OVERVIEW OF IOWA’S SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS & SCHOOLS

The Iowa Department of Education (IDOE) is focused on ensuring equity not just in access to a well-rounded education, but to educational excellence leading to success for all Iowa students. We have incredible strength in our system to achieve and sustain this critical focus. We have established an effective infrastructure that draws upon expertise from across our state to establish evidence-based practices embedded in every aspect of what we do in education. We maintain a robust delivery and support system needed to increase student results by providing evidence-based professional learning to educators and leaders statewide. Within this collaborative infrastructure\(^1\) we are committed to ensuring:

A. **Supports for Students** to have access to – and thrive within - an equitable and well-rounded education;  
B. **Supports for Educators** to work in systems that promote excellence in both teaching and learning; and  
C. **Supports for Schools** to have greater flexibility and positive outcomes through Iowa’s Unified Differentiated Accountability and Support System.

**Collaborative Infrastructure.** For the past four years, we have worked to establish a robust collaborative infrastructure with Area Education Agencies (AEA), districts, schools, and related educational organizations (Figure 4). Experts across the state are engaged in this critical work to guarantee that what we do as a state is based on current evidence of impact on student outcomes and efficacy in school improvement in the following ways:

- **Development.** We work as a system to identify, develop, refine and pilot evidence-based processes, tools, practices and professional learning.  
- **Delivery.** After establishing efficacy within Iowa’s context, members of Iowa’s statewide Training Cadre engage in professional learning which is then, in turn, delivered across agencies. Training Cadre members are personnel from across the educational system expert in areas vital to student outcomes and school improvement. Iowa’s Statewide School Improvement Team (SSIT) are members of this cadre and are considered the core experts in school improvement.  
- **Supports.** Training Cadre members are responsible to support schools identified as needing universal, supplemental or targeted supports. SSIT members are responsible to support schools identified as needing comprehensive or intensive supports.

![Collaborative Infrastructure Diagram](image)

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\(^1\)This is often referred to as Collaborating for Iowa’s Kids or C4K.
A. **Support for Students.** Iowans have always valued and promoted a high-quality, well-rounded education for all of its citizens. This value is reflected in Iowa law through the required subjects and coursework that all public schools in Iowa must provide to all students. Indeed, accreditation of public schools in Iowa are partially predicated on public districts both offering and teaching the prescribed coursework in a well-rounded range of topics. These requirements are contained in Iowa Code 256.11 and include but are not limited to:

**For Elementary students grades 1 through 6 [Iowa Code 256.11(3)]**
- English-language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, health, age-appropriate and research-based human growth and development, physical education, traffic safety, music, and visual arts.

**For Junior High students grades 7-8 [Iowa Code 256.11(4)]**
- English-language arts; social studies; mathematics; science; health; age-appropriate and research-based human growth and development; career exploration and development; physical education; music; and visual arts.

**For High School students grades 9-12 [Iowa Code 256.11(5)]**  The minimum program to be offered and taught for grades nine through twelve is:
  - Five units of science including physics and chemistry;
  - Five units of the social studies including instruction in voting statutes and procedures, voter registration requirements, the use of paper ballots and voting systems in the election process, and the method of acquiring and casting an absentee ballot;
  - Six units of English-language arts.
  - Four units of a sequential program in mathematics and two additional units of mathematics;
  - Four sequential units of one foreign language other than American sign language;
  - All students physically able shall be required to participate in physical education activities during each semester they are enrolled in school except as otherwise provided;
  - A minimum of three sequential units in at least four of the following six career and technical education service areas: (a) Agriculture, food, and natural resources. (b) Arts, communications, and information systems. (c) Applied sciences, technology, engineering, and manufacturing, including transportation, distribution, logistics, architecture, and construction. (d) Health sciences. (e) Human services, including law, public safety, corrections, security, government, public administration, and education and training. (f) Business, finance, marketing, and management;
  - Three units in the fine arts which shall include at least two of the following: dance, music, theater, and visual arts; and
  - One unit of health education.

Iowa addresses meeting the needs of all our students, including subgroups of students by ensuring these students have equitable access to high quality instruction in all of the areas of a well-rounded education listed above and by providing an array of supports for these students to promote their performing at high levels in Iowa’s high academic standards. Not only does Iowa provide equitable access to all students, as documented in our recent state Educational Equity Plan, but we strive to provide equity in result – as is described in detail throughout this plan. Indeed, our equity plan goes well beyond assuring access to all students to striving to provide high levels of results for all.
Iowa’s implementation of the ESSA offers additional opportunities for LEAs to consider and further student opportunities to obtain a well-rounded education. The IDOE, through its implementation, guidance and technical assistance for all Titles and Grant programs of ESEA intends to support LEAs in creatively leveraging and coordinating well-rounded education opportunities, within parameters offered by the statute, in ways that best support local district needs. Examples of additional program opportunities that the IDOE will encourage districts to consider include Physical Education, Social Studies, School Library Programs, Talented and Gifted Education Programs, Early Childhood Education Programs and Fine Arts Programs. In these areas, the Department will actively work with State-level professional organizations to create exemplars of how these disciplines can work effectively to encourage a well-rounded education and promote high levels of achievement in challenging learning standards for all learners. The Department will also partner with State-level professional organizations to create a clearinghouse of evidence-based strategies in these disciplines that districts might incorporate into various components of their ESSA plans to meet local need. This clearinghouse will be web-based and searchable by LEAs and will serve as part of the technical assistance offered by the IDOE to LEAs.

B. Support for Educators. In Iowa, the 2013 legislative session adopted Iowa’s Teacher Leadership and Compensation System (TLC) system with the express purpose of creating a framework within all districts across the state to recruit, retain, support, and promote excellence for all educators and leaders. All districts have established local plans that create the framework within which educators may serve across a variety of critical roles essential for continued professional learning (e.g., model, mentor, lead, instructional coach, curriculum and professional development leader). Such a framework empowers educators, and serves as a structure for professional learning needed to support our Unified Differentiated Accountability and Support System. To that end, evidence-based professional learning will be supported as appropriate across all school personnel (e.g., teachers, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, and paraprofessionals). Professional learning will have an emphasis on historically disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities, students who are economically disadvantaged, students from major ethnic and racial groups, and English Learners. In addition, the focus will be on effective implementation of essential components of a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS):

- **Assessment and Data-Based Decision-Making.** This includes training on the implementation, interpretation, and use of assessments results to support educators to make appropriate instructional decisions. This also includes understanding data-based decision-making practices at both the system and student level.

- **Evidence-Based Universal Instruction.** This includes professional learning on Early Learning Standards and Iowa Core Standards, as well as research-based instructional practices to meet the needs of all students.

- **Evidence-Based Intervention System.** This includes professional learning on how to diagnose and identify specific learning needs of individual students as well as groups of students, how to design instruction to address identified student need(s), and how to effectively deliver instruction to maximize student engagement and achievement.
Further professional learning includes:

- **Leadership.** This includes professional learning in distributed leadership, evidence-based practices and competencies in instructional programming, and systems work within continuous improvement and MTSS.

- **Infrastructure.** This includes professional learning on effective structures for professional learning, program evaluation practices, effective community and family engagement and system functioning (e.g., resources, scheduling, alignment), and effective management of financial resources.

Additional areas of professional learning and support will include opportunities to (a) increase teachers’ effectiveness in effective MTSS implementation to support teaching all students, including students with disabilities, English learners, low income students, lowest-achieving students, children with disabilities, children and youth in foster care, migratory children, homeless children, immigrant children, and neglected, delinquent and at-risk students, and (b) prevention and recognition of child abuse for all school personnel, including teachers, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, and paraprofessionals.

**C. Support for Schools.** Iowa has established a *Unified Differentiated Accountability and Support System* (Table 3) designed to provide support for public districts, accredited nonpublic schools and Area Education Agencies (AEAs) when and where they need it most. This system has three interconnected structural components: Universal Desk Audit, Identification for Supports, and Supports for Schools. It is designed to support compliance with state and federal law as well as build capacity in continuous improvement reflected within Iowa’s Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) framework.
### Table 3. Unified Differentiated Accountability and Support System.

#### Universal Desk Audit

The Universal Desk Audit is a required compliance submission and review. All districts, preschool programs, nonpublic schools and Area Education Agencies must submit audit information through Iowa’s Consolidated Accountability and Support Application (CASA). This includes compliance for all state and federal requirements. Noncompliance issues identified must be corrected within the designated timeframe indicated within code.

#### Identification for Supports

There are two methods to identify schools for supports:

1. **ESSA Measures.** Calculated and reported annually, the below measures will be used to identify schools for support every three years beginning in 2017-2018.
   - Academic Achievement (includes gap)\(^E\)
   - Academic Progress \(^H\)
   - Graduation Rate \(^H\)
   - Progress in achieving ELP \(^E\)
   - School Quality/Climate Indicator \(^E\)

   Schools identified using ESSA measures must engage in Supports for Schools. This is required as indicated under Supports for Schools.

2. **Healthy Indicators** Calculated annually, the below healthy indicator measures are used to identify schools for supports.
   - Assessment and Data-Based Decision-Making HI (includes universal screening/progress monitoring)
   - Universal Instruction
   - Intervention System
   - Leadership
   - Infrastructure

   Schools identified using HI measures will be provided access to all the same supports as those identified using ESSA measures. The support is optional.

Identification levels for support include **Supplemental and Intensive**.

#### ESSA Identification levels include **Comprehensive** (lowest 5%), or **Targeted** (underperforming subgroups).

#### HI- Identification levels include **Universal**, **Supplemental and Intensive**.

#### Supports for Schools

There are four essential areas of supports for schools:

1. **Common Tools.** All schools will have access to an established data review process that includes a comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) and root cause analysis (RCA) that facilitates identification and verification of system needs. 
   Required: Targeted and Comprehensive (ESSA).

2. **Technical Assistance.** All schools have access to an established layering of supports: self-paced, online modules, regional professional learning, ongoing webinars, and onsite support. 
   Required: Comprehensive (ESSA)

3. **Action Plan.** All schools have access to one unified action plan aligned to state and federal law, and connected to results of the CNA and RCA. 
   Required: Targeted and Comprehensive (ESSA).

Schools identified as needing Extended Comprehensive support (Comprehensive for more than three years), will be required to implement state-approved strategies aligned to district and building needs.

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1. The Iowa School Report Card is included in the Unified Accountability and Support System, and measures are calculated and reported annually. However the state-required report card neither identifies noncompliance issues, nor identifies schools in need of support. Therefore it is not reflected in Table 3. Measures for the report card include: Academic Proficiency Growth (College Ready and Annual Growth), Closing Gap (Program and Race/Ethnicity), On-Track for College Readiness, Attendance, Graduation Rate, Staff Retention, and Parent/Community Involvement. Levels used for state reporting purposes only include: Exceptional, High Performance, Commendable, Acceptable, Needs Improvement, and Priority.