



**ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS DIVISION**

*Frequently Asked Questions
Regarding Solutions Teams*

1. What is a Solutions Team?

A.R.S. § 15-241 (P) (as amended) states, in part, “the superintendent of public instruction, based on need, shall assign a solutions team to an Underperforming School, a School Failing to Meet Academic Standards or any other school pursuant to a mutual agreement between the Department of Education and the school, comprised of master teachers, fiscal analysts and curriculum/assessment experts who are certified by the state board of education as Arizona academic standards technicians.”

Solutions Teams are sent to schools designated as Underperforming under AZ LEARNS and other schools by request. The assignment of Solutions Teams supports the Superintendent’s mission to provide high quality service to *all* schools.

One team leader and one or two team members, depending upon the size of the school to be visited, will comprise a Solutions Team. As a Solutions Team these individuals will be official representatives of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Arizona Department of Education.

2. What is a Solutions Team visit?

The on-site visit is a serious, evidence-based inquiry by ADE representatives to determine the school’s capacity (leadership, instructional practices, and organizational conditions) for sustained improvement. The team will produce a *Statement of Findings* that will serve to validate or to re-direct the school’s improvement efforts as well as offer specific recommendations for moving forward.

3. What must a school do in preparation for a Solutions Team visit?

Prior to a Solutions Team visit, the following must occur:

1. The school must engage in a comprehensive needs assessment using Arizona’s *Standards and Rubrics for School Improvement*.
2. Using all available achievement data and the findings of the comprehensive needs assessment, develop an *Arizona School Improvement Plan*.
3. A pre-visit meeting must be scheduled and held with the Solutions Team leader and the principal. All details and logistical arrangements for the visit are worked out between the principal and the team leader.



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4. What will actually happen during a Solutions Team Visit?

Under the guidance of an experienced team leader, members will review and analyze achievement data, the *Arizona School Improvement Plan* and related performance information. On-site visits are based on the *Standards & Rubrics for School Improvement* and will include interviews, classroom walk-throughs and focus group discussions. The Solutions Team is charged with answering three guiding questions based on the *Standards & Rubrics for School Improvement*:

1. Does the school's *Arizona School Improvement Plan* appear to be a sound plan for improving student performance?
2. Do the structures and conditions appear to be in place for the successful implementation of the school's *Arizona School Improvement Plan*?
3. What recommendations can be provided that will assist the school with the implementation of its *Arizona School Improvement Plan*?

The guiding questions will be answered as a result of interviews, observations and a systematic review and analysis of the school's improvement plan, achievement data and related documentation of performance. The visit will culminate with the presentation of a *Statement of Findings*.

5. What can a school expect after a Solutions Team visit?

Following the team visit, the Arizona Department of Education assigns a School Improvement Coach to schools designated as Underperforming (AZ LEARNS). This Coach confers with the Team Leader regarding the recommendations and overall needs of the school. Through in-person visits and telephone and email contact, the Coach helps the school maintain its focus on priority issues and connect with available resources related to the improvement goals. The Coach also documents the school's progress in implementing its improvement plan. (A Coach will not be assigned to a school requesting a Solutions Team visit.)

ADE's Standards-Based Best Practices Section provides customized support to all schools:

- ♦ An online Resource Guide to help the school identify resources appropriate to its needs
- ♦ A series of academies based upon priority needs, as identified by Solutions Teams.

6. What are the general responsibilities of a team member?

Individuals selected will be assigned to teams whose members possess a broad range of education-related experience and expertise. Orientation provided by ADE coupled with each individual's background will prepare team members to meet the expectations for the Solutions Team process. Members are expected to:

1. Understand and be committed to the purpose of the Solutions Team Process;
2. Review and analyze student performance data, staffing and leadership information, and other written materials provided on each school to sharpen the focus of the team's on-site review;
3. Utilize evidence gathered on-site through data and document analysis, observations, and interviews to answer the three Guiding Questions that frame the review;
4. Contribute to team discussions;
5. Help develop the content of the *Statement of Findings*;
6. Review the team's written report for accuracy and to ensure findings reflect team deliberations.



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7. What are the specific responsibilities of the team leader?

In addition to the general responsibilities cited for team members, leaders are expected to:

1. Collaborate with ADE on all matters relating to the school visit;
2. Meet with the principal of the school prior to the scheduled visit to coordinate all logistical arrangements;
3. Provide support and guidance to team members on all issues relating to the Solutions Team process and actual visit;
4. Coordinate the team visit by ensuring that a serious, evidence-based inquiry of the school's capacity for sustained improvement is effectively carried out;
5. Facilitate the team as it examines and verifies the self-assessment results of the *Standards & Rubrics for School Improvement* and prepares the *Statement of Findings*;
6. Take the lead in delivering the exit report to the school staff at the end of the visit.

8. How many days must I commit for serving on a Solutions Team?

Team Members

A four- or five-day commitment is required of all Solutions Team members. This includes two days of orientation and two or three consecutive days on site, depending upon the size of the school to be visited. These are intense days, so be prepared!

Team Leaders

There are additional time commitments for Solutions Team leaders. The leader shall perform a half day of work before the scheduled visit to confer with the building principal and provide a comprehensive overview of the Solutions Team process.

9. Can I serve on more than one Solutions Team?

Yes. In fact, ADE would like for members to serve on multiple teams, but realizes that service on a team takes high performing individuals from their schools and districts.

10. Will Solutions Team members receive compensation?

Yes. Compensation for participation must be in strict compliance with LEA policies. Following are compensation options offered by ADE:

- General leave, personal days, retiree or other non-district participant:
\$250 per day for team members
\$375 per day for team leaders
- District release time:
If the district provides release time for Solutions Team member/leaders, ADE cannot pay compensation. However, ADE can reimburse the cost of substitute teachers when necessary.

ADE will reimburse approved mileage, lodging, and meals as specified in the orientation session.



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11. What are the benefits for a school or district that encourages personnel to serve as a Solutions Team member?

Involvement in the Solutions Team process will not only make a significant contribution to improving the overall quality of education in the state, but will also allow team members to participate in an objective, evidence-based review of a school in another district. This experience is a valuable form of professional development from which participants can bring back ideas and insights to support improvement in their own schools and districts.

12. What are the professional benefits for an individual who participates as a Solutions Team member?

Participation on a Solutions Team will allow individuals to observe organizational structures, curricular programs and instructional practices, analyze improvement plans, achievement data and other performance information, and review the adequacy of a school's professional development plans and activities. These kinds of experiences will contribute significantly to one's understanding of school improvement and the state's accountability system.

13. How do I get selected to be on a Solutions Team?

You must complete the Solutions Team application and submit it along with a résumé and three letters of reference.

Required/Preferred Qualifications

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| <i>Required</i> | Demonstrated expertise in one or more of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Master teaching• Development and Implementation of Standards-based curriculum and assessment• Fiscal analysis and management in an educational setting |
| <i>Required</i> | No conflict of interest with the school(s) being served |
| <i>Preferred</i> | Demonstrated expertise in professional development |
| <i>Preferred</i> | Master's degree in education-related field |
| <i>Preferred</i> | Leadership experience in a role that requires understanding of effective teaching practices, school administration, and improvement planning |
| <i>Preferred</i> | School and/or program evaluation experience |
| <i>Preferred</i> | Experience analyzing student performance data |
| <i>Preferred</i> | Current knowledge of AZ Learns and No Child Left Behind |



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Required Skills and Competencies

- Objectivity
- Discretion
- Analytical skills
- Flexibility
- Ability to integrate information from interviews, documentation and observation
- Ability to evaluate and make judgments based on evidence
- Interpersonal skills to work on a team and within a school
- Ability to express ideas and communicate information clearly, both orally and in writing
- Ability to listen well