A PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

BUILDING AN EWS TEAM (CORE COMPONENT #1 OF 5)

REL Regional Educational Laboratories

Learning Series on EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

Early warning systems (EWS) use individual student data to generate indicators of on-track status for graduation, including attendance, behavior, and course performance. States and districts across the nation use these systems to identify off-track students in middle and high school and to design and assess interventions to keep students on track to graduate. Despite the popularity of EWS, research on their implementation is sparse. The **REL Northwest** report *A practitioner's guide to implementing early warning systems* summarizes what is known about EWS implementation and describes how states, districts, and schools can draw on the research. This summary series describes the five core components of implementing an EWS. The first of those five components is described here.

| 1 | Establishing and training a team to use the EWS | 2 | Identifying accurate indicators | 3 | Designing and using reports | 4 | Mapping appropriate interventions to individual student needs | 5 | Evaluating student progress and intervention effectiveness |

Implementing an EWS effectively requires careful attention to team roles and responsibilities. Team structure, composition, leadership, goals, and community support should reflect district and school needs.

Developing the team: Before districts and schools begin to use an EWS, they must establish a dedicated team to identify off-track students, assign interventions, and monitor progress.

Defining goals and objectives: The **S.M.A.R.T.** goal framework can help the EWS team design actionable, realistic objectives and timeframes.

Determining meeting content and structures: School-level team meetings typically focus on individual students but can periodically include discussions of combined indicator and intervention data.

Providing professional development: EWS implementation often includes professional development for teachers, administrators, and other school staff so they can access and interpret the data.

Seeking support from the community: EWS teams can bolster their staff and financial resources by partnering with community organizations.

Common early warning system roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Information technology staff	Inputs data, collaborates on report structures, builds reports, updates data
School team leader	Serves as a liaison for the school with other schools and the district, ensures compliance with overall mission
District-level leader	Disseminates accomplishments and challenges, advocates for policy change at the district level
Program coordinator	Keeps track of the mapping between indicators and interventions available
School counselor	Represents the students, relays what is working on a day-to-day basis
Data coach	Teaches the team how to interpret the data, identifies appropriate professional development
Representatives from different stakeholder groups	Serve as advisors and provide insight into how the system is working for a variety of stakeholders (some systems rotate their members)

S.M.A.R.T. goals

- **S** Is the goal **specific**? What will it do? Who will carry it out?
- **M** Is the goal **measurable**? How will the team know it has been achieved?
- **A** Is the goal **achievable**?
- **R** Is the goal **relevant** to performance expectations?
- **T** Is the goal **time bound**? How often will this task be done? By when will this goal be accomplished?

This summary was created by REL Mid-Atlantic.

The **Learning Series on Early Warning Systems** is a coordinated set of technical assistance activities conducted by the 10 Regional Educational Laboratories.