



Illinois State Board of Education

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Abstract

Target Audience

SREB provides comprehensive school redesign support to middle grades and high schools

Evidence of Effectiveness

The Consortium for Policy Research in Education of the University of Pennsylvania described SREB as having a system of support to advance reform efforts. A case study of five school reform models conducted by researchers from the center analyzed how three schools implemented the *HSTW* design. The consortium concluded that *HSTW* clearly effected changes in school structure and organization. “*HSTW*,” they wrote, is “ultimately about empowering teachers to take full responsibility for the success of all students and giving them access to the resources they need to do so.” They found that *HSTW* is adaptable by design and that school and district leadership in particular found the *HSTW* Technical Assistance Visit reports of great value. The study finally concluded that, for teachers and administrators who reach consensus about a vision for change for their schools and are willing to invest time and effort in realizing that vision, *HSTW* offers a participatory structure and a wealth of professional expertise that can significantly advance reform efforts. Data collected suggest that under the right conditions, the design can empower teachers, engender a deep commitment to reform, and facilitate improvements in instruction, professional collaboration, and teacher-student relationships.

***High Schools That Work* scores highest rating on training and materials to help schools improve.** The Comprehensive School Reform Quality (CSRQ) Center of the American Institutes of Research (AIR) concluded that *HSTW* was built on a solid foundation that linked the model’s design to a research base for the model’s core components: organization and governance; professional development; technical assistance; curriculum; student assessment; data-based decision making; and parent, family, and community involvement. The report also found moderately strong evidence of services and support to enable schools to successfully implement the model. The report also recognized *High Schools That Work* for its formal processes of establishing an initial understanding of the model at its sites and the use of informal strategies to

develop faculty buy-in, allocating school resources as materials and time, and using benchmarks for implementation.

U.S. Department of Education cited *High Schools That Work* as having evidence suggesting that broad-based comprehensive school management reforms can produce positive results. In its Request for Applications for education research grants, the department indicated that *High Schools That Work* has greater gains in achievement for students of high-implementation schools than at moderate- and low-implementation schools, implying that this design is an excellent candidate for a study using the more rigorous standards for research.

Pre-intervention / Needs Assessment

SREB has improved its Technical Assistance Visit process and now conducts a thorough College and Career Readiness Review of each school using the High Schools That Work design. The CCR Review includes an in-depth desktop review of programs offered at the school including opportunities for postsecondary credit, certifications, advanced studies and their alignment to workforce needs. In addition, the CCR Review includes a student survey, faculty survey and facilitated self-study by teachers and leaders at the school. Finally, a team conducts an on-site review of school and classroom practices. The team lead prepares a report of findings for all aspects of the review that includes a set of recommended actions for improvement along with evidence of the need for improvement.

General Description of Supports Provided

The High Schools That Work design is the nation's largest and oldest effort to improve secondary education in the country. The design has two pillars – engage faculty and leaders in taking ownership of the problems and improvement efforts at the school and a set of key practices that focus on getting students to put forth greater effort. These pillars guide schools in owning the improvement effort, not becoming a victim of the changes.

A unique aspect of the design is the dual focus on both academic and career technical studies to create purpose driven students. SREB supports high schools in developing career pathways (career academies for large schools) that link a rigorous academic core with a quality career pathway that connects students to a career goal beyond high school. For middle grades, SREB supports schools to expand career exploration, provide STEM learning opportunities and focus on students leaving prepared for rigorous high school studies. SREB believes this focus on success at the next level gets students to put forth greater effort and provides meaning for school.

Instructional reform, including assessment, curriculum and instruction

SREB provides support in four critical areas to improve instruction. SREB uses ongoing, job-embedded professional development (not one shot workshops) to help teachers move new College and Career Readiness Literacy Standards into classrooms using the Literacy Design Collaborative tools. For new College and Career Readiness Mathematics Standards, SREB supports math teachers to use a balanced

approach to math instruction using the Mathematics Design Collaborative tools. SREB also support career technical teachers to implement authentic Project-based Learning units of study that embed technical, literacy, math and science standards. Finally, SREB supports all teachers to improve the quality of questioning in classrooms. These four areas provide a comprehensive approach to improving instruction in every content area, not just English and mathematics.

Instructional and Leadership Coaching

SREB research over the past 25 years has shown that leadership (school and district) are key to school improvement. SREB school leadership specialists (SREB coaches) work with the school leadership team (not just the principal) to implement improvement plans and provide follow-up support for professional development. In essence, the coach serves as an external support to **ensure implementation of best practices. A unique aspect of SREB's leadership coaching is a close relationship with district supports.** SREB expects that the district will provide a key contact (Liaison) who will work closely with the leadership coach and assist in addressing issues as they arise. The primary intent of the leadership coaching is to assist the school principal, leadership teams and teacher leaders to implement strategic changes in school and classroom practices that will improve student motivation, attendance, achievement and transitions. The SREB leadership coach achieves this goal through several actions with the school:

- Establish faculty focus teams and assist them to adopt interventions their school needs and to develop an implementation plan that will produce the desired results.
- Work with principals and professional developers to build capacity of school leaders, team leaders and teachers to sustain school improvement efforts.
- Help schools identify professional development, curriculum materials and products that will further their instructional efforts.
- Provide faculty with follow-up activities to maximize professional development.
- Provide coaching that continuously focuses on improving instruction and helping students complete quality work.
- Establish protocols for effective use of teacher planning including the development of Professional Learning Communities and/or Career Academies.
- Facilitate instructional meetings for teachers to track, discuss and analyze local data and ensure that the proper structures are in place to reframe performance problems into instructional issues.
- Develop the school leadership teams skills in monitoring high quality instruction in all classrooms by engaging in focus walks and participating in calibration (live and through video) on Danielson's Framework for Teaching.

Each full-day coaching is planned in advance with a clear agenda and goals for the visit. Weekly follow-up **letters from the SREB coach will be sent to the school's principal, and copies will be forwarded to the district liaison and SREB.**

SREB has found that the best school leadership coaches and leadership mentors are former school and district leaders familiar with our framework for school improvement. We are able to differentiate the levels of intensity of leadership coaching support based on the needs of each school. SREB has a cadre of experienced coaches, many of whom have turned around low-performing schools and/or served in successful schools in the SREB networks, who are experts

in providing coaching and training focused on helping teachers teach all students at the proficient level.

In addition to the onsite and electronic coaching support, SREB will provide leaders at the school access to SREB's Leadership Modules. The Leadership Modules were developed as a curriculum for schools, districts and states to tap potential leaders and provide them with the training needed to be exemplary principals. These nationally recognized modules were a part of the New York City Leadership Academy curriculum and have recently been updated to focus on school turnaround. The Florida Turnaround Leader Program (FTLP) was a state/federal initiative to train potential school leaders to go into low-performing schools and provide leadership for turnaround. The FTLP used the modules as an integral part of the curriculum. SREB will use the modules, but adapt them in a way that they can become part of the school leadership coaching process. Each module provides leaders with strategies to address specific needs of the school.

SREB has learned that school change rarely can be accomplished alone; it takes leaders empowering teams to create high-performing learning systems for all students. The ***Building Instructional Leadership Teams to Lead Change for Student Success*** module focuses on forming instructional leadership teams, helping them define their purpose and goals, and working collaboratively with them to create a climate accepting of change based on their school's needs. Participants will learn about the various human and organizational factors that impact a school's ability to implement and sustain meaningful change. Teams will identify a vision of adaptive change – change deeply rooted in high expectations for all – and work on a framework for sustainable implementation of these concepts. The skills conveyed in this training are beneficial to the individual as well as teams of participants.

SREB also provides ongoing job-embedded content coaching to follow-up professional development. Content coaches work with teachers in their classrooms to model, co-teach, critique or collaborate to help teachers implement new instructional strategies. Content coaching is an essential part of professional development in all instructional areas.

Community and Family Engagement

SREB supports schools to engage family and community in two distinct, but very important ways. First, to engage families, SREB assists schools to create a high-quality Career Advisement Program that connects students, an adult mentor in the school and families to support the student in achieving postsecondary goals. Second, SREB engages business and industry in supporting the career pathways/career academies through work-based learning opportunities, advisory committee participation and to work with teachers to create authentic project-based learning units of study.

Strategies for Post-grant Sustainability

Every school that uses direct support from SREB for school redesign automatically becomes a part of the Illinois High Schools That Work state network upon completion of their grant. The state network provides a system to sustain the effort without additional funding. The Illinois State Board of Education is a member state of the High Schools That Work network and provides a state director for HSTW to coordinate services for the network.

Other Organizational Hallmarks

SREB has provided support to multiple schools receiving SIG funding who have received US DOE awards for the changes in school and classroom practices and serve as models for school turnaround/transformation.

Additional Resources

www.sreb.org

www ldc.org

<http://map.mathshell.org/materials/index.php>