



## ESSA IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

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### ESSA Subcommittee Meeting – Schools and District Improvement

**Date, Time:** Monday, June 24, 2016, 9:00 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.

**Location:** 135 South Union Street, Suite 215

**ALSDE Facilitator:** Catherliene Williamson

**Members present:** Nancy Beggs, Terri Boman, Clyde Chambliss, Susan Kennedy

**Members absent:** N/A

**Summary:** Williamson moderated a white-board brainstorming session on several questions:

- Define what school and district support looks like.
- What triggers identify a school as a comprehensive school/ what are non-negotiables that all schools need?
- What triggers a comprehensive need at local level?
- If data is analyzed over several years and if there is no improvement at the school, what is the next step of action?
- What accountability needs to be in place to be most effective?
- If nothing is happening, how should the SEA react?
- What is the number of years that is “acceptable” before the SEA provides rigorous support?
- Timeline: When does the SEA start the process for intervention?
- How many years must a school meet the set standards before exiting the failing schools list? What progress must be shown before the school can operate independently again?

**Next meeting:** Friday, July 22. 9 am – 11 am. 135 South Union Street, Suite 215

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## Detailed Notes

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*All notes below are comments with committee members and the ALSDE facilitator.*

**Question 1:** What does school and district support look like?

- What experiences have you had with it? Where would you like to see it go?
  - Decision-making at local level, accountability, decentralize state activities to regional levels, transparency, “good, solid data-based decision making”
  - “One-size-fits-all” approach does not work
  - Some standards across the board are good
  - Factors of failing schools: community fails first, then schools
    - Schools do not fail first
  - Include community issues in discussion: hunger, poverty
  - Schools cannot succeed without significant community involvement
  - Good teachers are needed
  - Be passionate about what’s going on in schools

**Questions 2/3:** What triggers identify a school as a comprehensive school/ what are non-negotiables that all schools need? What triggers a comprehensive need at the local level?

- If accountable and data-driven, must come from identified need at local level
- Need for consistency long-term
- Workplace safety is one of the biggest issues
  - Increased safety is opportunity for increased productivity
- “Teachers are most important, so how are we going to support them?”
  - How do we identify this? Focus on educator effectiveness— principals, students
- Absenteeism of students and professionals should also be added as a trigger
  - Several schools use substitute teachers
- Identified the need to coach professionalism
  - Teachers should attend “teacher effectiveness” sessions
- Identified problems as also a legislative issue and legislators should be informed
- Structure in schools needs to also be examined
- There is a need for a mentor/master teacher level because there are no additional opportunities for promotion unless it is to an administrative role; many teachers love the classroom and do not move into administrative roles
  - Start with schools that need improvement because leadership is important and impactful
- Additional examples: low reading levels, graduation rate

\*Summary of 2/3: Identify triggers and schools, implement coaching and master teachers.



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**Question 4:** If data is analyzed over several years and if there is no improvement at the school, what is the next course of action?

- Torch-bearer program
  - When a school makes gains and improvements, that school is lifted up as a torch-bearer school
  - Called a “home-grown” initiative
  - Successful because of mentors and model sites
- “State Department cannot ‘be all things to all people,’ [and] cannot solve all problems”
  - Need for mobilizing support
  - Look at data with school leaders – ask what they can do to move this forward
- Regional support happens state-wide right now

**Question 5:** What accountability needs to be in place to be most effective?

- Need for looking at accountability across the board at multiple levels
- Q: How does accountability and support work now?
- Committee member said they felt like they were accountable as part of the structure
  - If a teacher is not moving forward, adjust the support

**Question 6:** If nothing is happening, how should the SEA react?

- Expressed the need for dissatisfaction with mediocrity or less; students are graduating but are not prepared for the world/workforce, etc.
- Q: What is standard for intervention?
- A: (from committee member) said it depends on the superintendent
- We have codified what triggers an intervention
- Financial takeover is very different from instructional takeover: while there is a law that allows the replacement of leadership, you do not have to fire and replace everyone
- If the school is not performing as expected, allow for triage support
- The State Department of Education must set a final standard of achievement, otherwise takeover action is necessary
- The public needs to know when there is a problem, or the politics will not change
- Q: When a school is put on alert, should there be a way to publicize this alert?
- Member defined insanity, “doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different
- Schools need social workers; improvement cannot be solely left up to those that work in the schools



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**Question 7:** What is the number of years that is “acceptable” before the SEA moves into more rigorous support? Current maximum is 4 years.

*Multiple points of view on discussion of intervention:*

- “If you wait 4 years, you’ve lost a whole cohort of students who are out the door”
  - If we continue to see flat performance in year 3, after alert in year 2, intervention
- Should rest on locals a little longer
  - Drives morale down to get stuck on failing schools list – maybe call it “schools identified for extra support”
  - Makes teachers leave and schools give up
  - The cause cannot be because a change in assessments occurred
  - Locals should be in charge for the first year and into the second year – need opportunity to explain what happened and have input into what’s going on
  - Schools must be excited to be identified for extra support because it means improvement
  - Need for a joint plan between all parties involved
- Q: How do we convince the best and brightest educators to go to struggling schools?
- It is not just a K-12 issue; there is a great need for support
- Problem = never been funded
  - Recognize shortages across the board

**Question 8:** Timeline: When does the SEA start the process for intervention?

- *Discussion of different thoughts:*
  - Right now
  - Year 2
  - Right now because it’s urgent
  - Full-on takeover in year 4; intervention year 3
- Suggested plan from 2 committee members:
  - First year: local system addresses it (local control)
  - Second year: joint plan
  - Third year: intervention
  - Fourth year: full takeover
- Observation that some superintendents have made big process in year 1 because they are creative and believe in diversity
  - Concern voiced about the vetting process works for superintendents
- Need for another person (possibly a master teacher) in the school that a new teacher can talk to if they feel uncomfortable-- the new teacher does not want to tell the principal that they are struggling



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**Question 9:** How many years must a school meet the set standards before exiting the failing schools list? What progress must be shown before the school can operate independently again?

- Committee member does not like bottom 5% because even if everyone is achieving above the national level, there will always be a bottom 5%
- Q: What would be better than defining a school in need of intervention than “bottom 5%”?
  - Tagged this, members are to think about this discussion topic for next meeting

