

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-105648](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

ESEA Title I, Part A purposes include providing all children the opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education. To help achieve that goal, states must identify schools in need of support and improvement. States oversee improvement efforts; Education monitors states' oversight.

Senate Report 115-289 includes a provision for GAO to review school improvement activities.

This report examines (1) CSI school characteristics; (2) how CSI plans address selected ESEA requirements; and (3) Education monitoring.

GAO compared the characteristics of CSI and other schools using 2019-20 Education data (the most recent available). GAO also analyzed a generalizable sample of CSI plans (the most recent available as of June 2022) to assess how they addressed three ESEA-required elements for plan content for which Education has issued guidance. GAO interviewed officials from three CSI schools selected for varied locale and other factors and held two discussion groups with officials from six districts with CSI schools across six states. GAO also interviewed Education officials and reviewed relevant federal laws and monitoring documents.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that Education update monitoring protocols to independently select CSI plans for review. Education agreed with our recommendation and stated that it will independently select CSI plans for monitoring beginning in spring 2024.

View [GAO-24-105648](#). For more information, contact Jacqueline M. Nowicki at (617) 788-0580 or [nowickij@gao.gov](mailto:nowickij@gao.gov)

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## K-12 EDUCATION:

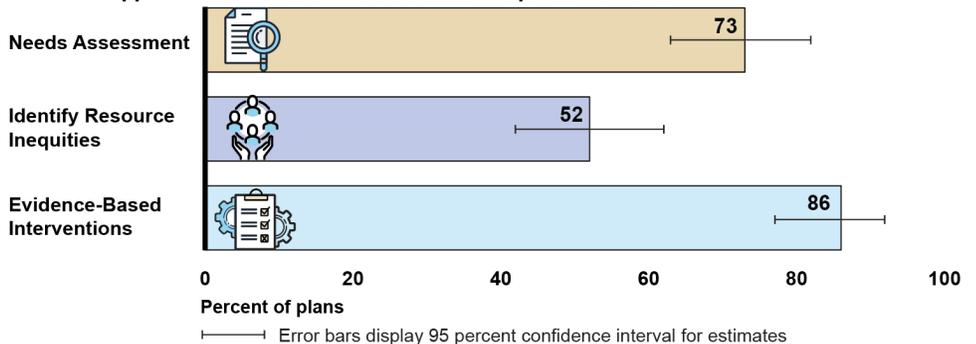
# EDUCATION COULD ENHANCE OVERSIGHT OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACTIVITIES

## What GAO Found

Roughly 2.5 million students attend a K-12 public school that their state has identified for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA). GAO found that CSI schools are among the lowest-performing schools in the nation. GAO also found that compared to other public schools, CSI schools are much more likely to serve predominantly Black and low-income students and those who are not proficient in reading or math. CSI schools also have higher student-teacher ratios than other schools.

In its review of a nationally generalizable sample of CSI school improvement plans, GAO estimated that less than half (42 percent) appeared to address all three required elements it reviewed, which include that the plan: (1) be based on a needs assessment, (2) identify resource inequities, and (3) include evidence-based interventions. Further, GAO identified wide variation among the CSI plans it reviewed. For instance, when identifying resource inequities, some plans focused on the types of inequities students faced in their own lives (e.g., poverty or homelessness). Other plans focused on how equitably educational resources (e.g., funding or teachers) were distributed across the district or within the school.

Estimated Percent of Comprehensive Support and Improvement Plans Available as of June 2022 that Appeared to Address Three Selected Required Elements



Source: GAO analysis of nationally generalizable sample of comprehensive support and improvement plans. GAO (images) | GAO-24-105648  
Note: GAO did not independently assess legal compliance with its three selected Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 requirements.

Education monitors state compliance with ESEA school improvement requirements (e.g., to approve CSI plans and monitor their implementation) and has identified and addressed compliance issues through its efforts. For example, Education found that five of the nine states it monitored from February 2020 through July 2023 failed to enforce ESEA requirements that CSI plans include all of the three elements GAO assessed. Education required the states to take corrective action to address these issues. However, Education's ability to identify these and other compliance issues may be limited by a weakness GAO identified in Education's monitoring approach. Specifically, Education does not select the CSI plans it reviews. Instead, it relies on monitored states and districts to do so. Ensuring that Education staff independently select these documents could help Education better assure that it is identifying and responding to compliance risks through this key part of its monitoring strategy.