Colorado ESSA Summit

Colorado's second statewide ESSA Summit took place on January 17, 2017 and brought together almost 200 educators from 39 school districts. The purpose of the ESSA Summit was to provide a meaningful opportunity to gather feedback from teachers, wellness specialists, school leaders, district leaders, and school board members to inform the development of Colorado's ESSA state plan. Districts were encouraged to bring a team comprised of these various roles. The event was hosted by six organizations: CASB, CASE, CEA, CBA, CEI, and PEBC.

ESSA Summit Event Structure and Data Collection

The event was designed to both capture feedback from the field, and to expeditiously develop an accessible summary of the feedback for key decision makers.

Following an overview of ESSA, participants attended breakout sessions focused on the following topics:

- Accountability: 'N' Size and Other Indicator
- Accountability: School Identification and Student Participation
- Assessment
- Effective Instruction and Leadership
- School Improvement

In each break-out session, stakeholders involved in the ESSA plan development process presented a brief summary of key decisions points. After discussing the decision points in small groups, each group captured feedback through an online survey platform. The online survey was designed to capture nuances from the small group discussions by providing an open text box after each question to document different perspectives that emerged regarding the decision points. After the event, the link to the online survey was emailed to attendees so they could provide additional comments or make the survey available to others who could not attend the summit.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Members of the Research and Impact team at CEI used the feedback submitted through the survey to create five separate summaries that synthesize quantitative and qualitative data on the key topic areas captured in the online survey. The visuals presented in the summaries represent the small group responses. The rates are calculated using the following method:

$$\frac{\text{number of small groups that selected each response option}}{\text{total number of small group survey submissions specific to the topic area}}$$

Most survey items allowed respondents to select all options, which is why rates do not total 100%. Individual responses submitted after the event were the same or similar to group responses and are reflected in the qualitative data.

Contact Information

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Overview and Participation

The information in the School Improvement section of the Colorado ESSA Feedback Summary reflect perspectives on the key decision points regarding the process, timeline, and supports for schools identified as either Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) or Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI).

Twenty-six surveys about the School Improvement decision points were submitted by small groups during the break-out sessions. A few additional individuals took the opportunity to share feedback about the School Improvement decision points although they did not attend the event. The summary provided after each question includes overarching themes and direct quotes that reflect the spectrum of responses provided by small groups and individual respondents.

School Improvement Feedback

1. **What would be key elements and supports needed to be put in place during a planning period for CSI and TSI schools?**

Strategies and resources that build data literacy and facilitate data use were the most frequently mentioned supports needed by small groups. Specifically, respondents requested tools that help with root-cause analyses, templates and protocols for data analysis, and access to data that focus on the whole child (specifics listed below). Additional requested resources and supports included:

- Strategies for stakeholder engagement (teachers, parents, community, board) in planning and decision-making, and subsequently, communicating challenges, strategies, progress, and success.
- Models of success from "sister" schools.
- Outside auditor/facilitator for a diagnostic review of challenges.
- Monetary support for non-Title schools.
- Data sources beyond achievement data (Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (HKCS), Colorado Healthy Schools Smart Source, climate surveys, parent perception surveys, attendance, grad rates, etc.).
- Awareness of available state resources for school and district support.
- Training on systems change.

2. **In your experience, what is the most useful planning tool to guide school improvement strategies?**

Survey respondents identified specific tools, but also provided additional information, including data sources, strategies, and structures, that have helped them to advance school improvement strategies.

Tools and Data:
- StratOp (or other private sector models for strategic planning)
- 90 Day Plan
- 360 survey
- TEAMS/HATS by American Academy of Pediatrics
- UIP
- Schoolwise Rubric
- Leading the Learning Resources/PD for School Leaders
- MAPs
- Outcome mapping

- Whole child indicators (health and wellness)
- Summative, interim, and formative assessment data
- One-page document focused on instruction

Strategies and Structures
- Community, board, and stakeholder engagement
- Data teams/PLCs
- Root-cause analysis with broad array of stakeholders
- Peer observations
- Regular school walkthroughs

3. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of the UIP as a planning tool for school improvement?**

Respondents identified both advantages of using the UIP and ways to improve the tool and process.

Strengths
- Process is familiar, collaborative, and results in shared ownership.
- Template helps organize data, determine root cause, and create action plan.
- Conversations and processes are reflective and data-driven.
- Teachers pay closer attention to data if they're included in creating the UIP.
- Data-driven, uses best practices for improvement planning.
- Focused on instruction.
- Can provided alignment between schools and districts.

Weaknesses
- Stakeholder engagement is difficult, especially with parents.
- Feels punitive for priority improvement and turnaround schools and compliance driven for performance schools.
- Annual is too frequent – should create a 2-3-year plan instead.
- No tracking tool to monitor progress.
- Starts with a focus on achievement, but root cause may be something else (teacher quality, health and wellness, etc.).
- Doesn't address total wellness of students and community needs.
- Potential for lack of buy-in from various stakeholders, often dependent on a leader to use the tool effectively.
- Too long – a two-page document would be more useful because it would be more focused.
- Format (online, different sections, etc.); can be cumbersome to complete.

4. Should Colorado provide a pre-approved list of identified evidence-based interventions, strategies, and partners?

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88%
(Other or Additional Feedback (please specify))

46%
(Yes)

23%
(No)
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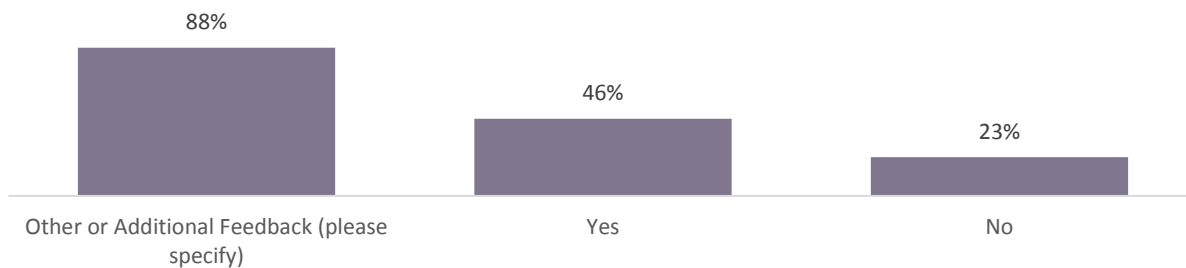
The majority of submitted surveys suggested that a list or menu of identified, evidence-based interventions, strategies, and partners should exist, but that it should not limit the ability of schools or districts to choose alternatives. Respondents provided additional feedback to contextualize their preference to have a list.

- Be clear about the criteria used to create the list.
- List should be evidence-based interventions (not a list of vendors/partners).
- CDE could use list as a networking tool for schools/districts that are using similar strategies/vendors.
- READ Act approved resources isn't comprehensive enough.
- More important to have a good process to determine root cause than it is to have a list.

5. In reserving 7% of the state Title I allocation to support identified schools, should the funds be distributed to LEAs through a formula, competitive process, or blend of the two (hybrid)?

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69%
(Other or Additional Feedback (please specify))

38%
(Hybrid)

31%
(Formula only)

0%
(Competitive only)
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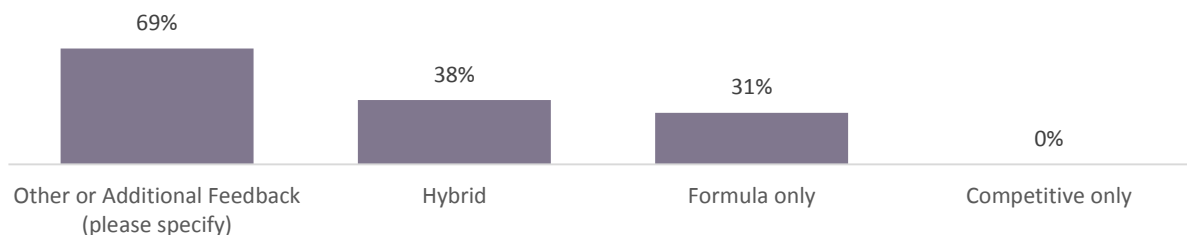
None of the submitted surveys preferred a competitive process and many respondents expressed serious concerns about the process including the reflections highlighted below.

Competitive Process
- No school or district should have to compete for funds they need.
- Districts/schools may not have effective grant writers.
- Big districts will win; small districts will lose out.
- Perhaps every school should receive something, but there could be some funds set-aside for competitive grants that schools can use to try something new.

Formula Process
- Amount a school receives should reflect the needs of the school/district.
- Dollars should be tied to the effective UIP plan approval – show how you'll use the dollars to implement an improvement strategy.
- Concern that funding levels will be very low if we use a formula.

6. **In reserving 7% of the state Title I allocation to support identified schools, should CDE retain an additional 3% for direct services for CSI schools?**

38%	23%	15%
No	Other or Additional Feedback (please specify)	Yes
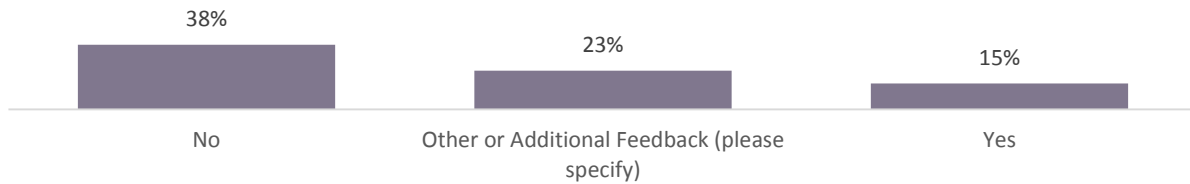
Most of the submitted surveys indicated a preference for funds to go directly to districts rather than be retained by the state. The justification for the preference was that Title dollars are expected to be lower than past years and because 10% seems like a large portion for the state to retain. Some respondents had questions about the source and use of funds.