

# Frequently Asked Questions School and District Improvement Plans

*Toward preparing  
students to be  
college, career, and  
culturally ready  
graduates*

## **Which schools must complete a school improvement plan?**

All Priority, Focus, 1-star, and 2-star schools are required to submit School Improvement Plans to EED for approval. Schools with a 3-star designation are required to write a School Improvement Plan and submit it to their district office for approval.

Schools with 4-stars or 5-stars that have not met AMO targets or that have experienced declines in the Growth and Proficiency Index or graduation rates for two years are required to submit to the district for approval a plan to improve the performance of the low-performing subgroup(s). Plans for 4- or 5-star schools will not be required until the 2014-2015 school year. (4 AAC 06.845)

## **What districts must complete a district improvement plan?**

In addition to school improvement planning, any district that is designated as Tier II or Tier III must complete a district improvement plan for implementation at the district level to coordinate support and oversight of 1-star and 2-star schools contained within. Districts in which 25% to 49.99% of the schools are 1-star or 2-star schools, or 25% to 49.99% of the students attend a 1-star or 2-star school, will be Tier II districts. Districts in which 50% or more of the schools are 1-star or 2-star schools, or 50% or more of the students attend a 1-star or 2-star school, will be Tier III districts. Districts will be notified of their Tier designation by October 1, 2013.

## **How are plans completed?**

The district and school will create and submit the school improvement plan using Alaska STEPP. This online planning tool is structured to allow improvement teams to provide the focus, sequence and shared accountability necessary for improvement. Twenty six of Alaska's 54 school districts have used or are currently using Alaska STEPP for improvement planning. For those schools and districts new to the tool, access codes unique to each site and instructions for tool use will be provided by EED. Schools access and update their plans by logging in with their unique access code at: <http://www.indistar.org/>

Alaska STEPP is based on the continuous improvement model (assess-plan-implement-monitor-adjust). Teams begin by assessing the present level of performance in a number of best-practice indicators. Rubrics show levels of



Alaska Department of  
Education & Early  
Development  
801 West 10th Street,  
Suite 200  
P. O. Box 110500  
Juneau, AK 99811-0500

<http://education.alaska.gov>

implementation and help define the next steps for teams. This brings to light the specific challenges facing a school. Teams select where to focus their efforts based on their assessments. The plans are accessible by all staff, parents, and community members, increasing transparency and inviting others to pitch in and help. Alaska STEPP is not the responsibility of, or the product of, one person, but rather it ensures that the information collected and plans created become the shared institutional knowledge of the entire school community.

### **What is the deadline for plan submission?**

Each site's school improvement plan will be submitted no later than November 1 of each school year. District improvement plans will be submitted to EED no later than November 1 of each school year.

### **What support is provided to schools and districts as they complete their plans?**

EED will assign a liaison for each priority, focus, and other 1- or 2-star schools. The EED Liaison is available as a resource throughout the planning and completion, implementation, and monitoring of plans. While it is anticipated that collaboration will take place between school, district, and EED Liaison as sites complete their plans, regular contact throughout the school year will help support the implementation of plan goals and actions.

### **What training is provided to assist schools and districts in plan development?**

Schools and districts are encouraged to contact each site's assigned EED Liaison as a first contact to express the need for support and to access the support and training available from the department. Training in the use of the tool, content, and process is available through sessions offered at the Fall Teaching and Learning Support Institute, through webinars tailored to both continuing and new users of the planning tool, and through one-on-one assistance from EED Liaisons. Onsite training is available to all Tier III districts new to Alaska STEPP.

### **How will EED communicate with schools and districts regarding support for developing, implementing, monitoring, and adjusting school improvement plans?**

EED will initially inform districts through communication with the district superintendent regarding school designations, school improvement plan expectations, and available support as applicable to the specific school designations. The liaison will communicate with the school principal, the designated district school improvement staff member, and possibly other members of the school improvement team during the plan development process and periodically throughout the year regarding the implementation of the plan and to discuss any areas in which support is needed or areas where the plan may need to be adjusted. The waiver creates a space for flexibility and specialization of school improvement efforts and resources to the unique needs of each site.

### **To whom are plans submitted?**

Districts must submit plans for all priority, focus and other 1- and 2-star schools to their assigned EED liaison for feedback and approval. It is the district's responsibility to review the plan through a peer review or other process at the district level before submitting them to EED.

All 3-star schools and any 4- or 5-star schools required to complete plans (beginning in the 2014-2015 school year) must submit plans to the district for support and oversight by district school improvement staff.

### **To whom should questions be directed?**

Each school that is required to submit a school improvement plan to EED is assigned an EED Liaison who will collaborate with each school administrator to provide support and oversight in the planning process. This Liaison will collaborate with site administrators to assess needed support, provide notice of available supports, and give plan feedback leading up to submission. This liaison will also follow-up periodically throughout the school year to continue to support implementation. School personnel and district support staff should feel free to address questions and concerns to their assigned liaison at any time and should view this person as their access to the support of EED. Questions can also be directed to Brad Billings (907-465-8720) or Margaret MacKinnon (907-465-2970) at the Department of Education and Early Development.

