

A Systematic Approach to Providing Integrated Services to High Support Districts and Schools in Ohio

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Information Tools Training

Positive results for students will come from changes in the knowledge, skill, and behavior of their teachers and parents. State policies and programs must provide the opportunity, support, incentive, and expectation for adults close to the lives of children to make wise decisions.

The Center on Innovation & Improvement helps regional comprehensive centers in their work with states to provide districts, schools, and families with the opportunity, information, and skills to make wise decisions on behalf of students.

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The information included in this portrayal of Ohio's statewide system of support is derived from an on-site visit by the authors to the Ohio State Department of Education (ODE), telephone interviews with regional staff as well as district superintendents and principals, and artifacts provided by the ODE. Additionally, the authors interviewed the ODE Chief State School Officer, Dr. Susan Tave Zelman. The Ohio State Department of Education is Ohio's state education agency.

INTRODUCTION

This introductory section provides background on Ohio's development of a system to support school improvement, the factors that ODE personnel have determined to have the greatest impact on school improvement, and the lessons ODE personnel have learned along the way. This information was derived from interviews with ODE personnel.

Evolution of the Statewide System of Support in Ohio

Question: Most statewide systems of support evolved into what they are now, under NCLB, from state systems that developed during the 1990s. How did your SEA assist districts and schools with improvement prior to NCLB, and how has the system of support evolved from what existed before NCLB?

Prior to the passage of NCLB, ODE developed the concept of Title I School Support Team Facilitators aligned to nine regions across the state. All the Ohio Education Service Centers (ESCs) were included within these nine regions.

In the late 1990s, the Title I improvement monies and other federal funds were placed in a few ESCs across the nine regions, and facilitators were hired to administer the grants with money coming from the Title I school improvement funds set aside for the state. These School Support Team Facilitators (SIF) provided on-site technical assistance to Title I schools and districts as well as regional workshops. Their task was to carry out and support the state's accountability system which was evolving at the same time as other state legislation, e.g., the state report cards.

When Dr. Susan Tave Zelman became state superintendent in 1999, she led both internal and external key stakeholders through a comprehensive planning process to raise expectations for public education and to build the capacity of ODE to meet those expectations through aligned initiatives. For example, she initiated the Ohio content standards so teachers would know what to teach and what the state would assess, i.e., put teaching before testing.

Under this state superintendent, Ohio's philosophy was to integrate program planning and service delivery. The new content standards were for all children; therefore it became an equity issue to make sure that all students in every part of the state, rich and poor, including those in bilingual programs and those with disabilities, were taught in such a way they could meet these learning standards. Dr. Zelman insisted that algebra have the same content and expectations for students in Cleveland as in the rural districts of southeast Ohio, and that all students have access to high-quality curriculum, taught by highly qualified teachers, in all seven of the learning areas covered by the Ohio content standards. To assure equity of access to a rigorous curriculum, Ohio developed end-of-course exams for use by local districts.

Even prior to NCLB, one of Ohio's main strategies was to integrate a variety of state and federal programs for seamless and efficient delivery of services. One way to make this happen was to get Governor Taft on board via his Governor's Commission for Student Success. Dr. Zelman then established the Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP) and the Integrated Management System (IMS) as major positive forces in moving from multiple program requirements for improvement planning and compliance into one planning tool in which resources were aligned with needs and plans of action. Prior to the CCIP, schools were required to create separate (and often merely pro forma) plans for each state and federal program. The CCIP integrated the many plans into a single document, aligned with fiscal resources that would serve as a guide to districts and schools in their improvement efforts. A key change was the movement from compliance monitoring on the part of ODE to an effort to become genuine partners and resources for improved instruction.

By 2001, Ohio added Regional Professional Development Centers, state-funded School Improvement Facilitators, and federally funded consultants in addition to the Technical Support Coordinators. Each had separate funding, unique reporting relationships to ODE, different missions, goals, and planning processes. All were approaching districts separately and advising district planning activities separately.

A subsequent review of these disparate approaches by the State Superintendent produced an evaluation document by a third party contractor. This report as well as other data began the momentum to consolidate the many regional overlays into one aligned system of state support. ODE began to collapse its own “silos” and subsequently created the Office of Regional School Improvement Services, now the Office of Field Relations, with the intent of working across the agency to better integrate and align the agency’s products, services, and efforts. In the 2004-05 school year, the structure of the Regional School Improvement Teams (RSITs) was created to bring the regionally sponsored work into one team that would collaborate with other regional service providers to better serve districts and buildings. The focus of their work was comprehensive school improvement. Although the Special Education Regional Resource Centers (SERRCs) collaborated with the RSITs, they did not fully integrate the special education compliance work and the school improvement work at that time. The initial work of the joint teams was teacher training centers, but they gradually began to become school improvement teams.

In summer 2005, ODE restructured itself and created the Center for School Improvement. In the process of defining the Center’s work and giving it direction, ODE identified six areas of focus: data analysis; research-based practices; focused planning; monitoring and implementation; resource management; and delivery of high-quality professional development to school/district sites.

To ensure that regional service providers were offering professional development and technical assistance that supported districts in building their capacity in the above six areas, ODE held the first Ohio School Improvement Leadership Conference in August 2005. Regional School Improvement Team members, along with internal ODE staff, attended the conference to hear ODE’s vision for school improvement—integration and alignment toward one system of support. The goals of the conference included strengthening partnerships and relationships among regional service providers and ODE personnel.

The integration effort was propelled forward in 2006 when House Bill 115 established an Educational Regional Service System (ERSS), with 16 common regional boundaries, and required the creation of a coordinated, integrated, and aligned system to state support for school district efforts to improve school effectiveness and student achievement. The intent of the Ohio General Assembly was for this regional service system to reduce the unnecessary duplication of programs and services and provide for a more streamlined and efficient delivery of educational services without reducing the availability of services need by school districts.

Each region is now developing an advisory council that identifies regional needs and priorities for educational services; develops policies to coordinate the delivery of services to school districts; makes recommendations regarding the expenditures of funds available to the region for implementation of school improvement efforts; and monitors implementation of state and regional education initiatives and school improvement efforts by regional partners. Each of the 16 advisory councils has one representative on a statewide regional alliance advisory board that also includes parents, teachers, local administrators, business leaders, and higher education personnel. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction chairs the statewide board. The board’s purpose is to promote communication and coordination among the state board, fiscal agents, advisory councils, and users of the educational regional service systems. In addition the board makes recommendations regarding quality standards for the delivery of services to school districts and schools through the regional service system.

The merger of former RSITs and SERRCs in July 2007 created State Support Teams (SSTs), finalizing the long desired integration of special education and general education supports. Each SST now uses a single school improvement process—The Ohio Improvement Process (OIP)—with aligned training, tools, and resources.

One year into the full integration, ODE is still identifying areas of duplication, honing the integration of efforts and processes, and prioritizing services for the combined teams. One example includes the incorporation of the focused monitoring process into the State Diagnostic Review process. ODE is investigating the similarities and differences of the two processes and what parts of focused monitoring can be addressed through the larger Ohio Improvement Process (OIP). Ohio's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) is providing an opportunity to test with 32 districts—two per SST—the integration of the special education and general education improvement models. A prime consideration in this test of the integration of the OIP and SPDG is the scalability to all districts and schools across Ohio.

The 16 State Support Teams are responsible for the regional delivery of school improvement, literacy, special education compliance, and early learning and school readiness services to districts using the Tri-Tier Model (see Figure 2), a differentiated technical assistance structure for support based upon need. Sixteen ESCs were selected through an RFP process to act as fiscal agents for the SSTs. The SSTs work with the Office for Exceptional Children, Office of Literacy, Office of Early Learning and School Readiness, and the Office of Field Relations to provide technical assistance and professional development.

One ODE staff member is the Single Point of Contact for SST staff. She coordinates and integrates communications among ODE, SSTs, and districts. The Office of Field Relations supports and monitors, through six Regional Managers, the Statewide System for School Improvement Support and the delivery of services to all districts, with the greatest intensity of support to the 147 high support districts with greatest needs that are the first priority of the SSTs. ODE has narrowed the scope and prioritized the SST work. Previously, the professional development offered by the SSTs lacked a coherent focus and varied from region to region.

Each of the State Support Teams is responsible for implementing a tiered-service delivery model identified in SST goals and strategies articulated in the Performance Agreement between ODE and its fiscal agents. This model outlines how all districts are served through a differentiated technical assistance structure to support school improvement efforts, with the highest need districts receiving the greatest intensity of service. Additionally, the model focuses on assisting district and instructional leaders in developing the capacity to plan and implement effective school improvement systems around the themes of leadership, curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school climate.

Ohio has 306 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff outside of ODE funded through performance agreements with the 16 fiscal agents to provide technical assistance. Additionally, the State funds 23 information technology centers that are often the keepers of student level data and provide data analysis services for the districts. Some of these centers are within an ESC and others are stand-alone.

No Child Left Behind Act requires Ohio to provide statewide support services to schools in need of improvement around four basic stages in the reform process, as identified by the U.S. Department of Education: needs assessment and goal setting, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Ohio has developed a comprehensive Statewide System of School Improvement Support through which it fulfills this requirement and partners with districts to build their capacity to plan and implement school improvement processes that close achievement gaps for all students.

Factors that Contribute to Improvement and Services that Address Them

Questions: *What factors do you think are most important in contributing to a school or district's improvement in student achievement and why? In other words, what does a school or district do that matters most in improving student learning? What services does the statewide system of support provide that you think have the greatest impact on the three improvement factors you just described, and why?*

Factor 1—School and district improvement is most likely within a system of support that builds capacity at each level.

The NCLB requirement for a plan on how regional services would best be delivered required ODE to work with the Legislature and Governor's office to shape an effective regional system with the primary mission to best serve all schools and districts, especially those that are low performing. ODE's intention was to build capacity in these Regional Teams so that Ohio educators did not have to rely on external vendors. Ohio did not want to bring in consultants who would provide services without simultaneously building capacity at the state, regional, and local levels.

ODE leaders believe that the best way to make academic gains for all students is to ensure a high-quality educational system in which all students participate. Therefore, ODE integrated the two existing support systems—SERRCs and RSITs—into one State Support Team (SST). A goal of the newly formed SST was to ensure that special education students would have the same access to teachers who understood the academic content standards and curriculum implications as regular classroom teachers. ODE leveraged the federal discretionary Title VI B Special Education funds in accordance with the IDEIA (The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004) statute and the State General Revenue Funds for school improvement to integrate the work and provide one system of support for all students.

Factor 2—School and district improvement is enhanced by access to high-quality data and data analysis.

SSTs devote a considerable amount of time helping district staff understand data and know how to use it for improvement planning. Local personnel can now drill down into item analysis by classroom.

The Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) involves four stages of improvement based on high-quality data:

1. Use data to identify areas of greatest need;
2. Develop a plan to address those areas of need that is built around a limited number of focused goals and strategies to significantly improve instructional practice and student performance;
3. Implement the plan with integrity; and
4. Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the improvement process in changing instructional practice and impacting student performance

ODE staff believe that improvement is not random. Rather, improvement is highly focused, begins with an honest assessment of student data, and identifies academic weaknesses that must be addressed. Stage 1 of the OIP begins with this kind of assessment using the Decision Framework (DF) tool. The DF is a decision-making process designed to assist districts in making informed decisions—based on what their data tell them—about where to spend their time, energy, and resources to make significant and substantial improvements in student performance. A state-developed data warehouse allows relevant data, needed to complete the DF process, to be readily available to districts and buildings. These data are organized in such a way as

to allow district and school leadership teams to answer essential questions and make decisions about their greatest needs related to improving student performance.

Using the Decision Framework tool, a district goes through a process of looking at data from four levels. Each level has data resources and essential guiding questions to assist the district in identifying, analyzing, planning, and evaluating the critical components for improving the academic performance of all students. The data are examined in relation to student performance in content areas, identifying the weakest grade levels, subgroups with poor performance and the extent to which the problems are present throughout the district. Once the student performance needs are identified, the district then looks at the performance in relation to instructional management (curriculum, instruction, and assessment), professional development and educator quality.

Factor 3—Leadership is key to school and district improvement.

More than creating a shared vision, mechanisms have to be put into place to build a culture of success, embedded in school and district leadership teams. A fundamental assumption underlying Ohio's work to create a coherent and cohesive leadership development system is that the purpose of leadership is the improvement of instructional practice and performance, regardless of role (Elmore, 2006).

One challenge is the longstanding belief and practice of implementing reform efforts on a school-by-school basis. Ohio's Statewide System of Support views districts and buildings as a connected unit, and improvement efforts require the establishment of new leadership team structures for aligning and focusing the work across the district as a system. ODE believes this change requires new behaviors and the "letting go" of some positional authority so that efforts can address fewer, but more relevant needs based on data.

ODE, in partnership with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), established the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC) in March 2007. OLAC is identifying a common core of essential practices around which systemic efforts to improve leadership can be unified and advanced. For example, OLAC believes superintendents should focus their efforts on creating goal-oriented districts by engaging in collaborative goal setting and working with the local board to set and monitor progress and align resources toward meeting non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction. And it believes that effective leadership team structures at the district and school level have to be in place to implement strategies and actions in an aligned and focused way to reach district goals.

Factor 4—School and district improvement requires the right balance of expectation, support, flexibility, and absence of barriers.

The ODE approach has been highly successful at resource management: helping SSTs, districts, and schools make smarter decisions. The philosophy is to control little, but influence a lot. This is not to say that ODE is unwilling to provide direction and actively engage in all phases of the development and deployment of regional efforts. ODE understands and takes seriously its obligation to monitor fiscal expenditures in accordance with state and federal statutes and Performance Agreements; therefore, the Agency ensures the SSTs deliver the system of support as defined by ODE and in accordance with the law.

For example, the Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan enables districts to submit one plan that meets the requirements of multiple state and federal programs. The CCIP is a unified grants application and verification system that consists of two parts: the Planning Tool and the Funding Application. The Planning Tool contains the district goals, strategies, and action steps for all grants funded via the CCIP. The Funding Application contains the budget, budget details, nonpublic services, and other related pages.

ODE staff views the CCIP as a resource tool that enables school and district improvement planning to be enhanced. With the CCIP, the district has one plan as its guide to school improvement, not a potpourri of requirements from multiple program agencies. Subsequently local staff has more time to analyze data for their one plan. They do not have to write multiple “program driven” improvement plans; they can concentrate on one planning process based upon data.

ODE staff can focus on improvement activities, with telephone and desk monitoring taking care of compliance. As an example, funds are pooled so there are no Title 1 funds as such. In fact, ODE has consolidated most of the major federal programs through the CCIP and thus has no Title I personnel or office. This approach has been approved by the United States Department of Education.

The CCIP application comes into ODE, and one person looks at it initially while one more reviews it later; then it is complete. The process used to consume 60 days for ODE staff to review a district’s application containing 10 to 14 programs simultaneously; the review time has been reduced to 5 to 7 days. The process has been in place for six years and was built as an automated application with the help of a consulting company. Since then competitive grants have been added.

Currently, some but not all district and school data can be aggregated at a regional level for use by SSTs through automated reports to construct regional profiles. ODE is working to further automate these reports for all data. Staff of the Center for School Improvement has developed many regional views of relevant data to support the SSTs in their data analysis work. ODE will be going from a computerized system to a web-based data warehouse for districts and buildings by January 2009.

Lessons Learned

Question: *What are some “lessons learned” from your state’s experience with a statewide system of support that would be helpful to other states?*

Lesson 1—The state must be willing to judge.

“We need to be willing to sometimes say that we are willing to judge you as a district. We are going to come in and observe what you are doing and make recommendations.” At one time in ODE, there had been a level of discomfort to say that a district was not doing well enough. It is now acceptable for ODE personnel to say that they have expectations for improved performance. In fact, “It is our responsibility to say we have expectations.”

Lesson 2— The state must be willing to learn.

“We need to learn from districts, even those in corrective action, since everyone has some strengths.” While observing districts in corrective action status, improvement staff found really good things going on in all these districts, and that local personnel learned more from each other than from the state. ODE staff learned to build on those strengths instead of just focusing on weak areas. They now focus on the strengths and start with those. They also found that it was important to build personal relationships with local staff by listening to district leaders and encouraging them to talk about how their goals and plans were being aligned.

Lesson 3—A student-centered rather than program-centered approach is best.

“We are now a system of educational supports for all students.” ODE worked with federal officials to obtain maximum flexibility in using federal funds. The modeling behavior by the Ohio Department of education showed how internal cooperation can be accomplished so that funds and requirements can be integrated. This has caused school staff to think about how they can most effectively combine funds for improvement as well.

This particular approach originally concerned parent advocates who were worried that special education services might be lost. ODE has maintained that a student-centered approach, rather than a programmatic or funding centered approach, will be best for their children. “By improving the whole system, we improve the learning for special education students.”

Lesson 4—Schools must become both more effective and more efficient.

“We now include school finance staff with school improvement personnel as part of the decision process. Everyone needs to know how the money is being spent.” Money follows the student and is linked to school improvement. In Ohio, school finance people even participate as members of the State Diagnostic Teams that go to and review low performing schools to ensure that their budgets are aligned with identified needs. As a team they can work together to ascertain how schools can become more effective and efficient. These review teams are trained by ODE to have a philosophy that moves away from compliance behavior to leadership for improvement.

FUNCTIONS OF A STATEWIDE SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

This section organizes the information provided by the Ohio Department of Education personnel into the evidence-based framework for a statewide system of support in the *Handbook on Statewide Systems of Support* (Center on Innovation & Improvement, Information Age Publishing, 2008). The framework outlines a change process whereby the State supports school improvement by providing incentives, extending opportunity, and building capacity (both systemic and local).

Providing Incentives for Change

Publicly Disclosing Low Performance

Ohio places a public spotlight on districts that show continued low performance on its federal and state blended accountability system. Ohio has five designations and now a federally required special education IDEA annual determination based on a district’s ability to implement IDEA. In August 2008, there will be an additional value-added tag on school report cards. Districts that do not make the absolute benchmark can show they are making improvement.

Levying Consequences for Low Performance

Districts identified as Tier 1 because of continued low performance work with their SST to complete the Decision Framework in order to arrive at a comprehensive needs assessment that is entered into the district CCIP. The SST also helps the District Leadership Team (DLT) integrate all data collection efforts into the Decision Framework, including all compliance related monitoring to ensure the development of one aligned and coherent needs assessment and a reduction of duplication and/or processes. The following outcomes are expected:

- ✦ Summary and analysis of data sets
- ✦ An understanding of how to apply the data to the Decision Framework
- ✦ An interpretation of key findings from the needs assessment
- ✦ A priority list of data-based critical problems from the Decision Framework

Providing Positive Incentives for Improvement

Recognition for Accomplishment

On one hand, Ohio does have corrective action for districts with continued low performance that exceeds NCLB sanctions. On the other hand, there is public recognition for schools that show improved results, especially “Schools of Promise” that have high achievement and high poverty and “Schools of Distinction” that have high achievement and a high percentage of special education students achieving at rates of 75% or higher proficiency.

Funding Contingencies that Encourage High-Leverage Improvement Strategies

Although some grants and programs are available to support school improvement for low performing districts and buildings, Ohio’s Statewide System of School Improvement Support focuses more on providing services that assist district and instructional leaders in building their capacity than on providing money without potential strategies and intended outcomes for impact on student achievement.

Any district or building funding that is available as a result of the district’s need for improvement is leveraged and integrated with existing SST support to ensure alignment of initiatives with prioritized goals within the focused plan. Five years ago, the ODE used a flow-through funding approach. Now the State looks at data-driven needs and requires the district to use funds to address those needs.

ODE does earmark one million dollars in the SSTs across the state toward parent engagement and involvement. In addition, the Office for Exceptional Children also places funds in other regional service provider organizations that support mentors and other support systems.

Financial Rewards for Results

Ohio does have a poverty based assistance program. The number of schools in academic distress within a district is compared to the state average. A district can receive a three to five percent increase in funds. However there is a penalty for better performance: moving out of school improvement means losing these funds. As an ODE staff member noted during an interview: “Hard to structure good incentives that are fair.”

Financial Rewards for Working in Hard-to-Staff Districts and Schools

Legislation exists for staffing high-need districts. A teacher will receive a signing bonus (\$20,000) or loan forgiveness for working in a hard-to-staff school. However, the individual has to agree to teach for five years

Providing Market-Oriented Incentives

Charter Schools

There are 324 charter schools in Ohio. The State encourages charter schools in areas where schools are continually underperforming. However, if a charter school is classified as in “academic emergency” for three years, the charter has to close.

Public School Choice

With regard to market-oriented activities, there are several efforts in Ohio. There is a building-based voucher program in a school that is classified as academic watch or emergency for two of the last three years. Cleveland has its own voucher program. There is a statutory provision for intra-district choice. However, each

district board has the option to decide if it will accept open enrolment from other districts.

Providing Opportunities for Change

Ohio does have a waiver process and the most frequently requested waiver is for fewer days of instruction so local personnel may have additional professional development. Waivers will be granted for a pilot period if the waiver is tied to student achievement. There is a concern that this kind of waiver takes time away from students.

Building Systemic Capacity

Creating and Disseminating Knowledge

The Ohio Improvement Process provides a consistent approach to organizing information, tools and resources to guide District Leadership Teams through data analysis and needs assessment, plan development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Some of these systemic tools are listed below:

Ohio's Aligning Data and Planning for Achievement Framework : Provides overview of the key components of the process for collaboratively analyzing district and building data, prioritizing needs, identifying strategies, collecting data to inform decisions, and developing action plans to address root causes for low performance.

District and Building Profiles : Provides a snapshot of some specific data at both district and building levels that SSTs can use with district and school instructional leaders to engage them in initial conversations about needs based upon drilled down data, areas of potential concern, areas in which further data are needed, and potential gaps that exist.

Local Report Card: Provides information for districts and schools.

Ohio's Interactive Local Report Card: Provides districts and buildings with longitudinal and snapshot data to inform school improvement planning and implementation. These data are used to further drill down in the Local Report Card information.

Instructional Management System: Ohio has an on-line Instructional Management System that enables teachers and administrators to access: Ohio Academic content standards, lessons and unit plans (including examples), assessments (including understanding state tests), research on standards, tools and resources for implementing a standards based classroom, program improvement guidance, and science toolkits.

The Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC): a research-based data tool that allows teachers, administrators, and policy makers to examine the extent of alignment between the enacted curriculum (what teachers teach), the intended curriculum (what the standards require), and the assessed curriculum (what the state tests). The SEC Collaborative is sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). Over 20 states and several large urban districts participate. Ohio is a leader in the Collaborative and has the largest SEC project of all the states. Ohio initiated a Pilot collection of data in 2003-04. This project expanded in Year 2 (2004-05) to include over 2,100 teachers in over 200 school buildings across the state. Presently, all interested districts and schools may participate in the project at all grade levels of mathematics and English/language arts.

Enhancing the Supply of Personnel Equipped for School Improvement

Increasing the Supply of Teachers and School Leaders

Approximately 14 percent of Ohio's nearly two million students are minority students, but less than eight percent of Ohio's teachers represent minorities. The Council Attracting Prospective Educators (CAPE) is one effort in Ohio to identify and attract young, talented people from diverse backgrounds to a career in teaching, with a goal of increasing the minority representation in teaching. In 1990, a group of concerned Ohio educators initiated discussions about establishing a pre-collegiate minority teacher recruitment program in Ohio. With the support of organizations and individuals from across Ohio, CAPE was established. The CAPE Teacher Academy is a five-day summer academy experience designed to introduce Ohio high school students to teaching and professional education as career possibilities. The Academy provides an opportunity for 50 high school students from diverse backgrounds who are interested in the education process to experience a university environment, to develop leadership skills and positive self-images, to explore a career in education, and to interact with peers and professional role models from diverse backgrounds.

Ohio Future Educators Association (OFEA) is a statewide organization for middle school and high school youth who are interested in a career in education. OFEA was initiated in 1991 by the Ohio Department of Education and Phi Delta Kappa, a leading association of educators, and is growing every year. OFEA works with advisors and officers of local chapters to recruit members, plan projects/activities, share trend/program information and provide a statewide communications network for local chapters. Local chapters help motivate students who are interested in a career in education by encouraging them to set educational/career goals early in life, focus on academic achievement, explore teaching through direct experience in the classrooms, and become citizen leaders through school/community service.

Preparing Teachers and School Leaders for School Improvement

The Education Standards Board and ODE chose to design a career lattice framework that invites varied teacher roles and responsibilities, promotes the acquisition of new knowledge and skills, uses multiple measures of performance and student achievement, and supports collaboration among teachers and with administration. (See Appendix A)

Ohio's Career Lattice Framework expands teacher leadership opportunities, drives collaboration between teachers and administrators on school design, leadership and school policy and creates a more common culture of teacher professionalism, improving teacher retention and, ultimately, enhancing student achievement. It also provides a framework for teachers to create and sustain a community of professional practice where they have collective opportunities to reflect upon their teaching, consider the progress their students are making, learn about and apply new knowledge in their fields, and support each other to improve.

The Career Lattice Framework provides a means for schools and districts to re-invent the ways teacher leaders fulfill newly identified roles, including whether the teacher leaders will maintain full, half, or partial classroom responsibilities. Districts submit a proposal for a locally designed Teacher Leadership Program (TLP) to pilot over a period of 3 to 5 years.

eLearning Literacy modules were developed to standardize professional development throughout the state. These modules strengthen instructional strategies and are focused towards Tier 1 schools that demonstrate the greatest need. They were first developed for K-3 teachers by the ODE Office of Literacy and the modules are now available to all K-5 teachers across the state, with modules for grades 6-12 teachers soon to be available. The goal is to link professional development to data and then offer customized professional development opportunities via these modules as well as provide opportunities for teachers to gain the NCLB status of being "highly qualified."

ODE believes that eLearning is an effective way to disseminate consistently high quality professional development content statewide since it focuses on scientifically based reading research content. The most successful eLearning modules are those that are developed based on school or district needs as determined by available data. For example, data may indicate that teachers in a particular school may benefit from vocabulary or comprehension professional development, or test scores may indicate a need for professional development in all five components of reading instruction. Courses can then be tailored to meet the specific professional development needs of that school.

These modules have proven to be very useful for teachers since they provide real-time, ongoing and job-embedded support to teachers. It is a video rich resource that draws on the expertise of local and national subject matter experts. eLearning can also fit within a teacher's busy schedule by giving access to self-paced content. With an internet connection, teachers can access learning content at any time and place.

Statutes and Policies

The Partnership for Continued Learning (PLC), an active statewide effort, connects pre-kindergarten, elementary, and secondary education to post-secondary education and the workforce through an articulated and coordinated system. The PLC is headed by the governor and includes the state superintendent, the chancellor of the board of regents, Ohio's director of development, various legislative leaders, as well as representatives from elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education. The PLC is charged with facilitating collaboration among providers of preschool through post-secondary education by aligning the expectations of what students should learn through 12th grade with the requirements for credit-bearing coursework in college; holding high schools accountable for graduating more students who are ready for post-secondary education and the workforce; and holding colleges and universities accountable for improving their graduation rates.

The State requires both public and private teacher preparation programs to provide pre-service instruction for teachers on the state's accountability system, including standards and assessments. The State also requires school leader preparation programs to provide pre-service instruction for school leaders on the state's accountability system.

Spring 2004 legislation required standards for teachers, principals, and professional development. These standards now guide training, provide a tool in developing coaching and mentoring programs, and support higher education in developing and providing content and requirements for pre-service training and ongoing professional development. Common themes across all three sets of standards include:

- ✦ A focus on student achievement
- ✦ Data-based decision making (principals use data to lead the development of a vision and goals of the school; teachers use data to set their instructional plans and professional development goals)
- ✦ Communication and collaboration
- ✦ Shared leadership
- ✦ Principals as instructional leaders
- ✦ Continuous professional development

Agreements and Partnerships

The State Superintendent supports sending ten Ohio superintendents to the Harvard summer training program annually and believes this core of superintendents has played a leadership role in helping their peers know how to think strategically, especially around instruction.

The Ohio Department of Education's Office for Exceptional Children (OEC) was awarded a \$9.5 million five-year State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). This federally funded project serves to pilot the work of the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) to determine scalability of the processes statewide.

The SPDG will also be used to provide leadership training for district leadership teams in the implementation of focused goals for improving instruction and achievement for all children. As mentioned earlier, there are now 32 districts in the pilot as of the 2008-2009 school year. During each of the next two years, another cohort of 16 districts will be selected to participate in the grant and receive three years of support. The SPDG will provide districts, families, and relevant organizations access to a wide variety of resources, including the project's Web site, e-Learning academies, and a series of products, tools, and supports.

Reporting the Experience of Graduates in the Education Workplace

A basic theory underlying Ohio's statewide system of school improvement support and professional development is that if the knowledge by district and instructional leaders can be increased in the following five areas, they will successfully plan and implement school improvement processes that identify and remedy all low academic performance:

- ✦ Standards-based content: What students should learn.
- ✦ Standards-based Instruction: How students learn.
- ✦ Standards-based Assessment: How we know students learn.
- ✦ Conditions and Climate: What environment supports teaching and learning.
- ✦ Leadership: What systems need to be in place to ensure all components operate efficiently and effectively.

SSTs provide opportunities for participation in state-funded High Quality Professional Development aligned with capacity building strategies for the district that answer the above questions. These opportunities are targeted, based upon ODE's Tri-Tier Model with priority registration to the teachers within Tier 1 districts. SSTs work with District Leadership Teams to ensure a critical mass of attendance.

Channeling Highly-Qualified Teachers and School Leaders to Districts and Schools in Need of Improvement

In 2006, the State Superintendent established ODE's Office of Educator Equity to focus on successful implementation of the Teacher Equity Plan by ensuring that a highly qualified teacher teaches every Ohio student. ODE is working with colleges and universities to align Ohio's standards for teachers and principals with education and licensure standards for teacher preparation. Ohio's Entry Year Program sees to the needs of new teachers and principals to ensure their successful transition in their new roles.

This Office of Educator Equity at ODE finalized the Teacher Distribution File (TDF) for each school district in Ohio. School districts may use the TDF to conduct an analysis to determine where their teacher inequi-

ties exist. TDF provides five data elements to help districts conduct the Teacher Distribution Data Analysis (TDDA):

- ✦ Identify (by core subject area and by school) where more than 10 percent of the core subject courses in schools are taught by teachers who are NOT highly qualified. (*Ohio has identified “high percentages” as schools where more than 10 percent of the core subject courses are taught by teachers who are NOT highly qualified.)
- ✦ Identify the percentage of minority students who are taught by inexperienced vs. experienced teachers in the core subject areas.
- ✦ Identify the percentage of minority students who are taught by highly qualified vs. NOT highly qualified teachers.
- ✦ Identify the percentage of inexperienced (less than three years) vs. experienced (more than three years) teachers in high-poverty schools vs. low-poverty schools.
- ✦ Identify the percentage of highly qualified vs. NOT highly qualified teachers in high-poverty schools vs. low-poverty schools.

A 1999 review of policies in 50 states suggested that the quality of teachers was directly related to improved student performance. In fact, students’ backgrounds – poverty level, language background, and minority status – are less influential in predicting achievement levels than the quality of the teaching force (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Ohio’s own research shows that often the children in low-performing schools who need the most experienced, most educated, most skilled teachers get the least effective educators (Levin, Driscoll & Fleeter, 2005). Ohio’s Teacher Equity Plan is focused on closing both the gaps in student achievement and the gaps in teacher quality.

Ohio’s research contributed to the basis for a national study on teaching inequality (Peske & Haycock, 2006). In 2004, Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin partnered with the Education Trust to identify the extent of any inequitable distribution in teachers across each state. Over the course of this two-year project, Ohio conducted a comprehensive, multidimensional review of the distribution of teacher characteristics across different kinds of students and schools, with a focus on the distribution of teachers to low-performing, high-need schools and districts.

The major findings from quantitative data analysis of district-level teacher characteristics are:

- ✦ Major urban, high poverty districts have significantly fewer highly qualified teachers than the state average.
- ✦ Lower achieving districts employ fewer highly qualified teachers.
- ✦ Districts with larger percentages of minority students employ fewer highly qualified teachers.
- ✦ No significant differences were found at the district level with regard to “years of experience” of Ohio’s teachers.

Among the major strategies in Ohio’s Equity Plan is the intent to develop a system in which ODE will continuously monitor and improve the distribution patterns of Ohio’s teachers to ensure that poor and minority students are not being taught at higher rates than other students by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers.

Providing a Strong Data System to Assist School Improvement

To take advantage of their longitudinal record system, Ohio has undertaken a statewide program to provide training in the use of data, including information from value-added and projection models for instructional decision-making. Through a trainer-of-trainer model, ODE and an Ohio non-profit organization are ensuring that each of the more than 600 Ohio districts has at least two staff members with advanced training in using the data from Ohio's accountability system to identify what is working well and what is not, and to be analytic and diagnostic with respect to determining which school programs and practices are accelerating academic growth and which are not. By using the value-added and projection models, schools will have better capacity to interpret the strengths and weakness of their curriculum, instructional methods, programs and practices to make data-driven decisions about where to focus resources.

Building Local Capacity

Coordinating Capacity-Building Structures and Roles

Size of the Statewide System of Support

Ohio has 306 full-time Equivalent (FTE) staff outside of ODE funded through performance agreements with 16 fiscal agents to provide technical assistance. Additionally, there are 23 information technology centers funded by the State that are often the keepers of student level data and provide data analysis services. Some of these centers are within an ESC and others are stand-alone.

Organization of the Statewide System of Support

SST members perform a variety of roles including presenter, consultant, coach, and facilitator. These roles are determined by and in response to a district's level of sophistication with school improvement planning and implementation and their particular needs. In some cases, the SST member presents district data and acts as a consultant to guide the district through the process of analysis, root cause identification, and goal setting. In districts with more expertise and familiarity regarding school improvement planning and implementation, the SST member coaches or consults the district throughout the process, using a cognitive coaching model in which the SST member asks probing questions, provides observations, and allows the District Leadership Team to develop hypotheses, goals, strategies, and action steps. If necessary, the SST member challenges the District Leadership Team to provide data and evidence for their decisions.

The District Leadership Team has the ultimate responsibility for analyzing data and developing a district improvement plan. Before meeting with the SST members, the District Leadership Team completes an initial analysis of multiple sources of data across multiple years, develops hypotheses for the areas of low performance, identifies goals and strategies that might impact performance, and is prepared to walk the SST through the analysis and plan.

When plans are too broad, contain too little specificity, lack high quality strategies, or are not connected to solid data sources, SST members engage District Leadership Teams in dialogues in an effort to increase understanding and strengthen their plans

Organizational Partners in the Statewide System of Support

To help Ohio reach its goal, the Office of Field Relations collaborates with other offices within the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) and various regional providers across the state to coordinate a Statewide System of School Improvement Support. Using the Tri-Tier Model, ODE provides aligned resources, infor-

mation, tools, professional development, and technical assistance to all districts, with the greatest intensity to those districts with the greatest need for support.

There are no bounds to the districts in need of School Improvement efforts. Districts in every category--urban, suburban, and rural, all grade levels and districts in every economic standing--have been identified for improvement, and thus have been granted funds or delivered services made possible by those funds.

SST members involve various partners in the review of data and identification of needs. These partners may include, but are not be limited to: institutions of higher education, Educational Services Centers, and Information Technology Centers. Partners are leveraged to provide services based upon existing relationships or content/process knowledge expertise.

ODE staff believe that a key for success is to continue to inform and work with major advocacy groups such as teacher unions, business groups, education coalitions, deans of public and private schools, and superintendent associations. The State Superintendent holds Performance Councils composed of top ODE staff, and others as necessary based on the agenda. These councils focus on improving the processes and efforts of the State Education Agency. She deliberately asks difficult and provocative questions of this group to keep everyone moving forward on the improvement agenda from the State level. "Treat them as partners by taking both their feedback and advice." (Interview with Dr. Zelman)

Support Teams

During the planning phase, the SST members facilitate a process with the District Leadership Team, examining data at deeper levels, studying research-based best practices, and scrutinizing existing practices to arrive at multiple strategies that can be leveraged across goals. SST members assist District Leadership Teams in understanding that there are no "silver bullets" and therefore, no one strategy that will respond to an identified concern.

In the planning phase, SST members also ensure that District Leadership Teams identify the evidence of implementation they hope to witness and the desired impact. Finally, they assist districts in mapping out the action steps necessary to enact the strategies and collect evidence of both implementation and impact.

As part of local improvement planning, cross-functional local teams composed of the superintendent, principals, key teachers who work with a variety of students come together to develop a common view of what is high quality instruction and look for data to support their judgment. The teams must evaluate the alignment of their policy and strategies with results using data. This philosophy is based on the medical rounds model developed by Elmore (2007). Practitioners on each local team work in a disciplined way to develop a common body of evidence they use for diagnostic purposes and then work through a set of solutions. This approach also operates around a model of professional accountability. Each member of the local team is accountable to each other for their work—for the quality of their observations, analysis and advice.

"Focusing school leaders' work on instructional practice can create a serious disorientation. Superintendents move from a world in which they spend much of their time managing political conflicts among members of their boards, dealing with unhappy parents and trying to balance the budget into a world in which they are talking with their colleagues about specific classroom practices and how these practices relate to problems of student performance in their district. Likewise, principals have similar disorientation. To connect the specific work of instructional improvement to the broader picture of organizing and managing complex school systems, we ask school leaders to develop a personal theory of action...a brief statement of how the practice of the individual—at the system or school level—leads to increases in learning and performance for students" (Elmore, 2007)).

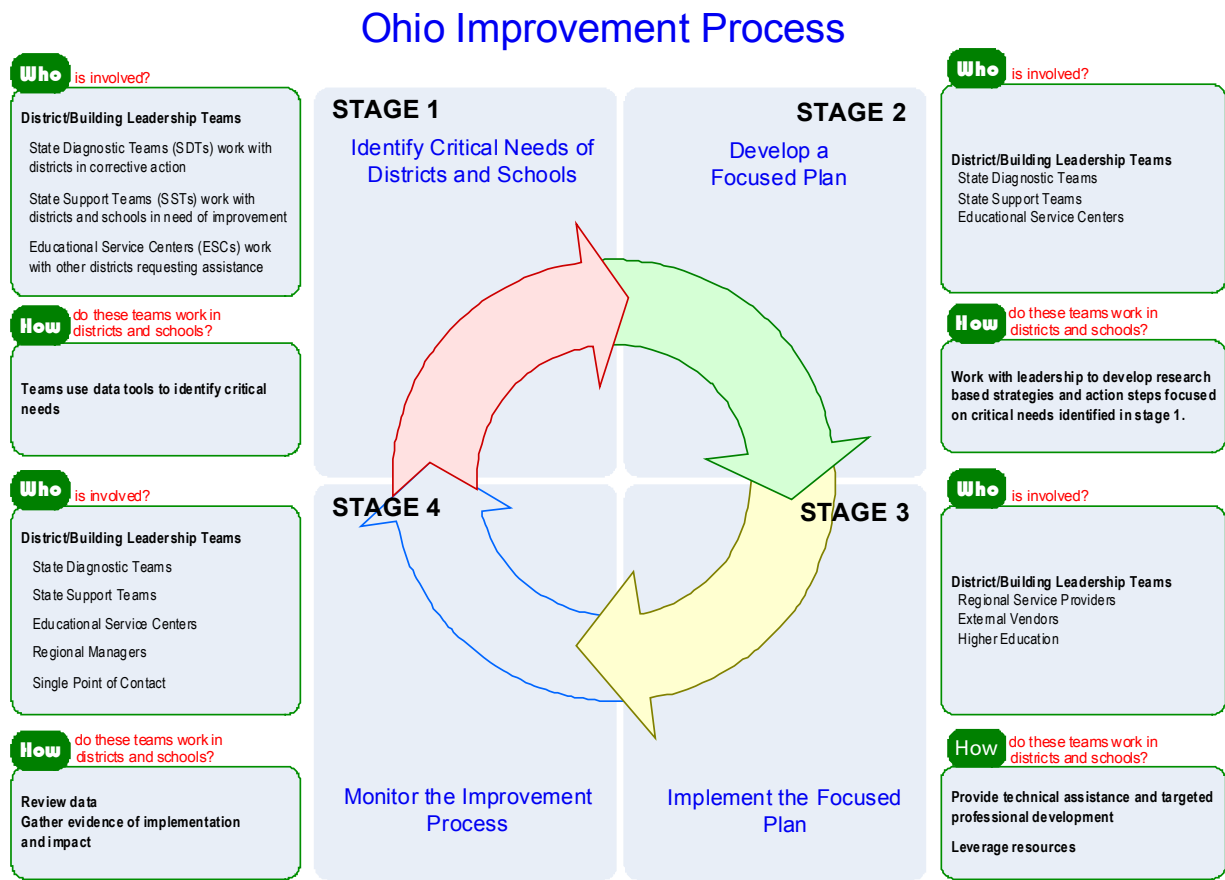
This model is designed for trained superintendents who are committed to sustained instructional improvement in their districts to form a community with a common purpose. Therefore, everybody in the system has to be an instructional leader. This means that technology staff, career/technical personnel, finance staff, and others must contribute to instruction or the improvement of instruction in some way.

Differentiating Support to Districts and Schools

Ohio’s current Statewide System for School Improvement Support emphasizes a collaborative partnership in which members of the State Support Team (SST) engage with district and instructional leaders in a dialogue regarding district and building data using the Decision Framework.

In the needs assessment and goal setting stages of the process, the SST and the District Leadership Team look at student achievement, demographic, perception, and school process data over a period of years to identify gaps and concerns, prioritize goals, and drill down deeper into root causes of the problems using school and student level data, such as formative assessments, interactive local report card, and item analysis. Ohio’s four stage improvement process provides a basis for aligning structures, tools and people to significantly improve instructional practice and student performance. See Figure 1: Ohio Improvement Process.

Figure 1: Ohio Improvement Process



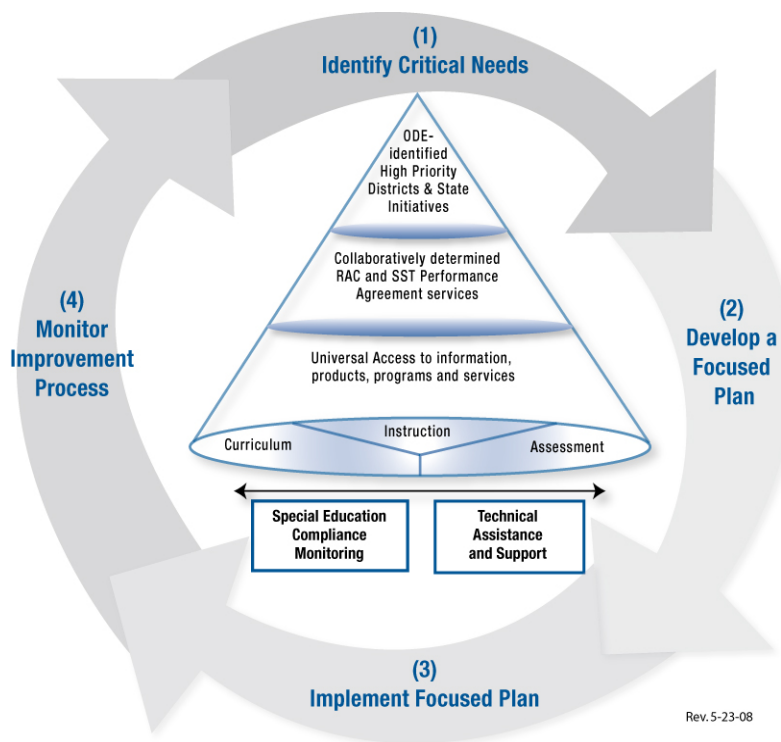
Partnership Agreement Process and Expectations: The following overview provides a step-by-step format for creating and implementing a quality Partnership Agreement. Expectations for each section of the agreement are outlined below. However, prior to commencing Stage 1 work, the SST will support the district in establishing a District Leadership Team (DLT). The responsibilities of the DLT are to:

- ✦ Set performance targets aligned with board-adopted District goals
- ✦ Monitor progress against the targets
- ✦ Build a foundation for data-driven decision making across the district
- ✦ Design system planning and focused improvement strategies, structures and processes
- ✦ Facilitate the development of collaboration structures
- ✦ Broker and facilitate high-quality professional development consistent with district goals for instruction and achievement
- ✦ Allocate system resources toward instructional improvement.

Ohio's statewide system of school improvement support uses the Tri-Tier Model of School Improvement Support (see Figure 2) to deliver school improvement services to all districts, but with the greatest emphasis on districts that have been identified by ODE as highest priority.

- A. Tier 1 services are provided within the parameters of the Performance Agreement to ODE-identified high priority districts or to districts identified by ODE to participate in state initiatives. The following pages will focus on Tier 1 services. For a more comprehensive description, see 2008-2009 Performance Agreement published by ODE.
- B. Tier 2 services are determined and delivered within the parameters of the Performance Agreement to any district in the region based upon regional needs assessment and in consultation with the RACs and the SST in each region.
- C. Tier 3 services are provided within the parameters of the Performance Agreement universally to all districts and to all district operated and other pre-school programs across the state.

Figure 2: Tri-Tier Model of School Improvement Support



The State Support Teams' (SSTs) work for FY09 will focus on the implementation of the four stages of the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP):

Stage 1: Identify Critical Needs

Stage 2: Develop Focused Plan

Stage 3: Implement Focused Plan

Stage 4: Monitor Improvement Process

Capacity building funds will be used to:

- ✦ Develop an effective and efficient SST that utilizes Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP).
- ✦ Identify low academic performance and to plan school improvement efforts in priority districts.
- ✦ Build the content and process knowledge of the SST regarding the OIP and CIA as outlined in the Performance Agreement

Tier 1 Districts

The following is the scope of work to be delivered to Tier 1 districts as identified by ODE using eighty percent (80%) of all remaining allocated SST funds after operational costs, capacity building set asides, and IDEA set asides have been calculated..

Stage 1: Identify Critical Needs

The SST provides intensive coaching to assist DLTs in completing the Decision Framework in order to arrive at a comprehensive needs assessment that is entered into the district CCIP. The SST also helps the DLT integrate all of data collection efforts into the Decision Framework including all compliance related monitoring to ensure the development of one aligned and coherent needs assessment and a reduction of duplication and/or processes

The following outcomes are expected from Stage 1:

- ✦ Summary and analysis of data sets
- ✦ An understanding of how to apply the data to the Decision Framework
- ✦ An interpretation of key findings from the needs assessment
- ✦ A priority list of data-based critical problems from the Decision Framework

The SST and DLT review the district, school, and student data and identify areas in which students are not achieving. Some questions they should be able to answer are:

- ✦ In which grades and subjects did performance go down?
- ✦ In which grades and subjects did performance rise?
- ✦ In which grades and subjects did the district not meet AYP goals?
- ✦ If achievement increased and yet they did not meet the AYP goal, what are the district's strategies?
- ✦ Are the current strategies working and just need time? What evidence do you have that this is the case?
- ✦ Do buildings within the district demonstrate the same trends? If not, who is outperforming the district? Who is underperforming the district?
- ✦ Do sub-groups demonstrate the same trends? Which sub-groups outperform the district? Which sub-groups underperform the district?

The SST and the DLT develop a joint commitment to implement the action steps they collaboratively developed and write them into the Partnership Agreement. This may include new initiatives, behaviors and/or processes to achieve the intended goals.

Stage 2: Develop Focused Plan

The SST provides intensive coaching to assist DLTs in building their capacity to complete a plan with two or three focused goals and enter the plan into the CCIP. This plan integrates the district's federal and state planning requirements into one district improvement plan with two or three goals entered into the CCIP with the support of ODE:

- ✦ CCIP requirements (including Title-1 requirements)
- ✦ Corrective Action Plan
- ✦ Highly Qualified Teacher Plan
- ✦ Focused Monitoring and accountability efforts related to the Office of Special Education Programs

The SST works with district and instructional leaders to identify hypotheses about the areas of low performance and the strategies that will address the root problems.

- ✦ Based upon the data analysis, what two or three district CCIP goals will leverage the greatest impact on student achievement?
- ✦ What initiatives are already in place or planned by the district to accomplish these goals?
- ✦ Based upon the data analysis, the inventory of the district's existing initiatives, and the district's CCIP, how will the SST support the district?

The following outcomes are expected from Stage 2:

- ✦ Development of focused SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) goals
- ✦ Determination of existing cause and effect relationships
- ✦ Development of strategies for each goal
- ✦ Establishment of indicators as well as baseline and progress measures for each strategy
- ✦ Creation of actions that have the greatest likelihood of increasing student performance and changing teacher-leadership practices
- ✦ The adoption of a district plan after review and revisions.

Once the intended outcome is specifically defined, the SST works with the DLT to complete a task analysis of the action steps required to arrive at the intended outcome. Timelines are also assigned for each action step, given the overall timeline and school calendar. The SST identifies the data that will be reviewed to provide evidence of implementation and impact. Impact should demonstrate the district's change in behavior aligned to research based practices.

Stage 3: Implement Focused Plan

The SST scope of work for Stage 3 is limited to supporting DLTs in their efforts to build their own capacity and the capacity of their Building Leadership Teams to plan and implement new collaborative structures and processes for aligning shared responsibility, expectations, and accountability. The SSTs also support the DLTs in effectively implementing school improvement processes and strengthening curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

School Improvement Processes

1. Building a school culture that supports effective data-driven decision-making
2. Establishing priorities for instruction and achievement aligned with district goals

3. Providing opportunities for teachers to learn from each other
4. Monitoring and providing effective feedback on student progress
5. Supporting the development, implementation, and monitoring of focused building improvement strategies/plans
6. Making recommendations for the management of resources, including time and personnel, to meet district and building goal

Curriculum

1. Assist DLTs in aligning district curriculum and goals for instruction and achievement
2. Assist DLTs in implementing the approved district curriculum in all schools
3. Assist DLTs in conveying clear priorities among the district's instructional goals and strategies

Instruction

1. Assist DLTs in implementing a system of high-quality standards-based instruction aligned with the district's curriculum and goals for instruction and achievement on a district-wide basis
2. Assist DLTs in implementing a delivery system of high-quality instruction across the district that:
 - a. Is founded on research-based practices
 - b. Engages students
 - c. Incorporates culturally responsive practices
 - d. Relies on ongoing assessment and progress monitoring to inform instruction
3. Assist DLTs in implementing systems that consistently and regularly monitor the district's instructional program
4. Assist DLTs in implementing systems that consistently and regularly monitor student and student groups' achievement and ensure full access and opportunity in order to meet district goals
5. Assist DLTs in implementing systems that consistently and regularly monitor the implementation and evaluation of prevention/intervention strategies as part of the instructional program to ensure all students meet performance targets

Assessment

1. Assist DLTs in developing and implementing a system to collaboratively develop common formative and summative classroom assessments to gauge student progress and guide instructional planning toward meeting District goals
2. Assist DLTs in implementing systems that consistently and regularly monitor each student's progress toward meeting district goals

Stage 4: Monitor Improvement Process

The SST assists the DLTs in developing a system to monitor staff usage of data to inform instructional deci-

sions. The team also assists the DLTs in the ongoing monitoring of a single district improvement plan that focuses on the two or three focused district goals.

The SST works with the DLT to infuse the new content/process knowledge they acquired during the professional development training with their existing experience, allowing opportunities for practice and feedback in non-threatening, low-risk scenarios.

If the intended impacts are not evident, the SST works with the DLT to analyze the data further to understand if their strategies and plan need more time or if their strategies are not appropriate and need to be revised to meet the intended outcome. If adjustments are needed, the SST coaches the DLT through the process again by returning to the Planning phase.

Intensity and Duration of Service

Ohio's Statewide System of School Improvement Support is a comprehensive system that provides support to all districts with the greatest level of intensity aimed at districts in district improvement status and districts with buildings in school improvement status. Support for improvement does not begin or end; rather it ramps up and becomes more intensive if performance is low. Districts with continued low performance receive greater intensity, and support becomes more directive as longevity increases.

ODE commissioned case studies of "Schools of Promise" for their substantial progress in ensuring high achievement for all students even when more than 40% of their students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. Five elements emerged:

- ✦ Rigorous standards and instruction
- ✦ Strong instructional leadership
- ✦ Instruction designed for all students' success
- ✦ Parent and community involvement
- ✦ A positive school culture

ODE has used this research to inform the school improvement process with research-based resources for educators and administrators. The result of this integration is a state diagnostic tool designed to help districts and schools improve student performance by analyzing their current practices against effective research-based practices, identifying areas needing improvement, and recommending resources they can use to improve performance. The expanded basis for this tool is now:

- ✦ Alignment with Standards
- ✦ Instructional Practices
- ✦ Environment/Climate
- ✦ Leadership
- ✦ Professional Development
- ✦ Data Driven Decisions

Within each of these six critical areas are diagnostic indicators which describe effective practices that are critical to improving academic achievement. Using the diagnostic indicators, review team members determine the degree to which a school or district demonstrates effective practices.

The ODE's State Improvement Diagnostic Review process is designed to gain access to observable behaviors and practices that provide information beyond existing data. The methods and protocols created for this

review process are grounded in scientifically based research practices and are aligned with the above themes that emerged from the Ohio Schools of Promise case studies. This diagnostic process relies upon skilled and trained reviewers from outside of the district or school, and standardized protocols for data collection and analysis. Because review team members collect data in the form of observations, interviews, and document analysis, members must be skilled in one-on-one and group interviewing, classroom observations, and data analysis. The quality of available evidence as well as the results from the team members produces profiles which result in diagnostic summaries that are expected to guide the school district as it assesses its needs and sets priorities for improvement.

Type of Service

SST members leverage existing state provided training - state initiatives - to assist districts in developing their capacity to plan and implement school improvement processes. In some cases, when training does not exist and regional service providers who are very knowledgeable in the needed content are available, the SSTs may sub-contract with regional services providers as part of their district partnership to create access for the district to the needed training. All professional development provided by the SSTs is tracked through “System to Achieve Results for Students” (STARS)”. STARS is a web-based application that allows educators to register for professional development opportunities across Ohio.

Besides the STARS system, there are many sources of technology used to reach the districts to assist them in thinking through quality implementation. For example, ODE staff uses Elluminate and Adobe Connect to create virtual meeting spaces for large numbers of participants. Documents are placed on regional share-point sites to foster collaboration and consistent, transparent communication.

Delivering Services to Districts and Schools

Provide Services

Assessing Operations, Performance, and Need

In addition to the roles already described in the school improvement process, the SST members also act as “brokers of services” in the planning phase by assisting districts with acquiring access to the products, programs, and services they need to carry out their improvement plans.

Focused monitoring is one of the processes by which ODE gathers information from districts to ensure their compliance with federal and state laws and regulations applicable to children with disabilities. This was mentioned earlier as one area in which ODE staff is trying to combine efforts. ODE selects districts for review based on performance data associated with specific State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators and school improvement status. Focused monitoring activities require selected districts to analyze instructional practices and research-based interventions that impact student performance and develop corrective action plans that improve results for students with disabilities. ODE uses a “focused monitoring” approach to drive improvement on twenty indicators. Eventually, staff agreed to drop a compliance-only approach and concentrate on student achievement.

As part of its responsibility to evaluate how children are served in special education programs ODE produces an annual performance report on these indicators along with any changes that staff needs to make. This information is posted on a web site and made available to the SSTs to decide what areas to work on within their region.

Planning for Improvement

SST members do not select interventions for districts. However, they do engage DLTs in conversations about sound practice based upon research, and will challenge strategies for which there is no research linking the strategy to improved student learning. One of the roles of the SST consultants is that of “critical friend.”

SST members frequently engage in conversations about resource management as a way of helping districts think differently about how they can implement proven practices with existing funds. SST members also periodically involve Financial Area Coordinators (positions funded by ODE) who have expertise in school finance to engage them in supporting districts in their resource management efforts.

Implementing the Plan

Since the role of the SST members is to work with DLTs to develop their capacity to plan and implement school improvement processes, their role during the implementation phase is to ensure that the District Leadership Team has a solid plan for how they will monitor implementation of the Improvement Plan at the building and/or district level.

Monitoring the Progress

Prior to the present way the Performance Agreements are evaluated, ODE and the SSTs used a rubric to document progress. While ODE has moved past this document, it might be useful to some SEAs as they develop their SSOS. SST members collected and reviewed evidence of implementation and impact, seeking clarification when necessary, and challenging districts to increase the quality of their evidence as appropriate. District Leadership Teams guide SST members through a review of their progress and provide formative and summative data to demonstrate the impact of their efforts and their progress in improving their school improvement planning and implementation processes. As a result, completion of the rubric by these two organizations provides a focused look at the most important systems within five critical areas - curriculum, instruction, assessment, conditions/climate, and leadership—to assist District Leadership Teams. (Appendix B)

As an example, in this four point rubric under the “System” heading, one of the fourteen sections is entitled: Formative and Summative Assessments.

1. No or insufficient implementation of formative assessment processes to drive instructional decisions and inform progress of individual student learning
2. Limited implementation of multiple sources of formative and/or summative assessments are used to drive instructional decisions and inform progress of student learning
3. Consistent implementation of multiple sources of formative and summative assessments drive instructional decisions and inform progress of individual student learning as evidenced by completed quality pre and post assessments, revised lesson plans, and regularly documented feedback to student regarding performance
4. Systematic and ongoing district-wide common formative and summative assessments from a variety of sources are used for each standard and benchmark, and vertical and horizontal team discussions take place to inform instructional practice and communicate the progress of every student’s learning.

As a result of completing the entire rubric, the participants in the partnership agreement asked themselves: Did we do what we said we would do by the time we said we would do it? What difference did it make as

measured by movement from the previous year on the Rubric? What does the District do or have now that it did not do or have before? What evidence/artifacts do we have to answer these questions?

Evaluating and Improving the Statewide System of Support

Monitoring Progress of the Statewide System of Support

SST consultants complete formative progress reports as they provide intensive coaching to district leaders. Results of ongoing work are captured in STARS. Additionally, SST members perform quarterly Partnership Agreement reviews with all Tier 1 districts to document evidence of implementation and impact and to revise strategies as needed based upon data. Finally, an annual summary of technical assistance provided to each Tier 1 district and the impact of those services on the district is provided by the SST in June. This summary captures the district's efforts and change in practice and helps guide ongoing work while documenting history and progress of the SSTs' efforts. (See Appendix C for an example from the 2008-2009 Partnership Agreement.)

Ohio's Statewide System of School Improvement Support is founded on the principle of building a district's capacity to plan and implement school improvement processes. It is the ODE belief that by working with district and instructional leaders, they can assist districts in learning how to better work with their building leadership to increase student achievement for all students while closing the achievement gap between the highest and lowest performing students. Rather than providing services as part of the district's team, SST members act as partners to improve and leverage existing services in support of the district's improvement plan.

Evaluating and Improving the Statewide System of Support

The Ohio Chief State School Officer stated that it is the responsibility of the Chief to continuously evaluate the key strategies that are being used to meet State Board Goals. "One has to incorporate an evaluation component at the beginning to see if the improvement strategies are working. The State has to stay the course since each day and year more issues can emerge which will tend to force mission drift if staff is not vigilant. It is critical that the culture of the SEA remain focused on instruction, student learning, and improvement."

Primarily, staff reviews multiple measures such as improvement of student achievement as demonstrated on formative and summative assessments, movement within state designations and movement regarding Adequate Yearly Progress rating. Staff will be sampling parents and teachers for more information.

SST members meet regularly in the districts they serve. During these meetings, SST members discuss evidence of progress within the district aligned to the Essential Practices Guide. These meetings reduce the pressure districts feel when being "audited" as they allow SST members to create a collaborative relationship to support the local quality plan rather than appearing to have the approach be compliance driven.

The effectiveness of Ohio's statewide system of support can be measured, in part, by looking at student test scores as well as the distribution of districts and schools according to designations ranging from "Excellent with Distinction" to "Academic Emergency." The Ohio average of all students' test scores—their performance index score—has increased by more than 25 percent since it was introduced in 1999-2000, from 73.7 to 92.3. This performance index measures the achievement of every tested student, not just those who score proficient or higher. During the 2007-08 school year, more than half of Ohio districts improved their performance index scores over the previous year.

In addition, more districts and schools than ever are designated as “Effective” or higher. This reflects almost 85% of school districts and almost 70 percent of school buildings. These figures include 74 districts and 158 schools that have earned the new “Excellent with Distinction” designation (See Appendix D.) This rating is achieved by districts and schools that otherwise would have been rated “Excellent”, but exceeded the value-added standard for the second consecutive year. For the third year in a row, Ohio has no district in Academic Emergency.

The 2007-08 school year was the first year that the value-added measure was part of Ohio’s report card system. Value-added measures the progress districts and schools made with their students even though the students may not have met the proficiency standard. The results can help teachers pinpoint problems and determine successes. Instead of only emphasizing one point in time scores, the Ohio approach measures how much progress is being made over time.

Ohio is one of eight states that received approval from the U.S. Department of Education to provide schools and districts with an additional way to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Beginning in the 2007-08 school year, through the Growth Model, students who were projected to be on a path to proficiency within two years are treated as proficient in the current year. Use of the Growth Model enables Ohio to focus on the schools and districts where performance is of greatest concern—those in which proficiency rates are low and in which students are not projected to be on a path toward proficiency.

VIEWS FROM THE FIELD

Regional Perspective

State Support Team Overview

Two of the regional facilitators who oversee State Support Teams and serve as their region’s single point of contact (SPoC) were interviewed. Both are former teachers and principals; one splits her time between being the regional facilitator and executive director of instruction services for the Educational Service Center (ESC) that serves as fiscal agent for her State Support Team. One of the regions is a six-county area that includes one large urban district, a small urban district and a mix of suburban and rural districts. The other region covers four counties with a mix of urban and suburban areas.

One of the State Support Teams has eight staff members: two full-time and six part-time. Members of the team are retirees who were formerly teachers, principals, superintendents, special education directors, and curriculum directors, all of whom have worked under the current accountability system. Although each is assigned to a district as point person, they may provide assistance in other districts, if their particular expertise is needed. The members are highly trained and have ongoing professional development, with some training of team members done in-house and some involving outside consultants. The training has gone beyond customary topics to include facilitation skills, coaching, and customer service. The other State Support Team has 27 consultants and 6.5 support staff. State Support Team members work with DLTs in the areas of data use, continuous improvement planning, curriculum, instruction and assessment. The State Support Teams are also involved with special education compliance and assist schools in finding ways to structure lessons to meet the needs of all students.

A Break from the Past

Prior to the implementation of the new State Support Team model, the Regional School Improvement Teams (RSITs) and Special Education Regional Resource Centers (SERRCs) conducted what one regional

facilitator described as “come one, come all professional development—what’s hot, what’s not” for teachers whose principals sent them to these workshops. With the advent of the new model, there were several major changes in professional development. First, the State Support Teams no longer offered one-shot professional development. Second, training was more targeted toward using data, planning, monitoring, and meeting specific instructional needs. Training has become, in the words of one regional facilitator, “very focused, very purposeful, and it’s ongoing. That’s what the research tells us, and what we see makes a significant difference.”

Another major change was that the State Support Teams provided direct service exclusively to leadership teams, rather than teachers (although school and district leadership teams typically include some teachers). “[W]e are no longer working directly with teachers. We’re working with building capacity at the district level and empowering those people to go back in the building and train their own folks.... We’ve been hand-holding for a long time, and the administrators have relied on us to do much of the training of their staff, and [now] they have to do it, the administrators and the building leadership teams....” Although the State Support Teams focuses on leadership teams, teachers can still receive professional development through other regional service providers.

Finally, there is an integration of regional special education services and staff with school improvement staff to create a system of support for all learners, which one regional facilitator describes as, “blending special education services and regular education services together in a unified effort to say that kids are kids, and we’re going to serve them all.”

[ODE] saw the need to bring all of the departments together instead of operating in silos. Something would happen at the Office of Exceptional Children, and something would happen in school improvement, and something would happen in another area, and we were all attacking the districts from different perspectives, and the district didn’t know how to sort all that out. What we’ve done is we have funneled this down into we’re the source of information for one-stop shopping. You come to us, and we now can disseminate information, and all the departments [at ODE] are speaking to one another.

We still have bugs in the system, you know, everything’s not perfect.... We have become a cohesive department delivering services to our districts. No longer am I walking in the front door and a special education person is coming out of the other door, and she’s created a plan, and I’m going to create a different plan. We’ve all created one plan, and we’re all working together with the districts in unison.

This merger is, in the words of one regional facilitator, “one thing the state is doing that is a step in the right direction...it’s about time we put together special education services with regular education services.” This change has been difficult, because “people felt like they’re giving up pieces...but I think everyone will eventually see it’s a better process.” When asked how a state might accomplish “getting people out of their silos,” she responded,

I think...you have to stop making it about you. We learned about each other, learned about each other’s processes, our strengths...we did lots of things so that we understood that our mission/vision was about kids, that we all truly believe the same thing. We just have a different way of approaching it. Your methodology for approaching it is quite different than mine; it doesn’t mean that I’m right and you’re wrong. It just means we have to understand one another. And sometimes, I think at the department level, for some divisions and departments to exist, they need funding. So it’s about them. They want to covet that money, and I totally understand that. But if every-

body understands that that's their pot of money to... organize, and we're going to do that together, what's best for kids. It's all about collaboration. How do we overcome some of these issues? How do we make this work happen? Because it's not about me, and it's not about you, it's about those little babies in the seats and what's best for them.

The merger of special education and regular education services has improved communication among the districts, regions, and ODE.:

[Information about and feedback from the district] goes through me and I take it back to the department. The department knows what's going on in the region. They know what's going on in my districts. And it's not 17 different people telling them; it's one person. Which I think, trying at times as it is, because it's a lot of responsibility for one person, and one contact person at the state, it has cleared up and organized the work around districts. And I think [the districts] appreciate that.

School Improvement Planning

The new model focuses on school improvement planning, creating district level leaders, and communication from the school level to the state level and back. Through the Ohio Improvement Process, "basically everyone in the state is receiving the same training, the same information. To me, that is a major step forward for the state."

State Support Teams have an active role in the development, implementation and monitoring of school and district improvement plans. Here is how one regional facilitator describes the process:

We met at the beginning of the year with high priority districts. We looked at their data, sat with them, presented their data to them. We did the drilling down, showed them how we did it, and mentored them in the process. We had conversation about what's in your strategic plan? What will give you the most bang for your buck? Many of our districts have plans that are hundreds of pages...but there are few accountability measures, strategies that are solid at getting them to the goal. We look at those and talk about SMART goals and strategic planning. How can we write these so you have fewer goals/strategies, but yet with greater output in terms of student achievement? That's what we do throughout the year. We have an action plan with them, steps that we are going to follow, that we're going to provide support and technical assistance to them, maybe professional development, and then we help them monitor that throughout the year. We want to see the benchmarks. We want to have checkpoints throughout the way, so we're essentially modeling for them what we want them to do and over time we hope that they'll take that on as their methodology...of using the data, continuing the refinement of the goals and the planning process.

In addition to facilitating the planning process and rolling out the ODE's new decision framework, the State Support Teams help districts and schools establish professional learning communities, monitor the effectiveness of school improvement strategies, and serve as a broker of services to help schools find training or other assistance to meet their clients' special needs.

Specific Services Provided by State Support Teams

Needs assessment and data use. Both regional facilitators reported placing a heavy emphasis on needs assessments and effectively using data. They hosted data retreats and data academies that helped schools carefully examine both academic and perceptual indicators. As one regional facilitator described it,

It's not just looking at numbers, but having discussions around the data. Why are these numbers saying what they're saying, and are they true? What other pieces of evidence do we need to support that? ... Often that begins the conversation about what data do we need? ... We write our goals, strategies, action plans based on their needs. We train them in the process, and the goal is for leadership teams to go back to their buildings and do the same process within their buildings.

That regional facilitator periodically meets with the DLT to examine what action steps were taken and what the results have been, what changes might need to be made, and what services the State Support Team could provide. They try to maintain a focus on data at district meetings and their own meetings with superintendents. "So we're trying to make sure the superintendents' conversations are not about the football game and drinking at the prom, but about the data. That's a challenge sometimes because it's easier to talk about the basketball game and the prom."

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment. The State Support Teams have provided considerable assistance to their districts with the state standards by creating alignment guides, curriculum maps, and pacing guides. They emphasized how a teacher can create engaging lessons that can be adapted to meet the needs of students with varying ability levels. State Support Teams give support on differentiated instruction, prevention/intervention models, and scheduling and use of instructional time. In addition, State Support Teams provide assistance and professional development in selecting or creating appropriate assessments aligned with the standards.

Classroom Management. Both State Support Teams have taken advantage of the special education expertise of their members to do substantial work on Positive Behavior Supports. "The former regional school improvement teams were heavily academically focused. The SERRCs were more behavior focused. By integrating the systems, we have an enriched system bringing the expertise from both together."

English Language Learners. Only one of the two regions had significant numbers of English language learners in some districts with the number increasing. They offer a range of services, which partly fall under the State Support Team's performance agreement with the state, and some through districts that may not be eligible for State Support Team services.

The regional facilitators spend the greatest amounts of time on needs assessments, interpreting and using data, planning, curriculum, and intervention techniques for students who are having difficulties with particular concepts. When asked which services have been the most helpful to their schools' and districts' improvement efforts, one responded, "helping them make decisions based on data." The other cited

...work around standards and alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Also leadership training on how you put systems in place is probably what's been the most helpful; getting districts to understand that it all works as a total system. You can't leave out one piece of the system and be successful...if you're not a systems thinker; you have a tendency to concentrate on your one area.

Work with State Diagnostic Teams

The ODE assigns state diagnostic teams to review districts in need of highest support. They conduct thorough examinations of districts and their schools including, among other things, walkthroughs and focus groups, and then report on their findings. State Support Team members make an effort to attend review meetings between local staff and the State Diagnostic Teams, serve as a liaison between the local staff and the State Diagnostic Team, and help the districts design action plans that address the weaknesses identified in the State Diagnostic Team's reports.

Evaluations

ODE collects customer satisfaction data, and the State Support Teams conduct self-evaluations, both formal and informal. Techniques include surveys, interviews, and portfolios for individual districts that include a history of what services the State Support Team provides and the district's data. The State Support Teams measure impact after training and follow up with the districts to see what changes in practice have taken place and the effects of those changes. One facilitator said that although others might disagree, she is "a firm believer that our ultimate impact is on student achievement."

Lessons Learned

- ✦ "Capacity building of all partners would be a major piece. To be as inclusive as possible. There are a lot of turf wars, but if we don't look at it as there's enough work for all of us, and if we don't work together as a system, we're not going to have success. I think that would be number one."
- ✦ "You have to be very clear and systematic in your approach to change. You have to be very specific about what you want to see in order to get that change."
- ✦ "You have to honor the work that has been done and to take the best to create a totally new system. Don't try to piecemeal systems together. Design a new system."
- ✦ "Don't change things in mid-stream.... that creates havoc in the districts.... Stay the course for a year, see what happens...."
- ✦ Consistency and credibility. "If you say you're going to do something, do it and follow through with it. And be responsive. If districts need something, make sure that you at least acknowledge it, if you can support it or not...have that conversation."
- ✦ It is crucial to build and nurture relationships with school and district staff. "If we can't build relationships, we're not going to get our foot in the door.... Yesterday, I went to one of my districts and laid everything out on the table. Here are your options. And they say, 'We trust you—what do you advise us to do?' Two years ago I didn't have that level of trust with the districts. I ask questions, they ask questions. We have conversations around that. And they ultimately make the decision, but I'm involved in helping them make them. You know, they listen to me. It's about being credible and developing that relationship."

Local District Perspectives

Superintendents from three districts were interviewed; other administrators participated in two of those interviews. The districts, all of which have worked with State Support Teams through the State Personnel Development Grant Program (SPDG), represent varying community types and levels of academic performance. District enrollments ranged from approximately 1500-3800. The smallest district was in an area of Appalachia that has seen many of its jobs disappear. About half the students qualify for free or reduced price lunch and nearly a fifth of the students have disabilities. This district had been in district improvement status for three years because it had not met targets for their special education students; it did make AYP in 2006-2007. The second district covers three varied communities in northwest Cincinnati, where 37% of students qualified for free or reduced price lunch in 2006-2007. The racially diverse district has approximately 5% English language learners, 18% students with disabilities, and a relatively large number of therapeutic foster homes and high needs foster students with disabilities. They have had individual schools fail to make AYP, but no school has failed to make AYP for two consecutive years. The district made AYP in 2006-2007, but did not make AYP in the two previous years. The final district is a relatively affluent district in suburban Cleveland which has consistently made AYP.

Factors Contributing to Improvement

The district staff were asked what they believe are the most important factors that contributed to their schools' improvement and why. Here are their responses:

- ✦ Instruction based on a consistent curriculum aligned with state standards.
- ✦ Pacing guides that had flexibility for individual students.
- ✦ Benchmark assessments.
- ✦ Increased monitoring. Principals were required to do learning walks, note the instructional practices teachers used, and submit detailed reports on their findings to the district office.
- ✦ Ensuring that instruction for special education students focuses on state standards.
- ✦ Inclusion of students with special needs and adapting curriculum to better serve them.
- ✦ Teacher quality.
- ✦ Principals serving as instructional leaders.
- ✦ Supportive parents and a community that provides adequate financial resources.
- ✦ A literacy consultant who worked with teachers one-on-one.

Two of the districts reported relatively little interaction with their ESC prior to the current State Support Team program, though two had more extensive dealings with their Special Education Regional Resource Center. The other district used the ESC for professional development, an audit of their math and science programs, and preschool curriculum development.

State Incentives

Two of the three districts felt the pressure of public accountability in response to schools' assessment scores. One believed the effect was positive: "I'm a believer that we need to hold adults accountable. Education has been far too long willy-nilly. I believe that sometimes public pressure is okay." The other felt that this had a negative effect, since the schools and the district were not being judged on the progress their students have been making despite high mobility, poverty, and a large number of students with disabilities. The pressure of undesirable consequences for persistently low performance had a positive effect in the third district, which had failed to make AYP because too few special education students were tested and because those students' scores were too low. It took the threat of state takeover to convince some special education teachers that their students had to be instructed in the state standards.

The threat of financial loss for low performance served as a motivator in that district, but it was not low performance on the part of students; the state had threatened to withhold some special education funds if the timeliness and completeness of IEPs did not improve. Another pointed out that what could be lost is not money, but some flexibility in how their money could be spent. When that district went into academic emergency (a state designation) 10% of their money had to be spent on school and district improvement. It is too early to tell whether the effect of using that money on professional development has had an effect.

None of the districts reported financial or other rewards for effective school leaders or teachers; two pointed out that high performing teachers and principals are internally motivated to do well. Nor were there financial or other rewards for principals and teachers to work in low-performing schools.

The pressure of competition for students from charter schools was felt by only one district. The effects were negative from a monetary standpoint, as over \$1 million per year went to the charter school, rather than to

the district since funds follow the students. The charter school has attracted some students by offering full-day kindergarten, which the district is unable to do. The pressure of competition from other public schools was deemed to have little effect.

Other incentives included honorary designations (one school was named a “school of promise”) and the opportunity to participate in special programs, such as the Appalachian Leadership Program and the State Personnel Development Grant. As one principal observed that, “Sometimes knowledge attainment is overlooked and not called an incentive, when I think it really can be a huge incentive.”

State Opportunities

Waivers from state education laws or rules have been used by two of the districts, and the third would consider asking permission to use some instructional days for professional development. One district requested class size waivers and a waiver to allow more special education students to take the alternate assessment. The effect of that has been positive for them. Another district used some instructional days for curriculum alignment across grades and other work on standards, development of pacing guides, and using data to identify areas of weakness. This gave them flexibility to allow teachers to work in grade level groups, across grade levels, and within subject groups, sometimes within schools and sometimes all three schools together. They also used waiver days for leadership training and other professional development. One of the districts received a waiver to appoint an assistant principal who wasn’t fully certified at that time, but all principals followed a traditional path to certification.

One district has had experience with alternatively certified teachers, most of whom did not work out well, with the exception of those who had previous experience working with children or bilingual teachers who had relatively small classes. None of the districts has sought waivers from a teacher contract, though one has used a memorandum of understanding to modify instructional and planning time to accommodate programmatic changes that occur in the midst of a contract. None has offered special training for principals to become turnaround specialists. Other opportunities the state provided include a grant that funded a literacy specialist in one of the districts.

In addition, all the districts interviewed are participating in the State Personnel Development Grant program. (An SEA official notes that the funds from this grant are given to the SSTs to leverage in support of this pilot program. The monies help underwrite the SSTs costs for delivering the pilot. Without the funds, the SSTs would still exist and serve these districts. With them there can be greater intensity.) All felt the training for the district teams was beneficial, though one suggested tailoring it to meet the needs of the districts involved, some of which were already more proficient than others in the material being covered.

School and District Improvement Planning

All of the districts reported some changes in their school and district planning processes as a result of their decision framework training by ODE and their work with State Support Teams. The new process involves establishing school and district leadership teams that include teachers and administrators. They gather and analyze data and develop a plan that addresses weaknesses using research-based strategies, with an emphasis on literacy and mathematics. All the districts described their State Support Teams as critical in helping them analyze data and constructing their plans. Data-based decisions on instructional strategies and professional development needs are central to the process.

One of the districts had previously followed a model for creating school improvement plans that is similar to ODE’s. What is different now is that they are making much more effective use of data. In the past, district plans were typically developed by central office teams, rather than by the more inclusive district leadership

teams. “It’s provided us with the opportunity to get together and...have the right conversations ...establishing as a district team what we believe, setting goals, and moving forward....”

The State Support Teams helped districts create more tightly focused plans than they had in the past. In the words of one superintendent, whose district had no school-level improvement plans at all prior to their work with the State Support Team:

Our continuous improvement plan for the district had way too many things in it. You could never measure all of them; you could never do all of them. So we get involved with the Ohio Improvement Process, which teaches us to pick a few things out, do them well, measure them really well, and make them SMART goals. So as a district, we’ve created a focused plan. The next step for us is having non-negotiable goals at the district level and then teaching our principals and others to write school improvement plans....We’re pretty excited about that.

The superintendent explained his support for the decision framework this way:

Because every school district in Ohio, and really, frankly, everywhere probably needs to do [planning], it makes good sense for a state to support that....If we’re going to be held accountable...for producing high quality instruction and student learning as measured by these summative accountability tests, then we need some help from our [state] department of education to get better at setting our goals and focusing ourselves, because otherwise, there are 611 school districts in Ohio and 611 entities doing 611 things differently. That seems kind of goofy. If our focus is to do things and get better, why not have a state model? ...Come get trained and we’ll teach you how to do this stuff. It just makes sense.

The State Support Teams get uniformly high marks from the districts for being helpful and easy to work with and for tailoring their services to each district’s needs.

The good thing about our State Support Team is that they’re flexible. I think if a State Support Team came in and said this is our job and this is what we’re going to do without first understanding what are the needs of the district, it could be viewed as rude and coming in and telling us what to do.... What’s good with the State Support Team in working with us is that they can meet us where we are and help improve our district.

The districts also praised the State Support Teams and ODE for improving communication between districts and ODE and alerting ODE to their problems and concerns. “By regionalizing things, it allows the information to flow from local districts to the regional improvement team and then to the department of education.”

Resources for School Improvement

The districts receive a variety of state and federal funds, including grants that paid for extras such as a literacy coach or special programs such as leadership training

If they had additional resources, districts would use those resources to do the following:

- ★ Engage in further job-embedded professional development...have teachers observe other teachers and witness high quality instruction happening. I’d like to have time for teachers to collaborate on student data. We can do some of this, but we’re limited...To look at what they did not do well on and what kind of interventions are we going to provide.

- ✦ Hire instructional coaches.
- ✦ Have summer retreat time for team building,
- ✦ Hire intensive intervention specialists for struggling students during both the school year and the summer.
- ✦ Conduct on-site professional development in which a trainer works with teachers in their own classrooms.
- ✦ Build time into the school day for teachers to plan and have professional learning communities.
- ✦ Have a longer work day for teachers.

While the districts were clearly eager for increased student achievement, one expressed concern that they would lose some state financial support, and that it would then be difficult to find money to purchase needed services.

Specific Services Provided by the State Support Team

Information and Data Systems. The State Support Teams won praise for helping the leadership teams understand and use data.

ODE's decision framework tool, which is in development, provides a structured way for school and district teams to look at data.

The data can be too overwhelming at times. When we got in to look at our data, one of the things we found was we couldn't really answer the questions we needed to answer in any way that was really a data-based decision....This process really helped us to identify things we had, but more importantly, I think, identify the things we didn't have and that we needed to get.

The districts use ODE's web sites to build user-friendly data reports used in school improvement planning. Assessment data for individual students, including item analyses, are available but these do not arrive until the fall semester has begun.

The state offers many online data tools, and they are in the process of creating an annotated catalog of those data tools. One superintendent explains the contents of the catalog:

Here are all the data tools that are out there; here are the purposes of these data tools; here's how these data tools are similar to one another; here's how they're different; and here's when you would use them for particular things and here are the links to those particular data tools.

Curriculum. The State Support Team has assisted districts by giving feedback, suggesting tools and resources, and assisting with curriculum alignment and the development of pacing guides. The ODE has many web sites for state educators. One set of sites provides curriculum information, lesson plans, and assessments. The districts report that use of these sites is increasing as the number and quality of resources increases and as teachers become more familiar with it.

Instructional Delivery. The State Support Team has provided professional development on best practices, increased the use of learning walks and, as one superintendent put it,

...helped us to understand that science-based methods were a better way of teaching our students than the "I know how to teach" model. We're seeing principals and teachers moving toward that [scientifically-based] model and that's a huge change after spending eight years trying to get teachers to adapt.

Instructional time and scheduling. The State Support Team helped one district revamp their school schedules to include an intervention/enrichment period.

Assessment. State Support Team members have helped districts and schools identify appropriate assessments aligned with state standards. The state web site includes short-cycle assessment items aligned with state standards.

Classroom Management. The State Support Team provided assistance with Positive Behavior Supports and culturally responsive practices.

Special Education. The regions hold monthly meetings to update districts on changes and disseminate information. One district reports that high staff turnover at the state has resulted in worse flow of information.

One district educator emphasized the importance of continuity of State Support Team staff, so that the team members would be able to develop knowledge of each district's circumstances and constraints. It is also important for all members of the State Support Team to have sound pedagogical knowledge in addition to facility with data. Although that superintendent believed that there needed to be a better balance between time spent learning about data and the time spent learning about intervention strategies, the superintendent concluded that, "They have led us to various resources that have really supported us strongly. I can't say enough about what they've done."

What's been the most helpful?

When asked which of the services provided by the State Support Teams have been the most helpful, they offered these responses:

- ✦ The decision framework is the most important. [It] allows a district to have a tool to look at itself diagnostically and say that these are the things we've got to work on. I think the state's gone about it in the right way saying here's a tool to help you analyze your organization; here are the things that have an impact on student achievement; analyze your data and move on to the next step. The framework is a very valuable tool to do that.
- ✦ Professional development.
- ✦ Help with the improvement plan and data; "they've been very good facilitators."

How might a state department of education determine the effectiveness of its system of support?

One superintendent proposed comparing districts that received service with similar districts that did not and monitoring the extent to which the professional development provided by the state system of support has been implemented. Possible measures could be achievement data and whether schools and districts exit corrective action.

How might a state continuously examine the effectiveness of its system of support and improve it?

One superintendent suggested this:

Setting well defined goals, just pick a few—practicing what you preach. [Having the state say,] "These are the things we're going to focus on. We're not going to pick a lot of them.... We're going to make them measurable, measure them, and seek feedback from those who partook in the process. We're going to continuously improve ourselves based on the feedback from the field." The thing that ODE has gotten better at is, again this is through regional support networks, listening to those of us in the field about what's going on and what we need. And they're getting better at providing what we need rather than what they think we need.

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Appendix A: Career Lattice Pilot

As envisioned by the ESB and ODE, the following table provides illustrative examples of teacher leadership roles and a continuum of increasing responsibilities in the pilot of the Career Lattice.

Standard	Accomplished	Distinguished
Standard 1: Students Teachers understand student learning and development, and respect the diversity of the students they teach.	*Be a mentor or coach *Lead a team of teachers in developing learning plans for individual students	*Design and teach literacy workshops for non-English speaking families *Design and teach cultural competency class *Train mentors and/or coaches
Standard 2: Content Teachers know and understand the content area for which they have instructional responsibility.	*Design and lead a service learning project, job-shadow or career day *Develop action research project	*Lead content-area workshops *Lead curriculum development/alignment committees *Lead a team in cross-curricular unit development
Standard 3: Assessment Teachers understand and use varied assessments to inform instruction, evaluate and ensure student learning.	*Serve as a coach to peers to assist in disaggregating student achievement data *Generate data-driven tools to share with other teachers	*Conduct training/presentation on classroom assessment and/or use of data *Lead a professional learning community or book study *Lead workshops on student-led instruction and reflection
Standard 4: Instruction Teachers plan and deliver effective instruction that advances the learning of each individual student.	*Be a mentor or coach *Offer a demonstration classroom *Participate in vertical articulation, curriculum mapping or looping committees	*Participate in district or state level committees *Conduct differentiated instruction training *Lead workshop on use of technology in instruction *Train mentors and/or coaches
Standard 5: Learning Environment Teachers create learning environments that promote high levels of learning and achievement for all students.	*Design and share units using cooperative learning and other strategies *Design and share tools for effective classroom management	*Participate in district policy committees *Design and lead training on service learning or cooperative learning and/or other strategies
Standard 6: Collaboration and Communication Teachers collaborate and communicate with students, parents, other educators, administrators and the community to support student learning.	*Become a member of a community group focused on academic, social and medical issues that affect students *Serve as North Central Accreditation chair *Coach colleagues in demonstrating proficiency in the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession	*Take a lead role in peer assistance and review *Develop partnership with local community agency or business *Assume a lead role in District TLP
Standard 7: Professional Responsibility and Growth Teachers assume responsibility for professional growth, performance, and involvement as an individual and as a member of a learning community.	*Become a member of a content or instructional area committee *Participate in district TLP development	*Participate on state or national policy committees *Become a professional development trainer *Write and/or manage a grant

Appendix B: Partnership Agreement Rubric

System	1	2	3	4
Alignment to Ohio's Academic Content Standards	no or insufficient evidence of attempted alignment among written, taught, and tested curriculum	limited evidence of attempted alignment among written, taught, and tested curriculum with partially completed curriculum maps	alignment of written, taught, and tested curriculum to Ohio's Academic Content Standards as evidenced by completed quality curriculum maps, pacing guides, and assessments	systemic and ongoing continuous improvement cycle and action research for evaluating alignment of written, taught, and tested curriculum to Ohio's Academic Content Standards
Equal Access to Learning	no or insufficient evidence of differentiated written, taught, and tested curriculum	limited evidence of differentiated written, taught, and tested curriculum evidenced by some modifications for students with disabilities	written, taught, and tested curriculum is culturally responsive and provides for different learning needs of students as evidenced by use of some best practices and review of disaggregated and individual student data to ensure all students are successful in meeting each standard, benchmark, and indicators	systemic and ongoing data-driven review and improvement of the written, taught, and tested curriculum effectively addresses the level of cultural responsiveness and the diverse learning needs of all students by providing equal access to learning opportunities and eliminating social and physical barriers
Formative and Summative Assessments	no or insufficient implementation of formative assessment processes to drive instructional decisions and inform progress of individual student learning	limited implementation of multiple sources of formative and/or summative assessments are used to drive instructional decisions and inform progress of individual student learning	consistent implementation of multiple sources of formative and summative assessments drive instructional decisions and inform progress of individual student learning as evidenced by completed quality pre and post assessment, revised lesson plans, and regularly documented feedback to student regarding performance	systemic and ongoing district-wide common formative and summative assessments from a variety of sources are used for each standard and benchmark, and vertical and horizontal team discussions take place to inform instructional practice and communicate the progress of every student's learning
Student Engagement in Learning	no or insufficient evidence that students are aware of learning expectations or are involved in determining what and/or how they learn	students can identify standards but focus on grades and assignments with limited opportunities for students to have a voice regarding what or how they learn	students consistently express expectations for what they are to know and do, are aware of areas that need improvement, and are regularly involved in defining what and how they will learn	systemic and ongoing strategies for engaging students in defining what and how they learn within and outside the classroom exist; students monitor their own progress in meeting learning expectations and can communicate areas in need of improvement
Monitoring standards-based education	no or insufficient processes for monitoring implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned to the Ohio Academic Content Standards at the building and classroom level	limited processes for monitoring implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned to the Ohio Academic Content Standards at the building and classroom level with no documentation of current practice or desired improvements	consistent processes for monitoring and collecting data regarding the implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned to the Ohio Academic Content Standards at the building and classroom level without formalized documentation	systemic and ongoing processes for monitoring and collecting data regarding the implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned to the Ohio Academic Content Standards at the building and classroom level to ensure the instructional program is meeting the needs of all learners

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT (SBE)

Appendix C: Impact Outcomes for SST Work in Tier 1

Throughout implementation of the Ohio Improvement Process, each SST monitors districts' progress. The following is one example.

		Y	IP*	N	Outcomes	Evidence (Aligned to the Ohio School Improvement Effective Practices guides)
Stage 3	Curriculum				* The DLT has aligned Ohio Academic Content standards, District curriculum, and goals for instruction and achievement. * The DLT has implemented the approved District curriculum in all schools.	
Stage 3	Instruction				* The DLT has implemented a system of high-quality instruction across the district that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Is founded on research-based practices b. Engages students c. Incorporated culturally responsive practices d. Relies on ongoing assessment and progress monitoring to inform instruction. * The DLT has implemented systems that consistently and regularly monitor student and student groups' achievement and ensure full access to the curriculum and opportunity to learn. * The DLT has implemented systems that consistently and regularly monitor the implementation and evaluation of prevention/intervention strategies as part of the instructional program.	

Appendix D: Table of District and School Ratings Page 1

Designation	Districts						Schools				
	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008		2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Excellent with Distinction	—	—	—	—	74		—	—	—	—	158
Excellent	117	111	192	139	152		920	889	1290	1143	1116
Effective	229	297	299	347	292		906	1136	1217	1255	1164
Continuous Improvement	224	175	112	113	83		1211	962	643	693	589
Academic Watch	34	21	7	11	9		125	239	218	230	230
Academic Emergency	4	5	0	0	0		222	288	208	182	234