

NATIONAL STUDENT ATTENDANCE,  
ENGAGEMENT, AND SUCCESS CENTER



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**NSAESC**

National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center

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## ESSA Needs Assessments and Evidence-Based Interventions

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**NSAESC**

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# ESSA

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- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states and districts to complete a needs assessment for schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement.
- States may also require districts to complete a needs assessment for schools that are identified for targeted support and improvement. States may choose to develop a standard approach to conducting the needs assessment. States may also choose to contract with partners to complete the needs assessment.
- States and districts are looking for valid approaches to assessing the needs of schools, instruments, and processes that will produce meaningful insights to support planning for improvement and the selection of the right evidence-based strategies.
- ESSA provides the opportunity to identify existing strengths within schools and then fill in the gaps with evidence-based strategies, warranting a more-intensive needs assessment process. Not all low-performing schools need the same set of reforms.



# Why a Good Needs Assessment Matters

*The battle is won or lost before it is fought.*

- Sun Tzu

*Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth...*

- Mike Tyson

- Whole-school improvement occurs when effective means are found to do three things simultaneously:
  - Build adult capacity and mindsets
  - Enhance student supports and motivations
  - Create school structures that enable a shared mission and continuous improvement that will enable all adults and students to succeed
- The real question of school improvement is how to do it, given the existing circumstances, challenges, capacities, and experiences of a school.
- A good needs assessment can identify where/how best to intervene and who might need the interventions the most.



# The Nuts and Bolts of a Needs Assessment

- A needs assessment is a systematic process used to:
  - Determine a school's or Local Education Agency's (LEA) strengths and weaknesses
  - Understand the current context and constraints for the school/LEA
  - Perform a root cause analysis
  - Develop an improvement plan outlining the changes most likely to result in stronger performance
- A needs assessment should be a part of a continuous improvement cycle—not a one-time event or standalone practice.
- Needs assessments have an important role to play in establishing where schools are on the pathway to effective leadership, skilled teachers, instructional coherence, data-driven instruction and student supports, the use of progress monitoring, and productive school climates.



# The Process



## COLLECTION

A comprehensive school data profile, including on track to postsecondary success indicators, is assembled to identify adult and student strengths and needs and establish degree of difficulty



## REVIEW

Site visits are conducted; they include all stakeholders and review the school against evidence-based practices.



## DIAGNOSIS

Post review, the qualitative and quantitative information is compiled and used for facilitated school-based diagnosis of need and planning of evidence-based improvements.



## IMPLEMENTATION

Capacity building supports are provided to enable schools and districts to implement their evidence-based improvement strategies.



# Taking a New and Differentiated Approach

- Needs assessments rooted in school improvement will not be sufficient. Additional elements that focus on the “what,” “why,” and “how” of redesign, given existing conditions, are needed.
- The ESSA Needs Assessment could and SHOULD be differentiated.
  - Grade spans—elementary, middle, high schools
  - Trajectory of past performance
  - Current data profile





# Turning Data into Insight

Based on 20 years of experience working on improvement plans with high-poverty secondary schools has enabled us to identify key items schools need to diagnose their challenges and select the right strategies to address them.

Who walks in the door in the entry grade of the school?

What is their prior history with chronic absenteeism, behavior, course failure, academic needs, and school success?

Is the school's current organized response to the educational challenge entering students bring to school sufficient and effective?

What do students report about the challenges they face outside of school and in school?

How does this compare to the perceptions of the adults in the school to what those challenges are and their scale and scope?

What is the schools prior perceived history with school reform efforts?

What is viewed as having worked and not worked?

From a teacher/ administrator point of view, do the adults in the school function as a team with a common vision?

Are processes and structures in place to enable and support school-wide participation in continuous improvement?

From the student point of view, how consistent, challenging, and fair are the academic and behavioral expectations they encounter as they travel from class to class?

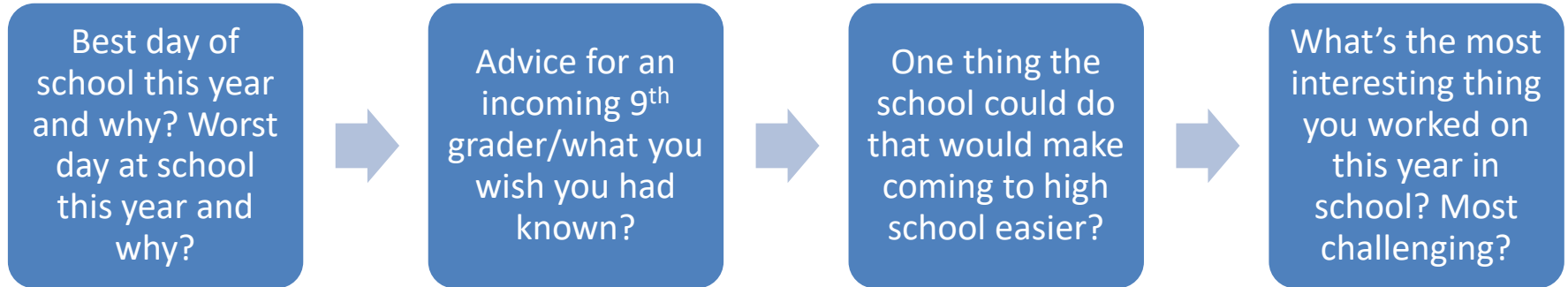
Are all students provided with supported pathways to post-secondary success and equitable access to key preparatory experiences?





# Engaging Students

- How can students help shape your plans?
  - Survey students
  - Create student profiles
  - Shadow students
  - Hold Student Focus Groups

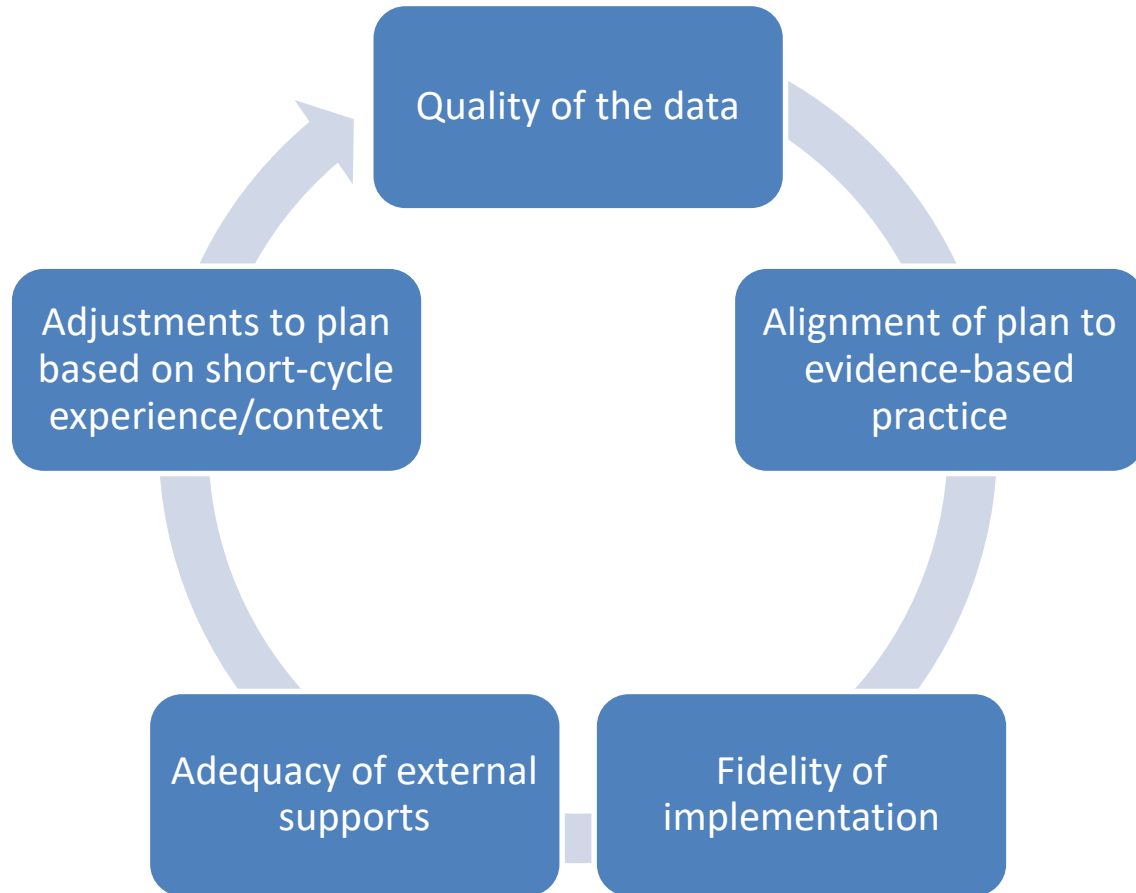


# The Needs Assessment is just the beginning....

- Once a low-performing high school knows where it stands on the continuum of school improvement, and the “what,” “why,” and “how” of its redesign efforts:
  - It must identify appropriate evidence-based strategies where they exist and then establish areas where innovation will be required
  - It also needs a strategic sequence of actions, timeline, and continuous improvement processes to support implementation
  - All of this together becomes the school’s redesign plan
  - Many/most of the remaining low-performing schools will need technical assistance and network supports in conducting needs assessments and developing school redesign plans



# Planning and Implementing Change: What does it take?



# ESSA Definition of *Evidence-Based*

ESSA's definition of *evidence-based* includes four levels of evidence. The top three levels require findings of a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes and are mandatory for school improvement plans funded by 7 percent set aside (Section 1003):

## (1) Strong

- At least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (i.e., randomized)

## (2) Moderate

- At least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study (i.e., matched)

## (3) Promising

- At least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias



# ESSA Definition of *Evidence-Based*

The fourth level is designed for ideas that do not yet have an evidence base qualifying for the top three levels. This *evidence-building* level can be referred to as "under evaluation."

## (4) "Under Evaluation"

- Demonstrates rationale based on high-quality research or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes
- Includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention



# Early Warning and Response Systems

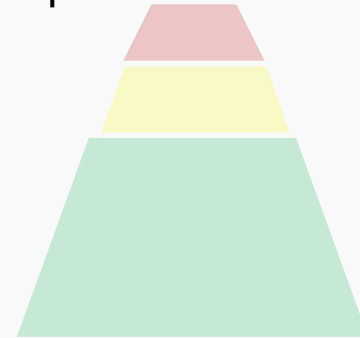
## Indicators

- Reliable, valid, and predictive
- Each indicator adds information for action**
- Easily accessed and organized

0	0	100%	0	C	F	C	D
1	1	97%	0	C	C	C	D
10	0	74%	0	B	C	C	C

## Support and Response System

- Whole-school/classroom, small-group, and individual initiatives and interventions
- System for monitoring/follow-up
- Reflective processes



Facilitation and Teams



# Attendance, Behavior, Course Performance

	Attendance	Behavior	Course Perf.
<b>Off Track</b>	Less than 90%	1+ suspension and/or mild sustained behavior	Failing a core course
<b>Sliding</b>			
<b>On Track</b>	Greater than 90%	No suspensions or mild misbehavior	Passing a core course
<b>College Ready</b>	Greater than 95%		B or better





# Success Mentors

- Targeted at students who are chronically absent
- Trained Success Mentors
  - Trained to serve as advisors, motivators, connectors, and confidence-builders and monitor early warning systems for chronically absent students at risk of getting off track, both in school and in life
  - Can be school staff, university students, peers in 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> grade, community members, professional tutors/mentors

Mentors see students in school at least three times a week and responsibilities include personally greeting students in the morning to make them feel welcomed and noticed, calling home every day a child is absent, and connecting students and families with a wide range of services to help them overcome barriers to success.

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/truancy/html/smc/smc.shtml>



# Who Is Talent Development Secondary?

- Talent Development Secondary is a national school partner and a leader in secondary school reform housed at the Johns Hopkins University School of Education. Its mission is to provide evidence-based models, tools, and supports to the most challenged secondary schools serving the most vulnerable students across the country.
- Built on four pillars of school success, Talent Development Secondary is a partner in districts, schools, and classrooms. On-site staff provide consistent help in implementing the schedule, curriculum, and instruction that will make a difference in how students learn and teachers teach. Professional development is continual, consistent, and specific to the needs of each school and its staff.
- Talent Development Secondary supports schools in the use of real-time Early Warning Indicator data, validated by the research of Dr. Robert Balfanz and predictive of on-time high school graduation and postsecondary success, to structure student interventions and supports.



# Questions? Thank you!

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# Organizations that we work with:

**Attendance Works:** <http://www.attendanceworks.org>

**MENTOR:** <http://www.mentoring.org>

**My Brother's Keeper Alliance:** <https://www.mbkalliance.org>

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