

Strategic Learning Initiatives: Sustainability

SLI's transformation model creates a culture of participative problem solving, collaboration, consistency, ownership, and accountability. Teachers that contribute to the transformation of a school using this model experience both a skill and motivation increase as they see the results they are able to create and sustain. This creates a world-class teaching and learning system within a school and a sustainable and scalable model that enables all schools in a district to take full responsibility for their performance.

One of the factors that restrict the improvement of school performance is teacher turnover. School leadership that limits teacher turnover will increase productivity and sustainability. A primary goal of our transformation process is to shift the school culture towards collaboration, teamwork, and increased teacher confidence in their improved abilities. As this culture shift takes place, teachers experience an increase in their energy and commitment for teaching and learning.

Staff hired with federal funds will no longer be needed once ISBE support ends, as new organizational structures will have been established to continue the project, e.g. teacher leadership teams as well as school-wide, planning, instructional leadership, grade-level, cross-grade level, lead teacher, and department teams. After the funding ends, school staff, along with project teachers and partners will continue their participation as part of their regular professional assignments.

In addition, a wide range of systems will have been built at each participating school to ensure that the schools have the capacity to continue the school reform activities developed under ISBE funding by the lead partner. Those include systems for: audit and assessment, professional development, leadership programs, community and parent/family involvement, school safety, after-school programming, expanded scheduling for student learning, transition from grade to grade, evaluation of principals and staff, evaluation of program effectiveness, the infusion of effective learning technologies, supporting high expectations for student learning, equity and access to learning for students from all backgrounds, financial planning, and the development of human capital. Essentially, ISBE funds will enable the project to institutionalize the teams and systems provided by lead and partner organizations.

The participating LEAs and schools, as part of the work of the lead partner, will also undertake planning to seek out public and private funding from local, state, and federal sources. SLI will offer workshops to the Leadership Teams in the districts and at schools on how to effectively apply for funding from such agencies. Those workshops will enable the districts and schools to identify potential public and private RFP's so that they can submit detailed grant applications, and to develop a template that can be used for a variety of grant applications. By the end of the project's three years, each LEA and/or school will have developed and written at least one grant proposal and submitted it to a public or private foundation for funding.

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