

Among schools that improved, which systemic and organizational change elements were used to improve student performance and close opportunity gaps?



**EBF LEGISLATION**

In 2017, the [Evidence-Based Funding for Student Success Act](#) was signed into law. It replaced one of the most regressive funding formulas in the country and was designed to address inequity in Illinois' school funding to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education.

**THE 5-YEAR EVALUATIVE STUDY**

The legislation calls for an evaluative study to be completed every five years by the EBF Professional Review Panel and submitted to the State Board of Education, the General Assembly, and the governor. It is intended to assess whether the EBF model is achieving state goals, including whether the formula is leading to the desired outcomes in student achievement, adequacy, and equity. See the full report [here](#).

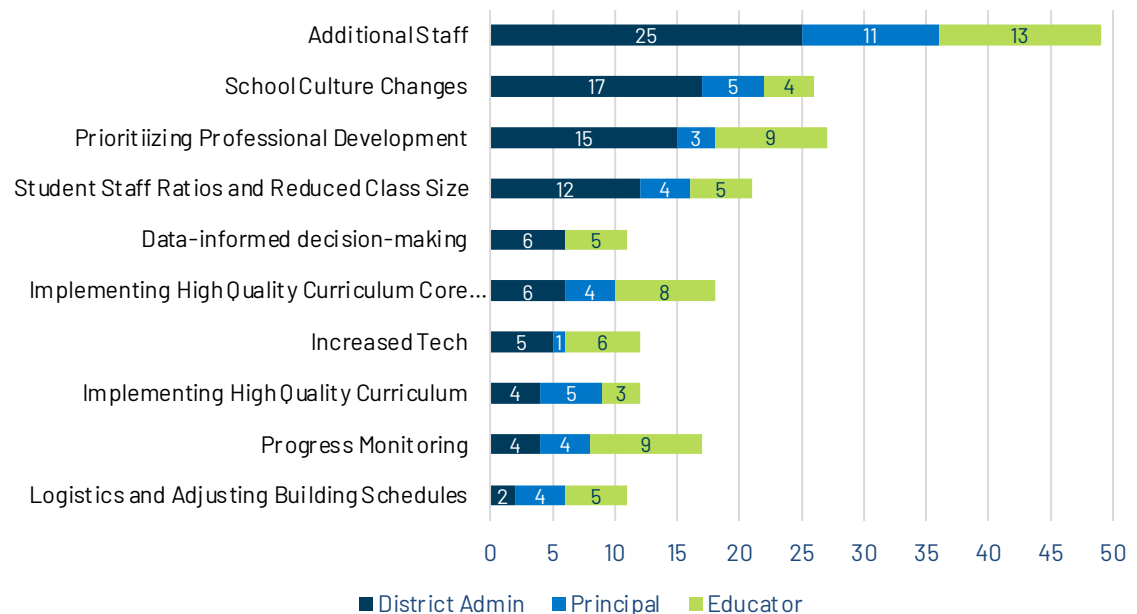
**Qualitative Analysis Methodology**

District administrators, principals, and teachers from **87 schools** that saw academic improvement in ELA and math assessment scores from SY 2017-18 to SY 2018-19 **participated in interviews and completed a digital survey regarding their spending decisions**. Each of these districts were designated as Tier 1 in SY 2017-18, and academic improvement was determined by meeting the following criteria:

- Statistically significant increase in ELA and math assessment scores for all students.
- Each of the target student groups (Black, Hispanic/Latino, IEP, EL, and low income) either saw no decreases in proficiency or a narrowing of the achievement gap.

**KEY FINDINGS**

Factors Contributing to School Improvement, According to Interviews and the Digital Survey



Changes in staffing, including adding staff to fill open positions or create new positions, maintaining consistency in staffing, and lowering student-to-staff ratios, as well as, improving instructional quality were seen as critical adjustments for improving student outcomes.

## 2022 5-YEAR EVALUATIVE STUDY

Interviews with district administrators, principals, and educators generally attributed their students' academic improvement to increasing instructional quality, additional staffing, and engaging in and executing strategic plans.

### INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

#### Purchasing and implementing new curricula

- Replace outdated curricula
- Standards-aligned in reading and math
- Vertical alignment between grades and horizontal alignment between classrooms

#### Professional development

- Often in tandem with new curricula
- Targeted sessions: instruction, SEL, classroom management, assessment, etc.

#### Hiring instructional coaches

- Model instruction on social-emotional learning curricula and approaches

“[Professional development] has been helpful. [Instructional coaches] modeled instruction and they have been sounding boards.”

- Educator

### ADDITIONAL STAFFING

#### Adding Staff:

Bringing back or filling positions that had been cut in previous years due to insufficient funding

- Teaching staff: core teachers
- Whole-student supports: counselors, aides, paraprofessionals
- Specific student supports: bilingual coaches, elective teachers, AP/IB teachers
- Interventionists/reading specialists
- Instructional coaches

#### Staff consistency

- Administrators and principals were able to plan with confidence in their ability to retain based on their budget

#### Reducing student-staff ratios and reducing class size.

- There was positive impact for educators and students

“We were just running bare bones and then we started getting smaller class sizes because we were adding teachers...the aides were a big part of this, where people aren't just stretched so thin that it just wouldn't work, but we were making it work.”

- Principal

### ENGAGING IN AND EXECUTING STRATEGIC PLANS

#### When executing strategic plans, participants associated positive school change with:

- Employing data-informed decision-making.
- Utilizing progress monitoring for continuous improvement.
- Working to improve school climate and culture.

#### District leaders and principals felt that additional funding enabled shifts in their leadership and management approaches.

- Leadership changes shifted from focusing on maintenance to those aimed at improvement toward specific goals.
- Systemic and coordinated approach to resource use and decision-making.

#### Teachers highlighted openness to new creative approaches and a commitment to continuous improvement.

“I think having new leadership was positive because we were able to be just a little bit more creative – and I'm trying to think outside of the pandemic. Like if I go back to the instructional coaches, we were able to find ways to utilize them effectively, even if they weren't utilized for the purposes that we initially hired them through evidence-based funding.”

-Principal