The Equitable Access Implementation Playbook

Approaches to Supporting Equitable Access
State Education Agencies Assisting Local Education Agencies

After state education agencies (SEAs) receive final approval from the U.S. Department of Education for their Equitable Access Plans, they move forward with implementation. As SEAs implement strategies at the state level, they also begin to consider how they will work with local education agencies (LEAs) on the local implementation of state-level strategies and, where applicable, the development and implementation of additional locally based strategies. Some states require that all their LEAs develop and submit plans to ensure equitable access, other states require that only a portion of their LEAs (e.g., high-need LEAs) submit plans, and other states do not have any LEA requirements for plan submission.

This resource is designed to help SEAs strategically plan their support of LEA efforts to carry out state and local equitable access work. It is meant to provide succinct, targeted information to help SEAs determine how best to work with LEAs that may have different challenges, access to resources, and local priorities. This resource is a companion to a guidance tool developed by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center), *Ensuring Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Strategic Guidance for Districts*, which is intended to help LEAs create their own local Equitable Access Plans and includes direction on local stakeholder engagement, local data collection and analyses, and local strategy development.

Levels of Support for LEAs Related to Equitable Access

SEAs may find Table 1 helpful in determining the level of support to provide LEAs in the implementation of state strategies and the development of local plans to ensure equitable access. It is likely that within a state, some districts will need considerably more support than others will. Table 1 shows four levels of SEA support, and SEAs may want to consider how each LEA in the state fits along the continuum.

Table 1. SEA Levels of Support for LEAs Related to Equitable Access

Less Support			More Support
Level 1 (LEA autonomy)	**Level 2 (LEA flexibility)**	**Level 3 (limited SEA support)**	**Level 4 (intensive SEA support)**
A level 1 LEA takes full responsibility for implementation and monitoring of the state's strategies as well as the development of its own strategies. It conducts stakeholder meetings and root cause analysis discussions, develops strategies, and devises a plan for implementation. It monitors its own progress and provides reports on strategies and results to the state.	A level 2 LEA assumes much of the responsibility for implementation and monitoring of the state's strategies as well as the development of its own strategies. It may request and receive targeted SEA assistance. The level 2 LEA conducts stakeholder meetings and root cause analysis discussions, develops strategies, and devises a plan for implementation. It monitors its own progress and provides reports on strategies and results to the state.	The state provides targeted, direct assistance and support through webinars, phone calls, resources, and state and regional convenings to assist level 3 LEAs in planning stakeholder meetings and root cause analysis discussions, developing strategies, and devising a plan for implementation. The state also would assist level 3 LEAs in developing and conducting monitoring procedures to determine progress on strategies and results.	The state provides targeted, direct assistance and direction in the form of a state or regional equitable access support team that works directly with level 4 LEAs to help them carry out aspects of plan design and implementation. The support team also assists level 4 LEAs in planning and conducting stakeholder meetings and root cause analysis discussions, interpreting results from those meetings, developing strategies, and devising a plan for implementation. The support team would assist level 4 LEAs in monitoring progress on strategies and results and conduct some of the monitoring.

Determining the Capacity of SEAs and LEAs for Equity Plan Development and Implementation

How much support an SEA should provide (or is able to provide) may be determined by considering a variety of factors that influence and reflect capacity at the SEA and LEA levels to carry out equitable access planning, implementation, and monitoring. Although it may not be possible to develop additional capacity in a short time frame, awareness of areas where capacity is lacking may help an SEA in strategically planning for the deployment of SEA staff, developing capacity through professional development, reaching out to partners, or temporarily allocating staff with specific skills to support equitable access work. Table 2 suggests key areas where capacity at the SEA and LEA levels is needed to successfully develop and implement local plans to ensure equitable access.

Table 2. Determining the Capacity of SEAs and LEAs for Equity Plan Development and Implementation

SEA Factors in Determining the Appropriate Level of Support for LEAs	LEA Factors in Determining How Much Support Is Needed From an SEA
Does an SEA have staff that can be deployed to work directly with LEAs on equitable access? If so, do these people have the following characteristics? ■ Trained in facilitation (focus groups, root cause analysis) ■ Knowledgeable about research-supported strategies that may be appropriate in local contexts ■ Able to assist in the development of implementation plans ■ Able to provide direct or remote guidance in data collection, analysis, and interpretation	Do LEA personnel have knowledge and training for the following activities? ■ Garnering local commitment and participation among key stakeholders ■ Facilitating stakeholder groups and conducting root cause analyses ■ Developing strategies based on root-cause analyses ■ Determining the long-term success of strategies through the selection and tracking of key indicators ■ Determining needs for mid-course adjustments ■ Collecting and analyzing data (both qualitative and quantitative)

Example Approaches for How to Support LEAs in Equitable Access Work

SEAs may already have strategies for providing professional development or reallocating SEA staff to ensure that expertise and resources are available to support LEAs in equitable access work. In addition, SEAs may consider offering guidance to LEAs in various modes. This two-pronged approach—development at the both the SEA and LEA levels—will help ensure that everyone involved has a shared understanding of the work to be undertaken. Even when SEAs have developed guidance documents for LEAs, some LEAs will likely need assistance in applying the guidance to their local contexts. For example, convening LEAs regionally or by type (e.g., urban, urban fringe, suburban, rural, and remote rural) may provide important opportunities to partner and share resources and ideas about how to support equitable access work within their own similar contexts. Table 3 outlines a variety of specific approaches that SEAs may take to provide LEAs with resources, support, and direction in doing equitable access work at the local level.

Table 3. SEA Approaches for Increasing LEA Knowledge and Capacity for Equitable Access Work

Strategy	Purpose	Mode	Content
Guidance documents	Provide written, readily accessible guidance for LEAs to understand their roles and responsibilities for equitable access work.	Online or print one-page overviews plus live or prerecorded webinars and other presentations	■ Overview of equitable access ■ Summary of SEA actions and decisions ■ Specific actions LEAs are being asked to take in implementing and monitoring both SEA and LEA strategies ■ Summary of what types of support or data an SEA is able to provide to LEAs in carrying out or measuring specific actions
Virtual support	Provide LEAs with planned opportunities to interact with SEA staff or other experts to enhance LEA understanding of equitable access and how it impacts them.	Live or recorded webinars, conferences, and online videos	■ Guidance on steps LEAs need to take to implement and monitor state equitable access strategies ■ Guidance on steps LEAs need to take to determine, implement, and monitor local equitable access strategies ■ Videos of stakeholders engaged in root cause analyses
Conference or convening (regional, state, or by type)	Provide LEAs opportunities to work with other LEAs that have similar challenges to share resources, develop partnerships, and discuss strategies.	Regional or statewide convening with state-provided expertise and facilitated discussions to promote the sharing of ideas	■ What works (local strategies) ■ Ideas for strategies suited to district types (e.g., rural or urban) ■ A discussion of challenges and solutions specific to the region
Direct support	Ensure that LEAs most in need of support have access to direct, specific, locally targeted assistance that will build their capacity for success with equitable access planning, implementation, and monitoring.	Teams of SEA or regional staff work directly with LEAs individually or at local convenings	■ Conducting successful stakeholder meetings ■ Conducting root cause analysis with stakeholders (including examples and graphics) ■ Implementation planning (including challenges) ■ Monitoring (e.g., types of data, collecting and analyzing data, and determining long-term progress) ■ Reporting on progress (e.g., content, organization, data displays, and a discussion of challenges and opportunities)

This resource provides some preliminary guidance for SEA approaches to working with and supporting LEAs in their equitable access work. As SEAs delve deeper into the work, they may determine that some LEAs need guidance that is more detailed. *Ensuring Equitable Access to Excellent Educators: Strategic Guidance for Districts*, a guidance tool from the GTL Center, would be a good place to find step-by-step guidance to support LEA success.