ESSA Subcommittee Meeting – Schools and District Improvement

Date, Time: Wednesday, September 14, 2016, 1:30 p.m.
Location: 135 South Union Street, Suite 215

ALSDE Facilitator: Dr. Catherliene Williamson

Members present: Dr. Williamson, Nancy Beggs, Susan Kennedy, Terri Boman, and Senator Clyde Chambliss

Members absent: none

Summary: Julie Woods and Stephanie Aragon from the Education Commission of the States presented. Dr. Williamson lead discussion as the subcommittee discussed the following key decisions:

1a. The beginning of the fourth year that a school is identified as low performing, the school should go into intervention (takeover) status.

1b. Target Schools: How long will be a school be categorized as “targeted support” before the schools falls into the “comprehensive” school category?

Next meeting: Friday, October 7, 9 a.m., 135 South Union Street, Suite 215
All notes below are comments with committee members and the ALSDE facilitator.

Julie Woods and Stephanie Aragon with the Education Commission of the States, Presentation

- Changes in ESSA/NCLB
  - Evidence based – broadens the type of strategies to turn around schools
  - Not tied to a particular model
  - No grants or separate funding

- How will the state support districts?
- How will the school improvement strategies used affect parents, teachers, students?
- How is the state engaging stakeholders?
- What is the current state plan?
- What are other states doing?
  - Innovation Zones (turnaround) - IN, TN, MA
  - Recovery Districts (takeover) - LA, TN, MI
  - Receiverships (takeover) - MA, PA, NY *Lawrence County school district in MA

Subcommittee Discussion

Key Decisions

1a. The beginning of the fourth year that a school is identified as low performing, the school should go into intervention (takeover) status.

- Committee members recommended that every school be placed on a continuum of support to ensure that schools receive support before being identified for takeover; also recommended that schools also be allowed to move along the continuum as they make progress.
- Supports should focus on building capacity within the district and school.
- Develop an evaluation where districts and schools are made aware of the exit criteria that includes:
  - Exit Criteria
  - Financial Evaluation
  - Opportunity Gap Audit (programs include AP, IB, Dual-Enrollment)
  - Curriculum Audit
    - Is the curriculum culturally appropriate?
  - Formative Assessments
    - Give schools/districts the autonomy to select which tools to use. If no progress is shown, schools lose autonomy and formative assessments will be a nonnegotiable.
- It was discussed that there will always be a bottom 5%. Failure should not be an option. Why not close the districts that are chronically underperforming? We need to encourage schools to be innovative, do things differently.
Key Decisions Continued...

- It was discussed that there will always be a bottom 5%. Failure should not be an option. Why not close the districts that are chronically underperforming? We need to encourage schools to be innovative, do things differently.
- Look at the data from those districts that are implementing innovative practices.

1b. Target Schools: How long will a school be categorized as “targeted support” before the schools fall into the “comprehensive” school category?

- It is recommended by the subcommittee that after a school has been identified for targeted support for two full years, upon beginning the third year, a school should fall into the comprehensive support category.
- Are there any qualitative pieces of data to support triggers? Case studies, focus group interviews with students/teachers/principals?
- Topics to think through as trigger:
  - Qualitative/quantitative factors and a time for entrance and exit criteria
  - Parental involvement: how to increase?
  - Tutoring: Is there a program? What is the participation rate? How to increase?
  - Night school as a means of extra academic support
  - Feeder pattern trends
  - Leadership, looking from the top down: Board members, superintendents and faculty of a failing system
    - Explore offering incentive pay
- Possible triggers for school identification:
  - Have you been identified in the bottom 5% for 3 years?
  - Are you currently in takeover?
  - Do you have an F in student achievement on the Report Card?
  - Case studies: interviews with principals, teachers, students, parents
  - Teacher turnover
  - Culture/climate
  - Attendance for both students and teachers

Next Steps:

- Identify the breakdown of schools per district by grade span to determine the criteria for identifying a takeover district
- Review the current failing school list
- Review the 3 Turnaround Models
- Side-by-side comparison of Alabama, Arizona, and Indiana- support of schools
- Determine triggers for entrance/exit criteria
- Recommendations concerning community engagement in schools

**Committee members are responsible for presenting the bulleted items at the scheduled next meeting, Friday, October 7, 2016 at 9 a.m.**