

Introduction

A System of Great Schools strategy is a district-level problem solving approach that seeks to understand school performance and community demands and use that information to make decisions about expanding what works, replacing what doesn't, and pursuing all possible options to create high-quality, best fit schools.

SGS network districts choose to participate in a **4-year cohort-based program** that provides district leaders with technical assistance, professional learning communities, and support in applying for grants and other financial resources.

We believe:

If districts shift their thinking, remain open to exploring all options, and allow families to choose from high-quality education options... **then** all students will have access to better schools.

SGS District Results

Eighteen districts, enrolling over 500,000 students, have participated in the SGS network since its establishment in 2017. These districts vary from rural to urban and are united by the commitment to ensure **every student has access to a high quality, best fit school.**



The first cohort of SGS districts have increased the number of A/B rated campuses by 47% and reduced the number of D/F campuses by 34% since joining the network.

At the same time, 77% of districts have planned or executed bold school actions designed to dramatically improve access to high quality schools.

We're looking for the next cohort of visionary leaders to join the SGS Network in Spring 2020.

What do SGS Districts Do?

Districts that join the System of Great Schools network are ready to engage in bold and transformational change aligned to the following levers:



Set the right goal of providing all students access to a high-quality school that best fits their educational goals and individual needs.



Conduct an annual portfolio planning process that analyzes school performance, community needs, and parent feedback to inform action plans for all schools.



Take bold action driven by the annual planning process, including at least one school action per year, including creating a new school, restarting a low-performing school, or reassigning students to a higher performing school.



Empower families by helping parents understand their child's options, enroll in their desired program, and overcome logistical barriers to attendance.



Create organizational structures to drive new policies and practices that accelerate the success and sustainability of the System of Great Schools theory of action.

SGS Expectations

The System of Great Schools theory of action is designed to be locally implemented, based on community needs and demand. However, TEA will support the creation of certain aligned deliverables that drive system-wide changes.

Each year: SGS Districts develop a regular cycle of data analysis and

- **Develop an SGS Roadmap** SGS districts each prepare a roadmap that details the goals they seek to accomplish and the monthly steps they will take to achieve those goals.
- **Conduct an annual portfolio planning process** that analyzes both academic outcomes and community need and demand and results specific plans for each campus, depending on the chosen strategy: improvement, redesign, action.
- **Call for Quality Schools document and process** SGS districts commit to conducting an annual Call for Quality Schools to rigorously vet school action plans.
- **Pass relevant Board policies**, including in-district authorizing and other SGS-related regulations.
- **Participate fully in all events**, including Chief Innovation Officer workshops, Superintendent and Cabinet convenings, Board trainings, and the annual SGS Summit.

Year 1:

- **Build Office of Innovation:** SGS Districts commit to launching an Office of Innovation with at least one *cabinet-level position* and clear plan of action to drive this work forward.
- **Build a talent pipeline** of internal leaders and external organizations to execute school actions.
- **Develop a plan to develop Equitable Enrollment Policies and Practices.** SGS districts commit to developing and passing equitable enrollment policies and practices.

Years 2-4:

- **Strengthen the Office of Innovation:** SGS Districts continue to build capacity of central office personnel by attending TEA-sponsored professional learning community activities.
- **Deepen a talent pool** by intentionally seeking internal leaders and external organizations that will meet district needs.
- **Implement equitable enrollment policies and practices.** SGS districts will work to ensure all families have the information and tools to enroll their student(s) in a high-quality, best fit school.
- **Execute at least one school action per year,** including launching a new school, restarting a low performing school, or reassigning students to a higher performing campus.

SGS Network Benefits

The SGS Network is a dynamic professional learning community of like-minded district leaders throughout the state. SGS Network districts are provided with the following:

Technical Assistance: Each SGS district is matched with a TEA-vetted organization with deep expertise to support districts in implementing the System of Great Schools theory of action. Technical assistance providers, known as Executive Advisor Firms, are funded at eight days per month in year 1 and tapering down to two days per month in year 4.

Professional Learning Community: TEA requires District participation in regular workshops and professional development opportunities, including:

Event	Frequency	Estimated time commitment	Total annual time commitment
Chief Innovation Officer workshops	Every other month	1.5 days per session, plus ~4 hours of prework	9 days off-site and 20-24 hours of pre-work total
Superintendent & Cabinet Convenings	Triannual	1 day per session	3 days per year
SGS Network District Visit	Annual	1-2 days per visit	2-4 days per year (w/ travel)
Board Support and Ongoing Coaching	Varied	2-day initial training and monthly coaching sessions	4-5 days of training/ coaching per year
Annual SGS Summit	Annual	2 days, last week in June	2 days, 5-10 hours pre-work

Access to Grants and Resources: While SGS Districts aren't guaranteed state or federal grants, they are strategic about the accessing competitive grants and other funding opportunities to jump start SGS initiatives, including:

1. **School Action Fund:** Open to eligible *comprehensive* and *targeted* campuses, the School Action Fund can be used for planning and implementation of "school actions:" create a new school, restart a struggling school, and reassign students to a higher-performing school.
2. **Texas Partnerships:** SB 1882 provides benefits in order to encourage districts to use Texas Partnerships as an action to improve student outcomes. Approved partnerships may receive additional state funding for the partnership school, and schools with an unacceptable state accountability rating are eligible to receive a two-year exemption from specific accountability interventions.
3. **Charter School Program (CSP) Replication and Start-up Grants:** Eligible Texas Partnerships may apply for CSP grants to support implementation.

SGS Application Process and Timeline

1. **May 8: Applications Released**

- The Division of System Support and Innovation (DSSI) will release two differentiated applications: one for current SGS Districts and other interested districts. Applications and more information can be found on systemofgreatschools.org.

2. **June 8: Application due**

- All districts interested in joining the System of Great Schools Network, including new and existing districts, should apply using the differentiated application by submitting it to SGS@tea.texas.gov.

3. **June 9-12: Phone Interviews**

- DSSI staff will conduct phone interviews with district leaders to add context to the written application.

4. **June 22: Invitation to Join Network**

- SGS Districts will be invited to join the 4-year program via email.

5. **July 15: Districts Matched with EA Firms**

- Upon selection, districts will vet and select an Executive Advisor Firm that will support SGS implementation.

6. **July-August 2020: District Onboarding**

- Executive Advisor Firms and the SGS team will conduct a phone call or site visit with network districts to kick-off the SGS implementation process.

7. **September 2020: Chief Innovation Officer Workshop Session 1**

- All Chief Innovation Officers attend the first of the network's bimonthly CIO Workshops. Save the Dates will be shared in June 2020.