The Impact of CSI Designation in Multiple Measure ESSA Accountability Systems
State Interview Protocol

American Institutes for Research – March 17, 2022

State Administrator Interview Protocol

State:	Interviewer:
Interviewee(s):	Date/Time:
Interviewee(s') Role(s):	

Key points to convey to the respondent:

- This study is being conducted by the American Institutes for Research as part of an Education Research Grant from the Institutes of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education. Through this study, we are seeking to examine
    - o whether the inclusion of new accountability indicators influence which schools are identified as low performing (CSI)
    - o whether administrators of CSI schools have higher levels of awareness about the measures included in the accountability system, have different priorities for improvement, or enact different interventions to address student outcomes compared to non-CSI schools; and
    - o whether CSI schools ultimately improve student outcomes relative to non-CSI schools.
- As part of this study, we are conducting interviews with state officials such as yourself/ yourselves in the three states serving as the focus of the study—California, Florida, and Ohio—to understand the process of designing the accountability system, the motivation and intention behind any newly introduced measures, and the supports, services, resources, and guidance provided to CSI schools.

    In addition to these state-level interviews, we will be conducting interviews with district-level administrators in a purposive sample of 10 districts in each state to obtain the local perspective on these matters. For each state, we also will conduct a survey of school principals in all CSI schools and a sample of the lowest performing non-CSI schools, as well as analysis of longitudinal, school-level administrative data.

- State-specific results of our study will be provided for each participating state through state-specific reports and an in-person presentation in the final year of the study. In addition, the study's results will be presented and discussed in a final report that will be available publicly. We also plan to disseminate findings in peer-reviewed journal articles. In these publications, states will be identified but districts and schools will not.

- We know that you are very busy, and we appreciate your time. We anticipate this interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

- We would like to record this conversation so that we can be sure we have an accurate record of our conversation. We will not share this recording with anyone outside the research team, and we will delete the recording after the final report is complete. Is that okay with you?

- You may discontinue your participation in this interview at any time. During the interview, if we touch on topics that you believe to be sensitive for any reason, please bring that to our attention, and we will not include these comments in our public reporting.

If asked how districts will be selected for the district-level interviews: In each state, we will identify a purposive sample of 10 districts, 5 of which will include the districts with the greatest number of CSI schools. The remaining 5 districts in each state will be selected to provide balance in terms of district size, urbanicity, and student characteristics.

If asked the number of years and types of data included in the analysis of longitudinal, school-level administrative data: We will obtain data for at least 5 years prior to initial CSI designation (2013–14 through 2017–18) and 4 years following initial CSI designation (2018–19 through 2021–22). In addition to data on outcomes, we also will collect data on (a) school demographics and staff characteristics for each school over the same time period, (b) administrative data from each state identifying the CSI schools from the initial identification year and all subsequent years, and (c) all data and documentation related to the method of identifying CSI schools in the selected states.

Opening

1) I'd like to start by talking a bit about your background and position. Going around the virtual room, could you briefly tell us about your current position and the role you have around school accountability and supporting low performing schools?

> *Probe, as necessary:*
> - How many years have you been in this position/role?
> - What are your credentials and experience?

Accountability System

2) In developing your state's approach to the ESSA accountability system, were there any **challenges or tensions in the prior system** that you sought to resolve?

3) To what extent did your **state's previous efforts** to support low-performing schools **inform the design** of its approach to identifying and supporting improvement in CSI schools?

> *Probe, as necessary:*
> - Were there elements, processes, or practices that your state decided to keep?
> - Were there lessons learned from prior efforts that your state sought to apply to the new system?

4) To the extent you can recall, what was the **rationale behind your state's decisions** regarding:
   - The measures used to evaluate school performance, particularly the use of [note state-selected accountability measures]
   - The rationale behind the methodology used to combine performance across those measures to produce an overall assessment of school performance (e.g., use of business rules/composite index, weight allocated to each measure), particularly the use of [description of state's approach to calculating school performance]
   - The criteria used to identify CSI schools, which as we understand it, includes: [Note state's criteria for identifying CSI schools based on low-performance and graduation]
   - The frequency with which CSI schools are identified [Note state's selected frequency of CSI identification (e.g., every three years or yearly)]
   - Exit criteria, including the number of years they must remain in CSI status before exiting: To exit CS&I, a school must: [Note state's stated exit criteria].

5) How has the **state communicated to local stakeholders** (e.g., the public, school districts, schools) about the rationale, design, and use of the new accountability system (i.e., through trainings, presentations, etc.)?
   - Are there any structures (e.g., task forces, advisory groups, listening sessions, etc.) in place to facilitate communication between the state and local stakeholders, or to solicit ongoing feedback from local stakeholders?
   - What strategies does your state use to promote clarity and timeliness of communication to local stakeholders?
   - Have you received any feedback from districts or schools regarding your communication strategies and how effective they have been?
   - Has there been any resistance from key stakeholder groups to the accountability provisions your state selected? If so, how are you working with that group(s) towards resolution?

School Improvement and Monitoring (Monitoring and Evaluation)

6) Overall, approximately **how many offices/divisions and staff** within your state education agency **have responsibilities related to CSI schools**; e.g., responsibilities related to determining which schools meet CSI identification and exit criteria, supporting the development and implementation of CSI plans, as well as monitoring and evaluating CSI plan implementation and outcomes?

Probe, as necessary:
- Which state-level offices or divisions are involved and what responsibilities to they hold?
- [If multiple offices/divisions are involved] How do these different offices or divisions collaborate and coordinate their efforts? How much time do the staff members in these different offices/divisions allocate towards CSI-specific activities?
- What types of training did those individuals need to become qualified to do this type of work?

7) Has your **SEA changed the way it is structured to support school improvement** as a result of CSI implementation? If so, in what way(s)?

Probe, as necessary:
- Added personnel/FTEs
    - How many staff were added and what are their qualifications?
- Redesigned SEA staff roles
- Reorganized SEA offices or divisions
- Created a new office for supporting school improvement
- Developed cross-divisional teams
- Some other form of restructuring
- What were the reasons for making these changes?
    Listen for:
    - To better leverage/mobilize relevant expertise
    - To allow the SEA to provide more intensive support to CSI schools/districts
    - To allow the SEA to provide support to a larger number of schools/districts than in the past
    - To promote coherence (e.g., ensure SEA staff are on the same page, communicating a consistent message or information to districts and schools)
    - To promote efficiency (e.g., avoid duplication of effort)
    - Other reasons

8) In what ways does your state education agency monitor and evaluate CSI schools' progress? What requirements or expectations does the state have for [regional support providers and/or] districts to monitor and evaluate the implementation of CSI plans?*
    Probe, as necessary:
    - What is the frequency of monitoring?
    - What measures or procedures are used?
    - Who does the monitoring? State education agency staff? External agency?
        - How much time does staff allocate towards monitoring and evaluating CSI school?
        - What are their qualifications and experience?
    - How do you communicate the results of your monitoring back to districts and schools?
    - What are the expectations for how this information is used by the school in revising their plans?

- Are there any materials, equipment, software used to monitor and evaluate CSI plan implementation and outcomes?

Technical Assistance and Support (Support for Development and Implementation of CSI Plans)

9) Thinking about your **state's overall approach to supporting improvement** among CSI schools, were there any guiding principles or an **overarching theory of action** that governed your state's approach?

> *Probe, as necessary:*
> - Role of district vs state vs other partners
> - Integration/coherence with other state policies and initiatives
> - How support is framed (e.g., punitive vs supportive)

10) What **types of supports** does your state education agency provide to districts and/or schools in **developing CSI school improvement plans**? What is the focus of these supports?

> *Listen for:*
> - Guidance/support for:
>   - Engaging stakeholders
>   - Identifying school needs and challenges
>   - Identifying evidence-based programs and practices
>   - Identifying and choosing external partners
>   - Examining how resources are being used

> *Probe, as necessary:*
> - What form has state guidance/support taken?
>   - Written/online guidelines or best practices
>   - Webinars or virtual meetings
>   - In-person technical assistance or meetings to discuss CSI activities
>   - Technical assistance or procedures for identifying intra-district resource inequities
>   - Assistance understanding the available CSI funds and other federal, state, or local resources
>   - External audits or instructional reviews [if yes, ask Question 15]
>   - Direct assistance from a support provider external to the school or district (e.g., a school support team or leadership coach) [if yes, ask Question 15]
>   - Support with data analysis or progress monitoring plans
> - Are districts or schools required to use any of these state-provided supports for developing CSI plans?
> - Are CSI schools or districts in your state required to engage an external partner? If yes, what role/for what purpose are they expected to involve the partner?
>   - What, if any, supports does the state provide to help CSI schools or districts select an external partner (e.g., a list of approved providers)?
> - Has the CSI planning process been coordinated with any other required planning activities in the state? (e.g., equity plans, plans for students with disabilities or those who are English learners, COVID-19 or other disaster plans, etc.) In what ways?
> - Follow up with questions about any supports that are not already included in the described staff time. Probe with questions about the supports and resources included.

11) With respect to **technical assistance or support** provided to CSI schools in **implementing their plans**, we understand that your state draws on [regional support providers] and LEAs to provide support. Has the state provided any guidance or requirements for what their CSI implementation support must entail? What, if any, support does the state provide to [regional support providers] or LEAs to help them support CSI schools? What, if any, implementation support does the state provide directly to LEAs with CSI schools?

> *Probe, as necessary:*
> - What form has state guidance/support taken?
>   - o Written/online guidelines or best practices
>   - o Webinars or virtual meetings
>   - o In-person technical assistance or meetings to discuss implementing evidence-based programs or practices or other curricular/instructional approaches
>   - o Technical assistance or procedures for addressing intra-district resource inequities
>   - o Assistance aligning CSI funds with other federal, state, or local resources
>   - o Assistance finding external expertise, technical assistance, and resources to support implementation
>   - o Additional resources (staff, materials, equipment)
>   - o Support with data analysis or ongoing progress monitoring
> - Who is involved in providing this support?
>   - o What are their qualifications?
>   - o What training did they need prior to being assigned this role? Do they have any continued training activities?
> - How frequently are the supports provided?
> - Are districts or schools required to use any of these state-provided supports for CSI plan implementation?
> - What other resources (materials, equipment, software) are needed to provide support? Probe with questions about the supports and resources included.

12) Could you describe the types of support that [regional support providers] provide to CSI schools or LEAs with CSI schools? Does your state draw on any other staff or organizations outside of the SEA to provide support to CSI schools or districts with CSI schools?

> *Probe, as necessary:*
> - What are their qualifications/areas of expertise?
> - What types of staff or organizations? Listen for:
>   - Consultants
>   - Regional service centers, educational service agencies, or BOCES
>   - County offices of education
>   - Partnerships with IHEs or other organizations
>   - Other types of staff or organizations
> - What role(s) do these entities play in providing CSI school support? Listen for:
>   - CSI planning support
>   - CSI plan implementation/monitoring
> - Follow up with questions about any supports that are not already included in the described staff time. Then probe with questions about the supports and resources included.

13) To what extent are these **different from the supports your state provides to other schools** that are not identified for CSI? Are the supports differentiated to different types of CSI schools? If so, how and on what basis?

14) Do CSI schools receive any **financial supports or resources** to help with school improvement? If so, what are they? How does your state determine the dollar amounts for CSI support funding?

We talked a bit already about the state supports provided for CSI schools, but we know that at the root of improving student outcomes are the school leaders and teachers in the classroom.

15) Are there any **state-level strategies in place to attract and retain** effective school leaders and/or teachers to CSI schools?

16) How has your state promoted **operational flexibilities** to CSI schools and their districts in implementing their CSI school improvement plans?

> *Probe, as necessary:*
> - Flexibility around:
>   - Budgeting
>   - Staffing
>   - Selecting school improvement strategies and interventions

Conclusion

17) What are the **greatest challenges** the state has faced in **identifying CSI Schools and supporting their improvement**?

> *Probe, as necessary:*

- Have you experienced challenges with respect to:
  - State capacity (e.g., number of staff, expertise of staff)
  - Buy-in from districts, schools, and other stakeholders
  - Local capacity (e.g., district and school leadership, expertise of district staff)
  - Balancing requirements and expectations with other state and federal programs and policies
- To what extent have you been able to address these challenges?
- Have you found that certain components or requirements of the CSI planning process are more difficult to implement than others? Which ones? How so?

18) What do you think your **state education agency's main strengths** are in guiding and supporting CSI planning and implementation?

19) What are the **key hallmarks of your state's approach**? What is **unique about your state**?

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