ASSIST™ Technical Guide for Alabama Schools and Districts

Continuous Improvement Planning and Reporting
About This Guide

This guide has been developed specifically for Alabama schools. It provides an overview of the Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools (ASSIST™) and step-by-step instructions for building and submitting Continuous Improvement Plans (ACIPs) in ASSIST.

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ASSIST is designed to guide and streamline the improvement planning process and help eliminate duplication of effort!

Learn more at:
www.advanc-ed.org/ALSDE
ASSIST Overview

Through partnership, AdvancED and the Alabama Department of Education (ALSDE), have customized ASSIST to guide and support a common, statewide improvement planning process for all Alabama schools and districts.

ASSIST now facilitates a more streamlined improvement planning and reporting process. This document provides guidance and step-by-step instructions for how to build and submit school improvement plans in ASSIST. Tasks will be set in ASSIST to guide schools and districts to the appropriate path toward improvement, accountability and compliance.

Navigating ASSIST
The primary navigation of ASSIST takes place using a series of tabs across the top of the screen. Specific tools are provided within each tab. The following diagram provides a basic overview of the ASSIST tabs and what is located within each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Profile</th>
<th>Diagnostics &amp; Surveys</th>
<th>Assurances</th>
<th>Goals &amp; Plans</th>
<th>Actions &amp; Reviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Due dates for required tasks - upcoming, past due and completed</td>
<td>Basic institution, demographic, affiliation, accreditation and accountability status information (e.g., Priority, Focus, Title I)</td>
<td>Tools to facilitate the collection and analysis of data and information to inform the improvement planning process. <strong>School Diagnostics:</strong> • Executive Summary • Self Assessment • Student Performance • Stakeholder Feedback • School Data Analysis</td>
<td>Yes/No Certification Questions – AdvancED and ALSDE state and federal assurances</td>
<td>Build and manage goals and improvement plans</td>
<td>SACS CASI Accreditation - Scheduled External Reviews and Required Actions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Document Components**: Contains task/document submission and review and approval workflow.
- **EXAMPLES:**
  - Continuous Improvement Plan
  - District Improvement Plan
  - Reform Redesign Report

- **Performance section is currently blank**

- **Basic institution, demographic, affiliation, accreditation and accountability status information**
  - (e.g., Priority, Focus, Title I)

- **School Diagnostics:**
  - • Executive Summary
  - • Self Assessment
  - • Student Performance
  - • Stakeholder Feedback
  - • School Data Analysis

- **District Diagnostics:**
  - • Executive Summary
  - • Student Performance
  - • Stakeholder Feedback

- **Surveys:**
  - • Parent
  - • Staff
  - • Middle/High Student (6-12)
  - • Elementary Student (3-5)
  - • Early Elementary Student (K-2)
  - • Transform 2020 for Staff
  - • Transform 2020 for Administrators

- **Tools to facilitate a process of checks and balances to ensure appropriate goals and strategies are in place.**

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New Terminology

During the transition from the Alabama School Improvement Management System to ASSIST some new terminology will be used. Below are a few terms you will see in this guide and hear in the coming months. Some of the terms have an associated image that is used throughout this guide and other training materials to help with the learning process.

**ASSIST (Adaptive System of School Improvement Support Tools)**

A web-based school improvement platform used by schools, districts, and Independent School Districts (ISD) and Educational Service Agencies (ESAs) around the world to facilitate improvement planning and streamline compliance, accountability and accreditation reporting requirements.

**Diagnostics**

Tools designed to help schools and districts self-assess strengths and areas in need of improvement related to organizational effectiveness, performance and stakeholder perceptions in order to support ongoing improvement processes and practice.

*NOTE: Diagnostics always are available for self-activation in ASSIST. You no longer have to wait for them to be activated. (The following diagnostics are referenced in this guide for the purpose of improvement planning: Executive Summary, Improvement Plan Stakeholder Involvement and School Data Analysis)*

**Assurances**

Compliance and/or accountability statements or questions that require a Yes or No certification response. Completion of assurances in ASSIST also will support the upload of documentation as well as narrative comments.

**ASSIST Components**

Requirements assigned to an institution that identify which reports need to be completed by a specified date. The components are requirements that can be defined and assigned by ALSDE or AdvancED/SACS CASI. *NOTE: The head of institution and primary contact listed in the system will receive an email notification when a new ASSIST report has been assigned for their institution.*
To directly access ASSIST, visit www.advanc-ed.org/ALSDE and select Log In or also navigate directly to the login page at www.advanc-ed.org/assist.

Enter your email address and password. **NOTE:** This is the same email address and password you always have used to access the School Improvement Management System.

Select Create New Account if you are a new user.

If you don’t remember your password, select Send New Password link and enter your email address.

From the login screen, select ASSIST.

To access accreditation status information and historical accreditation data and reports, select Accreditation Management System.

To access historical improvement plan and reports, select School Improvement Management System (ALSDE).

**Getting Started**

A Continuous Improvement Plan will be assigned to every Alabama school by August 16, 2013. The ACIP is displayed on the Portfolio Overview page along with the due date of September 15, 2013 (NOTE: Districts may request their schools to submit the ACIP prior to this date). Selecting the document name will display the specific components required for your school’s submission.
Viewing ASSIST Document Details

The Document Details page identifies the components that must be included for the SIP submission. AdvancED and ALSDE have worked together to assign the appropriate ACIP components for each school. If a component is in the Additional section, please refer to your training as to whether those components are required for your individual school.

Review the list of diagnostics that need to be completed by your school, and select the icon within the Components section to create or select a diagnostic.

If no components have been started, select Create New. Any component with the check box marked will be added to your report.

Selecting the name of the diagnostic will take you to the diagnostic page to begin work on the specific component.
When on the page of the diagnostic, select (Edit) to give the component a unique name with a date to differentiate reports from year-to-year. Select Update when complete.

Completing a Diagnostic

All diagnostics in ASSIST have a similar format for ease of use. Regardless of which diagnostic your school is completing, the navigation and page layouts are almost identical.

Blue section headings are provided for each section within the diagnostic. Red progress bars provide a visual of section completedness.

Select the section heading to view and/or respond to the items within each section.
A table provides the required items within each section. Items without a checkmark have not received a response, whereas those with a checkmark have been completed. ASSIST does not check for accuracy of information, so it is important to review all responses prior to completion.

You can return to the Diagnostic Summary to view a different section or overall progress.

Select an item with the Respond link.

Each item in the diagnostic requires a response.

You may be required to select a rubric or Likert Scale response, enter a narrative text response or upload supporting documentation.

Once the item has a response, select Save and Continue.

ASSIST automatically takes you to the next item in the diagnostic.

Spellcheck is not provided in ASSIST, but some browsers (e.g., Firefox and Safari) highlight spelling and punctuation errors.
Complete all questions in the diagnostic and confirm completion by selecting Yes Complete in the pop-up window.

Documentation uploaded as part of a diagnostic response can be viewed using the View Attachments button.

Select Reopen to make additional changes to the diagnostic prior to submission, if necessary.

Important!
The navigation and steps are exactly the same regardless of which diagnostic you are completing. Repeat the process outlined above until you have started and completed each of the diagnostics listed in your School Improvement Plan.
**Building Goals**

In addition to diagnostics, all ACIPs must contain goals, objectives, strategies and activities. ASSIST provides a structured process for building goals and plans.

Select the **Goals and Plans** tab at the top of the screen to build and manage goals and plans.


**Submitting the ACIP**

Select the **Portfolio** tab at the top of the page, and open the ACIP.

Select the pencil icon in the components column. This opens a window that allows you to select the component to attach by checking the box and selecting **Save Selection**.
Once all of the completed components have been added to the SIP, select Submit and confirm submission in the pop-up window.

Once the SIP is submitted, it can be reopened by the district at any time to make changes and resubmit. Select Reopen at the bottom of the ACIP Components page.

Comments are required any time the ACIP is reopened. A comment log and history of document submission dates and users can be viewed by selecting View Comments.

Each time the ACIP is submitted, a copy of the document is archived. You always can open an archived document to view a previously submitted version.
District Review and Approval of ASSIST Continuous Improvement Plans

For any districts that need to approve an SIP, utilize the search engine to find a list of your schools for all of its schools.

Select the “school” for which you want to review a report.

Upon selecting the school account, you should see a report listed for that school.

If the school submitted the plan, there will be a link to the archived report at the bottom of the page. This link, or the View PDF will give you access to the full report.

If the plan needs additional work, select Reopen, and provide comments when prompted.

The school’s principal, as well as the primary contact listed in the school’s ASSIST Profile, will receive an email when the report is approved or reopened.

Note: If a plan has been reopened and submitted multiple times, each submission is archived along with the comment history provided by the reviewer.