Equitable Access Support Network

State Plans to Ensure Equitable Access to Excellent Educators Implementation Tips Sheet #2

Identifying Metrics to Track Progress

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This tips sheet is the second in a series of briefs designed to help States monitor the implementation of their equity plans. It describes the relationship between goals and metrics in the context of equity plans and outlines a process that State education agency (SEA) staff can use to develop measures of progress, or metrics, for their equity goals. The tips sheet expands on Tips Sheet #1: Setting Equity Goals, which guides States in how to develop a theory of action and set high-quality goals for closing equity gaps.

Key Terms

Below is a list of key terms and definitions used in this brief:

- **Theory of Action:** A theory of action is a group of related "if…, then…" statements that demonstrate a causal relationship between actions and the intended outcomes.
- **SMART goals:** SMART goals make a vision for change concrete and progress towards that vision measureable. A State can translate the outcomes identified in the theory of action or logic model into tangible goals. SMART goals are: **S**pecific and **S**trategic, **M**easurable, **A**ction-oriented, **R**igorous, **R**ealistic, and **R**esults-focused and **T**imed and **T**racked.
- **Metrics:** Metrics (used interchangeably with measures of progress) measure and describe progress toward the achievement of SMART goals.
- **Indicators:** Indicators are types of metrics that are tied to a target. Leading and lagging indicators are two common types of indicators.
- **Data:** Information that refer to, or represent, conditions, ideas, or objects. A data element is the most basic unit of data that can be defined and measured.[1]

Developing Metrics Aligned with a Theory of Action

SMART goals help make vision-level outcomes more concrete and measureable. Well-defined metrics allow a State to quantify progress toward the achievement of SMART goals and provide evidence that a State can use to inform and determine interim adjustments that may be appropriate. Types of metrics used for monitoring SMART goal progress include those that measure implementation, process, quality, or outputs.

- **Implementation metrics** measure progress on carrying out a new initiative or project. For example, the percentage of districts that have been trained on a new evaluation system.
- **Process metrics** measure changes in the efficiency of key processes. For example, the time it takes the SEA to approve an educator's application for certification.
- **Quality metrics** measure changes in the quality or efficacy of processes or outputs. For example, the percentage of educators receiving the highest rating on their evaluation.
- **Output metrics** measure how much was produced or created. For example, the number of educator accounts created in a new educator professional development system.

[1] National Forum on Education Statistics (2007). Forum Curriculum for Improving Education Data: A Resource for Local Education Agencies (NFES 2007-808). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2007/2007808.pdf

The Equitable Access Support Network, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, offers collective and individualized technical assistance (TA) and resources to all 50 States and their districts. The Network will assist in the development and implementation of statewide equity plans and will provide assistance to States as they put in place strategies to ensure equitable access to excellent educators for all students.

To ensure that the metrics a State develops will help it track progress toward its goals, SEA staff can ask:

- Will this set of metrics help us measure progress toward and the achievement of our equity goals?
- Are we willing to take the time to collect, analyze, and act upon these metrics?
- Have our goals and metrics addressed each aspect of our theory of action?

If the State answers 'no' to any of these questions, the identified metric will likely not adequately support the State in tracking the progress toward meeting equity goals.

Lagging vs. Leading Indicators

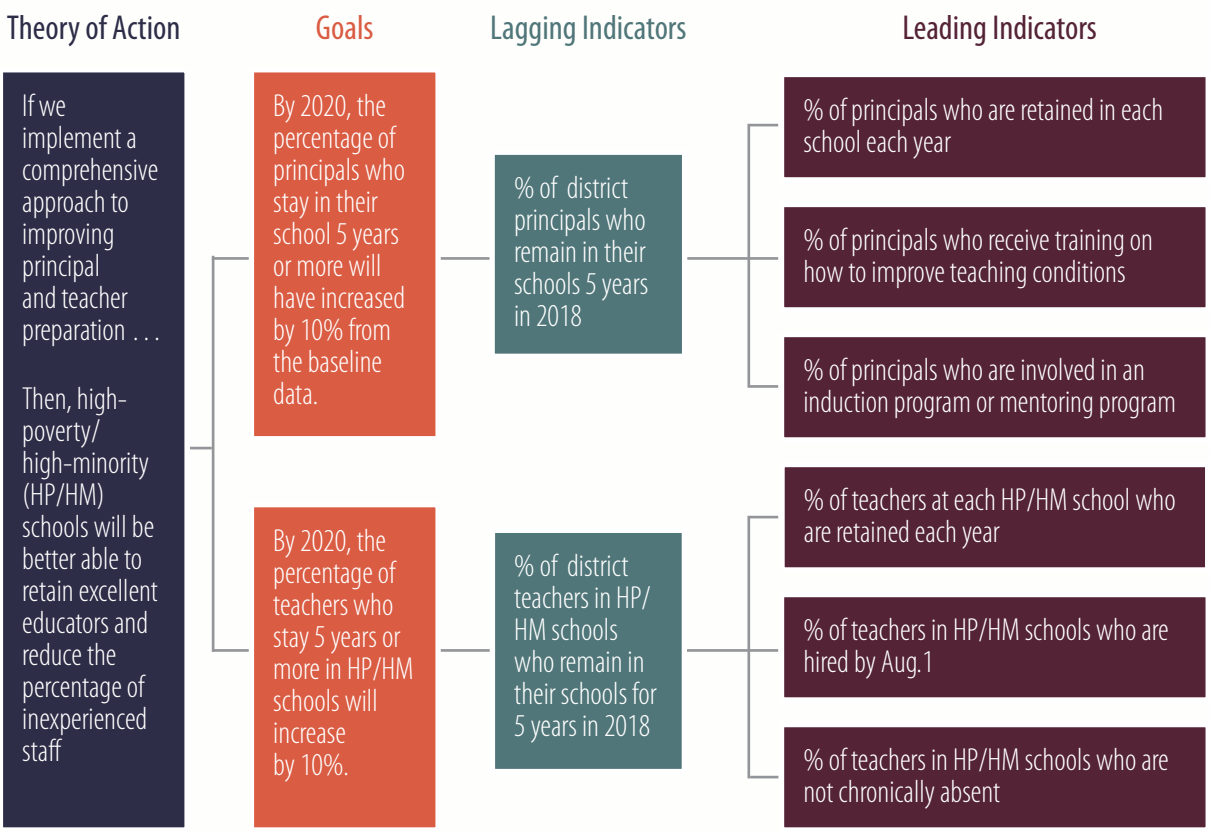
Indicators are a type of metric that measure progress towards or achievement of a target or goal. Both lagging and leading indicators are helpful to track

State Spotlight: Connecticut

When the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) developed its educator equity plan, it created a theory of action that outlined how its strategies would address the equity gaps it found. From there, CSDE developed equity goals aligned to the theory of action and then identified lagging and leading indicators to help it assess progress toward those goals.

The relationship between the State's theory of action, equity goals, and lagging and leading indicators is presented visually in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Connecticut's Goals with Aligned Leading and Lagging Indicators



progress toward goals over time, but they are calculated and used at different points in time and to achieve different outcomes. Lagging and leading indicators can be used together over time to provide a more complete picture of progress towards achieving a target or goal.

Lagging indicators capture outcomes over a longer time period, and they measure what has already happened. Lagging indicators are critical to assessing the achievement of goals but are less helpful in making interim course corrections. For example, if a State's goal is to increase the percentage of students who graduate from high school college-ready, lagging indicators may include summative assessment results, high school graduation rates, and college enrollment and persistence rates.

Leading indicators serve as predictors of future outcomes by measuring interim changes or activities intended to contribute to those outcomes. They are important for gauging shorter-term progress and providing data that can be used to inform course corrections. Data used for calculating leading indicators should be updated regularly (i.e. at least annually). To continue with the example above, for a State aiming to increase the percentage of students who graduate college-ready, leading indicators may include grades and credits earned and benchmark assessment results.

Developing Metrics for My State's Equity Goals: Practice Exercise

In the table below, write one of the SMART goals from your State's plan. Take inventory of the metrics available at the State level: You can use the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders' Example Priority Metrics and/or your own sources. As you review the metrics, identify lagging and leading indicators to measure progress toward the goal. You can use the examples in the first row as guidance.

Sample Equity Goal	Lagging Indicators	Leading Indicators
By 2017, LEAs supported by State Planning Grants will have increased the average representation of Black and Latino educators to 20 percent of their total educator population.	1. Number of Black and Latino educators hired in 2017. 2. Percentage of Black and Latino educators retained in 2016.	1. Number of Black and Latino precollege students interested in education careers. 2. Number of Black and Latino individuals certified to teach.

Where Can My State Find More Information?

The Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL) created a Data Review Tool for SEA staff to identify and analyze their available equitable access data. GTL's Example Priority Metrics worksheet helps States take inventory of their data, assess which metrics are useful to drive decisions on equitable access to excellent educators for all students, and determine what steps are needed to collect meaningful data elements that currently are not available. Also consider reviewing Step 4: Clarifying Leading Indicators in GTL's Implementation Planning Tool as a reference for you as you determine responsible parties for measuring your indicators that are aligned to equity plan goals.

SEA staff who want to explore pre-defined metrics can visit Connect, a clearinghouse for policy questions, indicators, and metrics defined by States, school districts, and other education stakeholders and funded by NCES. States can search Connect to find out what metrics other States are using, and use that information as a starting point or to help guide their own metric development. States can also use Connect to organize and define their metrics. Visit the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) site for more information and to learn about NCES's national CEDS collaborative effort to develop voluntary, common data standards that help to streamline the exchange, comparison, and understanding of data within and across institutions and sectors.

States that would like to develop metrics that are aligned with their equity goals may reach out to the Equitable Access Support Network, comprehensive centers, or program officers in the U.S. Department of Education's Office of State Support for assistance.

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