

Empowering Action for School Improvement (EASI)

Connect for Success

EASI Route: Offered Services



COLORADO
Department of Education

INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) conducted a comprehensive study of five high achieving elementary schools identified based on their overall performance, as well as the performance of their student groups, specifically English Learners, students with disabilities, students experiencing poverty, and minority students. The study focused on how these schools are attaining higher academic achievement than other schools in the state. The school and LEA leadership, personnel, families, and students participated in surveys, focus groups, and interviews to help identify the factors contributing to the schools' success with the identified groups. The following [High Achieving Schools \(HAS\) Study](#) summarizes the study purpose and methods, overall findings highlighting effective strategies common across the five schools in the 2014 study, and effective strategies unique within each school: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/dper/evalrpts>.

Who Can I Contact For More Information?

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In 2018, CDE added four new high achieving schools to the study: a rural elementary school, a middle school, a high school, and an alternative education campus (AEC). The same methodology was used to identify practices that are contributing to the success of the newly identified schools. Although three of the four schools were secondary schools, many of the same trends were noted across the second round of high achieving schools as has been evidenced in the first study. CDE is in the process of developing reports on the [second \(2018\) HAS study](#), which will be posted on the same website (<http://www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/dper/evalrpts>) later this fall.

The HAS study findings were used to develop the Connect for Success (CFS) grant which is an opportunity for schools identified for support and improvement to connect with and learn from the HAS to replicate the effective practices and strategies common across the HAS. To date, 28 Colorado Title I schools have participated in the CFS grant. The first cohort of grantees has now completed two and a half years of implementation. Based on 2018 preliminary School Performance Framework (SPF) results, over 76% of those schools are no longer on the accountability clock (i.e., Priority Improvement, Turnaround).

Schools that participate in the Connect for Success grant receive a diagnostic visit and a report that includes recommendations from a CDE team based on the findings of the HAS study. After hearing a panel of HAS school leaders and personnel and connecting with them at a kickoff meeting, grantees visit one of the HAS to see the effective practices in person. Schools identify and/or hire an implementation coach who works with a CDE Implementation Manager to replicate HAS strategies as well as monitor the implementation of those practices.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Districts with schools identified for Comprehensive Support (CS) or Targeted Support (TS) and/or schools on the accountability clock (i.e., Priority Improvement, Turnaround) are eligible to apply. Applicants should show readiness and willingness to rethink current strategies and practices to align with those of the HAS. This grant opportunity is not a good fit for schools that currently have a Tiered Intervention Grant, Pathways, and/or are in the Turnaround Network. In addition, generally this support is not a good fit for any schools that are in year 4 or later on the state accountability clock with a Priority Improvement or Turnaround School Performance Framework Plan Type as it takes over two years to implement targeted changes under this grant.



AVAILABLE FUNDS

For the 2018-2019 school year, up to 20 proposals will be funded. In Year 1, schools are eligible to apply for up to \$20,000 (January 1, 2019 – June 30, 2019). An additional \$80,000 may be requested for Year 2 (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020) and Year 3 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021). A budget and plan will be jointly developed with CDE. Subsequent year funding is dependent upon demonstrated fidelity to processes, implementing a plan that aligns with the HAS study findings and recommendations from the CDE diagnostic report, meeting reporting requirements, and availability of funds.

ALLOWABLE USE OF FUNDS

Funding from this opportunity **must** be used for:

- Costs related to visiting High Achieving School sites
- Costs for school/LEA leadership to attend state meetings in Denver area
- Strategies and practices that align with the findings of the CDE site visit and the High Achieving Schools Study

Funding from this opportunity **may** be used for:

- Costs for Implementation Coach (appointed or hired by LEA)
- Staff stipends and/or substitute pay to create time for job-embedded learning opportunities and/or time for collaboration
- Leadership development
- Costs associated with the CDE diagnostic visit (surveys, translating, and substitutes)

Funds from this opportunity must be used to **supplement and not supplant** any federal, state, and local funds currently being used to provide activities. There will be no carryover of funds. Unobligated funds at the end of the fiscal year will be returned to the CDE.

IMPORTANT PROGRAM DATES

January	Award notifications
February	Kick-off meeting for new grantees
February – April	CDE conducts school visits and provides recommendations for HAS strategies and practices to be implemented
May	School, LEA and CDE collaborate to conduct initial planning, goal setting, and budget development
June	School submits Year 2 plan, budget, and baseline monitoring indicators
August	Planning and learning opportunity for all Connect for Success grantees

EVALUATION AND REPORTING

Each LEA that receives a grant through the Connect for Success program is required to report, at a minimum, the following information to the CDE as follows:

1. The following data will be collected by CDE as part of the diagnostic visit after grant is awarded but before planning and implementation:
 - Parent surveys – distributed by the school; collected and analyzed by CDE;
 - Personnel surveys – distributed by the school; collected and analyzed by CDE;
 - Observation/walkthrough data – collected by a team from CDE and/or the CDE Implementation Manager; and



- Interviews with school leadership, teachers, staff, families, and students – collected by a team from CDE and/or the CDE Implementation Manager.
- 2. At the end of Year 1, the following data will be collected:
 - Description of planning process and the plans for the next year of the grant, including an implementation plan to replicate the HAS strategies and practices and based on CDE recommendations from the diagnostic visit.
- 3. During and at the end of Years 2 and 3 of the grant, the following data will be collected:
 - Implementation plan and, when available, implementation data to demonstrate the extent to which implementation occurred with fidelity;
 - Quarterly progress monitoring report submitted using the CDE Progress Monitoring Template;
 - Parent surveys – distributed by the school; collected and analyzed by CDE;
 - Personnel surveys – distributed by the school; collected and analyzed by CDE;
 - Observation/walkthrough data – collected by a team from CDE and/or the CDE Implementation Manager; and
 - Interviews with school leadership, teachers, staff, families, and students – collected by a team from CDE and/or the CDE Implementation Manager.

PROGRAM ASSURANCES

If approved for participation in the program, the LEA will be asked to submit signatures indicating agreement with the following assurances:

Teacher Commitments:

- Rethink current practices and modify those that are ineffective based on examination of student data
- Develop theoretical and practical knowledge of best practices
- Administer screening, diagnostic, and classroom progress monitoring assessments to inform instructional practice
- Help shape the culture of the school in a positive way

School Commitments:

- Provide CDE with the annual evaluation and quarterly progress monitoring information required
- School leadership team with LEA representation will attend the state sponsored professional development and/or networking opportunities
- School leadership will collaborate with the Implementation Coach, hired or designated by the LEA, to develop and implement a plan to replicate HAS practices and strategies based on the CDE recommendations from the diagnostic visit
- Reevaluate use of Title I and IDEA funds (e.g., Coordinated Early Intervening Services - CEI) to meet needs of minority students, students experiencing poverty, students with disabilities, and English Learners
- School Leadership will:
 - Conduct regular instructional walkthroughs
 - Perform ongoing performance monitoring of instructional staff and provide timely feedback to teachers
 - Ensure ongoing data analyses and participating in data meetings
 - Ensure that time for data meetings, analysis, and use is protected
 - Ensure time for collaboration is created and protected
 - Make student-centered decisions (including grouping of students, class schedules, etc.)
 - Set high expectations of staff, families, and students

- Budget sufficient funds and time to participate in required grant activities
- Address issues of teacher stability and training
- Exercise leveraging of Title I, IDEA, and other funding sources
- Evaluate the impact of these funds on student achievement and participate in the external evaluation of the initiative

LEA /Administrative Unit Commitments:

- Hire or designate an Implementation Coach that meets the minimum competencies
- Ensure both district and building leadership possess the qualifications and have committed the time necessary to accomplish grant activities to lead to student achievement gains
- Allow flexibility for school to adjust for mid-course corrections if data does not indicate progress toward increasing achievement
- Support school in using data to monitor student progress to inform instructional practice to accelerate performance
- Conduct monthly instructional rounds at school site (LEA /school/implementation coach, if applicable)
- Foster principal's leadership in the school and support leadership growth opportunities
- Ensure that funds are being leveraged with other local, state, and federal funds (e.g., Titles I, II, III, V, and IDEA) and that accountability for cost-effective management is provided
- Work with and provide requested data to CDE for the Connect for Success funding opportunity within the periods specified
- Will not discriminate against anyone regarding race, gender, national origin, color, disability, or age;
- Use funds to supplement and not supplant any moneys currently being used to provide services and grant dollars will be administered by the appropriate fiscal agent
- Maintain appropriate fiscal and program records on funded projects and conduct fiscal audits of this program as a part of regular audits
- Maintain sole responsibility for the project even though subcontractors may be used to perform certain services
- Misuse of these funds will result in the revocation of funds

Where can I learn more?

- Connect for Success: www.cde.state.co.us/fedprograms/ti/sitig#cfsg