The Ohio Improvement Process (OIP): What’s Different About It?

The OIP is the heart of Ohio’s Differentiated Accountability Model approved by USDoE:

- Provides districts the opportunity to spend significant time reviewing their data and making informed decisions;
- Requires a District Leadership Team (DLT) team and then Building Leadership Teams to participate in the process of improvement—reviewing data, developing a focused plan based on the data, implementing the plan across the district with great integrity;
- Removes the requirement that districts spend their time in corrective action/restructuring activities that are not related to their problems;
- Requires the major components of the district’s comprehensive continuous improvement plan (CCIP) to be driven by a sound needs assessment and focus on parallel goals and strategies specific toremedying the district’s most pressing problems; and
- Ensures that district/building plans are focused on a limited number of goals clearly identified from the data-driven needs assessment (one additional “operational” goal will be allowed that permits districts to legally expend state and federal funds in some secondary areas of need).

[NOTE: while the needs assessment and the improvement plan are both required under state and federal statute most current district plans are the work of a few individuals working in isolation to “list” what the district has done and explain how the district intends to expend funds, not how it intends to make/sustain improvement]

The OIP is a clearly defined process with sophisticated tools that:

- Are aligned to each other;
- Will be connected to each other in a web-based environment;
- Reduce the potential for error; and
- Allow districts and schools to plan the use of state and federal funds for the purpose of implementing a focused improvement plan.

[NOTE: the state support system -- state support teams (SSTs) and educational service center (ESC) personnel -- are being trained in the OIP process and on the use of tools so they can assist all districts and schools in the state]

The OIP requires the use of the Ohio Decision Framework (DF):

- The DF was created for districts and buildings because many districts have a lot of data but have limited expertise in sorting or analyzing these data. Those districts with good data managers rely on the data person to analyze data, but there is seldom a shared understanding of what the data mean; data managers seldom connect the data they are seeing to behaviors and practices around curriculum, assessment, instructional practice, and professional development (PD).
- The DF is a tool with pre-populated data and “essential questions” that force teams to make more and more focused decisions and get at the root causes of defined problems (almost all student performance data are three-year trend data for all students tested -- by grade level, building, and
major disaggregated student groups. In addition to performance data, discipline, expulsion/suspension, drop-out, graduation rate, and attendance data are pre-populated).

- Essential questions tying the lack of significant student progress to curriculum, local assessments, instructional practice, PD, etc. all help the district get away from the next new solution, program or opinion and replace it with an informed data review and discussion to determine which needs are the most prevalent (districts are also asked to consider what their community, parents, and students think about their district and schools, as well as the degree to which they make intentional decisions related to time, personnel and money).

- The use of the DF analysis results in agreement across the district about what is not working, the issues that need to be addressed, and what they agree to do about them, reducing time wasted on the wrong solutions that may be based on someone’s opinion or preference.

[NOTE: While the DF is provided as a significant resource to assist districts and schools in focusing on critical needs, they are the ones (not ODE) who determine those needs and the strategies for addressing them to make real progress]

The OIP promotes a true state system of support by better targeting resources at the state, regional, and local level meet goals:

- Once the DF is fully implemented in a web-based environment, decisions made by districts and schools can be retrieved and resorted as customized needs assessments on a state, county (ESC for example), or regional (SST) level, allowing ESCs and SSTs to more effectively plan in advance how best to respond to district/school needs.

- The OIP aligns and connects significant pieces of work such as the Ohio Leadership Development Framework, the State Diagnostic Review process in tangible ways to focus on the improvement of instructional practice and student performance.

[NOTE: Districts’ current plans cannot provide meaningful data for helping service providers (e.g., ESCs) understand and respond to the needs of districts/schools]