

System for School Success

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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School Improvement – Designations

Q. How are school designations determined?

School designations are based on the criteria and benchmarks for performance found in Alaska’s ESSA Plan. These criteria and benchmarks for performance are combined in weighted formulas used to rank school performance and identify schools that are underperforming as a whole or at a subgroup level or not meeting the four-year graduation target. Three categories of schools are designated for additional support within the state: Comprehensive Support and Improvement (5%), Comprehensive Support and Improvement (Grad Rate), and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI). For more information on how determinations are made see the [System for School Success](#).

Q. For FY2023, which schools are designated for comprehensive or targeted support and intervention?

For FY2023, CSI (5%) and TSI school designations will remain the same and be based on 2018-19 data. Note: When the accountability system is run in late Fall/early Winter of the 2022-23 S.Y., some CSI (5%) and TSI schools on the 2018-19 list may move off the list of designated schools. These schools will be able to continue to access and use approved school improvement grant funds through FY2023.

For FY2023, CSI (Grad Rate) designations will be based on four-year graduation rates from the 2020-21 S.Y. and made in Summer 2022.

Q. When will AK STAR results be available?

Alaska Star results will be available in late Fall or early Winter of the 2022-23 S.Y. For more information on Alaska’s accountability assessment see the [Assessment page of the education.alaska.gov portal](#).

Q. For FY2024, when will school designations be determined?

For FY2024, CSI (5%) and TSI school designations will be made after the accountability system is run in late fall or early winter of 2022. FY2024 CSI (Grad Rate) designations will be made in Summer 2023.

Q. Since we have a new assessment, will growth be part of the FY2024 index score calculation?

No, growth will not be included as one of the FY2024 accountability measures within Alaska’s formulas for determining school index scores and CSI (5%) and TSI school designations. A substitute measure will be used. Currently the selection of the appropriate substitute measure is under discussion.

School Improvement – Planning

Q. When is Alaska STEPP being retired?

Alaska STEPP will be retired on June 30, 2022. Updates and downloads of school improvement plans can be made until the retirement date. After that date, all files will be archived and accessible online.

Q. Can a district purchase an Alaska STEPP license?

Yes, but this is not recommended as the state moves to a new school improvement planning process and tool. The new process uses a Four Domain rubric. This rubric differs from the Alaska STEPP rubric.

Q. Where can I find the Four Domain rubric?

Alaska's Four Domain rubric is in draft form until 2023. To access the West Ed resource upon which it is based, "Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement: Indicators of Effective Practice," click [here](#).

Q. What will the new school improvement process look like?

The new school improvement process will intrinsically involve the local community in identifying what is important to look at, measure, and chart progress toward. More information on this process will be provided after the Cohort 1 pilot.

Q. When will the Grant Management System (GMS) be available for school improvement planning?

GMS as a school improvement planning tool will not be available for full scale use until Spring 2023. However, Cohort 1 schools will pilot the GMS school planning tool during the 2022-23 school year.

Q. How will GMS be set up to support school improvement planning?

The GMS planning tool will be separated from the school improvement grant application section to allow schools individual access to their plans. Plans will be available to the public either as downloadable files or site-accessible records. The GMS planning tool will follow the state's newly developed school improvement process. The school improvement grant application will continue to be how designated schools apply for their school improvement funding.

Q. What is the difference between a school improvement plan and a schoolwide plan?

A schoolwide plan references Title I requirements and as such is more comprehensive than a school improvement plan. Schoolwide plans are required for all Title I schools operating a schoolwide program. A school improvement plan is required for all schools designated as CSI or TSI. Learn more on schoolwide plan requirements at [DEED's Title I-A website](#).

Q. Do I need to submit a schoolwide plan in GMS?

A Title I schoolwide plan is not submitted in GMS. The schoolwide plan is kept on file at the school and is submitted to DEED if your school is selected for ESEA monitoring.

Q. What are we supposed to use for schoolwide planning if AK STEPP is going to be retired?

There are two options available to schools who are monitored next year. Schools can submit the [Title I Schoolwide Plan Assurances for Alaska STEPP form](#) or use [DEED's Schoolwide Plan template](#) (#05-18-031).

School Improvement – 1003(a) Grants

Q. Why are there two groups of designated schools in the 2022-23 school year?

DEED has initiated a pilot of a new school improvement process. A cohort of five schools are participating. This first cohort will pilot the new process and test the GMS school improvement planning tool being developed. Non-cohort 1 schools will not participate in the pilot.

Q. Who are the Cohort 1 schools?

The Cohort 1 schools were selected via an application process and were invited to apply based on criteria such as school size, region, designation, rural/remote, and if they currently have a SSOS coach. The five selected schools are:

- Davis-Ramoth Memorial School of Northwest Arctic Borough School District
- Joseph S. & Olinga Gregory Elementary School of Kuspuks School District
- Negtemiut Elitnaurviat School of Lower Kuskokwim School District
- Tetlin School of Alaska Gateway School District
- Wales School of Bering Strait School District

Q. What is the plan for school improvement grant submission for non-Cohort 1 schools?

This year all non-Cohort 1 designated schools will submit a condensed application for school improvement. The condensed application includes sections in which the school updates their data, needs assessment, goals, activity/cost table, and assurances. In addition, the condensed application requires all non-Cohort 1 schools to assume this mandatory goal: “To increase diverse representation on the School and Community Team.” For more information on the condensed application, click [here](#).

Q. How does the FY 2023 condensed application differ from the previous application?

The condensed application serves as a single repository for the school needs assessment, school improvement plan goals, and assurances. Previously, the school needs assessment, school improvement plan, and assurances were submitted separately in GMS. The other key difference between the condensed application and previous application submission is the assumption of this mandatory goal: “To increase diverse representation on the school and community leadership team.”

Q. How is the FY2023 condensed application the same as the previous application?

Both applications deal with the budget in the same way – through GMS with specific budget narratives answering the questions: “Who, What, When, Where, and How Long/How Many/How Much?” for each listed expenditure in an expenditure category.

Q. How do I know if an expense is allowable?

To research federal funding allowances, see the [Code for Federal Regulations](#). Remember federal funds are intended to supplement, not supplant district and state funds for education. There are specific guidelines in the provided link that cap the amount of fund expenditure for some categories.

Q. Why did DEED develop a condensed application?

The condensed application was developed for non-Cohort 1 schools to transition from AK STEPP to the

new process. The new process includes the development of a three-year plan, a situational analysis, and the involvement of a diverse team of stakeholders on the school and community team.

Q. Why do we have a mandatory goal added to our school improvement plan this year?

An integral part of the new school improvement process is engaging the community. As such, it is essential that designated schools work on increasing the diversity of their leadership team early next school year so that when schools begin to develop their three-year plan after the accountability system is run in late fall / early winter, their team is formed and ready to go.

Q. What does it mean to increase the “diverse representation” on our school improvement planning team?

The goal of increasing diverse representation will vary from school to school. For smaller schools it may mean adding one or two more community members or ensuring demographic representation within the leadership team. For other schools, it may mean specifying the particular “hat” a team member is filling on the team so that representation of all groups is ensured. A recommended practice is to communicate the school and community leadership team membership, names, roles, and contact information to the larger community to increase awareness and involvement. This information provides non-team members knowledge of who is representing their group, and to whom they can advance their ideas. One more consideration specific to TSI schools is to include one or more community members representing the identified TSI subgroup(s) demographic as members of the school and community leadership team.

Q. Are we adhering to the June 30 submission deadline for school improvement grant submission?

DEED is requesting FY2023 condensed applications for school improvement grant funds to be submitted by May 1, 2022.

Q. What should we do if we already have our school improvement planning meetings scheduled for the month of May?

In consideration that school plans are typically made more than a year in advance, DEED will accept school improvement grant applications up until the customary deadline of June 30, 2022.

Q. Why did DEED move up the submission deadline this school year?

There are three reasons DEED moved up the submission deadline this school year. First, since there is a reduced level of documentation needed within the FY2023 condensed application, DEED believed the streamlined application could be completed ahead of the usual timeframe. Second, the earlier timeline for grant submission will allow DEED to contact districts during the present school year to help refine plans, as needed. Third, the future process of grant review may include district presentation of school improvement plans. This additional requirement would shift application submission dates forward.

Q. How does the new legislation supporting early literacy in our schools interact with school improvement?

DEED hopes all designated schools consider adding literacy goals based upon the Science of Reading to their school initiatives planned and undertaken as part of school improvement.