

Southern Regional Education Board – High Schools That Work:

Sustainability

Sustainability is an absolute strength of SREB and the High Schools That Work framework. HSTW is the only improvement design with a state network within Illinois. Schools that complete their grant support from SREB automatically become a member of the Illinois State High Schools That Work network. Through this network, they can receive continued support from the state, participate in state workshops and continue to be active in the national network of schools. Schools may also continue to receive direct support from SREB (almost all SIG schools do) at a reduced level based upon the needs of the school and funding opportunities.

In addition, SREB attempts to tailor support in a way that builds sustainability. SREB carefully frames services over the three years to build leadership capacity of school and district leaders and teachers. Leadership development over the three-year period will focus on the essential skills leaders need to lead schools to improve continuously. All training includes projects that current and aspiring leaders must complete that use the skills and processes included in the courses. Debrief and follow-up support participants in applying the training to fit various situations.

Teacher buy-in and commitment to the school and to continuous improvement are developed through participation in active Focus Groups, SREB's approach to distributed leadership. The HSTW School Improvement Specialist gradually moves from leading and directing initial Focus Group meetings to facilitating ongoing school improvement planning and implementation by these groups. Teachers are encouraged to take leadership roles in various school-wide improvement initiatives.

By the end of the grant period, the school and district has enough expertise to continue using the design for improving teaching and learning through on-going participation in the Illinois State Network, HSTW Annual Staff Development Conference, National Workshops, Biennial HSTW Surveys, Annual Site Report, and other services provided in the Illinois State Network. Leadership coaching support shifts from an on-site focus in the first two implementation years (up to 150 days) to increased virtual support (as few as 60 days on-site) in the third year, depending on the school's progress.

Professional development is planned in such a way as to develop Lead Teacher Facilitators as the experts on campus for new teacher training and to continue support of other teachers. Lead Teacher Facilitators may continue to hone their skills after the grant ends by participating in HSTW National and State workshops.

The overall HSTW framework of School Focus Teams to address the problems of the school is a format for improvement that over 1000 schools across the country use without receiving direct support from SREB. At the end of grant funding it is an objective of SREB for the school to have these focus teams ingrained into the school culture and continue their use long after grant funding ends.