



# IL-EMPOWER

Annual Evaluation Report

January 2021





# IL-EMPOWER

**Annual Evaluation Report**

**January 2021**

*Prepared for*  
**Illinois State Board of Education**  
*by*

**MI**  **MEASUREMENT**  
INCORPORATED





## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>I. Plans for School Improvement</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>II. School Support Manager Supports</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>III. Learning Partner Supports</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>IV. Schools' Progress toward Annual Targets</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>English Language Arts (ELA) Progress</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>Math Progress</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Chronic Absenteeism Progress</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Relationship between Learning Partners and Outcomes</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>22</b>





## Executive Summary

IL-EMPOWER is the statewide system of support for school improvement in Illinois. Its mission is to build the capacity of adults to support continuous improvement of schoolwide systems in order to prepare students for post-secondary success. To achieve its mission, IL-EMPOWER promotes the alignment of supports and resources to the needs of schools and utilizes an accountability system with early warning indicators to ensure that schools are positively improving student outcomes.

During the 2019-2020 school year, schools with the ESSA designation of lowest-performing 5%<sup>1</sup> were eligible for *comprehensive* supports under IL-EMPOWER. These supports included funding through Title I 1003(a), as well as funding based on the state's equity formula that was weighted on student enrollment and district funding adequacy. Schools were also required to contract with an approved Learning Partner (LP) that had a specialty/expertise in systems improvement, teaching, or learning. LPs provided services such as professional development, coaching, and data analyses, to name a few, to support schools' improvement efforts. Lastly, schools were assigned a state-designated School Support Manager (SSM)<sup>2</sup> who provided guidance to district and/or school leaders on the school improvement process, clarified the participatory components of IL-EMPOWER, and facilitated quarterly meetings with Learning Partners. They also operated a Helpline that was available to all schools, Learning Partners, and other relevant groups.

The external evaluation of IL-EMPOWER was conducted by Measurement Incorporated (MI) and Censeo Group. The second year evaluation report was focused on comprehensive schools outside of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) that were in their first implementation year. The report addressed the following questions:

- ♦ **School Improvement Plans (SIPs):** Did schools meet the IL-EMPOWER timeline for submitting a SIP? What academic and school indicator goals and strategies did schools include in their plans? What areas of adult practices were a priority for improvement as identified by the Illinois Quality Standard Framework Supporting Rubrics (IQFSR) and how have these practices improved from the planning year?

---

<sup>1</sup> This includes lowest-performing 5% of eligible Title I schools statewide and high schools that have a graduation rate of 67% or less.

<sup>2</sup> The title of this position has since been changed to IL-EMPOWER Coordinator.

- ◆ **School Support Manager supports:** What type of supports were provided by SSMs? How much and how frequently were supports provided?
- ◆ **Learning Partner supports:** Who were the Learning Partners that schools contracted with to support their improvement efforts? What goals and practices did LPs support? What services did they provide and how much?
- ◆ **Schools' progress toward meeting annual targets:** What progress did schools make toward meeting annual targets that were identified in the school improvement process? What was the contribution of Learning Partners?

The report includes a summary of data collected from existing databases maintained by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Other data collection activities that were integral to the original evaluation design - such as surveys (school, teacher, and Learning Partner), interviews with LPs, case studies, and statewide student assessment data - were cancelled, according to ISBE guidance due to the COVID19 pandemic that led to statewide school closings in March, 2020.<sup>3</sup> As a result, this report is missing data on several components of the original evaluation.

Due to the manner of reporting, this replacement data is neither comprehensive nor complete as a result of the Executive Order. Although the data cannot determine the effectiveness of IL-EMPOWER or school improvement efforts, it does provide a glimpse into the types of activities in which schools engaged and general descriptions of self-reported outcomes. Given the limited availability of data and data caveats, the report's findings should be interpreted with caution.

### School Improvement Plans

The second-year evaluation concluded that the vast majority of schools were in compliance with IL-EMPOWER requirements regarding their school improvement plans. Moreover, their school improvement plans reflected areas of greatest need, as identified by academic and school indicators and needs assessment data. The findings were gleaned from the School Improvement Report (SIR) that schools submitted in February 2019 and the IQFSR that schools submitted in December 2018 and 2019.

- Schools aligned their school improvement goals with areas of low student performance as identified by academic and school indicator data. Specifically, 90% of schools identified goals in area of ELA, 56% in the area of mathematics, and 42% in the area of chronic absenteeism.
- Most schools identified a blend of strategies to address their goals that included 1) changes and improvements in curriculum and instruction, 2) routine examination of

---

<sup>3</sup> Please see the link to the Executive Order: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/FAQ-4-1-20.pdf>



student performance through PLCs and other groupings such as grade-level teams, and 3) family engagement.

- Schools selected Illinois Quality Framework standards that were most in need of improvement as indicated by their IQFSR ratings. Specifically, the majority of schools (82%) selected Standard 7: Student and Learning Development as an area of focus on their school improvement plan. Another 54% of schools selected Standard 2: Culture and Climate. Last year only 55% of schools aligned their SIP to IQF standards that were most in need of improvement; therefore, IL-EMPOWER may have been instrumental in helping schools to better align improvement plans with areas of need as indicated by the IQFSR.

### **School Support Manager supports**

SSMs met with comprehensive schools throughout the school year. They provided support and guidance on IL-EMPOWER requirements including reporting, funding, and Learning Partner quarterly meetings. Additionally, SSMs provided assistance to schools or districts with other IL EMPOWER designations, as well as to approved Learning Partners, through the Helpline and local, regional, and statewide presentations. The findings were summarized from the SSM Log data.

- The average number of meetings with school leaders and/or School Improvement Teams was 5.5 and ranged from 1 to 18 per school. The meetings were provided on-site 60% of the time while the other 40% of meetings were conducted virtually, the latter of which were more likely during the time of COVID19 pandemic-related school closings.
- 47% of the meetings centered on a review of the Learning Partner Quarterly report. These meetings typically involved school leaders, the Learning Partner(s), and the School Support Manager. Another 25% of the meetings involved “check-ins”, data reviews, and/or participation in School Improvement Team meetings. Twenty-two percent of the meetings included guidance and support on specific IL-EMPOWER requirements.
- Helpline support was provided to Regional Offices of Education (41% of calls), Learning Partners (32% of calls), and schools with designations other than comprehensive (27% of calls). These calls typically involved support in one of the following three request areas: 1) clarifications on Learning Partner-specific requirements - including reporting, 2) guidance in making connections with schools to offer services, and 3) discussions related to issues and/or concerns about school participation.

### **Learning Partner supports**

The evaluation identified three main findings that were based on data provided by Learning Partners via the Learning Partner Quarterly Report. One, schools contracted with a small

number of approved Learning Partners and some LPs were more concentrated in several Regions of the state. Two, many LPs provided support to schools in priority areas that were identified by schools' needs assessment and academic school indicator data. These supports included coaching, professional learning, SIP-related supports, and data review and/or analysis. Three, supports were mostly delivered during the second and third quarters. Even still, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the extent to which LPs fulfilled their contracts with schools because of missing data from the first quarter of the school year, as well as school closings that occurred during the fourth quarter which may have resulted in disruptions to service provision.

- 21 out of 54 (39%) state-vetted and approved Learning Partners had contracts with schools that were included in the evaluation. The five LPs with the highest number of contracts included: IARSS (28 schools), Urban Learning Leadership Center (19), ECRA Group, Inc. (16), American Institutes of Research (14), and District Management Group (13).
- As LPs, ECRA Group, Inc. and District Management Group were heavily concentrated in area 2. The LP, Urban Learning Leadership Center, was heavily concentrated in areas 5 and 2 - with 11 schools and 7 schools, respectively. Finally, IARSS was concentrated in areas 3 and 4 - with 13 schools and 8 schools, respectively. American Institutes of Research, on the other hand, was more evenly distributed throughout the state in terms of their work as a Learning Partner.
- More than half of LPs (i.e., 60%) supported schools in adult practices related to Standard 7: Student and Learning Development. Second in frequency, 43% of LPs provided supports on adult practices related to Standard 2: Culture and Climate. Recall that both of these standards were identified as priority areas by most schools. Third, 41% of LPs supported schools on practices related to Standard 1: Continuous Improvement, which was not listed as a high priority area by most schools.
- Regarding academic and school quality indicator data, LPs primarily supported schools in addressing goals related to ELA growth/proficiency (57-60%), math growth/proficiency (47-50%), and chronic absenteeism (42%).
- LPs provided four types of supports to schools: coaching, professional learning, school improvement planning, and data review/analysis. During quarters two and three of the school year, most LPs provided the supports that were identified in schools' SIRs; however, all areas of support declined during the fourth quarter. These decreases can be attributed to the school closings that resulted from the COVID19 pandemic.

## Schools' progress toward meeting annual targets

Overall, data related to schools' progress toward meeting annual targets showed some promise. For instance, the majority of schools that reported data in February showed progress toward meeting their annual targets. Learning Partner reports on schools' progress also showed positive growth. The data reporting by schools and Learning Partners, however, was inconsistent. Furthermore, many schools did not provide any data on their progress on identified goal areas. Coupled with the school closings and the lack of data, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the impact of schools' improvement efforts on student outcomes for the 2019-2020 school year.

- 65% of schools reported making progress on their ELA goals, 68% of schools reported making progress on math goals, and 99% of schools reported making progress on chronic absenteeism goals.
- Learning Partners reported that over 80% of schools made progress on ELA, math, and chronic absenteeism goals during quarters two and three.
- There was a statistically significant relationship between coaching supports provided by LPs and ELA outcomes. In other words, schools that received more coaching also made progress towards ELA goals. Other LP variables that were included in the analyses but were *not* statistically significant included: individual Learning Partner organizations, timing of the contract signatures, hours of service provided, and percentage of Title 1 funds contracted to LPs.

## Recommendations

Measurement Incorporated acknowledges that the COVID19 pandemic presented many challenges to the important work of IL-EMPOWER. Nevertheless, the fact that schools, along with the support of their School Support Manager and Learning Partners, were able to implement their improvement plans and, in some cases, show progress towards their annual goals is commendable.

Equally important is the fact that schools identified improvement strategies that many researchers and policymakers are now highlighting as key to addressing the likely widened achievement gaps resulting from the pandemic. For instance, an intentional focus on improving the school's instructional core is one of the underlined strategies that is deemed critical to the work of school improvement during and after the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the evaluation showed that the vast majority of schools were implementing changes and enhancements to curriculum and instruction as part of their improvement efforts.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.brookings.edu/research/beyond-reopening-schools-how-education-can-emerge-stronger-than-before-covid-19/>

Other strategies that have been identified as important to addressing achievement gaps during and post COVID19 pandemic include strengthening family-school partnerships and support for social and emotional learning.<sup>5</sup> Again, these strategies were identified as part of school improvement efforts in many of the schools in the study. The evaluation recommends that schools continue and, perhaps, intensify their efforts to improve teaching and learning, family engagement, and social and emotional development. We also recommend that ISBE consider ways that they can emphasize schools' use of these strategies through communication of their importance and/or ensuring that they are part of services provided by Learning Partners.

The COVID19 pandemic also shed light on areas of improvement needed in IL-EMPOWER's data systems and, in particular, systems that were designed to monitor schools' and Learning Partners' implementation efforts. This prompted key personnel from IL-EMPOWER, ISBE's Research Department, and MI to collaborate over the course of several months in the spring of 2020 to make revisions to the reporting mechanisms. The revisions included more consistent and quantitative measurements of school improvement efforts, Learning Partner supports, and the reporting of goals. The revisions will enable the evaluation to better investigate the alignment between school improvement plans and actions, LP supports, changes in adult practices, and changes in student outcomes.

To further improve the reporting process, the evaluation offers several additional recommendations. One, the report submission deadlines for both schools and Learning Partners should be at the same time. This will allow for more relevant comparisons across the reports. Two, the evaluation team recommends that ISBE articulate a logic model that clearly outlines the key inputs, outputs, and short- and long-term outcomes that reflect changes that have been made to IL-EMPOWER. This will enable the evaluation team to better align data collection activities to key components of the system of support so that their impact on school and student outcomes can be appropriately assessed. Lastly, there should be increased collaboration with key personnel at Chicago Public Schools so that schools that are designated for IL-EMPOWER be included in state monitoring and evaluation efforts.

---

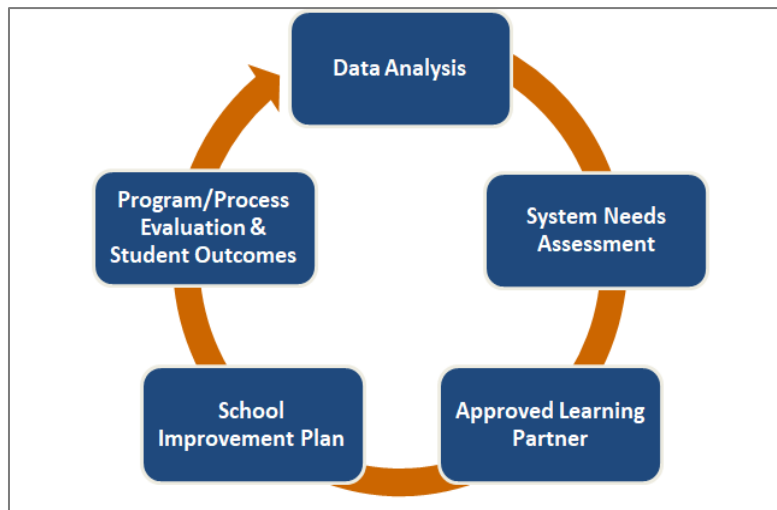
<sup>5</sup> Darling-Hammond, L., Schachner, A., & Edgerton, A. K. (with Badrinarayan, A., Cardichon, J., Cookson, P. W., Jr., Griffith, M., Klevan, S., Maier, A., Martinez, M., Melnick, H., Truong, N., Wojcikiewicz, S.). (2020). Restarting and reinventing school: Learning in the time of COVID and beyond. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. and <https://ccsso.org/blog/ccsso-releases-restart-recovery-considerations-teaching-learning>



## Introduction

IL-EMPOWER is the statewide system of support for school improvement in Illinois. Its mission is to build the capacity of adults to support continuous improvement of schoolwide systems in order to prepare students for post-secondary success. To achieve its mission, IL-EMPOWER promotes the alignment of supports and resources to the needs of schools and utilizes an accountability system with early warning indicators to ensure that schools are positively improving student outcomes.

**Figure 1**  
**IL-EMPOWER School Improvement Process**



Source: ISBE webinar, January 2019

School improvement, under IL-EMPOWER during the 2019-2020 academic year, involved an iterative process for continuous growth and development. Depicted in **Figure 1**, all public schools engaged their School Leadership Team in a collaborative *data analysis* of their system, student academic, and school success quality data. They also participated in a *system needs assessment* that included completion of the Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric (IQFSR) so that they could identify strengths and gaps in adult practices in their school system.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Chicago Public Schools engage in a parallel process that results in the development and implementation of a Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP).

Based on their ESSA designation and eligibility for additional supports through IL-EMPOWER<sup>2</sup>, schools contracted with an *approved Learning Partner (LP)*. LPs have a specialty/expertise in systems improvement, teaching, or learning. Schools developed a three-year *School Improvement Plan (SIP)* that addressed areas of concern identified in the analyses of student indicator data and needs assessment. Concomitantly, their districts applied for additional federal funds through the Title I School Improvement—1003(a) Grant to fund the implementation of the SIP. In the *program/process evaluation and student outcomes* phase of the school improvement process, schools implemented and monitored their improvement plans.

Not depicted in the figure but also part of IL-EMPOWER were state-designated School Support Managers (SSMs). SSMs served as thought partners to schools located outside of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) that were designated as the “lowest-performing 5%.” They provided guidance to district and/or school leaders on the school improvement process, clarified the participatory components of IL-EMPOWER, and facilitated quarterly meetings with Learning Partners. They also operated a Helpline that was available to all schools, Learning Partners, and other relevant groups regarding IL-EMPOWER components and supports.

In September 2018, ISBE contracted Measurement Incorporated (MI) and Censeo Group to conduct a three-year evaluation of IL-EMPOWER. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of IL-EMPOWER in supporting school improvement efforts, and to determine the degrees of system- and student-level changes as a result of school improvement efforts. This report provides a summary of findings on the 90 comprehensive schools (i.e., schools with the ESSA designation of “lowest-performing 5%”) located outside of CPS that completed their first of the 3-year school improvement implementation cycle during the 2019-2020 academic year. The report addresses the following questions:

- ◆ **School Improvement Plans:** Did schools meet the IL-EMPOWER timeline for submitting a SIP? What academic and school indicator goals and strategies did schools include in their plans? What areas of adult practices were a priority for improvement as identified by the IQFSR and how have these practices improved from the planning year?
- ◆ **School Support Manager (SSM) supports:** What type of supports were provided by SSMs? How much and how frequently were supports provided?
- ◆ **Learning Partner supports:** Who were the Learning Partners that schools contracted with to support their improvement efforts? What goals and practices did LPs support? What services did they provide and how much?

---

<sup>2</sup> Schools with an ESSA designation of lowest-performing (i.e., lowest-performing 5% of Title I schools statewide and high schools with less than 67% graduation rate) participate in comprehensive supports that require them to contract with an LP. They are also required to design and implement a 3-year School Improvement Plan.

- ♦ **Schools' progress toward meeting annual targets:** What progress did schools make toward meeting annual targets that were identified in the school improvement process? What was the contribution of Learning Partners?

To help answer the research questions, the evaluation used several data sources, which are listed and described in **Table 1**. Other data collection activities that were integral to the original evaluation design, including surveys (school, teacher, and Learning Partner), interviews with LPs, case studies of a sample of participating schools, and statewide student assessment data were cancelled, according to ISBE guidance due to the COVID19 pandemic that led to state-wide school closings in March, 2020.<sup>3</sup> As a result, this report is missing data on several components of the evaluation. For example, there was no data to assess schools' perceptions of the quality, usefulness, and effectiveness of Learning Partner and School Support Manager supports. State-wide student assessment outcomes and other indicator data are also missing.

The report includes a summary of data collected from existing databases maintained by ISBE. Due to the manner of reporting, this replacement data is neither comprehensive nor complete as a result of the Executive Order. Although the data cannot determine the effectiveness of IL-EMPOWER or school improvement efforts, it does provide a glimpse into the types of activities in which schools engaged and general descriptions of self-reported outcomes. Given the limited availability of data and data caveats, the report's findings should be interpreted with caution.

---

<sup>3</sup> Please see the link to the Executive Order: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/FAQ-4-1-20.pdf>

**Table 1**  
**Data Sources for the Evaluation**

Source	Description
<b>Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric (IQFSR)</b>	ISBE database that included IQFSR ratings of comprehensive (i.e., lowest performing) schools. Data were submitted annually by December 31 <sup>st</sup> . The 2018 and 2019 databases included 86 out of 90 comprehensive schools; however, there were 83 matched pairs across both the datasets.
<b>School Improvement Report (SIR)</b>	ISBE database that contained comprehensive schools’ reports on improvement efforts during the first year of implementation. The series of mainly open-ended items <sup>4</sup> related to 1) analysis of academic and school quality indicators findings, 2) system needs assessment (i.e., IQFSR) findings, 3) Learning Partner selection and scope of work and contract, 4) school improvement plan goals and strategies, and 5) mid-year progress toward goals summary. The mid-year progress report was due February 14, 2020. The end –of–year report was not collected due to the Executive Order. The database included 90 schools.
<b>School Support Manager (SSM) Logs</b>	ISBE database that contained a log of activity by SSMs. It documented Helpline communication, meetings with schools, and presentations. SSMs logged the date, audience, activity, and a summary of the occurrence, the latter of which was provided in an open-ended written format. The 2019-2020 log contained 369 calls on the Helpline, 71 presentations, and meeting logs on 176 schools (i.e., designated as lowest performing and underperforming).
<b>Learning Partner Quarterly Reports</b>	ISBE database that contained Learning Partner reports on areas of focus of their supports (i.e., Illinois Quality Standards and academic and school quality indicators), type of supports provided, hours of service, and schools’ progress toward meeting annual targets. The reports, generally aggregated to the school level, were submitted quarterly, beginning with the second quarter. The number of reports by quarter were: 130 in December (2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter), 108 in March (3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter), and 100 in June (4 <sup>th</sup> quarter).

<sup>4</sup> Codes were generated for the open-ended items in order to create quantitative variables. Most of the variables were dichotomous, i.e., selected (1) or not selected (0). Schools were not required to submit specific answers to the narrative items, hence, limiting the consistency of responses. There were various cases where the schools might not have answered the question, which was coded as blank.





## I. Plans for School Improvement

This section of the report provides a summary of findings related to school improvement plans. Included are 1) timing of School Improvement Plan approvals by the schools' local Board of Education, 2) schools' goals to address academic and school improvement indicator areas, 3) the Illinois Quality Framework Support Rubric (IQFSR) ratings and areas of priority for improvement, and 4) schools' strategies for addressing goals and priority areas. The data are derived from the School Improvement Report (SIR) and the IQFSR (i.e., 2018 and 2019 ratings).

Under the IL-EMPOWER school improvement process, schools with a lowest-performing 5% designation were required to develop a three-year School Improvement Plan (SIP) and have it approved by the local Board of Education by December 30, 2019. **Table 2** shows that nearly all of the schools (94%) had their SIP approved by December. There were only a few (i.e., three percent) approved after December. The table also shows that a small percentage of schools (3%) were missing a date of approval.

**Table 2**  
**Approval of SIP**  
*Percentage of schools by month*

Approval Months	% (n) of schools
May, 2019	1% (1)
June, 2019	9% (8)
September, 2019	1% (1)
October, 2019	2% (2)
November, 2019	7% (6)
December, 2019	73% (66)
January, 2020	1% (1)
February, 2020	2% (2)
Date not provided	3% (3)

Source of data: SIR, n=90

Each schools' SIP could include up to three academic and school quality indicator goals. **Table 3**, on the next page, shows the goal areas selected by schools. The table shows that the majority of schools (90%) selected English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency or growth as a goal. This was followed in frequency by a math-related goal, chosen by over one-half of the schools (56%), and a chronic absenteeism goal chosen by 42% of schools.

**Table 3**  
**2019-2020 Academic and School Quality Indicator Goals<sup>5</sup>**  
*Percentage of schools by goal area*

Goal areas	% (n) of schools
English Language Arts	90% (81)
Mathematics	56% (50)
Chronic absenteeism	42% (38)
Freshman on Track	6% (5)
Science	3% (3)

Source of data: SIR, n=90

To address their academic and school indicator goals, as evidenced in **Table 4**, over half of the schools planned to use data-driven Professional Learning Communities (66%), ELA curriculum and/or instruction strategies (57%), and family engagement strategies (54%). Examples of each of these strategies are provided in **Box 1**. The table lists other strategies that were identified by less than half of the schools.

**Table 4**  
**Planned Strategies to Address Goals**  
*Percentage of schools that identified each strategy*

Implementation of...	% (n) of schools
PLCs	66% (59)
ELA curriculum and/or instruction	57% (51)
Family engagement	54% (49)
Attendance improvement strategies	41% (37)
SEL curriculum and/or instruction	34% (31)
Math curriculum and/or instruction	33% (30)
Tiered supports	29% (26)
Student incentives/engagement	28% (26)
Curriculum mapping	20% (18)
PBIS strategies	19% (17)
Specific interventions	17% (15)
Differentiated instruction	17% (15)
Standards alignment	16% (14)
Test preparation strategies	11% (10)
Before/after school programs	8% (7)
Science curriculum and/or instruction	4% (4)

Source of data: SIR, n=90

---

<sup>5</sup> Schools provided narrative form answers on the SIR. The data reflects schools that selected each type of goal for either the academic and school indicator or IQF under step 4 of the report.

## Box 1. Strategy Examples

### PLCs

- ◆ Gather, analyze and monitor student data
- ◆ Analyze the effectiveness of instructional strategies
- ◆ Develop critical questioning skills during collaboration meetings
- ◆ Develop data-driven instructional practices

### ELA curriculum and/or instruction

- ◆ Implement a new ELA program
- ◆ Monitor the integrity of implementation
- ◆ Provide differentiated reading instruction
- ◆ Provide small group reading instruction
- ◆ Increase literacy instruction block
- ◆ Review current reading instructional strategies and curriculum resources for evidence of effectiveness

### Family engagement

- ◆ Utilize a Parent Liaison to connect with families and/or conduct home visits
- ◆ Implement various family outreach and engagement strategies, e.g., parent meetings, newsletters, attendance flyers, Family Attendance Events
- ◆ Increase parent communication regarding attendance
- ◆ Implement attendance incentive programs that engage families

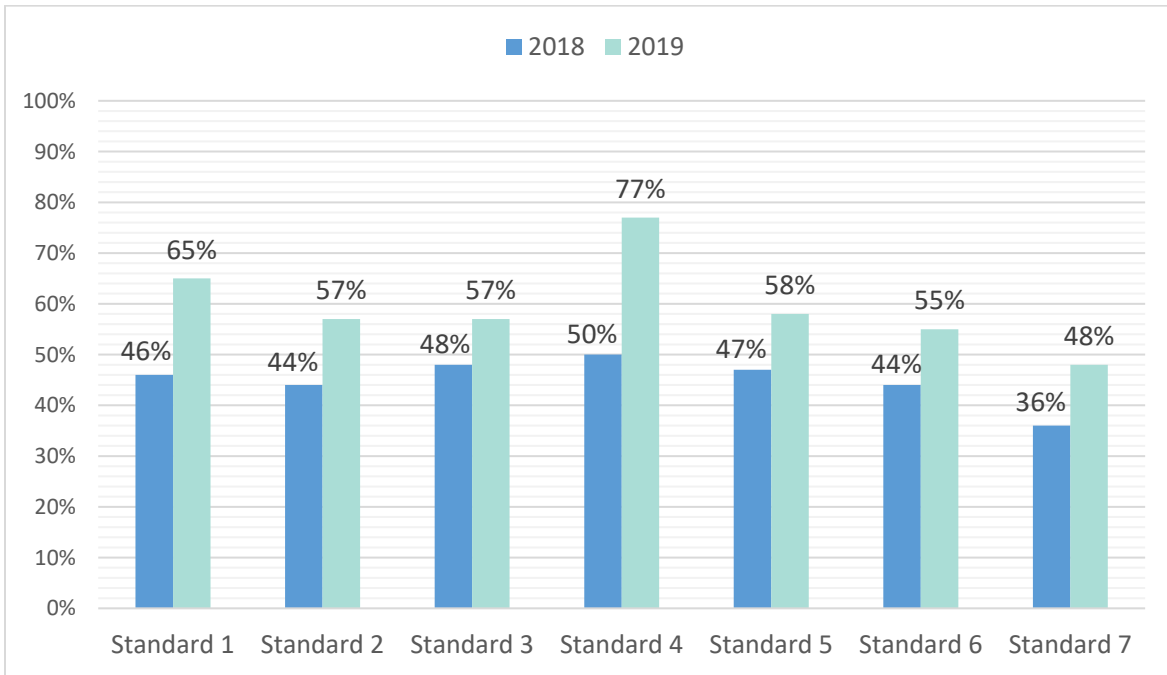
The IL-EMPOWER school improvement process also used the Illinois Quality Framework Supporting Rubric (IQFSR), which is a self-evaluation tool that identifies strengths and gaps in adult practices that influence student results. School Leadership Teams rated their school's level of performance on each indicator of the Illinois Quality Framework using a four-point rubric (i.e., ineffective, emerging, accomplished, and exemplary). Schools were required to complete and submit their IQFSR by December 30, 2019. Schools were expected to identify standards that would be a priority for improvement during the first year of IL-EMPOWER implementation.

**Figure 2** (following page) compares the percentage of schools that reported the two higher implementation levels (i.e., accomplished and/or exemplary) on each of the seven standards in 2018 and 2019.<sup>6</sup> On the positive side, the figure shows that gains were made on all seven standards. The largest gain was made in Standard 4, Governance, Management, and Operations. Specifically, the percentage of schools at the accomplished and/or exemplary levels increased 27-percentage points, moving from 50% in the planning year to 77% in the first implementation year under IL-EMPOWER. This was followed by a 19-percentage point increase in Standard 1, Continuous Improvement. Even still, it should be noted that in 2019 roughly 45% of the schools remained at the lower implementation levels on the five remaining standards.

---

<sup>6</sup> Findings are presented on the two higher implementation levels for ease of interpretation.

**Figure 2**  
**2018 and 2019 Comparison of Comprehensive Schools at Accomplished and/or Exemplary Implementation Levels**



Source of data: IQFSR 2018 and 2019, n=83 matched schools

**Table 5** shows that Standard 7 was identified as a priority for improvement by the majority of schools (i.e., 82%). Standard 2 was also selected by over half of the schools (i.e., 54%). A small percentage of schools selected Standard 3, 5, and 6. Only 1 school selected Standard 4 as a priority for improvement.

**Table 5**  
**IQF Standards Identified as Priority in 2019**  
*Percentage of schools by standard*

IQF Standard	% (n) of schools
S1: Continuous Improvement	22% (20)
S2: Culture and Climate	54% (49)
S3: Shared Leadership	26% (23)
S4: Governance, Management and Operations	1% (1)
S5: Educator and Employee Quality	22% (20)
S6: Family and Community Engagement	26% (23)
S7: Student and Learning Development	82% (74)

Source of data: SIR, n=90

## Summary

The findings presented in this section of the report provide sufficient evidence that schools were in compliance with IL-EMPOWER requirements regarding their school improvement plans. Nearly all schools had a SIP that was approved by their local board of education when expected. They also aligned their goals with areas of low student performance, which would have been the reason they were designated as the lowest 5%. Most schools identified a blend of strategies aimed at impacting students, including changes in curriculum and instruction and routine examination and monitoring of student performance through PLCs and other groupings such as grade level teams, to name a few.

To add, schools made notable improvements on several IQF standards including the Continuous Improvement (Standard 1) and Government, Management and Operations (Standard 4) standards. These improvements align with findings from the planning year. Specifically, schools reported that the planning year enabled them to examine priority areas as part of the system rather than in isolation, identify root causes affecting student performance, become more adept at tracking accountability data related to student outcomes, and become more reflective of students' needs.

Lastly, the IQF standards that the majority of schools selected as a priority, i.e., Student and Learning Development and Culture and Climate, were standards most in need of improvement as indicated by the lower implementation levels on the IQFSR. Last year only 55% of schools aligned their SIP to IQF standards that were most in need of improvement; therefore, IL-EMPOWER may have been instrumental in helping schools to better align improvement plans with areas of need on the IQF.



## II. School Support Manager Supports

School Support Managers (SSMs) were state-designated field personnel who were assigned to a group of comprehensive schools that were typically located within a similar geographical region of the state. During the 2019-2020 academic year, there were 6 SSMs assigned to approximately 15 comprehensive schools that were in their first implementation year.<sup>7</sup> They provided guidance to district and/or school leaders on the school improvement process, the participatory components of IL-EMPOWER, and quarterly meetings with Learning Partners. Additionally, they shared responsibility for operating the IL-EMPOWER Helpline that was available to all schools in the state, Learning Partners, and other relevant groups (e.g., Regional Offices of Education) regarding IL-EMPOWER requirements and supports. Finally, SSMs provided various IL-EMPOWER-related presentations across the state.

This section of the report provides a summary of findings on the frequency, type, and nature of guidance that SSMs provided to comprehensive schools. It also summarizes the other type of supports that they provided to all schools, districts, and LPs including the Helpline and presentations. The data presented in this section were derived from the SSM Logs.

SSMs met with comprehensive schools throughout the school year. According to the SSM logs, the average number of meetings with school leaders and/or School Improvement Teams was 5.5 and ranged from 1 to 18 per school. The meetings were provided on-site 60% of the time while the other 40% of meetings were conducted virtually, the latter of which were more likely during the time of COVID19 pandemic-related school closings.

**Table 6** (following page) provides a breakdown of the nature of the meetings between SSMs and comprehensive schools.<sup>8</sup> As seen in the table, 47% of the meetings involved discussions about the Learning Partner Quarterly report. These meetings typically involved school leaders, the Learning Partner(s), and the School Support Manager. Another 25% of the meetings involved “check-ins”, data reviews, and/or SSMs’ participation in School Improvement Team meetings. Twenty-two percent of the meetings included guidance and support on the IL-EMPOWER requirements. Examples of guidance are bulleted below.

- ◆ Communication regarding state funds
- ◆ Reporting requirements and amendment deadlines

---

<sup>7</sup> SSMs were also assigned to work with newly designated comprehensive schools (n=40) that were in their planning year during the 2019-2020 school year. The average SSM caseload was approximately 22 schools including the newly designated schools.

<sup>8</sup> SSMs provided a written summary of the meeting on the log. The evaluation team coded the open-ended responses into the five categories presented in the table.

- ◆ Support on completion of Consolidated District Plan
- ◆ Technical assistance on SIR in IWAS
- ◆ Advisement on Learning Partner selection

Finally 6% or less of the meetings were related to specific Learning Partner issues and/or professional development offered/attended by the SSM.

**Table 6**  
**Nature of Meetings between SSM and Schools**  
*Percentage of meetings*

	<b>% of meetings</b>
Learning Partner Quarterly Reports	47%
School-related progress monitoring	25%
IL-EMPOWER guidance and support	22%
Learning Partner specific	3%
Professional development	3%

Source of data: SSM school specific logs, n=90

Switching to the IL-EMPOWER Helpline, SSMs fielded 369 requests throughout the school year. **Table 7** summarizes the audiences for the requests. Specifically, the vast majority of the requests came from Regional Offices of Education (41%) and Learning Partners (32%). These calls typically involved one of the following three requests: 1) clarifications on Learning Partner-specific requirements including reporting, 2) guidance in making connections with schools to offer services, and 3) discussions related to issues and/or concerns about school participation.

**Table 7**  
**Audience for the IL-EMPOWER Helpline**  
*Percentage of calls*

	<b>% (n) of calls</b>
Regional Offices of Education	41% (151)
Learning Partners	32% (118)
Schools designated as Underperforming	19% (69)
Schools designated as Commendable	7% (26)
Schools designated as Exemplary	1% (5)

Source of data: SSM Helpline log n=369

The table also shows that another 27% of the requests came from schools in one of the other three designations. Nearly all of the requests were related to clarification on state indicator data and/or the school’s designation.

Lastly, SSMs provided a total of 71 presentations. The presentations were typically on the IL-EMPOWER requirements, though some presentations that were provided at the district or school level were aimed at reviewing data with district or school leaders and School Improvement Teams. **Table 8** presents a summary of the audiences for the presentations.

**Table 8**  
**Audience for Presentations**  
*Percentage of presentations*

	% (n) of presentations
School level	38% (27)
Regional Offices of Education	28% (20)
District level	24% (17)
In-state	7% (5)
ISBE conference	3% (2)

Source of data: SSM Presentation log n=71

**Summary**

The findings presented in this section demonstrate the ways in which SSMs served as thought partners to comprehensive schools. Meetings with the schools typically involved “check-ins” and/or Learning Partner quarterly meetings. SSMs also provided guidance to schools on the IL-EMPOWER requirements, including reporting, funding, and Learning Partner selection. Unfortunately, data were not available to gauge the extent to which the meetings were deemed useful and/or effective to schools. In addition to the supports provided to comprehensive schools, SSMs provided information through the Helpline and presentations to other schools/districts and Learning Partners on the IL-EMPOWER requirements, school designations, and other reporting requirements.





### III. Learning Partner Supports

Learning Partners (LPs) are external organizations that are vetted by the state and have a specialty/expertise in systems improvement, teaching, or learning. This section of the report provides a summary of findings regarding schools' selection of LPs, the amount of Title I dollars spent on LPs, the services and supports that LPs provided, and the number of hours that they worked with schools and districts. The data are derived from Learning Partner quarterly reports, the SIR, and an ISBE database with funding totals by LP.

**Table 9**  
**Learning Partners**  
*Number of schools and total \$ allocated through contracts*

Learning Partners	FY18-19		FY19-20	
	# schools	\$ allocated	# schools	\$ allocated
Illinois Association of Regional Superintendents	39	\$870,352	28	\$6,755,720
Urban Learning and Leadership Center, Inc.	12	\$1,014,314	19	\$1,298,224
American Institute of Research	32	\$1,441,298	14	\$1,236,680
Ed Direction	5	\$193,479	5	\$765,335
Consortium for Educational Change	8	\$667,979	5	\$730,985
ECRA Group, Inc.	18	\$110,523	16	\$510,637
IL Multi-Tiered System of Supports Network	4	\$157,657	3	\$487,616
District Management Group	16	\$240,000	13	\$480,426
Atlantic Research Partners	4	\$194,819	5	\$439,339
Silver, Strong & Associates	2	\$123,000	3	\$422,927
Academy for Urban School Leadership	5	\$315,853	1	\$260,000
Cambridge Education	2	\$121,372	1	\$139,642
New Leaders	--	--	2	\$109,000
Illinois Association of School Administrators	--	--	1	\$108,800
Teach Plus	--	--		\$75,000
Midwest PBIS	1	\$28,700		\$51,428
School Works	--	--	1	\$15,000
Illinois Principals Association	2	\$3,194	2	\$3,000
Houghton Mifflin	--	--	3	n/a
Respond Ability	1	\$8,550		\$2,000
Instruction Partners	--	--	1	n/a
UMOJA Student Development Corporation	2	\$67,000	1	n/a
AdvancED	1	\$38,500	1	--
Roosevelt University	2	\$37,796	1	--
95 Percent Group	3	\$19,985	--	--
Northeastern Illinois University	1	\$900	--	--
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$5,655,271</b>		<b>\$13,891,759</b>

Source of data: 2019 SIR and ISBE budget spreadsheet; 2018 data ISBE budget spreadsheet

In the 2019-2020 school year, ISBE had 54 Learning Partners listed on the IL-EMPOWER website, of which 21 entered into contracts with comprehensive schools. **Table 9** on the previous page lists the LPs along with the number of schools and the total amount of funding that was allocated through their contracts with the schools. The table also provides a comparison to the number of schools and total funding allocation in 2018-2019. Several conclusions can be made from the table. One, the five LPs that had the highest number of schools in 2019-20 also had the highest number of schools in 2018-19. They included IARSS (28), ULLC (19), ECRA Group, Inc. (16), AIR (14), and DMG (13).

Two, three of the top five LPs in terms number of schools also had the highest total funding allocation. They include the IARSS, ULLC, and AIR. The remaining two LPs that ranked in the top five for number of schools, i.e., DMG and ECRA Group, however, ranked lower in total funding amounts. These two LPs also showed a decrease in number of school contracts. This same pattern did not necessarily hold true for the other LPs. For example, some LPs serviced fewer schools from FY18 to FY19 but increased their total funding allocation. This data could be interpreted to mean that LPs had a greater scope of work in the current year compared to the planning year.

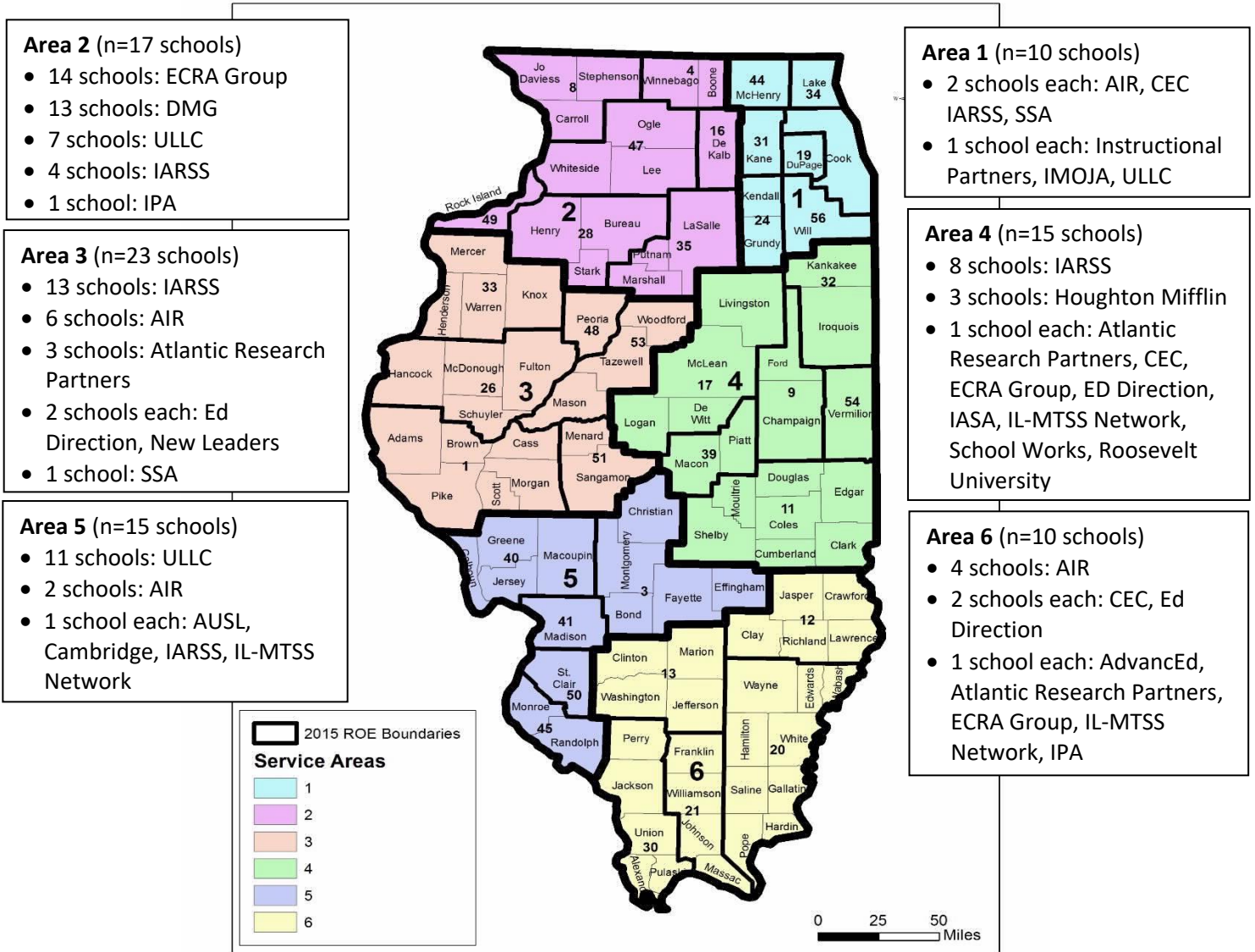
Lastly, the final row of the table shows that the total funding amount dedicated to LPs in FY19 compared to FY18 more than doubled. Specifically, approximately \$13.9 million of Title I dollars was dedicated to LPs this year compared to approximately \$5.5 million last year. This large increase mostly likely reflects the nature of supports that were provided to schools to support implementation of their improvement plans compared to their planning year.

Not shown in the table, 68% of schools budgeted 50% or less of the federal funding to LPs. The remaining schools (32%) budgeted 50-100% of their Title (1) funds to LPs. This was according to school's SIR data.

**Figure 3** on the following page displays the Regional Office Service Area map, which is typically used to show the counties that are assigned to each of the 38 Regional Offices of Education. The figure also shows how they are organized into six geographic regions of the state. For the purposes of this report, the map was used to identify the location of schools with the lowest 5% designation and the distribution of Learning Partner contracts within the six geographic regions of the state. It should be noted that schools were able to contract with more than one LP; therefore, the number of schools by LP may exceed the total number of schools in each region.

As seen in the figure, four out of the five LPs with the most contracts appear to be heavily concentrated in several regions of the state. For example, the ECRA Group and DMG were heavily concentrated in area 2. Moreover, schools in this region were likely to contract with both of these LPs. Another LP, ULLC, was heavily concentrated in areas 5 and 2, with 11 schools and 7 schools, respectively. Finally, the IARSS was concentrated in areas 3 and 4 (13 schools and 8 schools, respectively), though they had contracts with a small number of schools in nearly all of the regions, except area six. Conversely, AIR was more evenly distributed across the state compared to the other four LPs.

**Figure 3**  
**Regional Service Area Map**



**Table 10** on the following page lists the percentage of signed contracts between LPs and schools by month. For example, 26% of LP contracts were signed during the 2018-2019 school year (i.e., January 2019 through March 2019). A small percentage of the contracts, i.e., 12%, were signed over the summer. The majority of contracts with LPs (i.e., 63%), however, were signed after the start of the 2019-2020 school year. This means that services and supports provided by LPs were less than a full school year.

**Table 10**  
**Month of Contract Signature with LPs**  
*Percentage of LPs by month*

Approval Months	% (n) of LPs
January, 2019	1% (1)
February, 2019	24% (25)
March, 2019	1% (1)
June, 2019	3% (3)
July, 2019	1% (1)
August, 2019	8% (8)
September, 2019	20% (21)
October, 2019	5% (5)
November, 2019	12% (13)
December, 2019	16% (17)
January, 2020	3% (3)
February, 2020	6% (6)
April, 2020	1% (1)

Source of data: Learning Partner 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report, n=108

According to the second quarter LP report, LPs were contracted to address the IQF standard priority areas and the academic and school quality indicators goal areas identified in the schools' SIP. Looking at **Table 11**, more than half of LPs (i.e., 60%) supported schools on the implementation of adult practices related to Standard 7, Student and Learning Development, which most schools identified as a priority for improvement. Similarly, 43% of LPs provided supports on adult practices related to Standard 2, Culture and Climate, another standard identified as a priority by many schools. Standard 1 was also frequently identified as an area of focus of LP support.

**Table 11**  
**IQF and Academic and School Indicators addressed by Learning Partners**  
*Percentage of LPs*

	% (n) of LPs
<b>IQF standards</b>	
S1: Continuous Improvement	41% (44)
S2: Culture and Climate	43% (47)
S3: Shared Leadership	24% (26)
S4: Governance, Management and Operations	14% (15)
S5: Educator and Employee Quality	22% (24)
S6: Family and Community Engagement	15% (16)
S7: Student and Learning Development	60% (65)
<b>Academic and School Quality Indicators</b>	
ELA growth	60% (65)
ELA proficiency	57% (62)
Math growth	50% (54)

	% (n) of LPs
Math proficiency	47% (51)
Chronic absenteeism	42% (45)
Graduation	7% (8)
Freshman on Track	5% (5)
Science proficiency	2% (2)

Source of data: Learning Partner 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report, n=108

Moving down the table to the academic and school quality indicators, LPs primarily supported schools on goals related to ELA growth / proficiency (57-60%), math growth / proficiency (47-50%), and chronic absenteeism (42%). Many schools that selected a goal for each of these indicators, therefore, were also likely to have LP support for the indicator goal.<sup>9</sup>

The type of supports that LPs provided to schools were classified by the evaluation team into four categories: coaching, professional learning, school improvement plans<sup>10</sup>, and data review/analysis<sup>11</sup>. **Table 12** lists the percentage of schools that identified each support in their plan (“Planned”, first column) and the percentage of schools that received the supports from LPs during the second, third and fourth quarters of the school year (“Provided”, columns 2-4). This allowed the evaluation team to examine the extent to which LPs provided the supports (“Provided”) that were planned by schools (“Planned”). Unfortunately, data were not available on the first quarter of the school year, therefore the assessment does not span the entire school year.

**Table 12**  
**Alignment between Planned and Actual LP Services Provided**  
*Percentage of schools*

	Planned SIR	Provided Qtr 2	Provided Qtr 3	Provided Qtr 4
Coaching	90% (81)	72% (58)	80% (65)	46% (37)
Professional learning	87% (78)	69% (54)	71% (55)	44% (34)
SIP	72% (65)	72% (47)	72% (47)	51% (33)
Data review/analysis	59% (53)	68% (36)	12% (7)	49% (26)

Source of data: 2019 SIR, n= 90 and LP Qtr 2, 3, 4 reports aggregated to school-level

Generally speaking for quarters two and three, the majority of schools received support from LPs that had been identified in their plans. To give an example, of the 81 schools that planned to have LPs provide coaching, 72% received coaching during the second quarter and 80% received coaching in the third quarter. Similarly, of the 78 schools that selected LPs to provide professional learning, 69% received professional learning during the second quarter and 71%

<sup>9</sup> Tests of association, i.e., Fisher’s Exact Test, were statistically significant for all three indicators and LP supports.

<sup>10</sup> On the LP Quarterly Report, development, implementation and monitoring were three separate categories that were aggregated in the analyses for ease of interpretation.

<sup>11</sup> On the LP Quarterly Report, analysis of academic and school quality indicators and review of the IQF were two separate categories that were aggregated in the analyses for ease of interpretation.

during the third quarter. Conversely, the only support that was below 50% was data review/analysis during the third quarter (i.e., 12% of schools received data review support).

In general, all areas of support declined during the fourth quarter. These decreases can be attributed to the school closings that resulted from the COVID19 pandemic.

Finally, the evaluation summarized the number of hours of LP support to schools and their respective districts, both face-to-face and virtually (Tables 13 and 14). Table 13 shows that about one-half of schools (50-54%) engaged for 25 hours or more in face-to-face work with Learning Partners during the second and third quarters. This translates roughly into 3 to 6+ hours per week of face-to-face time per quarter.

**Table 13**  
**Number of Hours of LP support**  
*Percentage of schools receiving face-to-face and virtual meetings*

	Zero	1-24 hours	25-47 hours	48+ hours
<b>Face-to-face</b>				
Qtr 2	13% (10)	32% (24)	17% (13)	37% (28)
Qtr 3	12% (7)	38% (21)	50% (28)	
Qtr 4	85% (58)	15% (10)		
<b>Virtual</b>				
Qtr 2	40% (30)	44% (33)	8% (6)	8% (6)
Qtr 3	29% (22)	63% (47)	7% (5)	3% (2)
Qtr 4	28% (19)	50% (34)	12% (8)	10% (7)

Source of data: LP Qtr 2, 3, 4 reports aggregated to school-level

The amount of virtual time with schools was lower than face-to-face time during the second quarter but increased during the third and fourth quarters. The percentage of schools that received 25+ hours of virtual support increased from 16% in quarter two to 22% in quarter four. Conversely, the percentage of schools that received 25+ hours of face-to-face support decreased from over 54% in quarter two to zero in quarter four. The pattern of increased virtual support coupled with decreased face-to-face support is indicative of school closings.

Table 14 shows support provided to the district. The amount of face-to-face time that LPs spent at the district was appropriately less than the amount of time spent at the schools, particularly during the second and third quarters when schools were in session. The amount of time spent providing virtual supports increased during the third and fourth quarters, the latter of which was on par with school level virtual supports. Specifically, LPs provided 25+ hours of virtual support to 22% of schools and 24% of their districts during the fourth quarter. Again, this data most likely reflects the ways in which LPs shifted supports after schools closed.

**Table 14**  
**Number of Hours of LP support**  
*Percentage of districts receiving face-to-face and virtual meetings*

	Zero	1-24 hours	25-47 hours	48+ hours
<b>Face-to-face</b>				
Qtr 2	20% (15)	48% (36)	23% (17)	9% (7)
Qtr 3	26% (19)	53% (38)	21% (15)	
Qtr 4	88% (60)	10% (7)	2% (1)	
<b>Virtual</b>				
Qtr 2	41% (31)	36% (27)	23% (17)	
Qtr 3	37% (28)	41% (31)	1% (1)	20% (15)
Qtr 4	26% (18)	50% (34)	2% (1)	22% (15)

Source of data: LP Qtr 2, 3, 4 reports aggregated to school-level, n=90

## Summary

The data presented in this section shows that schools contracted with a small number of Learning Partners that were vetted by the state. Three out of the top five LPs in terms of number of contracts also had the highest total dollar allocation. They included the IARSS, ULLC, and AIR. Moreover, four out of the five LPs with the most contracts were concentrated in several areas of the state. It is unclear how LPs were selected; however, it is plausible that word of mouth from other schools or heavy advertisement from LPs resulted in the higher concentrations of contracts in certain areas.

The findings also show that schools used the support of the LPs to address priority standards and student outcome areas that were identified on their SIP. The supports included coaching, professional learning, SIP-related supports and data review and/or analysis. These supports were delivered mostly during the second and third quarters. It is difficult, however, to draw firm conclusions about the extent to which LPs fulfilled their contracts with schools because of the missing data from the first quarter of the school year and the school closings that occurred during the fourth quarter, the latter of which may have resulted in disruptions to service provision. To add, we don't know the total number of hours that were contracted to LPs to determine the extent to which contract services were fulfilled. Finally, data were not available to gauge the extent to which the supports provided by LPs were deemed useful and of high-quality by the schools.

On a positive note, many LPs continued to provide coaching, professional learning, etc., during the last quarter in a virtual format. This data suggests that LPs and schools were able to continue their work together despite the school closings.



## IV. Schools' Progress toward Annual Targets

The final section of the report summarizes findings on schools' progress toward meeting annual targets in the primary outcome areas identified on their SIP, including ELA, math, and chronic absenteeism. It also investigates the relationship between Learning Partner supports and outcomes. The findings are based on the SIR reports that schools submitted in February 2020 as well as on quarterly reports that LPs submitted on schools' progress toward targets.<sup>12</sup> Caution is needed in drawing conclusions from the LP data, particularly for the fourth quarter because of school closings in March. While LPs continued to track outcomes after March, the mode of instruction changed due to the mandatory suspension of in-person instruction, which may be associated with changes in student outcomes.

### English Language Arts (ELA) Progress

**Table 15** summarizes school (i.e., SIR) and Learning Partner data on schools' progress toward meeting ELA annual targets. Of the 40 schools that provided data on ELA outcomes in February, 65% showed or reported that they were making progress toward their annual targets. Learning Partners, however, reported that a higher percentage of schools were making progress toward targets during the second quarter (i.e., 84%) and third quarter (i.e., 87%).

**Table 15**  
**ELA Progress: Based on School and Learning Partner Reports**

	February SIR (n=40)	LP Quarter 2 (n=52)	LP Quarter 3 (n=53)	LP Quarter 4 (n=32)
Progress toward target	65% (26)	84% (44)	87% (46)	97% (31)
Mixed growth	15% (6)	8% (4)	11% (6)	3% (1)
No growth	20% (8)	8% (4)	2% (1)	
<i>No data provided</i>	<i>56% (50)</i>	<i>42% (38)</i>	<i>41% (37)</i>	<i>64% (58)</i>

Source of data: 2019 SIR, n= 90 and LP Qtr 2, 3, 4 reports aggregated to school-level

<sup>12</sup> School outcomes were reported differently between the school and LP reports. Schools provided a narrative summary, which was coded into three categories: progress toward meeting annual target as indicated by specific data and/or their interpretation of the data, mixed growth as indicated by growth shown in some grades/target student groups, or no growth as indicated by data provided and/or their interpretation of the data. Conversely, LPs were required to select one of three responses to indicate school progress: annual target met, progress toward target, no growth. In instances where more than one LP per school provided different responses, the school was coded as mixed growth.



The table also shows that as a result of the narrative-style format of reporting on the SIR, progress made on the ELA goal for 56% of the schools was unclear. Likewise, there was missing data from the LP reports although the reason for missing data is unclear.

## Math Progress

**Table 16** summarizes data on schools' status toward meeting annual targets in math according to schools (i.e., February SIR) and Learning Partners. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of schools that provided data on math outcomes showed or reported making progress toward their annual targets in February. Learning Partners reported that 86% of schools made progress toward their annual targets during the second quarter and 81% during the third quarter. The table also shows, however, that the majority of schools did not provide data on math outcomes and most LPs did not collect data either.

**Table 16**  
**Math Progress: Based on School and Learning Partner Reports**

	February SIR (n=22)	LP Quarter 2 (n=30)	LP Quarter 3 (n=36)	LP Quarter 4 (n=15)
Progress toward target	68% (15)	86% (26)	81% (29)	
Mixed growth	18% (4)	7% (2)	11% (4)	100% (15)
No growth	14% (3)	7% (2)	8% (3)	
<i>No data provided</i>	<i>76% (68)</i>	<i>67% (60)</i>	<i>60% (54)</i>	<i>83% (75)</i>

Source of data: 2019 SIR, n= 90 and LP Qtr 2, 3, 4 reports aggregated to school-level

## Chronic Absenteeism Progress

**Table 17** summarizes data on schools' status toward meeting annual targets for chronic absenteeism according to school and Learning Partner reports. As seen in the table, nearly all of the schools (99%) showed or reported making progress toward meeting their annual targets as of February when they submitted their SIR. Learning Partners reported similar results during the second quarter.

**Table 17**  
**Chronic Absenteeism: Based on School and Learning Partner Reports**

	February SIR (n=16)	LP Quarter 2 (n=19)	LP Quarter 3 (n=18)	LP Quarter 4 (n=15)
Target met		5% (1)		
Progress toward target	99% (15)	95% (18)	100% (18)	93% (14)
Mixed growth				7% (1)
No growth	1% (1)			
<i>No data provided</i>	<i>82% (74)</i>	<i>79% (71)</i>	<i>80% (72)</i>	<i>83% (75)</i>

Source of data: 2019 SIR, n= 90 and LP Qtr 2, 3, 4 reports aggregated to school-level

## Relationship between Learning Partners and Outcomes

The evaluation examined the relationship between the Learning Partner variables listed below and school outcomes (i.e., ELA, math, and chronic absenteeism).

- ◆ Individual Learning Partner organizations
- ◆ Timing of the contract signatures
- ◆ Hours of service provided
- ◆ Type of support provided (e.g., coaching, professional learning, SIP, and data review/analyses)
- ◆ Percentage of Title (1) funds contracted to Learning Partners

The purpose of these analyses was to identify characteristics of Learning Partner supports that were associated with positive school improvements. Of all the variables listed above, the analyses yielded one statistically significant finding. It was LP coaching supports and ELA outcomes.<sup>13</sup> Specifically, **Table 18** shows that 79% of schools that received coaching support from Learning Partners during the second quarter also reported progress toward meeting their annual target in ELA. Conversely, only 44% of schools that did not receive coaching supports made progress toward their target.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 18**  
**Coaching Support and ELA Outcomes**

*Comparison between schools receiving and not receiving coaching support*

	Coaching Support (n=24)	No Coaching Support (n=16)
Progress toward target	79% (19)	44% (7)
Mixed growth	4% (1)	31% (5)
No growth	17% (4)	25% (4)

Source of data: 2019 SIR, n= 90 and LP Qtr 2, 3, 4 reports aggregated to school-level

## Summary

Overall, the findings summarized in this section showed some promise for improvement in school outcomes. Specifically, 65% of schools reported making progress on their ELA goals, 68% of schools reported making progress on math goals, and 99% of schools reported making progress on chronic absenteeism goals. Learning Partner reports were even more positive than school reports, with a higher percentage of LPs rating the schools as making progress toward their goals in the second and third quarters. The data reporting by schools and Learning Partners, however, was inconsistent. Furthermore, many schools did not provide any reports about progress made on their goal areas. Coupled with the school closings and the loss of data,

<sup>13</sup> The Chi-square value was 6.88,  $p = .03$ ,  $n=40$  valid cases.

<sup>14</sup> Tests of association were not significant for math and chronic absenteeism. It should be noted that the sample sizes for these two outcome areas was small.

it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the impact of schools' improvement efforts on student outcomes for the 2019-2020 school year.

There was a silver lining in the analyses. That is, the evaluation found a statistically significant relationship between coaching supports provided by LPs and ELA outcomes. This finding lines up with other research that has demonstrated positive relationships between coaching supports and teachers' instructional practice and students' academic achievement.<sup>15</sup> Further investigation into the coaching supports - target audiences, depth and frequency, content, coaching models used - is suggested so that best practices can be shared with other schools and LPs.

Finally, it should be noted that the SIR and Learning Partner Quarterly Reports were not originally designed for the evaluation. Nevertheless, in light of the circumstances related to the COVID19 pandemic which are likely to continue to limit data collection opportunities into the 2020-2021 school year, key personnel from IL-EMPOWER, ISBE's Research Department, and the external evaluator collaborated over the course of several months in the spring of 2020 to make revisions to these two reporting mechanisms in order to increase their utility for the evaluation. The revisions included more consistent and quantitative measurements of school improvement efforts, Learning Partner supports, and the reporting of goals. The revisions will enable the evaluation to better investigate the alignment between school improvement plans and actions, LP supports, changes in adult practices, and changes in student outcomes. To further improve the reporting process and its impact on program improvement, the evaluation team recommends that the report submission deadlines for both schools and Learning Partners be at the same time. This will allow for more relevant comparisons across the reports. Additionally, the evaluation team recommends that ISBE develop a logic model that clearly outlines the key inputs, outputs, and short- and long-term outcomes of IL-EMPOWER. This will enable the evaluation team to better align data collection activities to key components of the system of support so that their impact on school and student outcomes can be appropriately assessed.

---

<sup>15</sup> Kraft MA, Blazar D, Hogan D. [The Effect of Teacher Coaching on Instruction and Achievement: A Meta-Analysis of the Causal Evidence](#). Review of Educational Research. 2018; 88 (4):547-588.



**MI**  **MEASUREMENT**  
INCORPORATED