Reflecting on CCSSO's Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems in the context of COVID & the American Rescue Plan

CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems	Reflection Questions
1. *If everything's a priority, nothing is.* Elevate school improvement as an urgent priority at every level of the system—schools, LEAs, and the SEA—and establish for each level clear roles, lines of authority, and responsibilities for improving low-performing schools.	➔ Is school improvement still an urgent priority? Are your schools getting *more* attention b/c greater pandemic impact or are they a *lower priority* as more schools have greater needs than before? ➔ Are roles clear as ESSER funding flows to districts/schools via other offices?
2. *Put students at the center so that every student succeeds.* Make decisions based on what will best serve each and every student with the expectation that all students can and will master the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college, career, and civic life. Challenge & change existing structures or norms that perpetuate low performance or stymie improvement.	➔ There are so many immediate needs. But this is also a moment to rethink and redesign. What seeds are you planting to build the SEA/LEA/school systems we need? ➔ What assumptions about how students learn and grow has the pandemic changed?
3. *If you want to go far, go together.* Engage early, regularly, and authentically with stakeholders and partners so improvement is done *with* and not *to* the school, families, and the community. · Work w/schools, families & community members to build trusting relationships, expand capacity, inform planning, build political will, strengthen community leadership and commitment, and provide feedback loops to adjust as needed. · Integrate school & community assets and early childhood, higher ed., social services & workforce systems to help address challenges outside of school.	➔ How and when are stakeholders involved as ESSER funds/ARP plans integrate with SI plans? ➔ How can you center student voice and experience? ➔ Can you leverage new pandemic-fostered relationships w/government agencies, community-based organizations & other partners? ➔ What can you do now to help your identified schools prepare for the (likely) greater needs of incoming student cohorts now and in the future (i.e., the next couple years of PK or K students)?
4. *One size does not fit all.* Select at each level the strategy that best matches the context at hand—from LEAs and schools designing evidence-based improvement plans to SEAs exercising the most appropriate state-level authority to intervene in non-exiting schools.	➔ In this new context, what should be held constant? What can be customized? Are there additional flexibilities to consider? ➔ New state interventions given the (even higher) stakes? ➔ Shifts in what/where you require regarding evidence of effectiveness?

5. *Failing to plan is planning to fail.* Support LEAs and schools in designing high-quality school improvement plans informed by • each school's assets (and how they're being used), needs (including but not limited to resources), and root causes of underperformance; • research on effective schools, successful school impact. efforts & implementation science; • best available evidence of what works, for whom, under which circumstances; • the science of learning & development, incl. the impact of poverty & adversity on learning.	➔ Are you requiring and/or encouraging <u>revisions to existing plans</u>? How will you support that process? What do you hope to accomplish through it? ➔ Will there be <u>coherence</u> between SI plans and ARP plans? How can you avoid fragmented planning? ➔ Do you need to tweak your <u>needs assessments</u> to capture all the challenges of the current context? Do your schools/LEAs need additional support to do new needs assessments well? ➔ How are you <u>ensuring schools learn</u> about updated information about what is most likely to help address the pandemic's impact on students and staff ?
6. *Talent matters.* Focus especially on ensuring the highest need schools have great leaders and teachers who have or develop the specific capacities needed to dramatically improve low-performing schools.	➔ How has the job of school leaders and staff changed? How can you help ensure your schools build the necessary <u>capacity</u>? ➔ What mechanisms do you and/or your schools have in place to regularly measure <u>teacher wellness</u> and surface needs? ➔ Can you use ESSER funds to increase the <u>diversity</u> of the educator workforce in your highest needs schools and ensure they are well supported? ➔ Are there staffing gaps you can help fill?
7. *Put your money where your mouth is.* Dedicate sufficient resources (time, staff, funding); align them to advance the system's goals; use them efficiently by establishing clear roles and responsibilities at all levels of the system; and hold partners accountable for results.	➔ Are 1003a and all the ESSER funds being used <u>coherently</u>? ➔ How can SEA and/or LEA ESSER funds be a catalyst for revisiting current partnerships & building new ones that embrace <u>shared accountability for student outcomes</u>? ➔ Are there opportunities to redesign funding mechanisms to drive more dollars to strategies with greater evidence of effectiveness?

EducationCounsel
Policy ׀ Strategy ׀ Law ׀ Advocacy

CCSSO
Council of Chief State School Officers

RESULTS
FOR AMERICA

8. *What gets measured gets done.* Establish clear expectations and report progress on a sequence of ambitious yet achievable short- and long-term school improvement benchmarks that focus on both equity and excellence.	➜ Do you & your schools need to revisit <u>goals and benchmarks</u>? Can you adjust short-term goals without lowering long-term expectations? ➜ What current metrics need to be tweaked? What new metrics are more relevant in this context and should be incorporated?
9. *Ideas are only as good as they are implemented.* Implement improvement plans rigorously and with fidelity, and, since everything will not go perfectly, gather actionable data and information during implementation; evaluate efforts and monitor evidence to learn what is working, for whom, and under what circumstances; and continuously improve over time.	➜ Do you have a shared <u>learning agenda</u> for SI that incorporates new research questions based on schools' experiences during the pandemic and the ongoing recovery period? ➜ How can you strengthen your own culture and processes that reflect a <u>learning organization</u> approach? How can you support districts and schools to adopt similar mindsets and practices? ➜ Are you investing ESSER funds (or encouraging LEAs to do so) in <u>evidence-building</u> activities? ➜ Do you need to revise your data collection and reporting systems? Are you capturing the right information at the right time? Can you reduce the burden at all on your schools while maintaining what's important?
10. *Don't be a flash in the pan.* Plan from the beginning how to sustain successful school improvement efforts financially, politically, and by ensuring the school and LEA are prepared to continue making progress.	➜ What's your <u>track record</u> in terms of exiting schools managing sustainability issues? What needs to change to help your SI schools avoid a fiscal cliff with their new ESSER funds? ➜ How can you help your schools be strategic about <u>what to sunset and what to sustain</u>? ➜ Are there underlying cost structures you can support changing? ➜ Are there lessons for you to share beyond the SI context now that so many districts and schools have new non-recurring funds?

EducationCounsel
Policy ι Strategy ι Law ι Advocacy

CCSSO
Council of Chief State School Officers™

RESULTS
FOR AMERICA