

STOUGHTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

The Needs Assessment Procedure describes the systematic processes that Stoughton Public Schools utilized in order to establish priorities for action and make appropriate decisions about the allocation of resources (e.g., people, materials, time, and fiscal, including all funds under No Child Left Behind, the most recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)) in its Title I program.

Statutory Requirements

A needs assessment is required under several sections of ESEA, including those related to schoolwide Title I programs (Sections 1114(b)(2)(B) and 1115(a)), school libraries (Title I-B, Section 1251), education of migratory children (Title I-C, Section Sec. 1306), local use of comprehensive school reform (CSR) funds (Title I-F, Section 1606), teacher and principal quality (Title II-A, Subparts 2 & 5), and the education of homeless children and youths (Title X, Section 723).

Characteristics

A Title I needs assessment must include:

1. Considers a Range of Needs and Issues

Although additional factors may be considered, those listed below significantly impact student achievement. At a minimum, Title I schools should assess their current status with respect to each:

- Student Needs, including: student performance on State assessments, in general, and in identified subgroups and individually; measurable goals for achievement known by parents, teachers, and students; mobility, dropout, graduation, and attendance rates; significant disciplinary issues; intervention processes to ensure individual students' educational needs are met in a timely manner; non-academic indicators of student success.
- Curriculum and Instruction, including: how staff members express high expectations for student achievement; alignment of curricula to Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in core content areas supported by scientifically-based research; if assessment instruments, including diagnostic assessments, are routinely used (at least 3-4 times per year) to measure student achievement in language arts/reading and mathematics; if assessment results are used to inform curriculum, instruction, and individual interventions; the role teachers play in deciding what assessments will be used to measure student achievement; if instructional technology is available for all students; the integration of technology into teaching; evaluation of instructional programs and practices.
- Professional Development, including: the qualifications of teachers and instructional paraprofessionals; processes used to determine the professional development needs of teachers; staff participation in professional development; the relationship of professional development to classroom instruction; whether professional development is ongoing and incorporated into the day-to-day routine of the staff; teachers' opportunity to collaborate as team members and/or mentors in professional development; professional development

providers (e.g., district, Department officials, expert practitioners, regional laboratories, representatives of higher education institutions); if the daily teacher schedule allows for common planning time across grade levels and content areas; how professional development is evaluated and mid-course corrections made, if needed.

- Family and Community Involvement, including: if teachers routinely communicate with parents (formally and informally) about the academic progress of their children; parents and community involvement in activities that support student learning; parents and community involvement in school and district governance decisions; the availability of health and human services to support students and their families; communication/outreach methods for families who speak languages other than English; partnerships with local social service and business organizations; community perceptions of the school or district; evaluation of parent and community involvement strategies.
- School and District Context and Organization, including: the school or district's vision and mission; the involvement of all staff in decisions about instruction; the progress the organization has made in the last 2-3 years toward meeting to student achievement and instructional goals; role(s) of central office staff, principals, curriculum specialists (such as coaches) and teachers in leading instructional improvement; how the budget is determined and priorities set; equitable allocation of available resources (e.g., people, materials, time, and fiscal, including all ESEA funds); discipline and safety policies; climate and culture.

2. Includes Information Gathered from a Variety of Sources

Schools should employ evidence-based investigation methods in the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.

- Quantitative Data, such as: student achievement results (e.g., MCAS, MCAS-Alt, MEPA, MELA-O, other standardized tests, district-based tests and rubrics, formative and summative assessments, portfolio assessments, end-of-course exams, etc.), enrollment counts, dropout rates, graduation rates from school and district records and reports, and demographic statistics from community-based or other organizations.
- Qualitative Data that reveal attitudes and perceptions, such as: written surveys, face-to-face or telephone interviews, focus groups, or classroom observations. Ultimately, the kind of information needed and the source of that information will determine the collection method to be used.

Obtaining qualitative data requires good organization and adequate time. Safeguards must be taken to ensure that collection methods are appropriate for the groups or individuals surveyed. For example, a lengthy written survey is not appropriate for a parent who has reading difficulties or limited English proficiency; instead, conducting a focus group might be a more appropriate means of eliciting useful information.

3. Employs the Use of Valid and Reliable Data to the Maximum Extent Possible

An effort should be made to present quantitative and qualitative data in formats understandable to stakeholders, including teachers, parents and community members. Data presentations should preserve the confidentiality of individuals and limits to generalizability explained clearly.

4. Meaningfully Involves Many Individuals Representing a Range of Knowledge, Skills, and Expertise

A formal planning team should be in place to organize and oversee the needs assessment process, lead the staff in developing plans, and conduct or oversee the program's annual evaluation. The principals of Title I schools are responsible for establishing this core planning team. The team might consist of: administrators; teachers representing different grades and content areas; other professional staff such as guidance counselors and curriculum specialists; parents and other community members; and students. The team should possess diverse skills, knowledge, abilities, and expertise, and be knowledgeable about Title I programs and their regulatory requirements. Parents, community members, and other stakeholders should be meaningfully involved.

5. Results in the Development of Goals and Action Plans

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data should result in the development of goals and plans that support all students in reaching proficiency in academic content areas. The plans will include strategies at the classroom level as well as strategies at the school and district levels targeted to achieve specified goals.

The plans must include the performance and improvement targets set for the school by the State in order to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) and substantially increase the percentage of students attaining proficiency. The plans should identify specific skills and knowledge that students have not mastered, and define incremental objectives for student learning based on those findings. The plans should include the activities necessary to fully implement the strategies needed for addressing student learning—including high quality professional development for all staff—and indicate who will be accountable for ensuring that the activities are completed in order to fully implement the strategies.

6. Used as the Basis for Resource Allocation

The needs assessment process will result in the identification of a large number of issues that could be addressed to improve student achievement. It is important, therefore, that the school, in consultation with a wide range of school and community representatives, prioritize areas that will move the organization to higher levels of instructional quality and performance. Once priority needs have been identified, the team should describe them in detail and generate discussion among stakeholders about strategies to address them. Resources (e.g., people, materials, time, and fiscal, including all ESEA funds) should be allocated to support those priorities.

7. Includes Regular Follow Up and Evaluation of Plans and Strategies

Schools should be prepared to evaluate their programs and policies on a regular basis to ensure they are having the intended impact on the skills, knowledge, and behaviors of students and adults. The schools should be able to articulate, for example, the expected changes in students' learning experiences, and have a set of observable indicators as a means of anchoring school and district expectations in concrete outcomes.

The results of these evaluations should be used to improve programs, and parents and other stakeholders should have opportunities for input on program and policy needs, implementation, evaluation and improvement.