

Needs Assessments

Use this handout to support a meeting around your local needs assessment, or to help community members begin thinking about information as a tool for action!

What is a Needs Assessment?

- To learn more about what a school needs to better support students, school and district administrators sometimes conduct a “**needs assessment.**” This is a set of in-depth questions about school environments, teachers and staff, extracurricular programs, coursework, and other information. **Needs Assessments are required** for all schools identified for school improvement under ESSA and are a best practice for all schools wanting to improve.

How do Schools Gather Equity Information?

- There are many ways that school and district officials and administrators gather information about students and the personnel, programs, and policies that support them, including **rubrics, open-ended questions and storytelling, surveys, and in-person conversations.**
- Help your school and school community learn more by collecting and **sharing the right information:** information should include both outcomes and inputs so that you know both where there is need and what might be able to fill that need.



Get Involved

As a stakeholder, you can inform a needs assessment by working with your school administrators to add questions, fill it out, help to analyze the results, and/or communicate out what is learned to your community.

Key Terms:

Standards and Curriculum

Academic **standards** describe outcomes for students: *what should students know at the end of 3rd grade?* **Curriculum** is a set of inputs: *what will the teacher and students do together in order for students to learn the standards?*

Indicators

Indicators are pieces of information about students and schools that let us know how they are doing and are used by the school, district, and state to inform decisions. Under ESSA, some indicators are required, including student performance on tests, but can also be non-academic information like school climate.

Data

Indicators are measured through the collection of **data**. Sometimes this data is straightforward, like scores on a test, but often the simplest data is the least useful for understanding not only how students are doing, but what they need in order to do better, like whether kids feel safe in school.

Student Assessment

A key component that connects a curriculum to standards is an **assessment** — a test: have students learned what they needed through the curriculum in order to meet the standards?

Inputs/Outputs

An **input** is something that contributes to the learning and success of a student, like curriculum, effective teachers, and access to healthcare, arts programs, and extracurricular opportunities. **Outputs** are indications of student success, like scores on a test or responses to a school climate survey.

School Climate

School climate refers to environment, including whether students are safe, learning, and respected; teachers are supported; and families are actively involved. It is often measured by survey but can also refer to specific measures like student suspension/expulsion rates and/or teacher absences.

For more Key ESSA Terms, check out the [Glossary](#)

