





INVESTMENT IN SCHOOLS

School Improvement Plan Template

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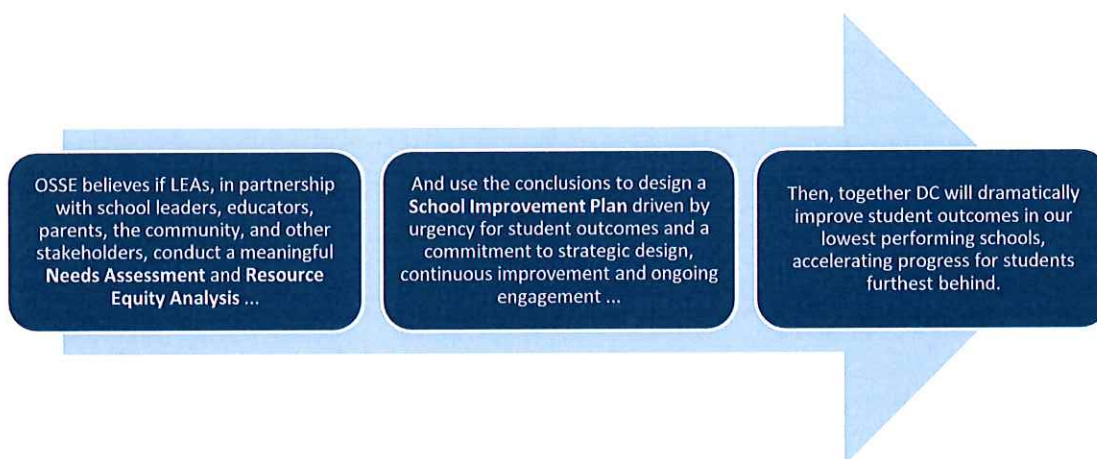
 GOVERNMENT OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

School Improvement Plan Template

To be completed for each Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Comprehensive Support and Improvement: Low Graduation Rate (CSI-Grad) School designated in the 2022-23 school year. The template may also be used to develop school improvement plans for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools. Local education agencies (LEAs) with TSI and ATSI schools have the discretion to either use the OSSE's provided template or a plan format of their choosing.

Background

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) understands that school turnaround and improvement plans must be designed with consideration of each school's unique context. The process of completing a needs assessment, including an analysis of the equitable distribution of resources, the development of goals aligned to identified needs and the creation of a plan to address those needs provides an opportunity for designated schools to work with stakeholders toward a vision to ensure all students have an opportunity to succeed.



Local education agencies (LEAs) with Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools are eligible for *Investment in Schools* (1003) grant funding. The *Investment in Schools* grant provides an opportunity for each of the District of Columbia's lowest performing schools to work with their communities to urgently improve educational outcomes for students. Every CSI school must conduct a needs assessment and develop a school improvement plan. LEAs with at least one school designated for comprehensive support and more than one school overall in the LEA must also complete a Resource Equity Analysis. (Note: Single-site LEAs do not have to perform the Resource Equity Analysis).

LEAs with schools designated in the 2020-23 school year as Comprehensive Support and Improvement: Low Graduation Rate (CSI-Grad) are not eligible for grant funding but are required to complete a needs assessment, school improvement plan and resource equity analysis (if applicable).

LEAs with Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools may use this template to assist their schools in developing a school improvement plan,

but use of this template is not required by OSSE. LEAs with schools designated as TSI and/or ATSI are required to share with OSSE their school improvement plan(s) regardless of the template chosen.

School Improvement Plan Template Overview

Framework

To provide guidance and flexibility, OSSE is naming three critical categories - **People, Instruction and Structures** - that school improvement plans (SIPs) will address. SIPs will explain how evidence-based strategies and interventions (*see more detail below*) in each of these areas will be put in place to make the changes needed for each school's individual context. Each SIP must start by describing overall vision and goals for the school; explaining specific strategies related to people, instruction and structures; incorporating how the school will determine whether the plan is generating its intended outcomes; and describing a process for continuous stakeholder involvement, which will include public engagement and reporting.

Scope

For newly designated schools in 2022, the SIP will span the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. The schools designated in 2018 developed a three-year plan. Given that 2022 designations do not include growth data, a central part of the DC Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan, schools will be identified again in 2024 with full accountability system metrics, after only two years. For schools designated in 2022, the data from the 2021-22 school year should be used for the baseline, and the targets and metrics related to the plan goals should be set at the end of the 2022-23 school year and the 2023-24 school year.

Transparency

SIPs should be available to the LEA, parents and the public, and the information contained in the plan must be in an understandable and uniform format, and to the extent practicable and/or required by DC law, provided in a language that the parents can understand.¹ Documents submitted to OSSE may be made available to the public via request and/or the OSSE website.

Evidence-based Interventions

In each category of the School Improvement Plan Template, schools must identify evidence-based interventions in the strategy for achieving its vision. Evidence-based interventions are practices, activities or interventions that have **evidence** to show that they are effective at producing results and improving outcomes when implemented. The kind of evidence described in ESSA has generally been produced through formal studies and research. Under ESSA, there are four tiers, or levels, of evidence:

¹ See <https://ohr.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ohr/publication/attachments/FINAL%20REGULATIONS%20-%20October%202014.pdf>.

Tier 1 – Strong Evidence

Supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented randomized control experimental studies.

Tier 2 – Moderate Evidence

Supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental studies.

Tier 3 – Promising Evidence

Supported by one or more well-designed and well-implemented correlational studies (with statistical controls for selection bias).

Tier 4 – Demonstrates a Rationale

Practices that have a well-defined logic model or theory of action, are supported by research and have some effort underway by a state education agency (SEA), LEA, or outside research organization to determine their effectiveness.

CSI plan strategies are required to have demonstrated strong, moderate, or promising evidence (Tiers 1–3) to support them. All other programs under Titles I–IV may use Tiers 1–4.

Schools Implementing a Schoolwide Program

To reduce burden and avoid duplicative efforts, schools implementing a schoolwide program model under Title I, Part A may use this template to meet the requirement to develop and implement a schoolwide program plan. The schoolwide plan must include a description of how the strategies the school will be implementing will provide opportunities and address the learning needs of all students in the school, particularly the needs of the lowest-achieving students. (ESEA section 1114(b)(7)(A)(i), (iii)) The plan must also contain descriptions of how the methods and instructional strategies that the school intends to use will strengthen the academic program in the school, increase the amount and quality of learning time, and help provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum, including programs and activities necessary to provide a well-rounded education. (ESEA section 1114(b)(7)(A)(ii))

Submission Instructions

CSI Schools

LEAs with newly designated or re-designated CSI schools must upload a completed School Improvement Plan Template for each school into the School Improvement folder in [Box.com](#) by May 31, 2023. After the plan is approved by OSSE, the LEA must upload the approved plan for each school into the Enterprise Grants Management System (EGMS) with their application by May 31, 2023.

CSI-Grad Schools

LEAs with CSI-Grad schools must upload a completed School Improvement Plan Template for each school into the School Improvement folder in [Box.com](#) by May 31, 2023.

TSI and ATSI Schools

LEAs with TSI and/or ATSI schools must upload a copy of their approved school improvement plan (in any format) into the School Improvement folder in [Box.com](#) by May 31, 2023. The plan must have been approved by the LEA prior to sharing with OSSE.

LEA Name: DC Public Schools **School Name:** Sousa MS

Date of Plan Implementation: SY 22-23, SY 23-24

Date of Plan Update: 08/22/23

School Plan Template

Overall Vision & Goals

In a narrative, explain the coherent aligned vision for your school, how you determined it and how you will know if you are moving toward that vision.

The narrative must include:

1. How this vision was informed by the process of completing a needs assessment including review of the resource equity analysis, if applicable.
2. How stakeholders were involved in determining this overall approach. Stakeholders should include at minimum, the LEA; principals; other school leaders, including Title I administrator, teachers and paraprofessionals; parents and members of the community; and as appropriate, specialized instructional support personnel, technical assistance providers, school staff, other individuals determined by the school and students.
3. If applicable, a description of how the SIP is coordinated with the school's Title I-A schoolwide program and the program's plans for other federal funds or local funds.

You will provide additional detail in the sections that follow on how this overall vision is connected to your approaches to People, Instruction and Structures. We expect that many strategies will be cross-cutting and not isolated to one of these categories to achieve the improvement goals.

School Level Vision and Goals

Vision:

At Sousa, our vision for school improvement is to plan and integrate a holistic and targeted approach to delivering instruction and analyzing data to support students' social, emotional, and academic development and success. These items will be addressed in the following buckets:

Academics

A key priority is that we want teachers to be confident with their content areas and their roles as co-teachers, and feel empowered to support all students by:

- Personalizing learning for small groups and individual students
- Teaching pre-requisite skills as needed to address unfinished learning during intervention blocks

- Utilizing technology programs strategically
- Providing opportunities to accelerate learning through a holistic and targeted approach that will address students' social, emotional, and academic development and success.

PARCC proficiency goals address needs 1 and 3 identified in the Needs Assessment. By creating a more collaborative environment between staff members, teachers across content and grade-level teams will be able to share best practices and conduct peer observations to observe effective instructional strategies. Furthermore, by analyzing student data properly to inform instruction (Need 3) teachers will be able to better differentiate lessons to address student gaps and respond to student misconceptions in a timely manner. By working together and using student data, teachers can create a learning environment where great teaching meets personalized student help, leading to better academic results.

While re-enrollment has been trending positively, Sousa wants to continue this growth. Re-enrollment is a critical goal to meet so that we build relationships with our students and families, which we can leverage to support healthy attendance habits. Growth in re-enrollment also promotes continuity in instruction. This helps us to know our students and their academic needs, and in turn, we can develop long-range intervention and acceleration plans that can be executed over the course of multiple school years. Ensuring stability in student enrollment will also ensure that the school-based budget is maintained so that staffing remains consistent over the course of the improvement plan. This will ensure that students have access to stable academic and social-emotional instruction with teachers and staff whom they have built relationships with.

To get to this point, we plan to offer the following:

Professional Development

- Teachers and coaches will participate in year-long professional development on Key pedagogical skills, led by EdConnective and Dramatic Solutions.

Planning and Teaching/Co-teaching Models:

- During co-planning sessions, teachers will identify the instructional routine and script out probing questions to advance student thinking during synthesis discussions.
- Implementation of schoolwide writing curriculum and explicit instructional strategies through LEAP and coaching cycles.
- Teachers will implement a department wide writing strategy to support students with presenting written arguments and justifications for Type II and Type III style questions.
- Students in need of Tier 2 intervention support will be provided the opportunity to complete at least three Zearn on-grade level lessons per week aligned to their grade level content or its immediate prerequisites.

Differentiation

- Differentiated coaching touchpoints for novice and experienced ELA, Special Education and EL teachers.

Data collection

- Teachers will embed daily exit tickets to assess mastery and a variety of CFUs throughout the lesson to monitor student understanding during the class period. Utilization of data informed instructional strategies and consistent reading acceleration to support student reading growth.

Data Analysis and Feedback

- Teachers will provide feedback to scholars on key unit tasks that students will revise to demonstrate growth and mastery.

Social-Emotional Learning

- We focus on providing enrichment and interest-based learning opportunities for all and that challenge scholars to create positive, social change. This translates through building strong relationships and equipping students with the skill set to self-regulate in conflict and adversity. We recognize that some of our scholars come with factors that may impede the learning environment, therefore we want to be sure they have a joyful, supportive environment which will allow them to thrive.

Needs Assessment Process

Sousa's school team participated in a thorough needs assessment process that utilized multiple sources of qualitative and quantitative data to identify key trends as they relate to people, instruction, and structures. The DCPS Data Systems and Strategy team compiled data across numerous indicators over three years and shared with the school leaders. An external partner, the American Institutes for Research (AIR), conducted a Principal interview using a structured protocol and administered an instructional staff survey to learn more about the school's strengths and areas for growth. A total of 23 staff of 37 staff surveyed completed the survey. A student focus group was held using a structured protocol and data was compiled into key themes. A parent engagement event was held to share information regarding the CSI-LP designation and to provide parents and the external community an opportunity to share their input regarding school improvement strategies. The DCPS Continuous Improvement team organized and ensured that all components of the Needs Assessment process occurred to satisfy the requirements for internal and external engagement.

The school team worked with trained facilitators from AIR to examine all of the data collected and prioritize the school's top three areas of need. AIR led the Sousa team in a collaborative data review process to reach consensus on those needs and then facilitated a root cause analysis to identify the underlying causes of each of the school's prioritized needs. Through this structured, facilitated process the Sousa team identified the following top three needs:

- Weak culture of trust among instructional staff hinders the creation of a collaborative environment to improve instruction for students.
- Staff do not have a clear understanding of an effective system to support students identified as chronically absent.
- Teachers are not analyzing data properly to inform instruction.

The following week, after completing the needs assessment, the Sousa team worked with the same AIR facilitators to develop this school improvement plan, which articulates Sousa's vision and goals, the school's theories of action about people, instruction, and structures, and specific strategies for achieving Sousa's goals and addressing the school's top needs.

Resource Equity Analysis

DCPS utilizes an equity-based school funding model that ensures schools are provided financial resources based on greater student academic and social-emotional learning needs. This model holds schools harmless for declines in enrollment and ensures that schools will at least receive a baseline level of funding each school year. Based on the results of a Resource Equity Analysis, Sousa MS's per-pupil expenditures exceed both the mean and median for other DCPS schools. Overall, schools with lower per-pupil expenditures demonstrated higher Summative Index scores, lower rates of Chronic Absenteeism, and higher rates of in-seat attendance. Therefore, it is unlikely that Sousa MS's performance challenges are related to funding deficiencies. Funding from the Investment in Schools grant will supplement existing high-rates of per-pupil funding at Sousa MS and the School Improvement Plan strategies will address the root causes of Sousa MS's top three priorities identified by the school team.

Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout March-May 2023, various internal and external stakeholders engaged in the Needs Assessment process. Representatives from the LEA (the Instructional Superintendent, central office Math, ELA, Attendance, MTSS, Restorative Justice, Special Education, Continuous Improvement, and Data and Strategy content leads) and school team members (the Administration, Connected Schools Manager, Instructional Coaches, Assistant Principal) analyzed SY 22-23 data during a mid-year review. Additionally, the DCPS Continuous Improvement Specialist, the DCPS Data and Strategy Specialist, and the Instructional Superintendent engaged with the school team (Administration, Instructional Coaches, Connected Schools Manager, and Dean/Restorative Justice Coordinator) and the AIR facilitator during the Needs Assessment and School Improvement Planning sessions. Teachers, paraprofessionals, and other staff members engaged in the AIR Staff Survey and the INSIGHT survey. Students were provided opportunities to engage via the aforementioned student focus groups and the Panorama survey. Parents, partners, and other external community members were provided opportunities to engage in the Fall Panorama Survey, May Community Meeting, and Community Mapping conducted by the Connected Schools Manager.

Coordination with Title I-A schoolwide program (if applicable)

Strategies outlined below will be integrated into Sousa's annual Comprehensive School Plan, the planning mechanism DCPS requires of all Title 1 schools to satisfy the annual schoolwide planning and evaluation requirements under Title 1.

State the Goals

Identify specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (S.M.A.R.T.) goals of the SIP to achieve the vision described above. SIP goals must focus on student outcomes, not on adult actions. These should include annual targets tied to specific accountability framework metrics as well as other leading indicators (inputs and/or outputs).

In the table below, list your school's goals and the metrics:

| Goal 1: Increase PARCC 4+ achievement in ELA from the 21-22 baseline of 10% to 28% by the end of Year 2 (annual increase of at least 9%) | | | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Measure: | Indicator(s) | Data Source | Baseline SY21-22 | Target SY22-23 | Target SY23-24 |
| PARCC ELA Meet or Exceeds Expectations | Percentage of Students attaining Level 4+ | PARCC ELA | 10% | 19% | 28% |
| Goal 2: Increase PARCC 4+ achievement in Math from the 21-22 baseline of 1% to 15% by the end of Year 2 (annual increase of at least 7%) | | | | | |
| Measure: | Indicator(s) | Data Source | Baseline SY21-22 | Target SY22-23 | Target SY23-24 |
| PARCC Math Meet or Exceeds Expectations | Percentage of Students attaining Level 4+ | PARCC Math | 1% | 8% | 15% |
| Goal 3: Decrease Chronic Absenteeism from the 21-22 baseline of 56% to 34% by the end of Year 2 (annual decrease of at least 11%). | | | | | |
| Measure: | Indicator(s) | Data Source | Baseline SY21-22 | Target SY22-23 | Target SY23-24 |
| Chronic Absenteeism | Annual Chronic Absenteeism Rate | DDAC Aspen OSSE Data Validation | 56% | 45% | 34% |
| Goal 4: Increase re-enrollment from the 21-22 baseline of 69.63% to 79% by the end of Year 2 (annual increase of at least 5%). | | | | | |
| Measure: | Indicator(s) | Data Source | Baseline SY21-22 | Target SY22-23 | Target SY23-24 |
| Re-enrollment | Annual Re-enrollment rate | DDAC Aspen OSSE Data Validation | 69.6% | 74% | 79% |

Critical Categories

Note: OSSE funding and resources are designed to focus on the most effective interventions, thus the School Improvement Plan Template focuses on strategies and supports related to People, Instruction and Structures.

People

When schools are producing student outcomes that indicate low performance, adults in the building also need supports and interventions to institute change. Through attention to this area, schools will identify the strategies to raise the performance of educators that will be used to address gaps and meet the plan's goals.

In a narrative, explain: What is the school's theory of action around people? What changes do you plan for your approach to talent building – for leadership and educators – to achieve the vision outlined above, and how are they informed by your analysis of qualitative and quantitative evidence in your Needs Assessment and Resource Equity Analysis, if applicable?

The narrative must include how your school is:

- Planning to ensure it will have effective leadership over the next two years, including the principal and any other key leadership roles and how it is building a pipeline of strong leadership
- Ensuring retention of effective educators
- Developing and helping educators who need support to improve
- Selecting strong, moderate, or promising evidence-based strategies for educators
- Determining strategies based on the conclusions of the needs assessment and resource equity analysis (If applicable)

The narrative may include how your school is:

- Identifying and creating key positions to support school improvement and academic achievement

Theory of Action

Sousa's leadership team values personal and professional development and transformation for all members as central to our learning and leading community. Through transformative leadership, we are leaders who make leaders. As agents of social change, we ensure our leadership inspires teacher leaders and in turn helps more students become leaders.

If we:

- build a culture of trust to explore new ways of doing things,
- encourage a safe space to discuss possible changes,
- build relationships intentionally,
- build capacity for our staff,
- collaborate towards common goals,
- build trust by cross-departmental work,

- take risks to support each person’s development,
- break down barriers and mindsets,
- find a safe space for teachers to develop their own learning with their colleagues to plan for powerful instruction, and

Then, we will create a school that values consistency and provides support, both personally and professionally and allows staff to experience vulnerability without judgement, which supports staff in being able to show up in authentic ways.

Key Needs (from Needs Assessment Process)

Through Sousa’s comprehensive needs assessment process, a key need emerged around establishing a culture of trust among instructional leaders and staff in order to create a collaborative environment to improve instruction for students. Root causes behind this need included leadership capacity challenges and limited professional development opportunities for school leaders and instructional coaches. Sousa’s theory of action for developing people therefore emphasizes the development of transformational leaders who can effectively foster a climate of trust and collaboration. Once a climate of trust has been built teachers and staff can work together to provide effective instruction for students. By promoting more effective instruction for students, Sousa’s capacity-building efforts address the school’s goals around academic achievement (goals 1 and 2), attendance (goal 3), and re-enrollment (goal 4).

Strategies to Develop People

To ensure **effective leadership** over the next two years, the principal, assistant principal, TIs, and school leaders will develop a clear blueprint for training leaders on high quality instruction, feedback conversations, how to effectively use data, how to dig deep on curricular and cross-curricular instruction, and how to develop pedagogies that work across subject areas. School leaders will enhance their capacity to provide instructional leadership around the school’s planned evidence-based practices, such as the use of project-based learning, a promising evidence-based approach which has been shown to be effective in boosting student academic achievement in at least two randomized control trials. The principal will play a key role in modeling practices for other instructional leaders in the school, who will in turn model effective practices for teachers. To support this, school leaders will be provided with executive coaching and professional development to build their capacity as leaders and will also engage in a summer intensive around curriculum planning. Furthermore, to ensure school leaders and coaches maintain a common understanding of effective practices for lesson planning and delivery, school leaders who observe and provide feedback to teachers will engage in weekly norming sessions, which will be critical in promoting consistent messages around effective practices to teachers.

The Sousa school team will build a **pipeline of strong leadership** by providing training and support for assistant principals in becoming more effective leaders, providing leadership development that is both technical and adaptive, and establishing a schedule and structure to provide sufficient time to coach and mentor these administrators.

The school team will ensure the **retention of effective educators** by strengthening the school’s teacher mentorship program for teachers in their first three years of teaching. The program will involve consistent coaching and feedback from instructional coaches and will help build a culture of trust between coaches and teachers.

The principal, instructional coaches, and other school leaders will help **educators who need support** to improve by using classroom observations to monitor teachers' use of effective instructional practices and targeting professional learning support based on those observations. School leaders and coaches will provide weekly feedback to teachers outlining teacher actions, student questions, and exemplars to guide improvements to teacher practice. In addition, the school will implement Learning Together to Advance our Practice (LEAP) sessions in which teachers collaborate and receive support on project planning, data analysis, student work analysis, and review Professional Learning Community (PLC) tracker feedback. Teachers will learn to use data to examine curricular and cross-curricular instruction and develop pedagogies that work across subject areas to support identified instructional strategies in ELA and Math. An independent review of the DCPS LEAP model by Learning Forward found that the model aligns to the key tenets of similar evidence-based professional learning practices that incorporate teacher reflective practice and on-going job-embedded professional development, which have been shown to result in positive changes in teaching practice and improvements in student learning outcomes when implemented at the district or state level, thus meeting the Tier 3 ESSA Evidence standard. Additionally, LEAP professional development modules are tied to the DCPS Essential Practices, a set of teacher behaviors actions linked to improved student outcomes. Several studies have suggested that this observation and feedback system grounded in the Essential Practices has been effective in improving student outcomes and teacher performance. Researchers from the University of Virginia have found that the DCPS system generates "meaningful gains in student outcomes, particularly in the most disadvantaged students", thus meeting the Tier 3 ESSA evidence standard.

The consistent coaching and feedback novice teachers will receive from coaches and veteran teachers will help strengthen pedagogical practices for both the novice teacher and coach. This process will not only enhance instructional quality but also foster a stronger dedication from teachers to the school community, consequently fostering higher retention rates among proficient educators. It takes the input and ideas of all staff to continue to build and improve our community. By the end of the year, we hope all staff believe that leadership is truly distributed throughout the community. We want all staff to know there is an opportunity for them to both grow and exercise their leadership and involvement in school decisions, regardless of experience or role. We also want to build on the strengths of our staff to retain them in the building and serve as leaders.

To further support school improvement and academic achievement, the school will continue to utilize the Connected Schools Manager and create a position for a Restorative Justice Coordinator. The Restorative Justice Coordinator contributes to academic achievement by helping to foster a positive and inclusive school culture, equipping students with valuable social and emotional skills, and creating an environment where students feel valued, supported, and motivated to succeed academically. Traditional disciplinary measures like suspensions and expulsions can lead to disengagement from school and hinder academic progress. The Restorative Justice Coordinator will offer alternatives that address behavioral issues while keeping students connected to the learning environment. Furthermore, Restorative Justice practices foster a more inclusive and respectful school environment. When students feel safe, respected, and connected to their peers and teachers, they are more likely to engage in learning, attend school regularly, and participate actively in classroom activities. The Connected Schools Manager, while not a new position, will continue to be responsible for increasing caregiver engagement, and increased partnerships which focus on attendance. A Restorative Justice Coordinator will utilize

trauma-informed strategies with students and support staff in developing capacity in that area, thus supporting the school in their attendance and re-enrollment efforts.

Additionally, the new Sixth Grade Academy will utilize a collaborative leadership model involving assistant principals, principals, and the instructional superintendent. They will work together to share leadership responsibilities and ensure effective management of the academy. Assistant principals will play a crucial role in facilitating weekly teacher team meetings within the academy, providing a platform for collaboration and information sharing among educators. Moreover, assistant principals and teachers will engage in regular one-on-one consultations, fostering personalized support and professional development. To inform their decision-making and instructional practices, academy staff regularly review and utilize data points specific to the academy, enabling them to make data-informed decisions for the benefit of the students.

Connections to Instruction and Structures

By focusing on improving leadership and educator capacity through professional learning, collaboration, and trust-building, the strategies described in this section (People) will be instrumental in preparing leaders and educators to implement the strategies planned and described in the Instruction section. In addition, the improved capacity and more consistent instructional expectations developed among school leaders will ensure that Sousa leaders can effectively monitor and support the fidelity of implementation of those instructional strategies, as described in the Structures section. Ensuring fidelity of implementation of the planned instructional practices is critical to the success of this plan, especially in relation to achieving the school's academic achievement, attendance, and re-enrollment goals.

Instruction

We must ensure that all our students are prepared for success in college and careers. By investing in resources aligned to school needs, building educator capacity and using evidence-based instructional strategies, we believe schools can meet this imperative.

In a narrative, explain: What is the school's theory of action around ensuring that adults are effective instructional leaders and students are receiving and demonstrating evidence of high-quality instruction? What strategies and interventions do you plan to implement and how they are related to your school's identified needs?

The narrative must include how your school is:

- Identifying capacity to ensure instructional approaches can be implemented timely and effectively
- Planning for the instructional approach to be scaled across the school for maximum impact and sustained over time
- Selecting strong, moderate, or promising [evidence-based](#) strategies
- Determining strategies based on conclusions of the needs assessment and resource equity analysis, if applicable

Theory of Action

Sousa's theory of action around instruction is if we:

- Create a culturally responsive environment where students see themselves in the learning,
- Employ strong and effective relationship strategies, which transfer to student achievement,
- Give access to culturally relevant and diverse texts and content
- Allow students to see themselves in the learning, and
- Use data effectively to target needed skills,

Then, we will ensure that students know how to read, are analytical thinkers, can transfer their skills to life skills outside of the school building, and become global citizens as part of a culturally responsive environment that will allow students to become change agents.

Key Needs (from Needs Assessment Process)

Sousa's theory of action around instruction includes one specific component directly aligned to one of the schools top three needs: Teachers are not analyzing data properly to inform instruction. By ensuring teachers use data properly, while simultaneously addressing the other components of the school's theory of action (i.e., culturally responsive teaching and learning), teachers will become more effective in their instruction. Improved instruction specifically supports Sousa's academic achievement goals (Goals 1 and 2).

Strategies to Develop Instruction

The Sousa school team has developed a two-year action plan that has taken key strategies and broken them down into subsequent action steps to be implemented over the next two years. This plan builds upon foundations which have already been established and scales out new strategies over the next two

years. As academic data shifts, the Sousa team will monitor key strategies and adjust actions accordingly in the school's annual Comprehensive School Plan (CSP). The CSP is comprised of four domains: Shared Leadership, Engagement, Culture of Achievement, and Academics. The action steps included in the CSP are more micro and speak to daily, consistent adult actions to achieve the goals within the CSP and the SIP. The CSP is monitored and updated on a quarterly basis and evaluated at the end of each year. The strategies within the SIP also exist in the CSP and the adult actions in the CSP are updated in subsequent years based on school data and feedback gathered throughout the year.

Sousa will continue to use a project-based model (PBL) with the integration of arts in core academic content areas. However, the use of PBL will be used by teachers who have been trained in PBL instructional practices under the past 2018 designation. They will continue to receive training as a cohort. Recent studies suggest project-based learning is an effective strategy for improving academic outcomes, and Sousa will continue to implement this model across all grade levels with at least one teacher at each grade-level. Sousa leaders will provide teachers and leaders with professional development on project-based learning. The training will support teachers in developing CCSS-aligned projects that include rigorous opportunities for students to engage with content.

At Sousa, all teachers are expected to facilitate meaningful discourse, implement engaging and rigorous common core aligned lessons, and incorporate small group instruction for at least 20-25 minutes per class period. Teachers also facilitate blended learning in daily instruction with a focus on writing in all content areas. Blended learning is an educational approach that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning activities, used for interventions. It integrates the advantages of both in-person and virtual learning methods, creating a hybrid learning environment. Teachers will continue using student directed questioning and responses based in literacy and mathematical practices. Finally, the school has prioritized developing student-centered lessons, where students have choice in their learning.

Sousa plans to continue many of the instructional strategies implemented in 2022-23, and school leaders will work to define and communicate identified Math and ELA instructional strategies for all learning environments. Although identified as a CSI school in 2018, Sousa was not able to implement all instructional strategies with consistency and fidelity, thus we have a renewed commitment to the research based instructional strategies identified and believe they are the high levers to improve student achievement. In the aftermath of COVID-19 disruptions, implementing Common Core-aligned lessons and research-based instructional strategies in writing can serve as a roadmap for academic recovery. These approaches provide a structured and evidence-based framework for addressing learning gaps, promoting skill development, and ensuring that students continue to make meaningful progress in their writing abilities.

Sousa was notified of their re-designation in January 2023, which corresponded to Year 1 of the two-year improvement cycle. Year 1 focused on the Needs Assessment process in identifying root causes that led to the continued CSI status. In Year 2, Sousa will focus on implementing strategies highlighted in the school SIP. The principal will receive direct coaching and support from their Instructional Superintendent, and members of their administrative/instructional teams will receive ongoing coaching via DCPS' Cluster Support Team. Both the superintendent and leadership team have had transitions since the last designation in 2018. The Leadership Team will examine the SIP goals and strategies

routinely and determine if adjustments are needed to align to current school needs and leadership vision.

Teachers will continue to use research-based instructional strategies in Writing (annotating text and unpacking prompts using appropriate graphic organizers). They will also continue using rubric grading and focus on providing effective feedback on student assignments. To support writing as a school-wide initiative, teachers will norm on writing with the PARCC rubric to identify level 3 and 4 responses. Students should use vetted resources (CCSS, C3, NGSS, and Specials Competencies) provided during instruction to independently cite, analyze, and synthesize well-articulated responses to high quality prompts.

To support teachers' data use, school leaders will implement LEAP sessions which support project planning, data analysis, student work analysis, and Professional Learning Community (PLC) tracker feedback. School leaders will plan for the approach to be **scaled** across the school for maximum impact by setting up a schedule and structure for instructional walks to ensure identified instructional strategies are implemented with fidelity. School leaders will ensure there is communication and collaboration among all curricular areas to ensure fidelity of implementation across the school, especially following LEAP sessions. School leaders will identify **capacity** to ensure instructional approaches can be implemented timely and effectively by providing training so that all teachers can demonstrate consistent implementation of identified instructional strategies and are able to then progress monitor using data. Sousa will continue leveraging Cluster-based support personnel from Central Office (Continuous Improvement, Math and ELA curriculum leads, and Special Education content specialists, etc.) to provide additional support to teachers. Leaders will develop a PD scope and sequence and will establish internal data trackers for school-based, salient data to inform PDs.

School leaders will plan for the approach to be **sustained** over time by identifying consistent progress monitoring measures to monitor and adjust for use in weekly data meetings. School leaders will also create an outline and scope and sequence for all professional learning and coaching cycles. Sousa will also include High Impact Tutoring in their instructional plan. High Impact Tutoring (HIT) is an evidence-based tutoring approach designed to provide targeted and effective support to students who are struggling academically (ESSA Evidence Tier 3). It is a form of individual or small group tutoring that focuses on specific learning needs and aims to accelerate student progress. HIT emphasizes tailoring the tutoring sessions to meet the specific needs of each student. Trained tutors who have the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively teach and guide students will identify the areas where students require assistance and provide targeted instruction and support accordingly.

In addition to the strategies above, the Sixth Grade Academy will provide a comprehensive education for its students. The academy follows the DCPS curriculum, which serves as the foundation for all instructional design decisions. To foster strong literacy skills, reading instruction will be integrated into all content areas. The academy places a strong emphasis on math education, with teachers receiving intensive ongoing training in Illustrative Math. Socialized learning is promoted, encouraging students to collaborate and learn from one another. To ensure a cohesive learning experience, academy teachers will adhere to term pacing calendars. Furthermore, transparent grading practices are established as the norm, implemented, and taught to students, fostering a clear understanding of their academic progress.

Connections to People and Structures

The strategies described in the People section – in terms of building trust and capacity – will be paramount to supporting teachers in their efforts to implement the Instruction strategies described here. The systems and strategies described in the Structures section will also help support teachers and hold them accountable to the expectations described here. Ensuring that instruction is engaging and meets all student needs is critical to the success of Sousa’s plan, and especially to the academic achievement goals.

Structures

Improving our lowest performing schools requires dramatic change. By investing in bold commitments to empower decision-making, structural configuration and management, we believe schools can accelerate improvement.

In a narrative, explain: What is the school's theory of action around structures and how will it reinforce and facilitate the work you are doing around People and Instruction? What supports and interventions do you plan to implement and how are they related to your school's identified needs?

The narrative must include how your school is:

- Selecting strong, moderate, or promising [evidence-based](#) strategies
- Determining strategies based on themes from the needs assessment and resource equity analysis, if applicable, to meet projected short- and long-term goals

Theory of Action

Sousa's theory of action around structures is, if we:

- Identify an effective structure for learning,
- Ensure all staff know how to operate in that structure with fidelity of implementation and practices, and
- Implement and monitor to see if that structure works effectively in our context,

Then we will have effective student engagement, a culture of trust between students and staff, and a more effective learning environment.

Key Needs (from Needs Assessment Process)

Focusing on building systems and implementing strategies that will engage students aligns well with one of Sousa's top needs: staff do not have a clear understanding of and an effective system to support students identified as chronically absent. By utilizing instructional strategies and approaches specifically designed to engage students, and by building systems for better tracking and supporting students who are not engaged, Sousa can address its chronic absenteeism and reenrollment goals (Goals 3 and 4).

Strategies to Develop Structures

Broadly, Sousa will continue implementing its STEAM Academy with a cohort of teachers, which uses a project-based model of learning that integrates arts in core academic content areas. Staff will participate in weekly data meetings using established, consistent data protocols and practices to ensure data-driven instruction. Our STEAM academy supports our goals by fostering engagement, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration. Its multidisciplinary approach helps students apply knowledge in practical ways and develop skills that are essential for academic proficiency. Because STEAM activities often involve hands-on, experiential learning that captures students' interest and curiosity, engaged students are more likely to actively participate in learning, leading to increased achievement. Our partnership with Word Beats Life will allow us to provide more Arts integrations throughout the school day. Furthermore, when students actively participate in creating projects or solving problems, they are more likely to remember and understand the material over the long term. To support staff in implementing this model, Sousa will plan and implement consistent PD across all grade

levels and content areas. School leaders will use the districtwide LEAP session structure to support PD implementation, with a focus on project planning, data analysis, student work analysis, and PLC tracker feedback. School leaders will use effective monitoring structures including regular walkthroughs and observations to ensure fidelity of implementation and to collect information about additional staff needs.

Sousa will continue using its MTSS team to address student needs and will utilize the district's Panorama platform to support these monitoring efforts. Sousa will incorporate reading and math intervention time into the master schedule for all grade levels.

Sousa will continue with the Connected Schools model, a whole-school evidence-based approach to school improvement. Staff will continue to receive support from a dedicated Connected Schools Manager, who helps to ensure students and families have access to the resources and supports they need. In addition, staff will continue to conduct home visits, an evidence-based strategy with promising evidence (ESSA Tier 3), according to the AIR Evidence Support Center, that the visits improve student attendance.

Sousa will continue to use its Academic Leadership Team (ALT), composed of teacher leaders and school administrators to engage in the development, implementation, and monitoring of this plan and of the school's annual Comprehensive School Plan. This team will also routinely engage in data cycles to maintain a pulse on instruction and engage in shared decision making to better distribute leadership in the school.

EdConnective is an additional coaching resource that will be provided to Sousa. EdConnective is a virtual coaching platform in which teachers are paired with a non-evaluative online instructional coach. As the coaching support is non-evaluative and provided by an EdConnective instructional coach partner, novice and/or ineffective teachers may feel more comfortable expressing their professional growth needs. The online instructional coach can review videos teachers submit and provide feedback to improve practice. Online instructional coaches can also review lesson plans and provide feedback, and work with teachers on their individualized professional growth interests. This model will help to further differentiate coaching and provide the school with additional non-evaluative coaching capacity. As coaching support is differentiated and driven by teacher skill and interest, the support is expected to further increase teacher satisfaction and retention.

The new Sixth Grade Academy is designed to facilitate a smooth transition to middle school and enhance the overall middle school experience. A key focus of the academy is to foster a sense of community among students, staff, and families. To achieve this, sixth graders will be organized into teams and share the same group of teachers. Unlike traditional cohorts that travel together throughout their core classes, academy students will be intentionally mixed each period. This allows them to interact with different peers in different classes, ensuring that all academy students get to know everyone in their learning community. Teachers' schedules will be structured to include common planning time, enabling them to collaborate on lesson planning, grading, and intervention strategies. Additionally, academies have the flexibility to implement customized schedules and student groupings. Academic and engagement interventions will be promptly adjusted based on progress monitoring, ensuring that students receive timely support when needed.

Connections to People and Instruction

The systems and strategies described in this section will help support teachers and hold them accountable to the expectations described in Instruction. These structures will also be used to build the trust, relationships, and leadership capacity described in the People section. Ensuring that Sousa builds, implements, and monitors consistent systems and structures to support is critical to the success of Sousa's plan.

Continuous Improvement

In a narrative, explain the routines for how the school will determine whether the SIP is having its intended outcomes, including self-monitoring and continuous stakeholder engagement.

The narrative must include how your school is:

- Establishing or continuing internal routines
- Establishing or continuing routines with stakeholders
- Making the SIP available to the LEA, parents and the public in a form that is understandable and uniform, to the extent practicable and/or required by DC law, provided in a language that the parents can understand
- Conducting an annual process of reviewing, sharing progress publicly, and as necessary, revising its SIP
- Structuring for sustainability, including how the school will coordinate and integrate the activities outlined in this plan with other federal, state and local services, resources and programs (e.g., other federal grant programs, health and nutrition programs, culture/climate programs, career and technical education programs)

Internal Routines

School leaders will establish intentional observation and walkthrough schedules, with systematic feedback processes. School leaders will also establish routines for data review at all levels and will continue implementing weekly data meetings.

Formative assessment and benchmark data will be examined weekly during the Data and Planning Meetings. Additionally, this data will be reviewed by administration, coaches, and non-academic staff leaders during the Academic Leadership Team at least monthly. The ALT format will also allow the Sousa team to correlate attendance trends against academic performance. Teachers will receive routine feedback on Tier 1 instructional practices from Instructional Coaches during the observation-feedback cycles and use this information to improve instructional practice. Our top three priorities and our progress in implementing strategies to address them will be reviewed in monthly staff meetings. This will ensure that all Sousa staff remain focused on our key priorities, understand their role in the work, and know how the school is progressing.

The school-based ALT will meet at least monthly to review leading indicators and progress monitoring metrics related to the OSSE SIP goals. Additionally, the Principal and/or other Sousa leaders will meet with a member of the DCPS Continuous Improvement team at least bi-monthly to review progress in SIP implementation and to review data as it is available. These touchpoints may be integrated into an existing school ALT meeting so as to provide the maximum amount of school content. Additionally, the ALT will meet with the DCPS Instructional Superintendent and DCPS Cluster Support team at least twice a year to formally review progress towards SIP goals, strategies, and progress monitoring metrics, and recommendations to course adjustment will be made if warranted by the data.

External Routines

Sousa will continue to leverage events conducted in partnership with the Connected Schools model to share information around key school priorities and progress towards goals with parents and community members. Additionally, the Attendance Team will routinely meet with partners to set goals and refine strategies. Sousa will engage in two formal reviews of their annual DCPS Comprehensive School Plan at BOY and MOY (which encapsulates the multi-year SIP Goals and strategies) with the instructional superintendent, the school-based leadership team, and members of the Cluster Support Team, which includes DCPS content managers for Attendance, ELA, Math, Data & Strategy, Continuous Improvement, MTSS, Special Education, and Restorative Justice. Members of this team will review data against goals and targets with the Sousa team and engage in thought partnership around any adjustments to strategies that may be necessary considering data trends. The CSP is also shared with LSAT and requires review and sign-off from an LSAT representative. DCPS central office content leads will also provide one-on-one coaching for school-based instructional coaches and other staff members as warranted by data and needs of individual staff members. Additionally, Sousa will engage in any additional required monitoring activities as required by OSSE or DCPS senior leadership such as the Chancellor, Deputy Chancellors, and Office Chiefs.

Sousa will leverage existing LSAT (local school advisory team) and PTO (parent-teacher organization) meetings to share SIP goals, strategies, and progress at least twice a year. Such touchpoints may include the back-to-school family night and/or community and family events organized by the Connected Schools Manager. The DCPS Continuous Improvement team will support Sousa in developing turnkey materials which can be used in meetings with stakeholders around SIP goals and progress.

Communication and Transparency

The Sousa school team will make the SIP available to the LEA, parents and the public in a form that is understandable and uniform, to the extent practicable and/or required by DC law, provided in a language that the parents can understand by ensuring translation is available for families who require it. School leaders will conduct an annual process of reviewing, sharing progress publicly, and as necessary, revising its SIP. School leaders will continue sharing progress toward plan goals at the beginning, middle, and end of year, making sure to share and celebrate successes.

This two-year School Improvement Plan will be available to the public via the OSSE website. The DCPS Comprehensive School Plan is an annual school improvement plan that encapsulates the OSSE SIP goals, strategies, and evidence-based interventions. The entire version of the DCPS Comprehensive School Plan is made available to all LEA-based stakeholders. Parents may request a copy of the DCPS Comprehensive School Plan and it is released at the discretion of the principal, as some information may need to be redacted to protect student identity. Major content from the DCPS Comprehensive School Plan is elevated and transcribed in parent and community friendly language and made available in the CSP Snapshot. These are made available to all members of the public on the DCPS website, and to any parents or external stakeholders when requested.

The approved two-year SIP will be posted on the DCPS ESSA Website, which is publicly available to stakeholders.

Coordination

The Sousa school team will coordinate and integrate the activities outlined in this plan with other federal, state, and local services, resources, and programs by working with the school's instructional superintendent on a regular basis.

Goals, evidence-based interventions, and other improvement strategies outlined in this plan are also captured within the school-wide Title 1 Plan, which is the DCPS Comprehensive School Plan, which also contains other strategies for LEA program requirements. Investment in Schools funding is utilized to supplement local and federal funding in the school budget, which ensures that strategies in the plan are sustainable over time.

As a multi-campus LEA, DCPS provides Title allotments to schools as part of their school budgets, apart from the Investment in Schools Grant. As the team responsible for monitoring CSI schools, the DCPS School Performance and Continuous Improvement team works in partnership with the DCPS Office of Federal Programs and Grants and the DCPS Office of Resource Strategy to ensure that multiple school funding sources are allotted to schools in an equitable manner and in alignment with CSI school Improvement Plans and the DCPS Title Plans. This funding model allows school leaders to be able to maximize resources across multiple funding streams to ensure resources are used to their fullest extent to fund human capital or programs aligned to school needs and the DCPS Comprehensive School Plan.

Approvals

School Approval

Approver Name: **Brittany Green**

Approver Title: **Principal**

Signature: *Brittany Green*

LEA Approval

Approver Name: **Drewana Bey**

Approver Title: **Deputy Chancellor**

Signature: *Drewana Bey*
Drewana Bey (Sep 20, 2023 13:41 EDT)

OSSE Approval

Approver Name: *Danielle Branson*

Approver Title: *Deputy Superintendent of Academics and Schools*

Signature: *Dalb*