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We Have an Equitable Access Plan—
NOW WHAT?

The Equitable Access Implementation Playbook
IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING TOOL

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Contents

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of the Implementation Planning Tool is to provide state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) with a six-step process that they can use to plan implementation of the key strategies described in their Equitable Access Plans, which are designed to reduce equity gaps.

During the past year, SEAs across the United States have been working to develop Equitable Access Plans. This tool is part of the Equitable Access Implementation Playbook prepared by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) to support the implementation of states' Equitable Access Plans.

This tool includes the following:

- Guided planning for robust implementation using a six-step process:
  - **STEP 1.** Plan for community awareness.
  - **STEP 2.** Identify a project leader.
  - **STEP 3.** Assess current levels of implementation.
  - **STEP 4.** Clarify leading indicators.
  - **STEP 5.** Create a project management plan.
  - **STEP 6.** Act on the plan and monitor progress.
- Guidance and support for each step, including the following:
  - Background and quick tips on how to overcome some common implementation obstacles that you may encounter at each stage
  - Activities for state teams to engage in the implementation process in small groups from a single office or collaboratively with teams across multiple state offices
  - Resources to help states move step by step toward achieving their strategic goals
  - Sample project planning tools (provided in the appendices).

Implementation Models

Before jumping into the implementation process, you may want to consider that a variety of research-based approaches to implementation and common barriers to success have been identified by authors such as Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, and Wallace (2005) or through approaches such as Deliverology.[1] Although each approach has subtle differences, the approaches all share similarities in what it takes to lead and implement a successful change initiative, such as an Equitable Access Plan. Implementation success depends on the following factors, which are embedded within the six steps shaping this framework: a clear and compelling vision for the work, measurable goals, roles and responsibilities identified and assigned to an implementation team, progress monitoring and accountability, course correction, and sustainability.

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[1] Deliverology is an approach to implementation developed by Sir Michael Barber, who founded the U.S. Education Delivery Institute. For more information on the approach, see http://www.deliveryinstitute.org/publications/deliverology-101-field-guide-educational-leaders.

The Implementation Planning Tool helps states and districts assess the stage of implementation of any initiative, including state Equitable Access Plans, based on the implementation stages defined in Fixsen et al. (2005). When beginning to address the need for a new policy or practice (or modify existing policies or practices), stakeholders at any level (SEAs, LEAs, or schools) first need to be clear on the current level of implementation effectiveness of a specific policy or practice. By considering the preliminary prompts in the next section, leaders at all levels can begin to determine the current implementation status of a selected policy, practice, or strategy. Although the Implementation Planning Tool has been designed to specifically support the implementation of a state's Equitable Access Plan, it is versatile enough to support the implementation of any state-level educator quality plan, such as state systemic improvement plans, Teacher Incentive Fund grants, or Elementary and Secondary Education Act flexibility waivers.

Preliminary Considerations

Consider the following before you begin:

- Within the Equitable Access Plan, what strategies, programs, or policies are to be implemented?
- What is the status of the identified strategies, policies, or programs already started in your state (e.g., piloted in two or three districts but not statewide)?
- For those that have started, what data, evidence, or performance metrics are available to gauge progress?
- For those that have started, does a current policy, practice, or strategy need modification? How do you know?

The answers to the questions will help you narrow your focus as you engage with this tool.

Implementation Planning Tool Overview

The Implementation Planning Tool will guide you through the six steps for planning implementation of the Equitable Access Plan, based on previous experiences with SEA implementation. Because of variation in plan design, some of these steps may have been addressed already in your document. For example, many plans already include timelines for implementation and monitoring progress. As your implementation team engages with each step, use the prompts and tools to reexamine your planned implementation process to identify gaps or areas needing clarification.

To use this tool, you will need the following:

- Your Equitable Access Plan and any supporting documentation or information
- An implementation team

Figure 1 presents the six steps of this tool. If you identified multiple strategies, programs, or policies to implement from your plan, these six steps can be used for each piece separately in addition to considering the entirety of the plan itself. For example, state Equitable Access Plans include a series of strategies to address the root causes of a state's equitable access challenges. Although the entire plan has an overall timeline, each strategy will have a set of programs, policies, or initiatives to implement. Consequently, multiple mini-implementation plans are needed to ensure success of the overall plan.

Figure 1. Planning for Robust Implementation

STEP 1.	Plan for community awareness.
STEP 2.	Identify a project leader and team.
STEP 3.	Assess current levels of implementation.
STEP 4.	Clarify leading indicators.
STEP 5.	Create a project management plan.
STEP 6.	Act on the plan and monitor progress.

Getting Started

The following sections include a set of prompts, quick tips, and resources for you to consider at each step of implementation planning. This guide need not be completed in one sitting. Rather, work through the steps at the appropriate pace for your team and the schedule demanded by the plan itself.

For support using the Implementation Planning Tool, please contact the GTL Center.

Background

The first step in implementing your Equitable Access Plan actually began by initially exploring your state's needs and identifying goals and strategies to improve equitable access. In your preliminary considerations, you should have identified the focus of your implementation process. In Step 1, consider the essential stakeholders and partners you will need to communicate with to begin implementation.

In their community readiness model, Edwards, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, Oetting, and Swanson (2000) identified nine stages of community readiness, which are summarized in Figure 2. Identifying the readiness of each stakeholder group will allow the implementation team to take focused action steps to increase the readiness of stakeholder groups and increase the likelihood of success and sustainability for the Equitable Access Plan. This step will help identify the current starting point for each stakeholder group because it is likely that each group will start from different places in the process.

Figure 2. Stages of Community Readiness

1.	**No Awareness:** Leaders are unaware of a problem. The status quo is considered acceptable.
2.	**Denial:** Leaders do not think a local problem exists.
3.	**Vague Awareness:** Some leaders and stakeholders feel a local problem needs to be addressed.
4.	**Preplanning:** Some leaders and stakeholders understand a problem exists and begin to think about change.
5.	**Preparation:** Some leaders and stakeholders engage in planning for change.
6.	**Initiation:** A new activity or program is started.
7.	**Stabilization:** Leaders support the implementation of one or two activities or programs.
8.	**Confirmation/Expansion:** Activities and programs are implemented, and leaders and stakeholders support further program improvement or expansion.
9.	**Professionalization:** Strong support exists for activities and programs from leaders, well-trained program staff, and the community.

The stages of community readiness are described in Fixsen et al. (2005). See Appendix A.

Using the Community Readiness Table (see Table 1) and the guidance that follows, your team will assess the community readiness of each stakeholder group across five key dimensions of community readiness:

- Knowledge of the issue
- Knowledge of efforts
- Climate
- Leadership
- Resources

Table 1. Sample Community Readiness Table

Stakeholder Group	Knowledge of Equity Issues	Knowledge of Equitable Access Plan	Climate Toward Addressing Equity	Leadership Commitment to Addressing Equity	Next Steps
Teachers Association	7: The mission of the association directly aligns to the goals of the Equitable Access Plan. Issues related to equity are deeply understood as part of daily practice in classrooms.	4: A survey demonstrated a lack of awareness among the general membership of the contents of the Equitable Access Plan.	7: The association leadership has expressed interest in long-term participation in implementing the plan with support from membership.	7: The association leadership was part of the early development of the plan and has pledged continued support as long as strategies do not conflict with current initiatives.	Convene meeting with the leadership of the teachers association to build background knowledge on the plan itself and the goals for implementation. Explore options for including this group as part of the ongoing feedback team and for monitoring.
Connecting Families and School Groups	8: Mission alignment is clear.	2: Did not participate in planning process but will be included going forward.	7: Parents are actively engaged with issues related to supporting schools in general and are interested in learning more about the Equitable Access Plan.	7: Leadership is interested in continued involvement.	Convene parent-focused meeting on equitable access issues and offer opportunities for ongoing involvement in focus groups.

Note. The numbers refer to the stage of readiness for each stakeholder group, which are described in Figure 2.

The following is an overview of the Assessing Community Readiness activity along with examples for your reference. A blank version of this tool is included in Appendix A for your use.

Quick Tips

- Identify the community stakeholders and leaders who will be impacted by the Equitable Access Plan.
- Determine the current levels of community readiness for implementing the Equitable Access Plan or specific plan strategies.
- Craft an action plan to increase the levels of community readiness that address knowledge of the equity issue, knowledge of the goals and strategies in the Equitable Access Plan, community attitudes or support, commitment of leadership, and available resources.

Process for Assessing Community Readiness

1. **Identify stakeholder groups.** Educator effectiveness strategies outlined in Equitable Access Plans and other strategic plans require the support of SEA divisions and leaders, professional organizations in the state, institutions of higher education, teacher preparation programs, teachers, parents, and school and district leaders. The success of the initiative will depend on the extent to which diverse stakeholders agree that a problem needs to be fixed and their willingness to participate in and support implementation of the initiative.

Who are your stakeholder groups?
■
■
■
■

   Populate the names of your stakeholder groups in the first column of the Community Readiness Table *(see Table 1 for an example; see Appendix A for a blank template for your team's use).*

2. **Identify the level of community readiness** for each identified stakeholder group or defined community across the five key dimensions. Keeping in mind the stakeholders identified previously, complete the following:

   - For each stakeholder group, assign a score of 1 to 9, corresponding to the identified level of community readiness within each key dimension.

   - Determine the priority dimension(s) for each stakeholder group that need a higher readiness score to ensure the success of Equitable Access Plan implementation efforts.

   - Develop specific action steps to address the identified dimensions for each stakeholder group.

   Then revisit the level of community readiness for stakeholder groups on an annual basis to determine progress within each group and identify potential risks that may surface.

3. **Develop a communications plan.** Without ongoing meaningful stakeholder engagement and continuous feedback loops,[2] stakeholders may feel left out of the process, suspicious of the changes, and concerned that the success of the plan is not a top priority. When stakeholders do not feel engaged in the implementation rollout and confident that the implementation team will follow through with the implementation process, they may begin to move their responsibilities in the process down on their personal priority lists. Use your Community Readiness Table and the next steps identified to develop or refine your communications plan.

> **Playbook Tool Connection**
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> The *Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Communication Guidebook* may be useful for states that are ready to develop a communications plan based on their community readiness assessment.

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[2] Continuous feedback loops are formal channels of communication between stakeholders and policy implementers throughout the implementation process. These channels could take the form of in-person meetings, surveys, online forums, or focus groups.

Background

Effective leadership is critical to the successful implementation of any program. Leadership can and should come from multiple people throughout the implementation of the various elements of your plan. However, it is important to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly designated and communicated to all members of the implementation team as early as possible.

The complexity of the tasks and energy required to overcome the status quo may seem overwhelming and could result in the adopters suspending implementation. For this reason, perseverance among those in leadership roles is crucial. It is important to assign staff from higher levels of management who have the authority to make decisions, empower staff, and support persistence in their new roles.

The RACI chart is a simple tool that clarifies roles and responsibilities, eliminates duplicate efforts and confusion by assigning clear ownership for each task, and reduces miscommunications. Although the RACI chart can support your team culture by establishing clear ownership and direction, this area also must be addressed through communication, internal stakeholder engagement, and ongoing relationship building.

What is RACI?

- R—Who is responsible? (responsibility for the activity or problem)
- A—Who is accountable? (to whom R is accountable for outcomes, decisions, and results; exactly one person must be accountable for each activity.)
- C—Who is consulted? (has the information or capability necessary to complete the work)
- I—Who is informed? (must be notified of results but need not be consulted [e.g., stakeholders])

Quick Tips

- Consider selecting an SEA designated "champion" staffed at a high level (e.g., director of an SEA program or an SEA assistant superintendent) who carries the authority for decision making to serve as project manager or on the support team.
- Identify an SEA project manager and support team members to ensure that various offices and departments understand and participate in the Equitable Access Plan implementation.
- Identify clear roles and responsibilities for the project manager and the support team members, distributing leadership roles based on talents and areas of expertise.
- Encourage dialogue in the planning and implementation process to ensure that all perspectives are considered before committing to particular strategies.
- Create a culture of empowerment and encouragement to keep team members inspired and motivated.

RACI Chart Activity

An easy-to-use tool to help you establish an implementation team and assign responsibilities is the responsibility assignment matrix, also known as a RACI chart. Table 2 presents a sample RACI chart. A template for your state is in Appendix B.

Table 2. Sample RACI Chart

Tasks	Position/Team Member				
	John	Angela	Alex	Catherine	Matthew
	Director of Data and Accountability	Director of Teacher Effectiveness	External Stakeholder Group Liaison	Communication Team Associate	Statewide Superintendent Liaison
Consult with the state department of education and stakeholder groups to design a statewide culture and climate survey for all certified employees to obtain data on current working conditions to use in the equity challenge.	A	R	C	I	C
Release the annual survey through the department of education website along with the teacher electronic mailing list to ensure that all educators have access to the survey.	I	A	C	R	I
Department of education staff will analyze the results of the annual survey to determine additional resources needed to help retain excellent educators.	C	A	I	R	I
The stakeholder group will analyze the results to determine the additional resources needed to help retain excellent educators.	I	A	R	I	C
Report data from the survey, including combined recommendations from the department of education and stakeholders by means of the Equitable Access Plan website and through the Educator Effectiveness Quarterly Newsletter.	A	C	I	R	I

Note. R = responsible, A = accountable, C = consulted, and I = informed.

Background

The third step in implementing a state Equitable Access Plan is to identify the current level of implementation and the plan for full implementation. The implementation team should consider doing this step together as a project team to get others' perspectives on current implementation efforts. Before getting started, the team should pull together any data available on implementation to date (e.g., website hits, survey responses, informal feedback from key stakeholders).

Leaders and stakeholders may use the stages of implementation (see Figure 3 [Fixsen et al., 2005]) to identify the preliminary levels of implementation for a given initiative or strategy. Then they can use the guiding questions and tool in Appendix C to gather information and identify current successes and challenges in the implementation of each policy initiative.

Figure 3. Stages of Implementation.

Exploration and Adoption: Initial phase of implementation—identify the need for an intervention, gather stakeholder support, and choose an intervention.

Program Installation: Prepare for installation without changing practices, including gathering resources and training.

Initial Implementation: Start to implement a new strategy, policy, or program and confront fears and uncertainty that occur with any change.

Full Operation: The new program is fully integrated into practice, gradually becoming accepted practice.

Innovation: Opportunities for refining the practice and additional customization occur during the innovation phase.

Sustainability: Ensure the practices that were implemented are continued through staffing and funding changes and continued community and political support.

Quick Tips

- Determine who should participate in the assessment.

- Determine which data to use for assessing the current level.

- Assess the current level of implementation to plan for future implementation.

- Determine current successes in the implementation of the policy initiative you have identified. Consider what led to the successes so that these strategies might be replicated for future implementation.

- Identify the current challenges to success. Consider why these barriers exist and reflect on how these challenges could be eliminated or minimized.

Levels of Implementation Activity

1. Identify a focus action step or initiative from your state's Equitable Access Plan.

2. Determine the current level of implementation using the stages of implementation checklist in Figure 3. (Note: The complete checklist also is available in Appendix C.)

3. Plan for future implementation stages. Each level of implementation has its own set of guiding questions to inform your team's planning. Go to the section of the Implementation Assessment focused on the stage of implementation you identified in Appendix C. Answer the questions in the table for that stage of implementation and subsequent stages of implementation. An example is shown in Table 3.

   - Prioritize discussion and planning on future implementation based on those efforts most likely to close your equity gaps.

   - Look for the implementation of quick wins so that get you momentum for change and buy-in from stakeholders.

Table 3. Partial Sample Implementation Assessment[a]

Guiding Questions	Describe Current Status (Consider Successes and Challenges at This Level of Implementation)	What Strategies Do You Plan to Address This Challenge?	Timeline and Responsible Party
Exploration and Adoption. Initial phase of implementation—identify the need for an intervention, gather stakeholder support, and choose an intervention.			
What need was identified? *The state's high-poverty and high-minority schools have difficulty recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers.*	■ *Some districts provide financial signing incentives to mathematics and English language arts teachers who commit to teach for two years in a high-priority school.* ■ *Challenge: Funding for signing incentives will be unavailable after the current school year.*	■ *Explore alternate funding sources.* ■ *Convene districts offering this incentive to express state support and discuss collaboratively funding this initiative.*	■ *Meeting scheduled in 2015* ■ *Office of Teaching and Learning responsible; perhaps add to state School Improvement Grant convening?*
How were stakeholders, including LEAs, engaged in the process? *Identified LEA superintendents, teacher union representatives, and school board chairpersons held an initial meeting and have scheduled biweekly work sessions from September to December 2015.*	*Meetings scheduled. SEA will organize and facilitate meetings.*		*Becca A. and Andrew H. from the Office of Teaching and Learning are in charge of planning and organizing the biweekly work sessions.*
What different strategies were considered to meet this need? ■ *Improve or differentiate financial incentives for principals and teachers in difficult-to-staff schools.* ■ *Improve recruitment and hiring practices.* ■ *Improve working conditions.*	*Strategies will be prioritized and action plans established at the September 2015 stakeholder meeting.*		*Facilitators of the September 2015 meeting*

[a]The levels of implementation and questions are based on Fixsen et al. (2005).

Background

The next stage of implementation is to establish clear leading indicators for accountability and measuring progress during implementation. Leading indicators[3] are signals developed from the systematic collection and analysis of data that enable the state to better predict and even impact outcomes. Some indicators that may be relevant to state Equitable Access Plans can be found in the companion resource titled *Equitable Access: Example and Priority Metrics*.

During this step, it also is important to be aware of common goals across different initiatives to share resources and maximize efforts. One of the more obvious places for overlap lies within policy initiatives, but other areas can be considered to develop a coherent approach to optimize outcomes: fiscal alignment, roles and responsibilities, data, and external and internal communication. If your team is interested in further exploring the coherence and alignment of policy initiatives within and outside the Equitable Access Plan, consider using the GTL Center's *Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Creating Coherence and Alignment Tool*.

Quick Tips

- Identify specific metrics for tracking progress toward each goal in the plan.[4]
- Establish a plan for clear ownership of each goal to support progress throughout implementation.
- Consider other state initiatives and funding opportunities where overlap is possible and funds can be shared.[5]
- Assess whether any policies conflict with the Equitable Access Plan strategies.

Waterfall Goals Activity

The Waterfall Goals Planning Chart is a simple process for ensuring alignment from your plan goals to leading indicators to measurable responsibilities of the team members (see Figure 4 for an example; Appendix D has a blank Waterfall Goals Chart for use by your team). The Waterfall Goals Planning Chart establishes the indicators of success that you may ultimately use to monitor your progress in Step 6. The GTL Center's *Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Monitoring Tool* uses the information documented in the Waterfall Goals Planning Chart as a starting point for establishing a monitoring plan.

Playbook Tool Connection

The *Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Monitoring Tool* draws on the planning done in the Waterfall Goals Planning Chart.

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[3] For more information on leading indicators, see http://annenberginstitute.org/sites/default/files/product/206/files/LeadingIndicators.pdf.
[4] For more information about selecting metrics to measure progress, see the Equitable Access: Example and Priority Metrics tool.
[5] For more support on coherence and alignment of policies, see the Creating Coherence and Alignment Tool in the Equitable Access Implementation Playbook.

Figure 4. Sample Waterfall Goals Planning Chart

Equity Plan Long-Term Goal

By 2017, LEAs supported by state Planning Grants will have collectively increased the representation of Black and Latino educators by 10 percent to 20 percent.

Leading Indicators

Number of Black and Latino precollege students interested in education careers

Number of Black and Latino individuals certified to teach

Number of Black and Latino individuals hired

Measureable Responsibilities

Team Member 1: Identify LEAs that meet criteria for increased resources.

Team Member 2: Facilitate monthly Black and Latino Future Educators event.

Team Member 1: Identify LEAs that meet criteria to participate in field test.

Team Member 2: Conduct initial screening interview with Black and Latino candidates.

Team Member 3: Identify Black and Latino educators who are certified and eligible for open positions.

Used to ensure that leading indicators of progress and measurable responsibilities are aligned with each goal, the Waterfall Goals Planning Chart gets its name from the graphic that represents it. A long-term goal serves as the top level or source from which everything else cascades.

The second tier, leading indicators, provides timely measurements of progress toward reaching the long-term goal. If the leading indicators are met throughout the year, then the implementation team can expect to meet the annual goal.

The third tier, measurable responsibilities, provides additional clarity to show how the work of team members will result in meeting the leading indicators. If all team members are meeting their individual responsibilities, then the plan should be on track to meet the leading indicators, which ultimately means that the annual goals will be met. If a goal or leading indicator is not met, this chart will make it easier to diagnose potential reasons and develop next steps.

Background

After your team has assessed community readiness and created a communications plan (Step 1), identified team roles and responsibilities (Step 2), evaluated levels of implementation (Step 3), and clarified the goals and leading indicators of each strategy in your Equitable Access Plan (Step 4), it is time to establish a concrete project management plan to make sure that the work envisioned is completed.

The Equitable Access Plan Project Management Tool will help you and your team create and monitor realistic timelines for strategies in your Equitable Access Plan, ensuring that appropriate resources are identified and aligned and providing the needed support to ensure success for the implementation teams.

Some Equitable Access Plans may already include timelines and specific plans for progress monitoring. If this is the case, use this step and consider using these suggested tools to evaluate these plans and modify as needed. As discussed in the preliminary considerations section, the state may have a timeline and progress monitoring plan for the overall plan but not for the individual strategies, programs, or policies. Consider creating a timeline for each segment of the larger plan.

While designing a realistic timeline, it is important to consider the timing and availability of funding and resources. Limited funding and resource constraints (e.g., human capital) present a large challenge to the implementation teams' ability to properly execute the components of their state Equitable Access Plans. Implementation often stalls or fails when plans for proper funding, resources, human capital implementation, and sustainability are not clearly laid out at the beginning of the process.

The questions to consider when developing a project management plan are as follows:

- Have we thought of all the steps required to complete the given task or activity?
- Is the due date realistic?
- Are steps that are dependent on each other planned in the correct sequence?
- Are the responsibilities distributed across the team in a practical way that will support meeting deadlines?

In addition, the planning process should ensure "the availability of funding streams, human resource strategies, and policy development as well as creating referral mechanisms, reporting frameworks, and outcome expectations" (National Implementation Research Network, 2013b). This process may identify the need for additional resources or a realignment of existing resources, such as staff (Fixsen et al., 2005). During this step, you should create coherence across your policies, funding streams, staff, data systems, and internal and external communication. A resource to help support this is the GTL Center's *Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Creating Coherence and Alignment Tool*.

Playbook Tool Connection

The *Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Creating Coherence and Alignment Tool* is a useful resource for examining the coherence and alignment of policies, programs, and initiatives across the SEA's departments.

Quick Tips

- Identify what tools and resources will be needed to achieve success and when you will acquire or create them. Be specific.
- Understand your capacity within time spans and plan within that range.
- Contact federally funded technical assistance centers for resources and support as needed.

The Equitable Access Plan Project Management Tool provides a visual representation of the implementation timeline, including discrete tasks linked to specific periods of time and any overlaps. Use this tool or one like it for each initiative outlined in your Equitable Access Plan.

Project Management Tool Activity

Table 4 is a sample completed Equitable Access Plan Project Management Tool. A blank version of the tool is included in Appendix E for your team's use.

To begin using the Equitable Access Plan Project Management Tool, complete the following:

1. Develop an initial list of the strategies or tasks that need to be completed. List these in the first column of the Project Management Tool.

   - These tasks should be taken directly or adapted from the strategies in your plan.
   - Each task should have a responsible person assigned.
   - Determine whether additional resources are needed.

2. For each activity or task, determine the sequence of action steps that will need to take place to complete the activity or task (e.g., initial planning meeting, review existing professional learning offerings, draft revisions, leadership review of draft).

   - Each action step should have its own row in the Project Management Tool, listed under the name of each activity or task.
   - Each action step should have a person responsible assigned.

3. After the activities or tasks, action steps, resources needed, and responsible people are recorded, the next step is to establish a completion timeline.

   - Assign due dates for each step according to the plans for Year 1 implementation.
   - Then backward map each required step to ensure that all steps can be completed by the due date.

This tool also can be completed as part of ongoing progress monitoring meetings (see Step 6 and the GTL Center's *Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Monitoring Tool*). Color-code each task. Assign red to each task that is behind schedule, yellow to steps that are in progress, and green to any step that has been completed.

Table 4. Sample Completed Equitable Access Plan Project Management Tool

Strategies, Tasks, and Action Steps	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Q3 2015	Q4 2015	Q1 2016	Q2 2016
Develop a Compensation and Incentives Program to attract and retain excellent educators in hard-to-staff schools.	HR Office					
Research Office			X	X	X	X
Initial brainstorm meeting	Catherine (HR)	Meeting room	7/1			
Develop exit survey (educators who leave) and "happiness" survey (of educators who stay) to identify reasons teachers and leaders stay or leave.	John (HR)	Existing surveys from other states	X	X	X	
Research existing exit surveys.	John (HR)		7/15			
Draft survey tools.	John (HR)		8/15			
Share survey tool draft with leadership and HR directors for comment.	John (HR)		8/15			
Revise and finalize survey tools.	John (HR)		8/31			
Launch survey tools.	Sharon (Research)	Survey platform		9/1		
Collect and analyze survey tool data.	Sharon (Research)			12/31		
Report findings of survey tools.	Sharon (Research)				1/15	
Convene team to review findings and identify compensation and incentive strategies to improve attraction and retention of excellent educators.	Catherine (HR)	Meeting room			1/31	
Facilitate focus groups to get feedback on proposed compensation and incentive strategies.	John & GTL Center	Protocol				
Contact GTL Center for support in developing focus group protocol and facilitating focus groups.	John (HR)			11/1		
Recruit focus group participants.	Sylvia (HR)			12/31		
Conduct focus groups.	GTL Center	Meeting spaces			2/28	
Analyze focus group data.	GTL Center				3/15	
Refine and finalize Compensation and Incentives Program based on focus group outcomes.	Catherine (HR)					4/30
Launch program in pilot districts.	Catherine (HR)	Pilot districts				6/30

Many online project management tools and resources can support the shared tracking of timelines, deliverables, and next steps. If your team would prefer to establish and implement a project management plan online or in a shared space, consider replicating this template in an online tool such as SmartSheet, Microsoft SharePoint or Outlook, or Google Docs.

Background

By this step in the process, you will be very close to putting your plan into action. You have established your team, identified a communications strategy, engaged stakeholders, and identified the level of implementation for elements within the larger plan. You have timelines ready and progress monitoring indicators identified. What happens now?

As you launch your new programs, policies, or initiatives, attention will shift to the ongoing work of monitoring progress and maintaining communication channels with all stakeholder groups. The challenge now is to move from initial implementation to full implementation.

Quick Tips

- Convene webinars or share in writing the implementation phases and expectations with stakeholders prior to critical milestones (e.g., announcing modifications to the strategy or launching a new program). Engage stakeholders in thinking about how they will be involved or affected by the activities that will be implemented.

- Avoid the temptation to make changes to the plan before implementing strategies and action steps as intended. Too many changes early on will make it difficult to assess successful strategies because of a lack of time to gain traction or have a measurable impact.

Establishing and Implementing a Monitoring Plan

Your goal is to move your plan from initial implementation to full implementation during the course of your established timeline. Reaching full implementation means that all practitioners are implementing their tasks "with proficiency and skill, managers and administrators support and facilitate the new practices, and the community has adapted to the presence of the innovation" (National Implementation Research Network, 2013a). Full implementation means the new program has become accepted practice and treatment as usual within the community, which is the goal of your implementation process, but the time it takes to reach this stage varies by strategy, program, and initiative. The next steps in implementation take place using other tools in the Equitable Access Implementation Playbook.

To build on your progress monitoring approach, we recommend completing the *Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Monitoring Tool* as your next step with your team.

The *Monitoring Tool* outlines the processes involved in monitoring the success of an implementation, including stakeholder engagement, assessing the success of strategy implementation, the cost-effectiveness of various strategies, the interaction effects among strategies (both positive and negative), and outcomes (generating data that shows whether equity gaps are narrowing):

> **Playbook Tool Connection**
>
> The *Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Monitoring Tool* is a useful resource for taking the next step of establishing and implementing a monitoring plan to track progress toward your short and long-term goals for each strategy identified in the Equitable Access Plan.

- Step 1. Establish a monitoring plan for each long-term goal identified in the Equitable Access Plan.

- Step 2. Monitor progress toward each long-term goal identified in the Equitable Access Plan, using evidence to support your stated progress.

- Step 3. Reflect on successes and "course correct" for continuous improvement as needed.

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Appendix A. Community Readiness Table

Planning for community readiness is a critical first step to effectively create sustainable change efforts. By identifying the current readiness of multiple stakeholder groups and leaders, specific steps can be taken to increase the commitment of the community and ensure success.

Directions

1. Identify stakeholder groups who will be impacted by the goals and strategies in the Equitable Access Plan.

2. Using the descriptions of each stage, assign each stakeholder group a score of 1 to 9, corresponding to the identified level of community readiness within each key dimension.

3. Determine the priority dimension(s) for each stakeholder group that need a higher readiness score to ensure success of Equitable Access Plan efforts.

4. Develop specific action steps to address the identified dimensions for each stakeholder group.

Table A1. Community Readiness Table Template

Stakeholder Group	Knowledge of Equity Issues	Knowledge of Equitable Access Plan	Climate Toward Addressing Equity	Leadership Commitment to Addressing Equity	Next Steps

The Community Readiness Model has nine stages of readiness (adapted from Edwards et al., 2000). Each stage of readiness can be described as follows (Fixsen et al., 2005):

Level 1. No Awareness

- Stakeholders have no knowledge about the issue.
- Stakeholders have no knowledge about local efforts addressing the issue.
- Leadership or stakeholders believe that the issue is not really much of a concern.
- No resources are available for dealing with the issue.

Level 2. Denial/Resistance

- Only a few stakeholders have knowledge about the issue, and many misconceptions may exist among community members about the issue.
- Stakeholders have misconceptions or incorrect knowledge about current efforts.
- Leadership thinks the issue cannot or should not be addressed.
- Stakeholders believe that this issue is not a concern in their community or cannot be addressed.
- Stakeholders or leadership do not support using available resources to address this issue.

Level 3. Vague Awareness

- Stakeholders have only vague knowledge about the issue.
- A few stakeholders have at least heard about local efforts but know little about them.
- Leadership or stakeholders believe that this issue may be a concern in the community, but they show no immediate motivation to act.
- Limited resources (such as a community room) have been identified that could be used for additional efforts to address the issue.

Level 4. Preplanning

- Stakeholders have limited knowledge about the issue.
- Some stakeholders have at least heard about local efforts but know little about them.
- Leadership or stakeholders acknowledge that this issue is a concern in the community and something should be done to address it.
- Limited resources are available that could be used for additional efforts to address the issue.

Level 5. Preparation

- Stakeholders have basic knowledge about causes, consequences, signs, and symptoms.
- Most stakeholders have at least heard about local efforts.
- Leadership is actively supportive of continuing or improving current efforts or in developing new efforts.
- The attitude among stakeholders is as follows: We are concerned about this, and we want to do something about it.
- Some resources have been identified that could be used for additional efforts to address the issue; stakeholders or leaders are actively working to secure these resources.

Level 6. Initiation

- Stakeholders have basic knowledge about the issue and are aware that the issue occurs locally.

- Most stakeholders have at least basic knowledge of local efforts.

- Leadership plays a key role in planning, developing, or implementing new, modified, or increased efforts.

- The attitude in the community is as follows: This is our responsibility, and some stakeholders are involved in addressing the issue.

- Resources have been obtained or allocated to support additional efforts to address this issue.

Level 7. Stabilization

- Most stakeholders have more than basic knowledge of local efforts, including names and purposes of specific efforts, target audiences, and other specific information.

- Leadership is actively involved in ensuring or improving the long-term viability of the efforts to address this issue.

- The attitude in the community is as follows: We have taken responsibility. Ongoing community involvement is addressing the issue.

- A considerable part of the allocated resources for efforts are from sources that are expected to provide continuous support.

Level 8. Confirmation/Expansion

- Stakeholders have more than basic knowledge about the issue and have significant knowledge about local prevalence and local consequences.

- Most stakeholders have considerable knowledge of local efforts, including the level of program effectiveness.

- Leadership plays a key role in expanding and improving efforts.

- The majority of the community strongly supports efforts or the need for efforts. The participation level is high.

- A considerable part of the allocated resources is expected to provide continuous support. Stakeholders are looking into additional support to implement new efforts.

Level 9. Professionalization/High Level of Community Ownership

- Stakeholders have detailed knowledge about the issue and have significant knowledge about local prevalence and local consequences.

- Most stakeholders have considerable and detailed knowledge of local efforts.

- Leadership is continually reviewing the evaluation results of the efforts and is modifying financial support accordingly.

- Most major segments of the community are highly supportive and actively involved.

- Diversified resources and funds are secured, and efforts are expected to be ongoing.

Appendix B. RACI Chart

The RACI chart is a simple tool that helps clarify roles and responsibilities; eliminates duplicate efforts and confusion by assigning clear ownership for each task; and reduces miscommunication. Although the RACI chart can support your team culture by establishing clear ownership and direction, this area also must be addressed through communication, internal stakeholder engagement, and ongoing relationship building.

R—Who is responsible? (responsibility for the activity or problem)

- Generally the doer or coordinator who ensures work gets done or decisions are made

- First level of escalation for problems

- Involves accountable person for goal setting, high-impact decisions, resources beyond planned levels, when conflict cannot be resolved, and when work involves executives from other programs

A—Who is accountable? (to whom R is accountable for outcomes, decisions, and results; exactly one person must be accountable for each activity.)

- Final level of escalation for problems

- Owns quality and end result; final approving authority

- Delegates work to the responsible person; signs off or approves work that the responsible person provides

C—Who is consulted? (has the information or capability necessary to complete the work)

- Provides information to the responsible person but is not the decision maker and is not accountable; typically, two-way communication

- Involved prior to action or decision through input of knowledge and information

I—Who is informed? (must be notified of results but need not be consulted [e.g., stakeholders])

- Kept up-to-date on progress, often only on completion of the task or deliverable; typically, one-way communication

- Affected by the outcome though no contribution to get the job done or make a decision

Directions

1. Identify all the tasks involved in your project (or your part of the project). List them in the first column of the RACI chart.

2. Identify the project roles (i.e., who should be performing the tasks listed in Step 1). List them in the first row.

3. Using the RACI codes (R, A, C, I), identify who will be responsible, accountable, consulted, or informed for each task. Only one person can be accountable for each task, but multiple people can be responsible, consulted, and informed. In addition, each person can have one or more RACI codes for any given task.

4. Identify if any gaps or tasks have too many people involved. Collaborate as a team to get the correct balance.

Table B1. RACI Chart Template

Focus/Strategy/Project Name:	
Created on:	Created by:

Tasks	Position/Team Member				
	Person A	Person B	Person C	Person D	Person E

Appendix C. Implementation Assessment

Directions

1. Identify an annual goal or initiative from your Equitable Access Plan and write in the text box.

2. Use a checkmark to identify your best assessment of the implementation stage.

3. For that stage of implementation and the later stages of implementation, complete the Implementation Assessment in Table C1. A completed example of one stage of the Implementation Assessment is included in Table 3.

4. *(Optional)* Consider the full degree of implementation and answer all questions in the table, even those for earlier stages of implementation, because skipping aspects of each stage of implementation can impact the success of overall implementation.

Figure C1. Stages of Implementation

Annual Goal or Initiative:

	Exploration and Adoption: Initial phase of implementation—identify the need for an intervention, gather stakeholder support, and choose an intervention.

	Program Installation: Prepare for installation without changing practices, including gathering resources and training.

	Initial Implementation: Start to implement a new strategy, policy, or program and confront fears and uncertainty that occur with any change.

	Full Operation: The new program is fully integrated into practice, gradually becoming accepted practice.

	Innovation: Opportunities for refining the practice and additional customization occur during the innovation phase.

	Sustainability: Ensure the practices that were implemented are continued through staffing and funding changes and continued community and political support.

Table C1. Implementation Assessment Template

Guiding Questions	Describe Current Status (Consider Successes and Challenges at This Level of Implementation)	What Strategies Do You Plan to Address This Challenge?	Timeline and Responsible Party
Exploration and Adoption: Initial phase of implementation—identify the need for an intervention, gather stakeholder support, and choose an intervention.			
What need was identified?			
How were stakeholders, including LEAs, engaged in the process?			
What different strategies were considered to meet this need?			
How was the strategy selected based on best fit to state (and local) needs?			
What barriers to implementation were discussed?			
Program Installation: Prepare for installation without changing practices, including gathering resources and training.			
How has staffing been realigned to support implementation? If staffing has not been realigned, what plans are there for staffing the initiative?			
How has funding been secured for implementation? If not, are funding sources identified?			
What structural supports for implementation are in place? What structural supports are not in place but necessary?			

Guiding Questions	Describe Current Status (Consider Successes and Challenges at This Level of Implementation)	What Strategies Do You Plan to Address This Challenge?	Timeline and Responsible Party
Initial Implementation: Start to implement a new strategy, policy, or program and confront fears and uncertainty that occur with any change.			
What fears or concerns have key stakeholders voiced? How are fear and resistance to change being addressed at the state and local levels?			
How are the skills of implementers (LEA and SEA) being built? What training or support has been (or will be) initiated?			
Will implementation be completed in stages? What are the leading or initial strategies?			
How is implementation being monitored?			
Full Operation: The new program is fully integrated into practice, gradually becoming accepted practice.			
Describe how the strategies are fully staffed.			
Identify the tools for implementation that are 100 percent operational.			
Describe how the strategies have become accepted practice. If not, identify barriers to strategies becoming accepted practice.			
Describe how implementation monitoring is showing full implementation. If not, identify barriers to full implementation monitoring.			

Guiding Questions	Describe Current Status (Consider Successes and Challenges at This Level of Implementation)	What Strategies Do You Plan to Address This Challenge?	Timeline and Responsible Party
Identify how SEA staff and LEAs will the report on progress toward goals.			
Innovation: Opportunities for refining the practice and additional customization occur during the innovation phase.			
Determine if full implementation has been in effect for sufficient time to collect data on program impact.			
Describe how strategies are showing benefits to students.			
Describe how LEA implementers are providing feedback to the SEA about how to refine strategies.			
Sustainability: Ensure implemented practices are continued through staffing and funding changes and ongoing community and political support.			
Describe how new staff members are being trained.			
Identify how funding streams are being secured to ensure ongoing funding.			

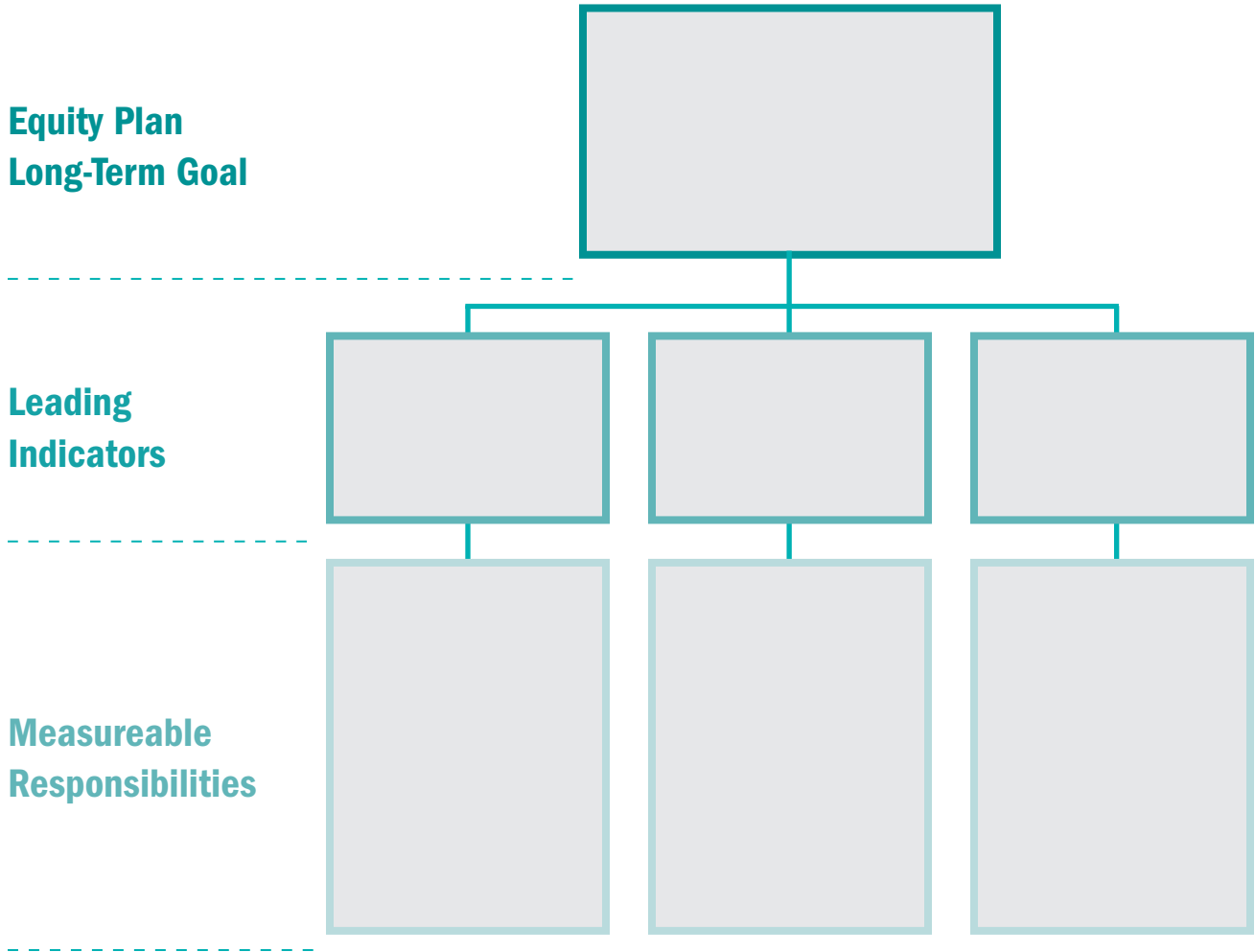# Appendix D. Waterfall Goals Chart

Directions

1. Identify the long-term goal from your Equitable Access Plan and write it in the first row of the chart (Table D1).

2. Compare this goal to the key initiatives found in existing plans, such as Title I and School Improvement Grants. If alignment exists, list any plans where existing policies or resources could be leveraged to assist with implementation of the Equitable Access Plan.

3. Specify leading indicators for the goal. No magic number exists for the number of leading indicators, but these should be measurable, able to be examined more than once per year, and give your team advance indication of progress toward reaching the annual goal. Identify the specific leading indicators for each goal that will be the most valid and determine how often each one can be reasonably monitored during the year. *The current status row will be used to monitor progress during implementation and should not be completed at this time.*

4. Assign measurable responsibilities for each leading indicator. These responsibilities should be delineated by who will actually do the work to ensure that the leading indicator remains on target throughout the year.

5. *(Optional)* Transfer the contents of the Waterfall Goals Planning Chart to the Waterfall Goals Graphic Template (Figure D1) to create an additional tool for communicating with the project team and external stakeholders.

Table D1. Waterfall Goals Chart Template

Long-Term Goal				
Aligned With Other State or Local Initiative?				
Leading Indicators				
Current Status				
Measurable Responsibilities	Team Member 1			
	Team Member 2			
	Team Member 3			
	Team Member 4			
	Team Member 5			

**Equity Plan
Long-Term Goal**

**Leading
Indicators**

**Measureable
Responsibilities**

Appendix E. Project Management Tool

Directions

1. Develop an initial list of the strategies or tasks that need to be completed. List these strategies or tasks in the first column of the Project Management Tool (Table E1).

   - These tasks should be taken directly or adapted from the strategies in your plan.

   - Each task should have a responsible person assigned.

   - Determine whether additional resources are needed.

2. For each activity or task, determine the sequence of action steps that will need to take place to complete the activity or task (e.g., initial planning meeting, review existing professional learning offerings, draft revisions, leadership review of draft).

   - Each action step should have its own row in the Project Management Tool, listed under the name of each activity or task.

   - Each action step should have a person responsible assigned.

3. After the activities or tasks, action steps, resources needed, and responsible people are recorded, the next step is to establish a completion timeline.

   - Assign due dates for each step according to the plans for Year 1 implementation.

   - Then backward map each required step to ensure that all steps can be completed by the due date.

This tool also can be completed as part of ongoing progress monitoring meetings (see Step 6 and the GTL Center's *Equitable Access Implementation Playbook: Monitoring Tool*). Color-code each task. Assign red to each task that is behind schedule, yellow to steps that are in progress, and green to any step that has been completed.

Table E1. Equitable Access Plan Project Management Tool

Strategies, Tasks, and Action Steps	Person Responsible	Resources Needed	Q3 2015	Q4 2015	Q1 2016	Q2 2016

Appendix F. Resources to Support State Implementation Strategies

This appendix is a compilation of resources developed by the GTL Center to support states and districts and ensure that all students have access to excellent educators. The Excellent Educators for All initiative required that states create plans to ensure equitable access, and now states must put these plans to action.

This appendix points states to technical assistance and research materials that align with commonly cited strategies in state Equitable Access Plans. These resources will help state teams build their internal team knowledge to effectively implement the strategies in their Equitable Access Plan, inform and build buy-in among external stakeholders regarding implementing the strategies in the Equitable Access Plan (refer to *Four Key Steps for Equitable Access Communication Planning* for tips on effectively communicating implementation strategies to stakeholders), and serve as training materials when rolling out implementation strategies to districts. Each resource is research based but also very user-friendly.

Strategy 1: Strengthen Educator Preparation

Strengthening educator preparation was among the most commonly cited strategies in states' Equitable Access Plans. States identified a wide range of strategies to improve educator preparation and ensure equitable access. The following resources provide implementation considerations to support your state's educator preparation plans.

- Ask the Team: *Preparing Teachers for the Common Core: Aligning Preparation Program Criteria*
- Ask the Team: *Improving School Leader Preparation: Collaborative Models for Measuring Effectiveness*
- Policy Snapshot: *Alternative Routes to Teaching: What Do We Know About Effective Policies?*
- Publication: *A Million New Teachers Are Coming: Will They Be Ready to Teach?*

The key takeaways from these resources relating to state equity work to strengthen educator preparation are as follows:

Teacher Preparation

- Research on the impact of the type of teacher preparation program on student achievement outcomes is inconclusive, possibly because of limitations in research design and wide variations across program types. However, some studies have found no differences in student achievement between traditionally and alternatively prepared teachers. Another study found differences in levels of student growth between students taught by Teach for America teachers, beyond the growth of students taught by teachers from traditional programs and less selective alternative routes.

- Many programs offering alternative routes to teaching struggle to recruit candidates who can meet specific district needs, whereas others recruit a more ethnically diverse candidate pool.

- Research on the retention of teachers prepared through alternative routes is mixed. Some studies indicate that teachers from alternative routes are more likely to turn over. Other studies found no differences in turnover rates between alternatively and traditionally prepared teachers.

- Ensuring that programs focus both on building rigorous content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge is key to having a strong teacher preparation program, including defining the common knowledge and competencies new teachers need. This can be done by providing a clinical practice component to teacher preparation, regardless of the type of program (traditional or alternative route).

- Strengthening screening processes will help programs ensure that the candidates are a good fit for both the program and the profession. Research indicates that measures beyond academic credentials may be predictive of a candidate's future success in the profession, such as "grit" or ability to persist. Furthermore, programs with local partnerships can work to find candidates who are qualified to teach in local shortage areas.

- Several states are making concerted efforts to prepare teachers to implement the Common Core State Standards using a variety of policy levers, including alignment of teaching standards to the Common Core, providing preparation program faculty with professional development on the integration of curricula to the Common Core, integrating the Common Core into preparation program approval and accountability processes by requiring evidence of the Common Core in preparation program coursework and assessments, and aligning the Common Core with the state teacher licensure assessments.

Leader Preparation

- Research indicates that principal preparation programs often do not have common performance measures tied to principals' postgraduation experiences. Reviews of state accountability and approval systems for leadership preparation show a lack of rigor in current accountability measures. State measures can be grouped into one of two categories: (1) measurement by program characteristics that focus mainly on descriptions of program features and rationales and (2) measurement by program outcomes. Outcomes measures include immediate impact rates, such as graduate licensure, graduation and certification rates, and job placement.

Strategy 2: Bolster Induction and Mentoring Programs

Many state Equitable Access Plans also included as a key strategy induction and mentoring for new professionals entering the field and career professionals transitioning into new positions. To improve induction and mentoring programs, strategies may involve extending the length of induction programs and incorporating cultural competency training.

- Policy Snapshot: *Supporting New Teachers: What Do We Know About Effective State Induction Policies?*

The key takeaways from this resource relating to state equity work to bolster induction and mentoring programs are as follows:

- Research indicates that a link exists between high-quality induction programs and both teacher retention and effectiveness rates.

- Context is important to the implementation of any mentoring and induction program. Considering the variation in needs by both teacher experiences and the school or district culture can influence the impact that mentoring and induction programs have on beginning teachers. This also includes ensuring that the needs of both special educators and teachers of English learners are supported through differentiation that identifies and addresses their unique needs.

- Developing a strong mentor relationship for teachers is a critical component of induction programs. However, effective induction programs should include more than mentoring. Programs also should provide new teachers with an orientation to district and school culture through principal leadership and communication; instructional support that includes data-driven conversations and peer-based professional learning communities; a set of professional expectations aligned with school, district, and state standards; and ongoing professional development based on individual teacher needs.

- Research indicates that some strategies lead to better teacher success, including clear program requirements, expectations for the participation of members on the induction team (teacher, mentor, and administrator), expectations for the length of the program, and required mentor qualifications and criteria for assignment.

- Research also suggests that mentor selection and matching are important to the success of any program. Research suggests the following key skills for screening potential mentors: interpersonal skills, instructional effectiveness, leadership, work experience, and having content-area and grade-level expertise similar to their mentee's assignment.

- Providing time and structure for teachers to participate in induction activities also is important to implementation. Policies may include setting minimum amounts of contact time, providing teachers and mentors with regular release time, and providing new teachers with a reduced workload.

- Ensuring adequate funding will help sustain induction programs and allow schools and districts to provide ongoing professional development for teachers and mentors.

Strategy 3: Improve Working Conditions

A number of states identified the importance of addressing working conditions as a strategy in their Equitable Access Plans. Strategies to improve working conditions include building school personnel's capacity to serve students experiencing emotional and behavioral health challenges, reducing class sizes, and collecting and acting on educator survey feedback.

- Professional Learning Module: *Understanding Teaching Conditions*

The key takeaways from this resource relating to state equity work to improve working conditions are as follows:

- Teacher working conditions include time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, and instructional practices and support.

- Research indicates that teacher working conditions influence teachers' satisfaction with their jobs, motivation and efficacy, and attrition and retention. Teacher attrition can be costly for districts. Research also suggests that teacher retention can serve to maintain instructional cohesion in a school. Teaching conditions are a product of the community of educators working together. It is important to remember that perceptions are reality, and educators will make decisions based on how they perceive conditions.

- Other research suggests that some conditions at the school level can act as teacher enablers, such as having effective school-level conduct management in place, providing applicable and effective professional development, giving teachers ample professional autonomy, and making sure teachers can manage demands on their time. Teacher working conditions can be measured with surveys. Surveys provide an open and safe space for educators to share their perceptions and can help districts and states collect a large amount of data across geographic areas. The amount of data collected also can provide policymakers and school leaders with a strong base of information to consider for school improvement planning and enable the application of resources in the areas where they are most beneficial.

- Teacher working conditions also can be measured using practice rubrics that support the interpretation and application of the teaching conditions standards. This process gives school educators preparation for school improvement planning and allows school and district leaders to consider where a school is at developmentally on providing positive teaching conditions.

- When analyzing teacher working conditions data, school leaders should ensure that conversations are structured, safe, and framed by the data collected. It is important to remember that the data are a starting point, not an end, and should create a common language to use when improving the conditions most important to teachers. It also is important to remember that some issues are beyond teacher and school administrator control, and focus should be placed on the areas where a school can take action and have success. Finally, it is important to remember that solutions will take time and effort to implement and show an effect in the school.

Strategy 4: Enhance Professional Learning and Educator Evaluation Practices

Another commonly cited Equitable Access Plan strategy relates to the need to enhance professional learning opportunities and align professional learning more closely to educator evaluation data. To increase retention and improve outcomes for educators working in high-need, low-income schools, state strategies may include modifying or rethinking current evaluation systems to support growth for educators at every point on the career continuum and reconsidering all professional learning opportunities to ensure they are—in fact—helping improve educator effectiveness.

- Policy Snapshot: *What Do Effective District Leaders Do? Strategies for Evaluating District Leadership*
- Policy Snapshot: *Evaluating Evaluation Systems: Policy Levers and Strategies for Studying Implementation of Educator Evaluation*

- Ask the Team: *Get the Information You Need: How to Design Educator Evaluation Studies for Continuous Improvement*

- Professional Learning Module: *Using Teacher Evaluation Data to Inform Professional Learning*

- Innovation Station: *Teacher-Led Professional Learning*

- Special Issues Brief: *Creating Coherence: Common Core State Standards, Teacher Evaluation, and Professional Learning*

- Special Issues Brief: *21st Century Educators: Developing and Supporting Great Career and Technical Education Teachers*

- Publication: *From Good to Great: Exemplary Teachers Share Perspectives on Increasing Teacher Effectiveness Across the Career Continuum*

- Special Issues Brief: *A Framework for Coherence: College and Career Readiness Standards, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, and Educator Effectiveness*

- Interactive Guide: *Intensifying Implementation Support: An Interactive Guide to Successful Teacher Evaluation for Professional Growth*

The key takeaways from these resources relating to state equity work to enhance professional learning and educator evaluation practices are as follows:

Teachers

- Research indicates that high-quality professional learning should be both ongoing and job embedded. Professional learning should move beyond the traditional sit-and-get models and be more interactive in nature to provide teachers with hands-on experience. Professional learning also should be differentiated for teachers based on content (e.g., special educators, career and technical educators, and teachers of English learners), and evaluation data should be used to identify individual teacher needs. Professional learning also should be aligned to school, district, and state initiatives, including integration with the Common Core or other instructional standards depending on the state and local policy context.

- Survey research suggests that teachers typically experience more traditional professional development models: school or district mandated, self-selected, self-funded, and provided by teachers. A majority of teachers rated self-selected professional development as important, whereas fewer teachers felt the same about their district-mandated professional learning experiences. Survey research also suggests a need for more research to enhance knowledge and understanding of the characteristics of each professional experience to make the experiences and supports more useful to teachers.

Leaders

- Research indicates that effective district leaders promote student learning by providing instructional leadership support, strategic planning, communicating with the school community, collaborating with school staff, successfully implementing board policies, managing financial and human resources, and setting the academic tone for the district.

- Strong district leaders establish a strong mission and vision that guide the district's goals and initiatives. Their efforts promote student learning for all teachers and bring together a community of stakeholders committed to accomplishing the mission and vision. Strong leaders also provide resources to encourage equitable access to education and promote safe and supportive learning environments for all students. A strong mission and vision also includes the promotion of effective leading, teaching, and learning within a school; establishing a culture of collaborative leaders; strong communication; and effective resource management.

- Strong district leaders create coherence across school and district initiatives to develop systemwide improvement plans and have a deep understanding of all federal, state, and local initiatives and regulations that influence their work. Furthermore, strong leaders create processes to use evaluation data to inform the professional learning opportunities provided in their schools and district.

Strategy 5: Build Educator Career Ladders and Address Compensation

State Equitable Access Plans also commonly included strategies to reevaluate educator compensation practices and career pathways. Specifically, state plans suggested increasing compensation overall, providing stipends to encourage effective teachers to work in high-need schools, and creating career ladders and lattices to provide teacher leadership and growth opportunities.

- Policy Snapshot: Increasing Teacher Leadership
- Ask the Team: Leadership and Lattices: New Pathways Across the Teaching Profession
- Ask the Team: Performance-Based Compensation: Linking Performance to Teacher Salaries
- Ask the Team: Tiered Licensure: Connecting Educator Effectiveness Policies
- PowerPoint Presentation: Teacher Compensation
- Innovation Station: Rewarding
- Innovation Station: Extending the Reach

The key takeaways from these resources relating to state equity work to develop educator career ladders and address compensation are as follows:

- Teacher career pathways provide new challenges and sustained opportunities for leadership and career advancement without requiring teachers to leave the classroom. Research suggests that providing these opportunities may help increase the retention of effective teachers. Similarly, research indicates that although salary increases typically accompany progress within an organization, opportunities for other types of advancement also can boost retention among high-performing employees.

- Researchers have found that high-performing employees (not low-performing employees) are more attracted to promotion opportunities, and they are more likely to leave a position because of a lack of opportunity for advancement. Furthermore, differentiated pay structures make it more likely that high performers will stay in the profession.

- Researchers have found that as educators improve their practice as teacher leaders, they often improve their leadership skills, organizational practices, and instructional practices. Teacher leadership opportunities also may provide higher degrees of engagement.

- Research on the effects of teacher leaders is limited. Some research indicates that teacher leaders can improve practice at the classroom level but does not provide clarity on how they may affect outcomes at the school level. Furthermore, research suggests that teacher leaders have a greater impact on students when their roles are focused at the classroom level instead of school or district goals.

- Challenges exist to implementing teacher leadership roles in schools, which stems from the absence of a formal framework to recognize and support teacher leaders. Specifically, challenges occur with a lack of clarity on the role of the teacher leader, limitations to the leadership roles and compensation for teacher leaders because of local regulations and collective bargaining agreements, instructional challenges related to removing the top teachers from direct classroom instruction and responsibility for students, a lack of sustained funding for teacher leader positions, a lack of clear processes to select teacher leaders, a lack of time for collaboration in the school, a lack of training for teacher leaders, a lack of time for the clerical duties associated with leadership, resistance to change at the school and district levels, and a lack of incentives or reward for leadership activities.

- Research suggests that districts or states should consider developing performance-based compensation systems as follows: develop the system in collaboration with key stakeholders; be specific about the structure of the compensation system and the rules for salary advancement or enhancements (beginner teacher pay, number and spread of salary levels, minimum number of years to reach the top of the salary schedule, additional opportunities to earn bonuses or stipends, special teacher situations such as new teachers with experience but no performance rating, how teachers will move across the schedule); be detailed and clear about an implementation timeline; ensure continuous evaluation of the new compensation system and provide opportunities for system revision; develop a communication plan to ensure all stakeholders are informed; and estimate system costs to ensure that the design is feasible and sustainable.

Learn More About Our Technical Assistance and Research Materials

Please visit the GTL Center website for the complete library of resources.

Professional Learning Modules

Professional learning modules provide content-rich, train-the-trainer materials to build the knowledge and capacity of SEA personnel on a variety of topics. These modules are designed to be adapted and customized to state context and needs. Within each module, four types of materials for trainers are provided to conduct the professional learning activities independently: (1) facilitator's guide, (2) meeting agenda with recommended time allotments, (3) slide presentation, and (4) professional learning activity handouts.

Ask the Team

The Ask the Team briefs are a quick, accessible resource. Each brief summarizes key examples, strategies, and research findings compiled from questions submitted by SEAs.

Policy Snapshot

Policy snapshots briefly present the latest information, research, and policy trends on critical educator quality topics in a quick, easy format.

Talent Development Framework

The Talent Development Framework takes SEA staff through a process of taking stock of existing educator talent policies and initiatives and strategically determining where further policy action is needed. It also promotes alignment and the breakdown of silos within and between agencies. The framework groups state policy and practice into three key interdependent policy and practice clusters: (1) attract the right talent into the profession; (2) prepare future teachers and school leaders; and (3) develop, support, and retain educators.

Innovation Station

The Innovation Station is a robust interactive, online resource designed to provide states and districts with a central location for cutting-edge information, tools, and resources related to ensuring effective teachers and leaders for all students at five different points in the career continuum. The resources listed under each station are searchable by role (teacher or leader) and topic, including an option for resources that support equitable access. Additional specialized topics include special education, English language learners, and technical education.

- Recruiting and Selecting. Great schools start with great teachers and leaders, and states and districts need specific strategies to recruit and select high-caliber candidates.

- Retaining. Strong retention strategies include providing paid career paths that keep great teachers in the classroom, giving teachers and leaders appropriate autonomy over their work, and offering multiple opportunities to continue to improve and excel.

- Rewarding. Schools retain great teachers and leaders by appropriately rewarding their excellence and ability to extend their reach to more students.

- Extending the Reach. Schools can make the most of their great teachers and leaders by extending educators' reach to more students. This approach can help create an opportunity culture for teachers in which they can collaborate, develop, and advance without leaving the classroom, and innovations in staffing models and career paths can make this approach possible.

- Teacher-Led Professional Learning. Many excellent teachers would like to share their success with peers and advance in their careers without leaving teaching but have few opportunities to do so. The Innovation Station's resources will help schools and districts determine how they can enable excellent teachers to lead job-embedded professional learning.

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