Conducting a Comprehensive Needs Assessment Process

Purpose

A Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) is the foundation for effective educational planning and continuous improvement. A high-quality CNA helps districts identify strengths, opportunities, and barriers to student success by examining multiple sources of data and engaging a broad range of stakeholders. The process should result in a clear understanding of district and school needs and provide the basis for strategic planning, school improvement, and the effective use of state and federal resources.

This process is designed to support and align local planning requirements across multiple state and federal programs. In some cases, districts contribute local information that informs statewide needs assessments and service planning conducted by ODE, including statewide assessments required for Migrant Education and English Learner Outcomes Program implementation.

Guiding Principles

An effective Comprehensive Needs Assessment should be:

Student-Centered: Focus on the experiences, outcomes, and opportunities of students, particularly those who have been historically underserved.

Inclusive: Actively engage students, families, educators, community organizations, Tribal partners, and other stakeholders whose perspectives help identify barriers and solutions.

Data-Informed: Use multiple data sources to understand both strengths and areas of need rather than relying on a single measure. Data and evidence should be collected and reviewed throughout each step of the process.

Action-Oriented: Move beyond identifying challenges to prioritizing needs and informing improvement strategies.

Continuous: Be revisited regularly to evaluate progress, refine priorities, and inform ongoing planning.

Step 1: Community Engagement

Districts should engage a diverse group of stakeholders throughout the needs assessment process. Engagement should be meaningful and provide opportunities for participants to help identify root causes, priorities, and potential solutions. Districts are encouraged to use the Community Engagement Toolkit to support authentic, culturally responsive, and inclusive engagement practices that elevate the voices of students, families, educators, and community partners.

- Students
- Families and caregivers
- Teachers and instructional staff
- Classified staff
- School and district administrators
- Community partners, including local workforce boards, industry partners, and community advocacy representatives for out-of-school, homeless, or at-risk youth
- Education Service District representatives
- Tribal representatives, when applicable
- Post-secondary partners
- Employers and workforce partners
- Migrant Parent Advisory Councils
- Charter school leaders
- Foster care points of contact
- McKinney-Vento liaisons
- Child welfare agencies
- Juvenile justice partners
- Private school leaders

Districts should ensure representation from student groups identified in ORS 329.095, and Perkins V, including:

- Students from racial and ethnic groups experiencing academic disparities
- American Indian/Alaska Native students
- Students with disabilities
- Students experiencing homelessness
- Students in foster care
- Economically disadvantaged students
- LGBTQ2SIA+ students
- Multilingual students
- Recently arrived students
- Migratory students
- Students involved in the justice system
- Pregnant and parenting students
- Students of parents in armed forces
- Individuals preparing for non-traditional fields

Step 2: Collect and Analyze Data

Districts should review multiple years of quantitative and qualitative data whenever possible. Data should be disaggregated by student groups to identify disparities and opportunities for improvement.

High-Quality Learning Experiences

☐ Analyze student performance and identify opportunities to reduce academic disparities including CTE achievement, participant gaps, and special population performance.

☐ Identify language development and instructional needs of multilingual learners/English learners to inform Title III services.

☐ Identify needs of migratory students to inform Title I-C services.

☐ Conduct school-level needs assessments for Title I Schoolwide, Targeted Assistance, CSI, and TSI schools, including analysis of student achievement, factors affecting student success, collaboration with local service providers, and review of school-level budgets and resource allocation to identify potential inequities.

Aligned & Focused Educational Systems

☐ Assess equitable access to rigorous academic courses.

☐ Assess needs related to providing a well-rounded education.

☐ Assess needs related to the effective use of educational technology (required if the district receives more than $30,000 in Title IV-A funds).

☐ Assess equitable access to rigorous academic opportunities and a well-rounded education.

☐ Review local data related to migratory students and identify educational and support needs. Information gathered may inform statewide Migrant Education Program needs assessments and service planning conducted by ODE.

☐ Identify educational and transition needs of students involved in juvenile justice programs or served in institutional settings to inform Title I-D services.

Safe & Inclusive Schools

☐ Assess student mental and behavioral health needs.

☐ Assess needs related to providing safe and healthy learning environments.

☐ Identify barriers and opportunities related to equitable access, participation, instruction, and outcomes for students with disabilities.

☐ Assess school conditions that support safe, healthy, and inclusive learning environments.

☐ Assess access to personalized learning supported by technology, including educator capacity to effectively use technology and data.

Engaged Partners & Communities

☐ Consider partnerships with:

- Federally Recognized Tribes
- Education Service Districts
- Postsecondary institutions
- Community-based organizations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Other educational partners that improve student outcomes
- Local workforce and industry boards to review regional/local labor market information, program size, scope and quality, progress of CTE program implementation, pathway development and postsecondary alignment

Committed & Supported Staff

☐ Identify staff needs, including sufficient time to:

- Collaborate
- Review student data (grades, attendance, discipline)
- Develop strategies to keep students on track to graduate
- CTE Educator recruitment needs, retention challenges, professional development needs
- career continuum support
- professional learning needs
- licensure gaps
- endorsement gaps
- staffing patterns
- certifications
- qualified educators
- multilingual educators
- special educators

For districts identified under the English Learner Outcomes Program, review evidence related to program design, instructional delivery, curriculum and assessment practices, staff qualifications, culturally responsive instructional practices, professional learning, and family and community engagement to identify factors influencing student outcomes.

Step 3a: Conduct a Self-Assessment of the High-Quality Learning Experiences Priority Outcome

Oregon's Student Success Priorities Framework provides a cohesive structure for aligning local and state efforts to improve outcomes for all students. The framework includes five priority outcomes, each with five essential practices. Districts will begin with assessing the High-Quality Learning Experiences priority outcome this spring. Districts should use evidence from community engagement and data analysis to inform their self-assessment and identify areas for deeper examination.

How will the information be used?
Responses will be aggregated and reviewed to help identify common strengths, emerging needs, and opportunities for support across regions and districts. The information will help ODE, ESDs, and Region Teams design differentiated support, learning opportunities, and improvement projects aligned to district needs.

Will the information be used for accountability purposes?
No. The purpose is not to evaluate or compare districts. The purpose is to better understand where support, resources, and partnerships may help strengthen the systems and practices that contribute to student success.

Step 3b: Conduct an early literacy program review
Districts must conduct an early literacy program review to examine the strength and coherence of their literacy system, including instructional materials, assessment practices, instructional strategies, supports for diverse learners, professional learning, intervention services, implementation fidelity, and continuous improvement processes. The review should identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth to inform district planning and resource allocation.

Step 4: Root Cause Analysis and Identifying / Prioritizing Needs
Root cause analysis helps districts move beyond symptoms to identify the underlying systems, practices, policies, structures, resources, and conditions contributing to challenges. Rather than focusing only on what is happening, root cause analysis seeks to understand why it is happening by examining the factors that influence student experiences and outcomes. A meaningful root cause analysis considers multiple sources of evidence, incorporates stakeholder perspectives, and explores how instructional practices, organizational systems, resource allocation, staffing, professional learning, school climate, and community conditions may contribute to identified needs.

After reviewing data and stakeholder input, districts should identify:

1. Key strengths to build upon.
2. Significant challenges affecting student outcomes.
3. Root causes contributing to those challenges.
4. The highest-priority needs for improvement.

Not every identified need can be addressed simultaneously. Districts should prioritize needs based on:

- Magnitude of impact on students
- Severity of identified disparities
- Urgency of the need
- Alignment with district goals
- Availability of resources and partnerships

Step 5: Connect Needs to Planning and Investments

The completed needs assessment should serve as the foundation for all major district planning efforts.
Districts should use identified priorities to develop Outcome → Strategy → Activity → Funding structures to help streamline planning and budgeting across multiple funding sources. Funding decisions should be directly connected to identified needs and intended student outcomes.

Step 6: Document and Monitor Progress
Districts should maintain documentation of:

- Stakeholder/community engagement activities
- Data review and analysis
- Identified strengths and needs
- Prioritization process
- Improvement strategies selected
- Funding decisions linked to identified needs

Districts should also establish a process for monitoring implementation and evaluating progress throughout the planning cycle.