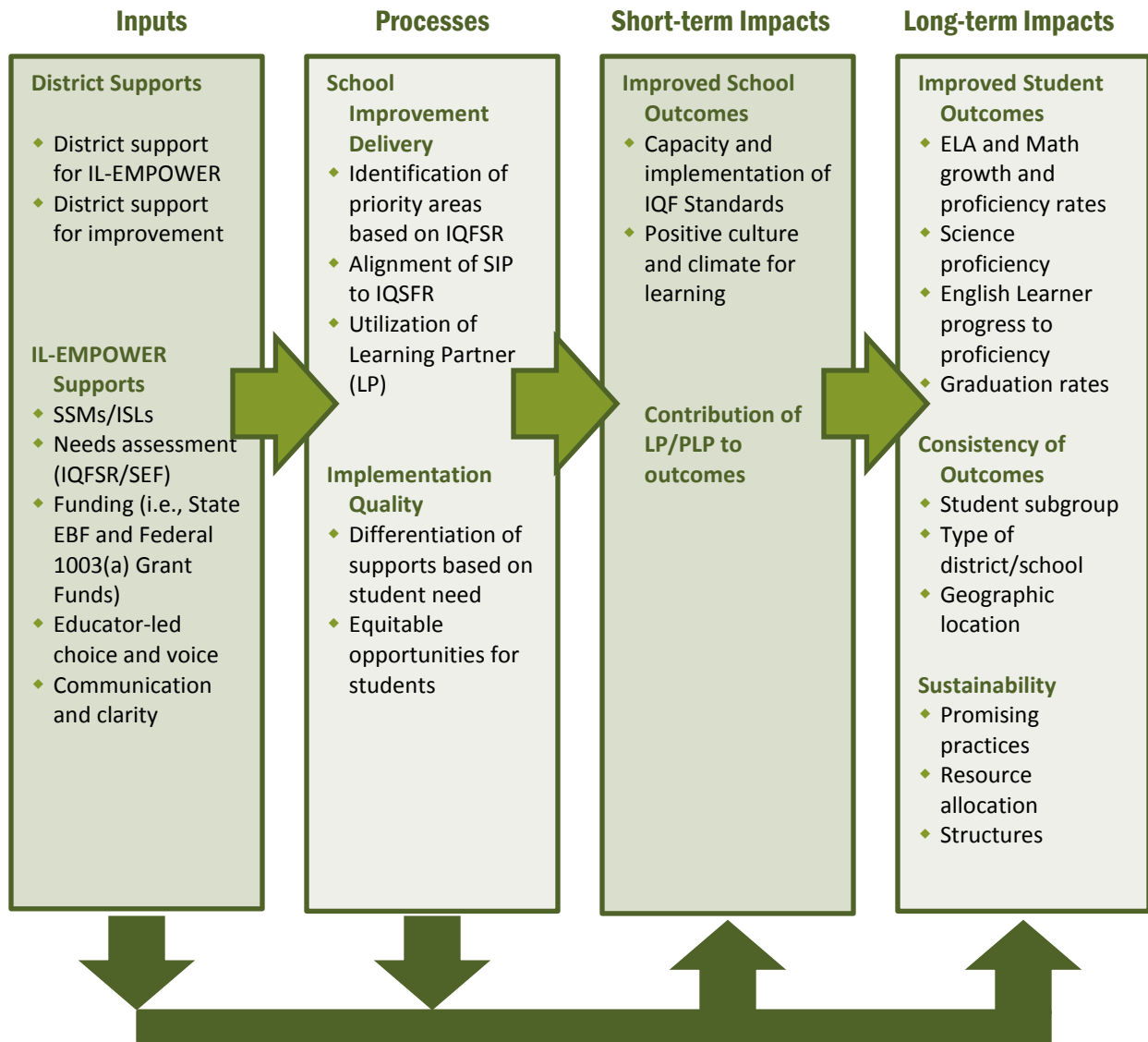
RQ6. What is the progress of improvement on student academic and school quality/ student success indicators? Were outcomes consistent across various students groups, geographic areas and types of schools? What is the relationship between school improvement efforts and student outcomes?

RQ7. To what extent are improvement efforts sustainable? What promising practices, structures, and resource allocations are in place to support sustainability? What are schools' plans for transitioning out of IL-EMPOWER?

The evaluation will utilize an inputs-process-impacts model to guide the evaluation effort and to organize the variables to be studied (**Figure 13**). The framework is drawn from an extensive review of the literature on statewide systems of support. Working from right to left in the figure model, the framework posits that improvements to student outcomes are dependent upon improvements in schools' implementation of effective practices that are aligned with the Illinois Quality Framework (IQF) standards, in addition to a positive climate and culture for learning and the contribution of Learning Partner supports. The framework further indicates that both student (i.e., long-term impacts) and school impacts (i.e., short-term impacts) are influenced by the delivery and quality implementation of school improvement efforts. Finally,

the framework shows that both the IL-EMPOWER processes and system impacts are influenced by certain "inputs" or resources including district and IL-EMPOWER supports.

Figure 13. Conceptual Model for IL-EMPOWER Evaluation

Inputs	Processes	Short-term Impacts	Long-term Impacts
District Supports • District support for IL-EMPOWER • District support for improvement **IL-EMPOWER Supports** • SSMs/ISLs • Needs assessment (IQFSR/SEF) • Funding (i.e., State EBF and Federal 1003(a) Grant Funds) • Educator-led choice and voice • Communication and clarity	**School Improvement Delivery** • Identification of priority areas based on IQFSR • Alignment of SIP to IQSFR • Utilization of Learning Partner (LP) **Implementation Quality** • Differentiation of supports based on student need • Equitable opportunities for students	**Improved School Outcomes** • Capacity and implementation of IQF Standards • Positive culture and climate for learning **Contribution of LP/PLP to outcomes**	**Improved Student Outcomes** • ELA and Math growth and proficiency rates • Science proficiency • English Learner progress to proficiency • Graduation rates **Consistency of Outcomes** • Student subgroup • Type of district/school • Geographic location **Sustainability** • Promising practices • Resource allocation • Structures

The evaluation will include a comprehensive set of research methodologies and tools designed to address the conceptual framework and to answer the key research questions. The research plan will provide for convergent validity of findings by cross-validating results through multiple, overlapping quantitative and qualitative data sources and mixed analysis designs. At the same time, it will use a thoughtful approach to data collection to ensure that the evaluation does not place undue burden on key stakeholders. **Table 13** lists the key data collection activities that are aligned to the main evaluation research questions, along with the timeline for collection.

Table 13. Evaluation Research Questions, Data Collection and Annual Timeline

Evaluation Research Questions	Data Collection Activities	Timeline
RQ 1. To what extent were structures in place to support school improvement efforts? For example, in what ways do districts, SSMs/ISLs, and Learning Partners support schools? What was the perceived quality of these supports?	◆ MI District and School Surveys ◆ MI interviews with key ISBE staff and SSMs ◆ Learning Partner Progress Report[23]	◆ Spring ◆ Throughout the year ◆ Quarterly
RQ2. Do School Improvement Plans address priority areas identified by IQFSR/SEF? In what ways are Learning Partners supporting SIPs?	◆ MI District and School Surveys ◆ School Improvement Progress Monitoring Tool[24] ◆ Learning Partner Progress Report	◆ Spring ◆ Monthly ◆ Quarterly
RQ3. To what extent are school improvement efforts marked by differentiation, educator-led choice, and a lens on equity?	◆ MI District and School Surveys	◆ Spring
RQ4. How do IL-EMPOWER Learning Partners and/or Peer Learning Partners contribute to meaningful changes in school improvement practices and the achievement of student outcomes?	◆ MI Learning Partner Survey ◆ Learning Partner Progress Report	◆ Spring ◆ Quarterly
RQ5. To what extent are schools that are participating in IL-EMPOWER producing worthwhile changes in their capacity for improvement and implementation of best practices related to IQF Standards?	◆ IQFSR database ◆ MI District and School Surveys	◆ Annually ◆ Spring

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[23] Completed by LPs
[24] Completed by SSMs

Evaluation Research Questions	Data Collection Activities	Timeline
RQ6. What is the progress of improvement on student academic and school quality/student success indicators? Were outcomes consistent across various students groups, geographic areas and types of schools? What is the relationship between school improvement efforts and student outcomes?	◆ Illinois Report Card data	◆ Annually
RQ7. To what extent are improvement efforts sustainable? What promising practices, structures, and resource allocation are in place to support sustainability? What are schools' plans for transitioning out of IL-EMPOWER?	◆ MI District and School Surveys ◆ Case studies	◆ Spring ◆ Spring, years 2-3

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