Finding the Power in IL-EMPOWER

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IL-EMPOWER
Background
IL-EMPOWER

- IL-EMPOWER is the Illinois name given to the structure that will address low performing schools as required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

- IL-EMPOWER is the new statewide structure through which schools will be able to select a Learning Partner(s) and access school improvement services.
From ISBE.net:

- “…empower schools with greater choice and voice in the school improvement process.”

- “IL-EMPOWER gives schools resources to focus on the needs of the whole child. Knowing the whole child is created equally from the child’s school, community, and home.”
IL-EMPOWER – THE BASICS

- **Tier 4 Schools** will be required to participate in IL-EMPOWER including selecting a “Learning Partner” to support their improvement plan and work.

- **Tier 4 Schools = lowest - performing** ~lowest 5% of schools

- **Learning Partners =** Providers approved by ISBE for IL-EMPOWER
NEW ESSA ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Tier 1: Exemplary School:** A school that has no underperforming subgroups, a graduation rate of greater than 67 percent, and whose performance is in the top 10 percent of schools statewide.

- **Tier 2: Commendable School:** A school that has no underperforming subgroups and a graduation rate above 67 percent, and whose performance is not in the top 10 percent of schools statewide.

- **Tier 3: Underperforming School:** A school in which one or more subgroup is performing at or below the level of the “all students” group in the lowest 5 percent of Title I schools.

- **Tier 4: Lowest-Performing School:** A school that is in the lowest performing 5 percent Title I schools in Illinois and those high schools that have a graduation rate of 67 percent or less.
PARTICIPATION BY STATUS

- **Tier 1: Exemplary School and Tier 2: Commendable School** - May apply to be an IL-EMPOWER Learning Partner for Tier 3 and Tier 4 schools.

- **Tier 3: Underperforming School** - School must complete an improvement plan approved by its *district*. School may participate in IL-EMPOWER.

- **Tier 4: Lowest-Performing School** - School must participate in IL-EMPOWER including a required Needs Assessment process, choose an approved Learning Partner(s), and have its improvement plan approved by ISBE. Funding available.
THE PROCESS

- Schools will use a needs assessment to determine opportunities for growth and set targets for improvement.

- The needs assessment will include:
  - Illinois Balanced Accountability Measure (IBAM) Rubric
  - Equity Activity
  - Data Review

- The needs assessment will identify opportunities for improvement in one or more of the Areas:
  - Governance and Management
  - Curriculum and Instruction
  - Climate and Culture
IL BALANCED ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURE (IBAM)

**IBAM Standards**
- Continuous Improvement
- Culture and Climate
- Shared Leadership
- Governance, Management, and Operations
- Educator and Employee Quality
- Family and Community Engagement
- Student and Learning Development
IBAM AND IL-EMPOWER

- Use of IBAM Standards and Rubric were incorporated into ESSA as the tool for Needs Assessment for IL-EMPOWER.

- Rubric has been piloted by an ISBE invited group of ~30 districts.

- Rubric will be revised based on feedback from IL-EMPOWER Pilot.
WHAT IS NEXT?

- ISBE will identify and notify Tier 3 and Tier 4 schools in late June 2018.

- Tier 4 schools will then:
  - complete a Needs Assessment process (includes IBAM rubric). *Learning Partners can be part of Needs Assessment process with ISBE approval*
  - select a Learning Partner(s)
  - complete and seek approval (by ISBE) of improvement plan for the 2018-19
  - have the ability to use 2018-19 as a planning year.
WHAT IS NEXT?

■ Tier 3 schools will then:
  – complete a Needs Assessment process.
  – complete and seek approval (by their district) of improvement plan

Many more details to come from ISBE!
CEC believes improvement happens when:

- **teachers** become regarded as teaching and learning experts;
- **data** is used as motivation to instructionally innovate and continually improve;
- **districts** commit to supporting schools;
- **schools** commit to supporting instructional teams;
- **teams** assume responsibility for the success of all students;
- **students** engage in and take responsibility for their own learning.
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INSIGHTS

- School **and** district system change
- Collaborative teams and structures must be oriented to support change
- School leadership matters
- Prepare for quality not quantity
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT INSIGHTS

- Schools need student level, actionable data
- No one size fits all model / no formula
- Meet non-academic needs (whole child, whole school, whole community)
- Teaching and learning is THE target
WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

- Prior efforts produced mixed and often disappointing results
- Evidence of positive effects in specific states or districts, types of schools, or student populations
- Many approaches have some evidence of effectiveness, but there is substantial variation within each approach
- There’s no one-size-fits-all formula, and successful efforts are context-sensitive and meet local needs
5 Components of Successful School Improvement Efforts

1. Supporting structures and systems
2. Culture shift
3. Improvement leadership
4. Talent management
5. Instructional transformation
RESEARCH: SUPPORTING STRUCTURES & SYSTEMS

- **School** improvement is a misnomer
  - Requires system-level change with support from district and the state

- What have successful states and districts done?
  - Help schools identify their unique needs
  - Providing multiple, individualized supports
  - Build networks of schools that work collaboratively on school improvement

- External partners can help jump start school improvement -- but not all do
RECOMMENDATIONS: SUPPORTING STRUCTURES & SYSTEMS

■ All stakeholders should commit and recommit. Leaders at each level must make school improvement a priority, and keep it a priority, even in changing political winds.
■ Districts, schools, and in many cases, a Learning Partner should develop a robust process for Needs Assessment.
■ Districts should grant the school(s) autonomy and flexibility - especially around time, people, and money.
■ Choose a high quality Learning Partner.
In many low performing schools, trust is insufficient for individuals to risk change. Replacing principals and staff, or restarting schools, are ways to catalyze culture shift -- but not the only ways.

Organizations typically choose to make only minimal change if that is an option. But improvement requires systemic change and the least disruptive interventions are usually the least effective.

School improvement programs can be viewed as a way to coordinate individual efforts into a more efficient collective vision.
RECOMMENDATIONS: CULTURE SHIFTS

- Districts and school should include teacher, student, family, and community participation in the needs assessment, planning and then implementation.
- Schools should choose a small number of changes to start on the path to improvement, rather than a laundry list. Quality over quantity.
- Schools should choose interventions that are research-based, can be adapted to the local context, and match the current capacity to implement.
- Districts and schools should focus on implementation and continuous improvement.
RESEARCH: TURNAROUND LEADERSHIP

■ An effective principal is critical for school improvement. Research indicates that effective turnaround leaders:
  – *support effective instructional practices*
  – *prioritize improvement & instill a sense of urgency*
  – *monitor goals & focus efforts on outcomes*
  – *target supports to student needs*
  – *improve staff efficacy*
  – *spark culture shifts*

■ Successful turnaround teams include teacher leaders and distributed leadership is common
RECOMMENDATIONS: TURNAROUND LEADERSHIP

What makes “turnaround” leadership different? Vision.

- Districts and schools should make sure the right principal is in place from the outset.

- Districts should plan robust support for the principal and administrators.

- Administrators should share and distribute leadership. Use the power of collaborative teams.
Successful improvement efforts link professional learning and external support with instructional transformation.

Instructional interventions must be research-based and fit the needs and capacity of the school.

Successful efforts use data to pinpoint the needs of struggling students, target PD, identify intervention strategies, and adapt interventions over time.

Focus on students’ non-academic needs is also critical.
RECOMMENDATIONS: INSTRUCTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

■ Districts should support schools to implement interventions with strong evidence of success and support their efforts to adapt the intervention to the local context.

■ Districts should examine and then provide an effective instructional infrastructure, including:
  – *clear curriculum guidance*,
  – *high-quality curriculum-aligned assessments*,
  – *a data system to track implementation progress and measure student outcomes*, and
  – *access to interim student data via user-friendly data tools*
RECOMMENDATIONS: INSTRUCTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

- Schools should develop or redevelop a teaming structure (e.g. PLCs) to support instructional improvement.

- Schools should focus on providing instructional training and then follow-up coaching and feedback to support improvement of instructional practice.

- Schools should build a plan that supports the whole child - integrate academic and social emotional learning & supports
RESEARCH: TALENT MANAGEMENT

- The most successful efforts often involve the most dramatic reforms, especially around staffing.
- BUT talent management for school improvement is not solely a matter of “weeding out bad teachers”
  - Effective principals can help attract, hire, develop, motivate, and retain better teachers
  - Successful schools create conditions where all staff can rapidly increase their effectiveness through meaningful professional learning, receive actionable feedback based on data, and take advantage of increased time for collaboration and instructional coaching
RECOMMENDATIONS: TALENT MANAGEMENT

- Districts should develop a plan to recruit, develop, retain, and sustain talented teachers and administrators.

- Collaboration is key. All stakeholders, but especially district and union leaders, should make agreements or policy changes to better support low performing schools.
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