

IL-EMPOWER is the statewide system of support for school improvement in Illinois. Its mission is to build the capacity of educators to support continuous improvement of school-wide systems. Schools with the ESSA designation of lowest-performing 5%ⁱ are eligible for the following *comprehensive* supports under IL-EMPOWER.

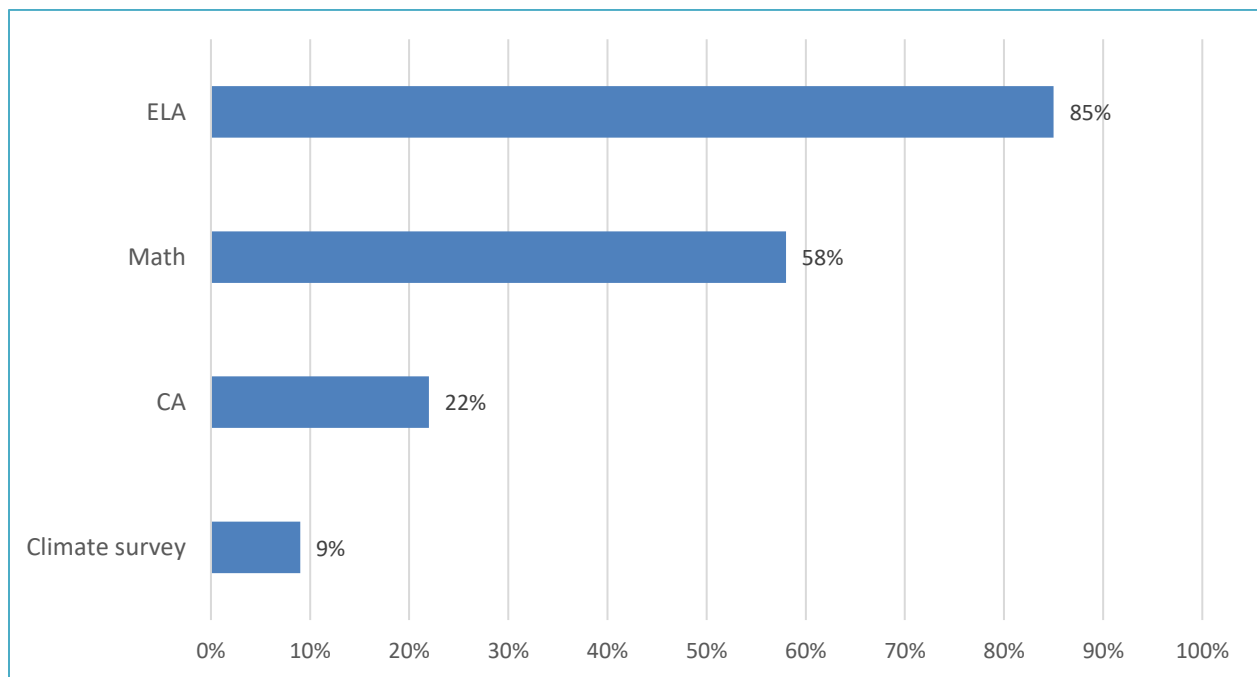
- ✎ Title I 1003(a) funding, as well as funding based on the state's equity formula that is weighted on student enrollment and level of district funding adequacy.
- ✎ Primary Learning Partners that provide professional learning supports in the areas of school culture, data driven instruction and decision making, instructional best practices and standards-based learning and assessment.ⁱⁱ
- ✎ Approved Learning Partners (LPs) that provide a variety of services such as professional development, coaching, data analyses, school improvement development, implementation, and monitoring, to support schools' improvement efforts. Schools could use Title I 1003(a) money to contract with one or more of the 54 state-vetted LPs.
- ✎ Assignment to a state-designated IL-EMPOWER Coordinator who provides guidance on the school improvement process, clarifies the participatory components of IL-EMPOWER, and facilitates quarterly meetings with LPs.
- ✎ School Improvement Planning (SIP) that includes a requirement to complete a system needs assessment using the Illinois Quality Framework Standard Rubric (IQFSR) and academic and school success quality data. The findings of the assessment are used to develop, implement, and monitor a 3-year School Improvement Plan (SIP).

This evaluation briefⁱⁱⁱ provides a summary of key findings related to comprehensive schools' implementation of school improvement plans and their progress toward meeting annual targets during the first two quarters of the 2021-2021 academic year. It also includes a summary of information provided by approved LPs during the same time, including the amount of money budgeted and invoiced for their services, as well as the number of service hours they provided to schools. The findings were derived from the 2020-2021 School Improvement Report (SIR) and Learning Partner Quarterly Monitoring Report.^{iv} These data reporting tools are housed in ISBE's I-WAS reporting system and are used to monitor schools' implementation of their SIPs and supports provided by approved LPs.

School Improvement Goals and Mid-Year Progress Toward Annual Targets

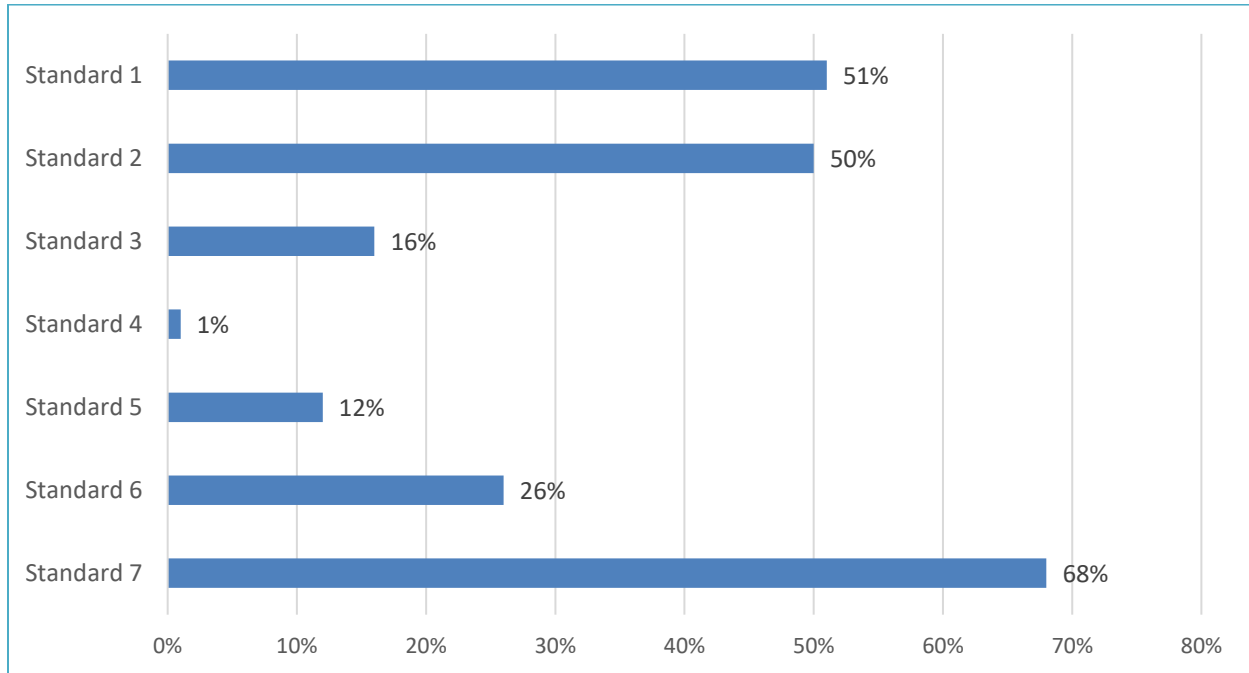
Summary: Most schools focused school improvement planning on improving ELA and math proficiency/growth, as well as adult practices linked to learning and instruction (Standard 7), continuous improvement (Standard 1), and culture and climate (Standard 2). By the end of the second quarter, nearly half of the schools reported little progress was made toward meeting annual targets for their academic goals. Conversely, a higher percentage of schools were showing progress toward meeting annual targets for adult practice-related goals. Schools that reported higher implementation of strategies identified to address goals also reported higher ratings on progress made toward meeting annual targets.

Goal Area: Student Academic and School Quality Indicators



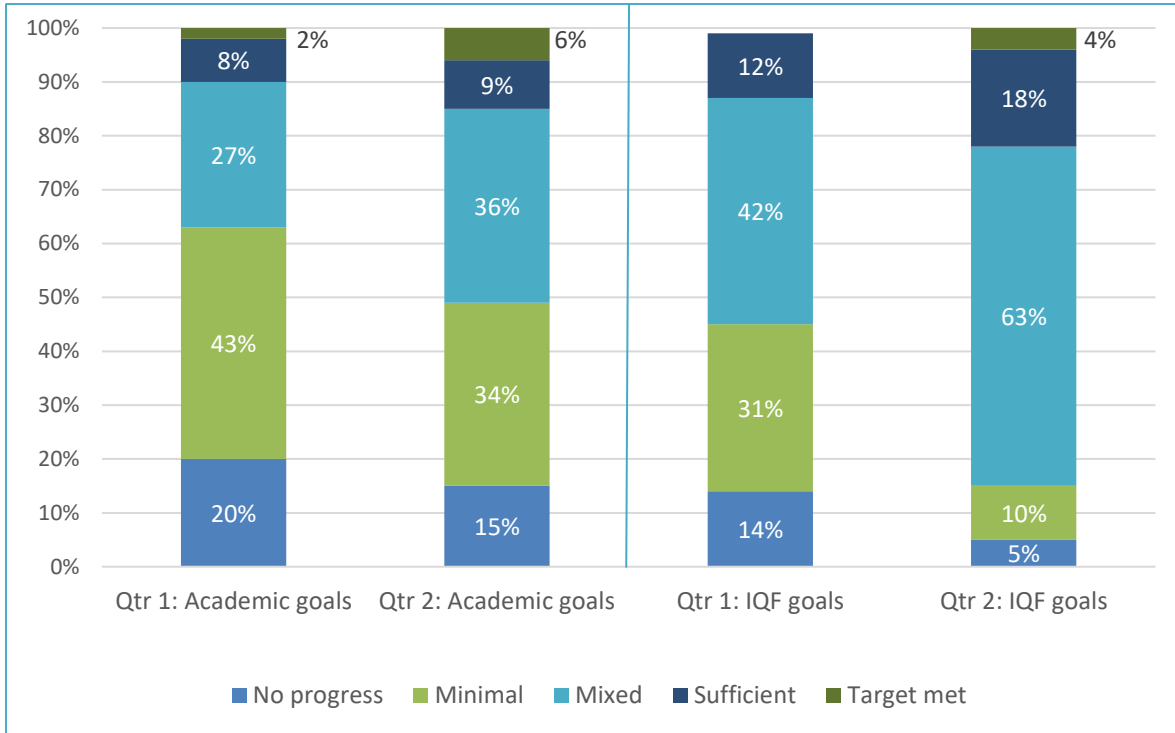
- Schools selected up to three goals focused on student academic and school quality indicator data on their school improvement plan.^v The indicator areas included: ELA proficiency/growth, math proficiency/growth, science proficiency, English Learner proficiency, High School graduation rate, chronic absenteeism, 9th graders on track to graduate rate, and climate survey (i.e., 5Essentials survey).
- As seen in the figure above, 85% of schools selected ELA proficiency/growth as a goal for improvement. This was followed by math (58%), chronic absenteeism (22%), and climate survey (9%).^{vi} Less than 5% of schools selected the remaining indicators: science proficiency, High School graduation, EL proficiency, or 9th grade on track, which are not shown in this figure.

Goal Area: Illinois Quality Framework Standards



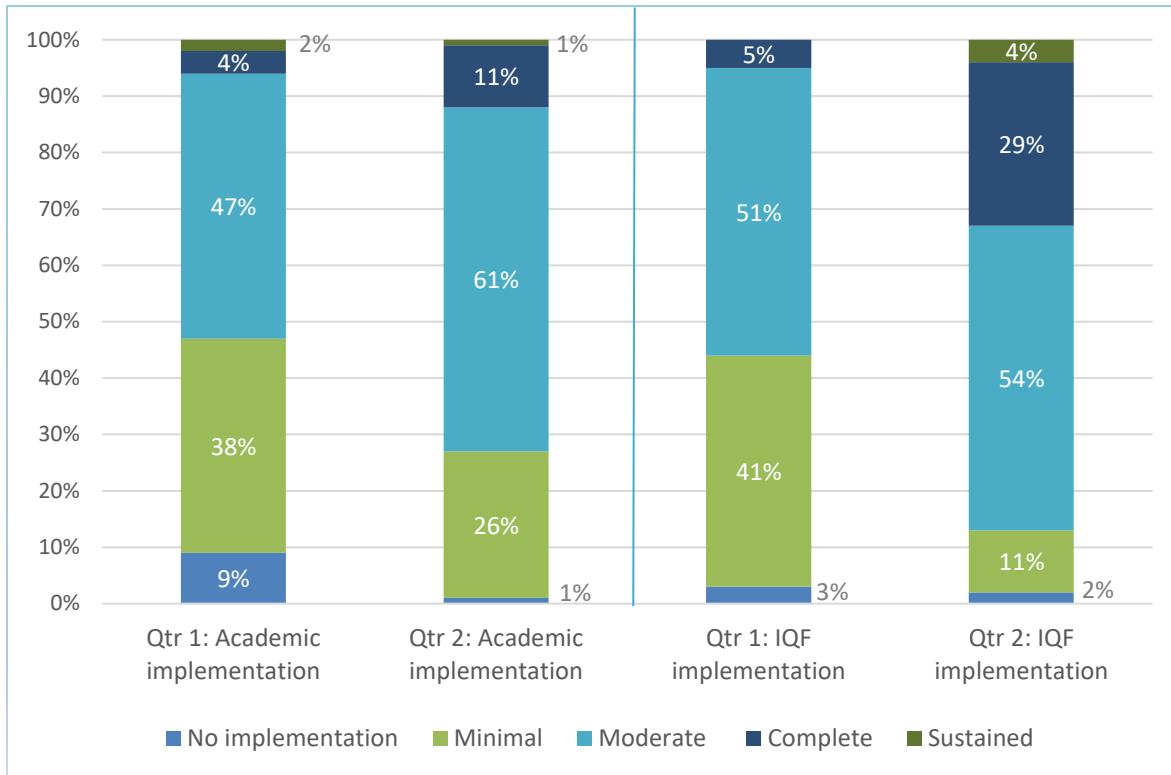
- Schools also selected Illinois Quality Framework (IQF) standards as areas of focus on their school improvement plans. Goals related to the IQF were intended to address changes and/or improvements in adult practices. For example, strategies identified by schools were primarily focused on improvements in adult practices in the following areas: 1) School Improvement Teams, 2) teacher participation in professional development, 3) delivery of instruction, 4) interventions, 5) school climate, and 6) educators' use of data.
- The figure above shows that 68% of schools identified goals related to Standard 7: Student and Learning Development. This was followed by Standard 1: Continuous Improvement and Standard 2: Culture and Climate at 51% and 50%, respectively. Just over one-quarter of schools (i.e., 26%) had goals related to Standard 6: Family and Community Engagement. Less than 20% of schools selected Standard 3: Shared Leadership (16%), Standard 4: Governance, Management and Operations (1%), and Standard 5: Educator and Employee Quality (12%) as areas of focus.

Midyear Progress toward Meeting Annual Targets



- Schools used a 5-point rubric that ranged from *no progress* to *target met* to rate their progress toward meeting annual targets on academic and IQF goals.^{vii}
- The left side of the figure summarizes progress data on **academic goals**. Here, most schools (i.e., 63%) reported *no* or *minimal* progress was made toward meeting annual targets during the first quarter. By the end of the second quarter, the percentage of schools that reported *no* or *minimal* progress decreased to 49%.
- For the remaining schools, 27% reported *mixed* progress during the first quarter, which increased to 36% during the second quarter. This means that sufficient growth was made for some of the targeted groups but not all (e.g., specific grades). Finally, there was a small percentage of schools that reported *sufficient* progress or *target met* both quarters, i.e., 10% in the first quarter and 15% in the second quarter.
- The right side of the figure summarizes progress data on **IQF goals**. Overall, schools fared better on IQF goals compared to academic goals. Specifically, the percentage of schools rating progress as *sufficient* or *target met* increased from 12% to 22% from first to second quarter. Conversely, the percentage of schools reporting *minimal* to *no* progress decreased from 45% in the first quarter to 15% in the second quarter.

Midyear Progress on Implementation



- Schools also rated their level of implementation of strategies/practices/programs related to academic and IQF goals using a 5-point rubric that ranged from *no* implementation to *sustained* levels of implementation.
- The figure above shows that during the first quarter 47% of schools rated academic-related implementation as *moderate* and 51% of schools rated IQF-related implementation as *moderate*. By second quarter, the percentage schools using the *moderate* category to describe levels of implementation increased to 61% and 54%, respectively.
- Additionally, there was an increase in the percentage of schools that rated implementation as *complete* from first to second quarter. More progress was made on implementation of IQF goals compared to academic goals.
- There was a significant correlation between schools' implementation and progress ratings (reported on page 4). Specifically, schools that reported higher levels of implementation also had higher ratings on progress made toward meeting annual goals.

Approved Learning Partner Services

Summary: Approved Learning Partners provided a variety of services to schools during the first two quarters of the school year. By the end of the second quarter, LPs had invoiced almost half of their budgeted amounts and provided an average of 33 hours of face-to-face support and 44 hours of virtual support to schools. While the review of data did not show a significant relationship between the portion of the budget expended, hours of support provided, and schools’ implementation and progress toward meeting annual targets, further analyses should be conducted at the end of the school year before making final conclusions about the impact of LP support on schools’ continuous improvement efforts.

Total Budgeted and Amounts Invoiced

	Mean	Range	
		Minimum	Maximum
Total budgeted for SY21	\$41,959.09	\$3,246.00	\$145,000.00
Amount invoiced for Quarter 1	\$8,084.83	\$0.00	\$42,500.00
Amount invoiced for Quarter 2	\$11,462.82	\$0.00	\$60,000.00
Combined amount for Quarters 1 and 2	\$19,547.65	\$0.00	\$80,000.00
Percentage of Total for Quarter 1 and 2	49%	0%	100%

- Approved Learning Partners reported the budgeted amount of their contracts for each school, as well as the amount that they invoiced during the first and second quarters. Shown in the table above, approved Learning Partners’ contracts with schools averaged at \$41,959.09 for the 2020-2021 school year. The contracts ranged from a low of \$3,246.00 to a high of \$145,000.00.
- Further examination of the budgeted amounts provided by LPs showed that Urban Learning and Leadership Center was represented in 12 out of the top 20 highest dollar contracts (~\$80,000 or more). Conversely, the lowest budgeted amounts were with ROEs from the IARSS (~10,000 or less).
- Also seen in the table, approved Learning Partners invoiced 49% of their budgets by the end of the second quarter. There were 8 schools where the LP did not report an invoiced amount during the first two quarters but provided services.
- There was no relationship between the amount of money budgeted or invoiced and schools’ levels of implementation and progress made toward meeting annual targets.

Hours of Service Provided

	Mean (range) Face-to-Face Hours	% of LPs not providing Face-to-Face	Mean (range) Virtual Hours	% of LPs not providing service
Average HOURS	32.56 (0-595)	66%	44.29 (0-360)	5%
Data analyses	10.67 (2-58)	87%	11.83 (1-49)	59%
System needs assessment	14.50 (2-58)	95%	12.75 (1-37)	93%
Development of SIP	5.50 (3-8)	93%	9.22 (1-30)	84%
Implementation of SIP	14.69 (2-63)	89%	10.76 (1-35)	72%
Monitoring/Evaluation of SIP	10.85 (1-58)	89%	11.53 (1-49)	58%
Professional learning	24.33 (1-65)	87%	24.00 (1-180)	43%
Coaching	37.07 (1-175)	77%	25.06 (1-180)	39%
Other	357.60 (1-595)	96%	3.44 (1-10)	93%

- The table above summarizes the average number of hours that approved Learning Partners provided services to schools during the first two quarters of the school year. It is divided into hours that LPs provided services face-to-face at the school and in a virtual setting. The table also includes the percentage of LPs that did not provide services in each category.
- Several conclusions can be made from the data presented in the table. One, LPs provided more hours of services in a virtual setting (average of 44.29 hours) than face-to-face (average of 32.56). Many schools were in a remote or hybrid learning schedule during the first half of the school year which would explain the use of virtual supports from LPs. Two, LPs provided the most hours of support in areas of professional learning and coaching, regardless of the setting.
- As would be expected, there was a significant correlation between the cumulative amount invoiced and the number of hours provided. In other words, Learning Partners that invoiced higher percentages of their budget in the first two quarters also provided more hours of support. There was no relationship, however, between the number of service provision hours and schools' progress ratings on academic and IQF goals.

Midyear Considerations

Measurement Incorporated offers the following suggestions after a review of the first and second quarter SIR and LPQMR datasets, most of which are intended to increase the rigor of the data and monitoring procedures.

- ∞ Ensure that schools are identifying SMART goals on their SIP. Our review of goals submitted by schools revealed that many did not adhere to SMART goal writing. For instance, schools reported vague goals that would make it difficult to measure and monitor improvement over time in a consistent fashion.
- ∞ Develop and implement a process for ensuring that schools and Learning Partners are submitting quarterly reports. Our sample included 108 out of 131 comprehensive schools that submitted/saved both quarter one and two reports. This means that there were 23 schools that did not submit reports. For the Learning Partners, there were 116 submissions for 97 schools. If each school is expected to partner with at least one LP then reports were missing for 34 schools. The expectation should be a 100% submission rate for both groups.
- ∞ Develop and implement a process for sharing the databases with the evaluator in a timely fashion. The evaluator made several requests spanning a 1 ½ month period before receiving the information needed for analyses.
- ∞ Consider providing training or a webinar to schools and Learning Partners to review instructions on how to complete the quarterly reports and address questions about data fields and requirements.

ⁱ This includes lowest performing 5% of eligible Title I schools, statewide, and high schools that have a graduation rate of 67% or less.

ⁱⁱ Illinois Association of Regional State Superintendents, Illinois Principal's Association, Illinois Association of School Administrators, Illinois Resource Center, IL-MTSS Network, Lurie Children's Hospital

ⁱⁱⁱ The evaluation is being conducted by Measurement Incorporated, an external evaluation company contracted by ISBE to conduct a three-year study of IL-EMPOWER.

^{iv} Quarter 1 and 2 SIR reports were submitted by 108 out of 131 schools. Seventy-six of the schools were in their second year of SIP implementation under IL-EMPOWER and twenty-seven were in their first year. LPQMR reports were submitted by 116 LPs representing 97 schools.

^v Illinois' ESSA plan includes student academic and school quality 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.

^{vi} Schools selected up to 3 goals, therefore the percentages do not add up to 100.

^{vii} Schools also reported the mean percentage of progress made during each quarter (e.g., average proficiency rate on assessments related to their goal). Progress ratings were significantly related to the mean percentage of progress reported by schools from the first to second quarter. For example, schools that reported a higher level of progress (e.g., sufficient or target) also reported higher averages on the percentage of progress, whereas, schools that reported lower levels of progress also reported zero to low averages on the percentage of progress.