

Resource Allocation Review Guide for Schools & Districts

Schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) or Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) are required to identify any resource inequities that exist in their school and/or district. These findings should be addressed through the creation and implementation of an improvement plan (ESSA Sec. 1111(d)(1)(B)(iv) & Sec. 1111(d)(2)(C)).

- CSI schools are required to submit an improvement plan to the NDE that incorporates actions to address resource inequities.
- ATSI schools are not required to submit an improvement plan to the NDE but can leverage an existing plan to address resource inequities. However, districts with ATSI schools are required to support and monitor the implementation of the plan.

“**Resource equity** refers to the allocation and use of resources (people, time, and money) to create student experiences that enable all children to reach empowering, rigorous learning outcomes—no matter their race or income. We believe that measuring and discussing the dimensions of resource equity can push us past illusory aspirations and instead focus leaders on how to design schools and set system-level policies that enable all children to succeed” ([Travers, 2018, p. 4](#)).

A Resource Allocation Review is...	A Resource Allocation Review is not...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A collaborative process to ensure students have equitable access to resources • A driver of meaningful change for districts that serve low-performing schools • A tool to support school improvement efforts • A component of your continuous improvement processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An evaluation or accountability measure • A punitive action against a school or district • A standalone activity completed in isolation of other improvement planning

(Adapted from [Region 15 Comprehensive Center Network & Utah Department of Education](#))

Elements of an Effective Resource Allocation Review for District/School Teams

1. Examine **all funding** from all sources.
 - This should include federal, state, and local funding, and not just money dedicated to school improvement.
2. Assess whether individual school spending levels fully **reflect their need**.
 - Equal or fixed allocations based on total enrollment and/or other drivers does not mean student needs and what it will take to reach high learning goals are considered. Students and schools that need more resources should receive what they need.
3. Review critical **dimensions of resource equity** beyond funding.

- How much funds are available is only part of the story. Resource Allocation Reviews should also capture the various dimensions of resource equity that directly impact the student experience: teaching quality, empowering, rigorous content, instructional time and attention, early intervention, early learning, a whole child approach, and family academic engagement.
- 4. Identify **root causes** of resource inequities.
 - Once resource inequities are identified, engage in a root cause analysis such as the [5 Why's protocol or Fishbone Diagram](#), to understand why those inequities occurred and know how to address them.
- 5. Check for **sustainability**.
 - It's important to consider the typical turnaround school lifecycle. While a school's performance might be low at the beginning of identification and funds are provided to support improvement, once the school exits their designation, funds will no longer be available. It's important to avoid using short-term funding to meet the ongoing, underlying needs of students.
- 6. **Align** school funding and planning timelines.
 - Whenever possible, it's important to consider when school budgets and staffing allocations are released and completed and when action planning occurs. School leaders are limited in their ability to address any resource inequities when decisions for the upcoming year have been made or inflexible.
- 7. Engage a **wide range of stakeholders** in the results.
 - Changes to resources may require some difficult trade-offs. Community and stakeholder engagement is not only required by ESSA but can help build support for necessary changes to better meet the needs of all learners.
- 8. **Codify** actions to address inequities into continuous improvement plans or other improvement plans used by the school and district.
 - Clearly tying actions designed to address resource inequities to improvement plans help to communicate the alignment between goals and activities.

Dimensions of Resource Equity

Below are the dimensions of resource equity and some sample diagnostic questions that can be used with school and district improvement teams to determine where inequities might exist. Adapted from [What Is Resource Equity?](#), a working paper that explores the dimensions of resource equity that support academic excellence.

Factors that directly impact the student experience		Focus Questions
Teaching Quality	Research and experience tells us that consistent access to effective teaching has a dramatic effect on student achievement. However, too often districts have difficulty attracting and retaining their best teachers	1. Does my system have a reliable way to measure teaching effectiveness? If so, how are highly effective teachers distributed across schools and students of different need levels? Is access to excellent teaching constrained

	in high-need schools. Any definition of resource equity must ensure that students with greater needs have at least as much access to excellent teaching, if not more.	<p>across the system, or just to students in a subset of schools?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> How are novice teachers distributed across schools and students of different need levels? What additional resources do schools with high concentrations of novice teachers receive?
Empowering, Rigorous Content	Research has shown a relationship between the level of expectations that systems, schools, or teachers set for their students and their students' subsequent levels of achievement. Those expectations play out in richness and rigor of curriculum material, the way instruction is delivered, what assignments students receive and the rigor with which they are graded, and access to advanced course material. Though we typically find much lower rigor in high-need schools, high-performing schools and systems actively manage the level of intellectual rigor that teachers demand of all students.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Are student assignments in equivalent courses equally challenging across high- and low-need schools? Do students have access to curriculum aligned with empowering, grade-level standards? Do the relationships between student grades and state assessment outcomes indicate that all students are held to a high standard? Do schools with higher-need students offer AP and advanced coursework at similar levels as schools with lower-need students? Do students with similar performance levels within and across schools get placed into advanced or AP classes at the same rates regardless of race or income?
Instructional Time & Attention	We typically see very little variation in total student instructional hours. Using time well means differentiating instruction to meet students and then accelerating progress to help students with diverse learning needs learn rigorous, grade-level content. In addition, when time is used effectively, adding instructional hours to the school year can be a powerful lever for improving student outcomes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Do students who have greater needs spend more time in school than students with lower needs? Does this vary across schools or across students within schools? How much time do schools give their struggling students in areas where they are behind? Do schools spend more instructional time in areas of high priority? Are students' class schedules fully utilized? How much of their schedules is free time or inefficient time? Does this vary across schools or across students within schools? To what extent do schools differentiate class and student group sizes and teacher loads to provide greater individual attention to students with greater needs in academic areas?
Early Intervention	Intervening early to keep students on track is much more effective than trying to "catch" students back up once they have fallen behind. This suggests that ensuring access to academic interventions (e.g., early warning systems and Response to Intervention programs designed to quickly identify specific student needs and address them before they become major problems)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> What percentage of students in high-need schools who fall behind academically have access to RTI and other intervention supports (without having to rely on referral to special education as the means to provide supplemental support), as compared to students in low-need schools? Do interventionists and teachers collaborate regularly to ensure intervention supports for

	for all students is critical to ensuring resource equity.	students who fall behind academically are integrated into and aligned with core instruction?
Early Learning	Research on early childhood education suggest that access to high-quality pre-K programs are among the highest impact ways to improve outcomes for students. Providing access to early learning opportunities particularly for students coming from families living in poverty or who have special learning needs is critical to ensure that they can achieve at the same levels as their peers later in life.	1. What percentage of kindergartners in high-need schools attended high-quality pre-K programs, as compared to kindergartners in low-need schools? How does this differ by student race or income?
Whole Child Approach	Research demonstrates that students need certain social, emotional, and academic development (SEAD) skills and competencies in order to participate in rigorous learning. And, students who arrive at school with unmet health, social, or emotional needs are at greater risk of poor performance. Schools that strategically organize resources focus on proactively supporting SEAD skills and competencies for all students and also integrate more intensive supports for students with greater social, emotional, or health needs. Schools that have higher concentrations of students with more intensive needs will need more resources to provide effective support.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do higher-need students have access to meaningful relationships with adults who know them and to whom they feel accountable? 2. To what extent do higher-need students have access to targeted social and emotional services, programs, and resources (e.g., counselors, social workers, or other mental health resources)? 3. Do higher-need students demonstrate social-emotional and academic development skills and competencies? 4. Does the curriculum higher-need students experience create opportunities to practice social-emotional and academic development competencies? 5. Do students and schools with higher needs have access to a consistent and fair disciplinary process and strong school cultures?
Family Academic Engagement	Parent/caregiver interest and involvement in their child's academic work can have profound effects on behavioral and academic outcomes. However, some parents face physical, linguistic, emotional, and cultural barriers that disproportionately impact the parents of students who already face additional challenges at school. School and system leaders can organize and invest to lower these barriers to better engage with parents.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does my district and its schools engage parents in their students' learning goals? 2. What percentage of parents receive student progress reports in their native language or can otherwise communicate with teachers through interpreters? 3. What percentage of parents report feeling welcome at their child's school? Do they report being consulted and informed about the academic lives of their children?