
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT



SCHOOL REOPENING TOOLKIT: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

This document includes strategies and best practices for supporting Priority and Focus school turnaround throughout the school re-opening process. It focuses on reflecting on turnaround strategies and revising school improvement funded grants to meet newly identified needs. Also, there are links to additional department resources and toolkits to help districts and schools navigate re-opening effectively.

All information in the document is non-regulatory guidance issued for general informational purposes only. This document is not intended to constitute legal advice. Because local school board policy and unique facts make dramatic differences in analyzing any situation, the Tennessee Department of Education advises each school district to consult with the local school board attorney for specific legal advice regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations.

I. Checklist

Priority and Focus school leaders should consult the [TDOE Reopening Schools Guide](#) as well as specific toolkits for relevant information and resources located on the [Reopening Guidance](#) page of the department's website. These toolkits provide more in-depth information that may be useful to Priority/Focus schools to address the following topics:

- [Academics](#)
- [Access & Opportunity](#)
- Assessing Student Learning (coming soon)
- [Charter Schools](#)
- [Consolidated Funding](#)
- [Counseling](#)
- [Early Childhood](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [School Nutrition](#)
- Health & Public Health (coming soon)
- [Postsecondary Transitions](#)
- Professional Development (coming soon)
- Safety & Operations (coming soon)
- [Special Populations](#)
- Staffing (coming soon)
- [Technology](#)
- [Transportation](#)
- [Wellbeing & Mental Health](#)

Promote a positive school climate.

- Refer to the [Academic Reopening Checklist](#) to plan for reconnecting your school and its educators to students and families
- Develop, communicate, and enforce a set of standard operating procedures and routines that include:
 - staff/teacher expectations for reopening;
 - classroom environment norms for teachers in school buildings or in a virtual learning environment;
 - master schedules which include academic considerations for learning spaces, materials, instructional delivery, and student movement;
 - academic and behavior expectations;
 - grading protocols and criteria; and
 - school-wide expectations, policies and procedures.

Assess student performance and learning gaps.

- Review the [Reopening Schools Guide](#) for guidance on how to assess student learning.
- Review the [Special Populations Re-opening Toolkit](#) for continuing educational opportunities and services for special populations including special education and English learners.
- Review the [Academic Reopening Toolkit](#) for guidance on specific academic considerations for elementary and secondary school student learning.

Revise school turnaround strategies.

- Reset and re-evaluate school improvement strategies for Priority and Focus schools by conducting a needs assessment to determine emerging needs.
- Once the needs are identified, the planning team creates aligned goals, turnaround strategies, and action steps that align with the prioritized needs.
- Districts should revise the District Priority Plan to include newly identified, prioritized needs.
- Priority schools should revise the school improvement plan to include newly identified, prioritized needs.
- Focus schools should revise their school improvement plan to address strategies to improve outcomes for identified student group(s) by reflecting on the following questions:
 - Utilizing your school data collected during the 2019-20 school year, describe the progress you've made or challenges you've faced towards improving outcomes for the student group(s) for which you were identified.
 - What strategy(s) will you utilize in the 2020-21 school year to address the needs and root causes you've identified for your student group(s)?

School Improvement Grants

- Determine which school improvement grant(s) need to be revised to meet the newly identified, prioritized needs of Priority and/or Focus schools
 - Review the period of availability for the grant funding source before making budget revision requests.
- Review the [Finance Toolkit](#) for guidance on how to revise grant budgets to address newly surfaced needs and respective timelines for grant activities.
- Contact your assigned Regional School Improvement Director for help with the following:
 - District and school improvement planning support
 - Budget revision assistance
 - Additional technical assistance and support

II. Best Practices

Review School Improvement Plan

Based on assessments used to identify student achievement and learning gaps, school planning teams should conduct a needs assessment using available academic and non-academic data, identify progress and challenges, and conduct a root cause analysis to identify prioritized needs. As they disaggregate the data, teams can review the checklist outlined above to access areas of strength and challenges with the outcomes of every student as well as those sub-populations identified through the ATSI/TSI designation.

Next, school planning teams can utilize the guiding questions (outlined in the [ATSI Resource Guide](#)) to facilitate a discussion about the current implementation and effectiveness of these practices. The guiding questions are a starting point for discussion, and along with other relevant data and local context, they can inform the self-assessment in the next section.

Assess Implementation of Practices Using a Self-Assessment

Under each practice is a self-assessment section that consists of a number of implementation indicators. These indicators are school-wide actions, policies, and/or processes that schools can implement and monitor to address student needs. Again, these are suggested indicators and not an exhaustive list. School planning teams can then self-score (on a scale of 1 to 4) each indicator to evaluate how effectively and comprehensively the school is implementing these indicators. The self-scoring scale is defined as:

1. The action is not yet in place.
2. The action is sometimes in place or at the beginning stages.
3. The action is mostly in place or fairly embedded.
4. The action is well-established and embedded.

Based on the scores from the assessment of student achievement and learning gaps and other relevant school data, school planning teams may choose to identify newly identified priority areas then update the school improvement plan as necessary. Schools are encouraged to develop a focused and small list of practices as they update their school improvement plans. A full, stand-alone self-assessment that includes all student groups is located in the [ATSI resource guide](#) in the resources section of this document.

Determine Strategies for Improvement

After school planning teams have determined the prioritized needs for student learning gaps, you should use the resources section to develop strategies and action steps to update your improvement plan and/or identify opportunities to enhance implementation of the plan. The department is committed to supporting equitable outcomes for all students and has published a variety of research-based frameworks, guides, and resources to improve student outcomes. Once your improvement plan has been updated and current needs have been identified, planning teams should then align school improvement resources to best support the new strategies and goals set for the upcoming school year.

III. Recommended Schedules and Procedures

Schools develop planning teams to conduct the school improvement planning process to identify prioritized student needs. Once the needs are identified, the planning team creates aligned goals, strategies, and action steps that align with the prioritized needs. All plans should be monitored regularly and revised based on students' needs throughout the school year with input from the planning team.

School Improvement Planning

Date	Item
May 15	School improvement planning opens in InformTN
May 15 – June 15	Review school improvement plan
June 15 - June 30	Assess implementation of practices using a self-assessment
July 1 - July 30	Determine strategies for improvement
Sept. 1	School improvement plans due in InformTN
Oct. 1	Districts must approve school improvement plans
Oct. 1-15	Division of School Improvement reviews Priority school improvement plans

Complete Checklist Items

Date	Item
Summer/Fall 2020	Promote a positive school climate
Summer/Fall 2020	Assess student performance and learning gaps
Summer/Fall 2020	Assess current instructional practices and support structures
Summer/Fall 2020	Ensure high-quality core instruction
Fall 2020	Implement Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI ²) effectively
Fall 2020	Implement positive behavioral supports effectively

IV. Resource List

TDOE Reopening School Toolkit

<https://www.tn.gov/education/health-and-safety/update-on-coronavirus/reopening-guidance.html>

What Works Clearing House

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

This website provides existing research on different programs, products, practices, and policies in education in order to provide educators with the information needed to make evidence-based decisions.

Evidence for ESSA

<https://www.evidenceforessa.org/>

This site provides a way for schools to identify programs and practices that meet the ESSA evidence standards. This website also provides stakeholders a way to easily find programs and practices that align to the ESSA evidence standards and meet their local needs.

ED Reports

<https://www.edreports.org/>

EdReports.org is an independent nonprofit designed to improve education by providing reviews of K-12 instructional materials.

Tennessee Department of Education School Improvement Webpage

<https://www.tn.gov/education/finance-and-monitoring/school-improvement-grants.html>

This site provides resources for school improvement planning and grant supports.

TDOE Accountability Protocol

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/accountability/2019_Accountability_Protocol.pdf

This site provides school turnaround designation information for Priority/CSI, Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI), and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

<https://www.tn.gov/education/student-support/student-supports-in-tn.html>

Tennessee's multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS) is a framework for seeing how all the practices, programs, and interventions fit together in order to meet students' needs both within an individual classroom and across the school building.