

**New York State Education Department  
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)  
Proposed “High Concept Idea” Summaries, 12/01/16  
Supports and Improvements for Schools**

<b>Topic:</b> School improvement requirements for schools identified as low performing
<b>High Concept Idea #33:</b> To ensure that school improvement plans are tailored to the identified needs of schools, we will require low-performing schools to complete a diagnostic needs assessment that looks at whole school practices and use the results as the basis for school improvement plans.
<b>Additional Information about High Concept Idea #33:</b> Schools that are identified as low performing will complete a diagnostic needs assessment that examines root causes contributing to the school’s low performance. The NYSED Diagnostic Tool for School and District Effectiveness (DTSDE) rubric would be used to conduct this analysis. Following the review, the school will develop a school improvement plan based on the results of the needs assessment. The review of Targeted Support and Improvement Schools will be mostly managed by the district. The review of Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools will be managed by both the district and the state.
<b>Relevant Requirements of ESSA law and/or final rulemaking:</b> ESSA requires that all Comprehensive Supports and Improvement Schools receive a Diagnostic Needs Assessment. ESSA requires that School Improvement plans are then developed based on the needs identified in this needs assessment.
<b>Rationale for High Concept Idea #33:</b> The Department’s rationale for this idea is based upon the understanding that the needs at schools identified as low performing will vary across schools, and that schools will need to develop school specific plans to address the specific barriers that are contributing to their low performance. The needs assessment serves a critical role in allowing schools and districts the flexibility necessary to address the specific needs at the school. The DTSDE rubric was selected with the understanding that the rubric has been used for the past four years in New York State; has been the subject of professional development at the state, district, and school level; and has created a common language and a common system across the state. The rubric was developed through stakeholder input and research into the pillars of effective practices of schools and districts.  Research has shown the value of school improvement plans <sup>1</sup> , along with the need for school improvement plans to be developed following a needs assessment. For example, researchers found that better school improvements are associated with the ability to carry out a careful analysis of the context, prioritize elements in the diagnostic phase of the process and detect specific improvement goals. <sup>2</sup> Other research has shown the value of having needs assessment as the first step in the planning process. <sup>3</sup> In addition, the School Improvement Grant process has required that schools complete comprehensive needs assessment as part of the planning process. As noted in guidance, needs assessments are also able to provide the tool through which districts can provide support to schools in turnaround. <sup>4</sup>
<b>Reaction to the High Concept Idea #33, based on October Survey to Regional Meeting Participants:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 20% strongly agreed with this idea.</li><li>• 49% agreed with this idea.</li></ul>

<sup>1</sup> Huber, D. J., & Conway, J. M. (2015). THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT. *Planning & Changing*, 46(1/2), 56-70.

<sup>2</sup> CCaputo, A., & Rastelli, V. (2014). School improvement plans and student achievement: Preliminary evidence from the Quality and Merit Project in Italy. *Improving Schools*, 17(1), 72-98. doi:10.1177/1365480213515800

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Cook (1989). Systemic Needs Assessment: A Primer. *Journal of Counseling and Development*. 67, 462-464

<sup>4</sup>[http://centeronschoolturnaround.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CenteronSchoolTurnaround\\_SIGPlanning\\_20150310.pdf](http://centeronschoolturnaround.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/CenteronSchoolTurnaround_SIGPlanning_20150310.pdf)

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- 14% indicated that they were neutral on this idea.
- 3% disagreed with this idea.
- 2% strongly disagreed with this idea.
- 4% indicated that they were unfamiliar with this idea, and therefore did not wish to respond.
- 8% answered “other” and provided their response in the comment section.

**Topic:** Annual review and annual plans for low-performing schools

**High Concept Idea #34:**

To ensure that plans are driving improvement, schools identified as low-performing will receive an annual review and develop annual plans in collaboration with the families and school community.

**Additional Information about High Concept Idea #34:**

Following the initial needs assessment of the school, both Targeted and Comprehensive Supports and Improvement schools shall receive some form of an annual review to determine if the school improvement plan is being implemented effectively and achieving its desired impact. The annual review will also consider factors that have emerged since the initial needs assessment to provide feedback to the school to allow the school to ensure that its annual plan addresses its most pressing needs. The schools will develop annual plans based on these reviews and other relevant data collected since the initial needs assessments.

**Relevant Requirements of ESSA law and/or final rulemaking:**

Each state is required to have low-performing schools submit school improvement plans.

**Rationale for High Concept Idea #34:** The Department’s rationale for this idea is based upon the understanding that school improvement is an ongoing process, and that feedback is essential in helping schools improve. The stakeholder workgroup acknowledged that schools identified as low-performing face a number of challenges that would make a multi-year plan a challenge, such as teacher turnover, leadership turnover at the school and district level, and struggles with implementation. This led the workgroup to acknowledge that the feedback provided by an initial needs assessment may be insufficient to serve as the basis for a multi-year plan, knowing that the plan being pursued needs to be based on the current circumstances at the school, and knowing that in low-performing schools, a needs assessment may identify a number of needs, and it may not be feasible to address all of these immediately. As schools embark on their plan, these schools will need feedback concerning the implementation of their plan to determine if their plan should be revised, rewritten, or continued.

In addition to this concept being an idea supported among the workgroup, research on needs assessments has shown the importance a periodic review of the needs assessment data to ensure continuous focus on small increments of change.<sup>5</sup>

**Reaction to the High Concept Idea #34, based on October Survey to Regional Meeting Participants:**

- 19% strongly agreed with this idea.
- 39% agreed with this idea.
- 12% indicated that they were neutral on this idea.
- 9% disagreed with this idea.
- 5% strongly disagreed with this idea.
- 3% indicated that they were unfamiliar with this idea, and therefore did not wish to respond.

<sup>5</sup> Moore-Thomas, C., & Erford, B. T. (2003). *Needs Assessment: An Ongoing Process for School Improvement*.

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- 13% answered “other” and provided their response in the comment section.

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**Topic:** Comprehensive Support and Improvement School Flexibility

**High Concept Idea #35:**

To ensure that schools identified as Comprehensive are able to address the specific areas that are contributing to their identification status, Comprehensive schools will have some flexibility in the school reform model they pursue.

**Additional Information about High Concept Idea #35:**

New York shall allow districts with Comprehensive Supports and Improvement schools to determine the most appropriate school reform model that they should pursue. The options to districts would include options that currently exist: Transformation Model, Turnaround Model, Innovative Framework Model, Early Learning Intervention Model, Evidence-based Model, Restart Model, and the Whole School Reform Model. The workgroup recommends that the Whole School Reform model as currently defined by Commissioner’s Regulations be modified to provide for more flexibility for districts and comprehensive schools. These changes would be changes to the language outlined in Commissioner’s Regulations as follows:

- Change “Review the quality of all staff and retaining only those who have the ability to be successful in the turnaround effort;” to “Review the quality of all staff **and ensure that staff** have the ability to be successful in the turnaround efforts;”
- Change “Prevent ineffective teachers from transferring to these schools; “ to “**“Only permit** transfers for teachers **who have been rated as Effective or Highly Effective in the most recent evaluation year;**”
- Change “Provide job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by the teacher evaluation and support systems and tied to teacher and student needs;” to “Provide job-embedded, ongoing professional development informed by **the diagnostic review**, the teacher evaluation and support systems and tied to teacher and student needs;” and
- Change “Redesign the school day, week, or year to include additional time for student learning and teacher collaboration” to “**Review** the school day week or year to **consider** additional time for student learning or teacher collaboration **as informed by the diagnostic review.**”

**Relevant Requirements of ESSA law and/or final rulemaking:**

ESSA requires states to have differentiated supports and improvements for schools based on their identification status. Comprehensive Supports and Improvement schools would be expected to pursue one of the whole school reform models identified above, while Targeted Supports and Improvement schools would not.

**Rationale for High Concept Idea #35:** The Department’s rationale for this idea is based upon the acknowledgment among the stakeholder workgroup that the needs at Comprehensive Support and Improvement schools vary, and that schools identified as Comprehensive should have the flexibility to pursue the school reform model that best suits the needs of the school and district. Some of the proposed changes to the language currently in Commissioner’s Regulations were rooted in the desire to be more specific, while other changes are presented with the acknowledgment that the staffing in various districts and the collective bargaining agreements in place may make some of the requirements difficult for some schools interested in the Whole School Reform Model option, and therefore may result in those schools pursuing a different reform model, even though that different model may not have been the model that best suited the needs of the school.

**Reaction to the High Concept Idea #35, based on October Survey to Regional Meeting Participants:**

- 27% strongly agreed with this idea.
- 49% agreed with this idea.
- 10% indicated that they were neutral on this idea.
- 1% disagreed with this idea.
- 1% strongly disagreed with this idea.

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- 9% indicated that they were unfamiliar with this idea, and therefore did not wish to respond.
- 3% answered “other” and provided their response in the comment section.

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**Topic:** Direct Service Set Aside option

**High Concept Idea #36:**

To ensure that schools and districts identified as low performing have the flexibility to address their specific needs, we will not pursue the Direct Service Set Asides option contained in ESSA.

**Additional Information about High Concept Idea #36:**

New York shall not pursue the option in ESSA that permits states to set aside up to 3 percent of all Title I funds in order to establish a program of Direct Student Services (DSS). The option presented contained the following requirements:

- 1) The state would reserve up to 3% of Title I funding for all New York State schools, and distribute it for DSS to schools identified as low performing.
- 2) The state would award grants to districts based on the district’s plan to implement DSS.
- 3) Districts would choose which specific types of DSS they will make available to students. Allowable services would include a wide variety of educational opportunities, including personalized learning, public school choice, tutoring, credit recovery, accelerated learning, and access to courses not otherwise available to students in their schools, such as AP.
- 4) Districts would identify eligible providers (although in the case of tutoring providers, the state would develop a list of eligible providers).
- 5) Families of eligible students would choose from among the DSS services and providers offered by their district.
- 6) States and districts would provide ongoing oversight.

**Relevant Requirements of ESSA law and/or final rulemaking:**

The criteria for Direct Student Services set aside is outlined in *SEC. 1003A. DIRECT STUDENT SERVICES* of ESSA and summarized above.

**Rationale for High Concept Idea #36:** The Department’s rationale for this idea is based upon the consensus of the stakeholder workgroup. The workgroup presented a number of concerns regarding the DSS option. These included the concern that Title 1 schools that are in good standing receiving less funding, potentially leading to a decline in performance and the concern that based on their experiences with the Supplemental Education Services (SES) requirement of No Child Left Behind, stakeholders were concerned with the quality of the services that external providers are able to provide. There was also concern about the ability of the eligible students with the greatest needs being able to access DSS options presented outside of the school day. Stakeholder members from districts with low-performing schools shared that the provisions contained in the law were too restrictive to offset the benefit of additional funds being available. Workgroup members concluded that identified schools needed adequate flexibility to address the school-specific needs contributing to the school’s low performance, and the DSS provision put restrictions on that flexibility, while also negatively impacting Title 1 schools not identified as low-performing.

**Reaction to the High Concept Idea #36, based on October Survey to Regional Meeting Participants:**

- 30% strongly agreed with this idea.
- 28% agreed with this idea.
- 12% indicated that they were neutral on this idea.
- 2% disagreed with this idea.
- 11% strongly disagreed with this idea.
- 26% indicated that they were unfamiliar with this idea, and therefore did not wish to respond.
- 2% answered “other” and provided their response in the comment section.

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