

School Improvement Planning PROCESS GUIDE

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School Improvement Planning PROCESS GUIDE Introduction

What is School Improvement anyway, and who needs to do it?

School improvement is a **continuous process** schools use to ensure that all students are achieving at high levels. All schools can in some way create better environments so that more students are successful. Continuous improvement of public schools is essential to providing increased student performance and quality results. Innovative, exemplary, and research-based programs, coupled with staff development, focused and aligned resources, and public participation in planning, are critical factors in improving schools.

All schools should engage in school improvement planning. The Washington State Board of Education in WAC 180-16-220 requires that each school district receiving state basic education funds **MUST** develop a school improvement plan or process based on a self-review of the school's program for the purpose of annual building approval by the district. The self-review required by the state shall include active participation and input by building staff, students, parents, and community members. The school improvement process described in this guide can fulfill this requirement.

Will this process work if we need more than one plan?

This process is generic and provides a framework that can be adapted to Title I Schoolwide Planning, District School Improvement Planning, Technology plans, Reading Excellence Grants, Comprehensive School Reform, and other types of school improvement planning the school may be engaged in. Be sure to check Appendix D3 for required components of some federal funding sources.

What are the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools and, how do they fit?

High performing schools with varied demographic conditions have shown they share common characteristics (see page iii). These Nine Characteristics are highly correlated to high performing schools. As school teams go through the process of school improvement planning, they will look for the presence of characteristics such as clear and shared focus, if curriculum and instruction are aligned with state standards, and if parent and community involvement supports learning. See a listing of the nine characteristics on page iii and a detailed listing of resources related to the Nine Characteristics in Appendix D19.

We're trying to make changes that will last, how will this process help us?

In the past, school improvement plans often centered on innovations such as new programs or changes in schedules. These types of changes, called "first" order change, may be positive but do not necessarily make sustained change to student outcomes. "Second" order changes are those

that alter the school culture or the ways people work together. See Appendix D18 for a more detailed description of first and second order change. This process encourages second order change through activities that help staff to reflect on their beliefs and gain focus and ownership that leads to lasting benefits for students.

How do principals and school improvement teams use this guide?

A variety of processes, graphic tools and resources are provided in this guide along with specific linkages to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) web-based *School Improvement Planning Tool (SIPT)*. Following this guide provides an explanation of the eight stages of school improvement planning and recommends activities within each stage. This is a cyclical, fluid, process, that may require going back and forth between the stages.

Eight Stages of School Improvement Planning:

1. Readiness to Benefit
2. Collect, Sort, and Select Data
3. Build and Analyze the School Portfolio
4. Set and Prioritize Goals
5. Research and Select Effective Practices
6. Craft Action Plans
7. Monitor Implementation of the Plan
8. Evaluate Impact on Student Achievement

Linkages to the web-based Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction *School Improvement Planning Tool (SIPT)*

The web-based *School Improvement Planning Tool (SIPT)* provides educators a way to access achievement and demographic data for their school on-line. It gives easy access to research databases on best practices, and provides a way to create an on-line portfolio. *The SIP Tool* complements the *School Improvement Planning Process Guide* and provides a hard-copy version of agendas, surveys, forms, and other resources. The combination of both resources helps schools make data-driven, research-based decisions.

Guiding Principles of School Improvement Planning

The following key principles form the basis for the School Improvement Process Planning Guide.

- The principal must be at the helm of this process—without support and leadership of the principal the planning process lacks the leverage that is needed for change to occur in a school environment.
- All members of a school staff, and representatives of as many other stakeholder groups as possible, should participate and/or be aware of the planning process. The more the full faculty is “in the loop,” the better the chances the school will achieve 100% buy-in by staff for change efforts.
- A representative group of stakeholders can do the bulk of the work if results and updates are reported back on a regular basis to the full faculty and other stakeholders.

- Decisions about school improvement goals and solutions must be based on careful consideration of multiple sources of data and research.
- School improvement planning is a journey of continuous improvement that demands ongoing monitoring and adjustment of programs and processes at the school.
- Improvements in student outcomes are directly related to what happens in the classroom. Teachers must be willing to be reflective about their practice and relentless in attempts to meet the needs of every student.
- The written plan document is only as good as the quality of thought, effort, and the degree of “buy-in” by staff.

This guide is written for principals and their leadership or school improvement teams. It helps them engage in the school improvement cycle, and gives resources and tips for planning a school improvement journey that ultimately results in higher student achievement and more supportive learning environments.

Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools

Research has shown that there is no silver bullet – no single thing that schools can do to ensure high student performance. Rather, high performing schools tend to show evidence of the following nine characteristics:

1. Clear and Shared Focus

Everybody knows where they are going and why. The vision is shared—everybody is involved and all understand their role in achieving the vision. The vision is developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistent focus.

2. High Standards and Expectations

Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and that they can teach all students. There is recognition of barriers for some students to overcome, but the barriers are not insurmountable. Students become engaged in an ambitious and rigorous course of study.

3. Effective School Leadership

Effective leadership is required to implement change processes within the school. This leadership takes many forms. Principals often play this role, but so do teachers and other staff, including those in the district office. Effective leaders advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

4. High Levels of Collaboration and Communication

There is constant collaboration and communication between and among teachers of all grades. Everybody is involved and connected, including parents and members of the community, to solve problems and create solutions.

5. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Aligned with Standards

Curriculum is aligned with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). Research-based materials and teaching and learning strategies are implemented. There is a clear understanding of the assessment system, what is measured in various assessments and how it is measured.

6. Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning are continually adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. A variety of assessment procedures are used. The results of the assessment are used to improve student performances and also to improve the instructional program.

7. Focused Professional Development

Professional development for all educators is aligned with the school's and district's common focus, objectives, and high expectations. It is ongoing and based on high need areas.

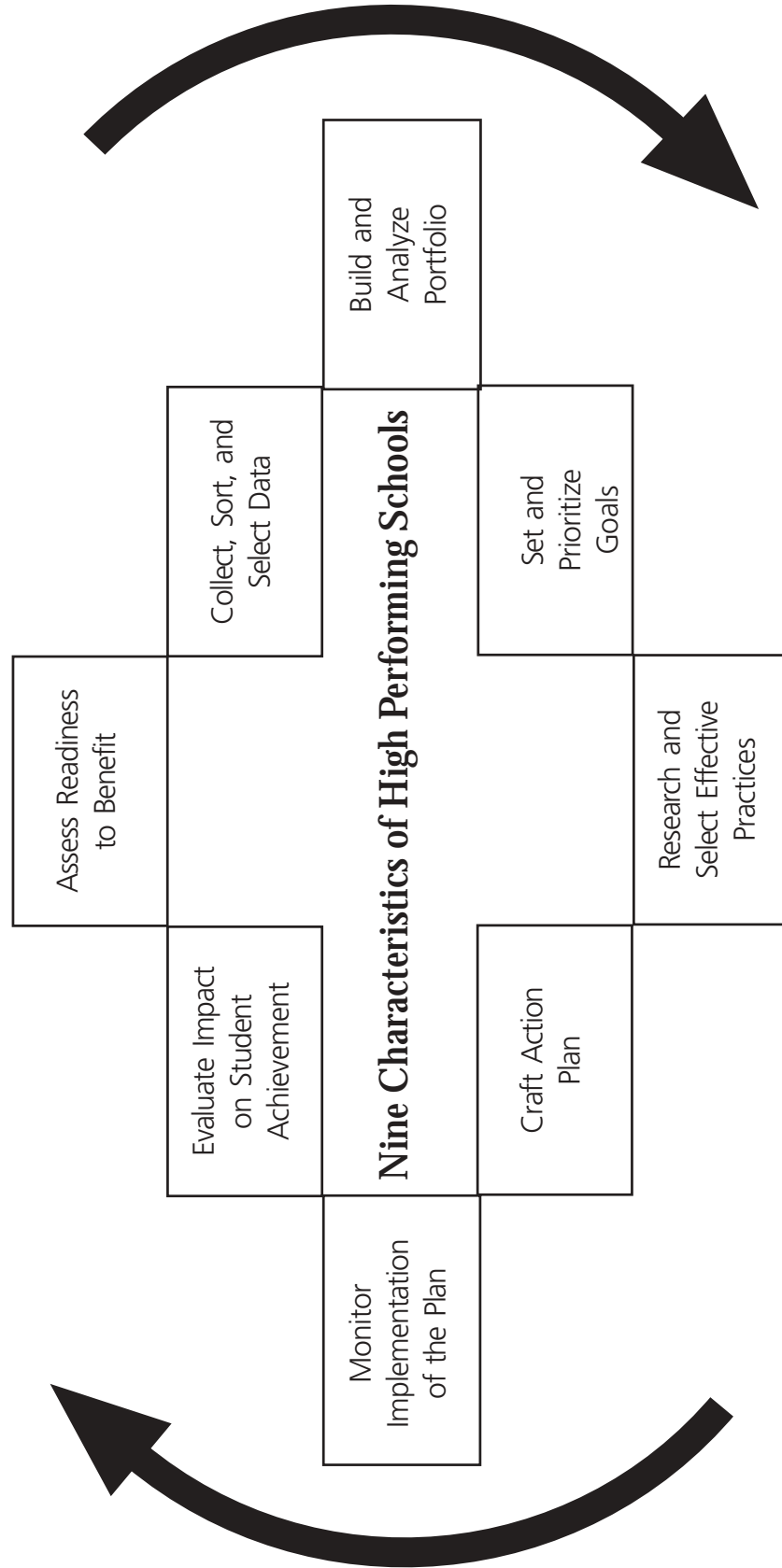
8. Supportive Learning Environment

The school has a safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students feel respected and connected with the staff, and are engaged in learning. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers.

9. High Levels of Community and Parent Involvement

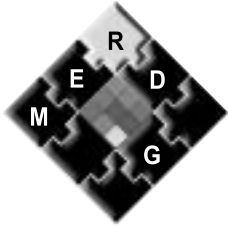
There is a sense that all educational stakeholders have a responsibility to educate students, not just the teachers and staff in schools. Parents, as well as businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges/universities all play a vital role in this effort.

School Improvement Planning Process Stages



Continuous Improvement

Assess Readiness to Benefit



Overview of This Stage

Staff members have varying levels of capacity or “readiness” to engage in school improvement planning. Most likely, some staff are ready and willing and some staff members are much less willing and able. This disparity can affect the quality of the entire planning process. Determining readiness to benefit is not a onetime event because readiness levels can change depending on the task at hand. The Leadership Team must be vigilant in their understanding of stakeholder readiness and adjust strategies and activities based on the abilities and willingness of the constituents at each stage and for each activity. *Some first steps that promote the abilities and willingness of staff are:*

- Effective processes for conducting meetings
- Decision-making strategies for working toward consensus
- Time to meet and resources for professional development
- Open communication and trust among staff
- District support and understanding of school improvement planning

Readiness

Is there a need and agreement among stakeholders that school improvement planning should take place? Has the principal initiated conversations with staff to let them know that a significant process must occur? Is the principal going to facilitate the process with the help of the leadership team, or has an outside facilitator such as an ESD staff person been identified to help get the process going? These are all factors that set the stage for creating a plan for school improvement. See Readiness Assessment - General Readiness, Appendix C3

Outcomes

The entire school faculty will gain a clearer picture of what it will take to go through the eight stages of the school improvement process. The appropriate foundation for school improvement planning will be in place (e.g., leadership team, district buy-in, accepted mission statement).

Who Should Be Involved?

Principal, district staff, a leadership team that reflects the diversity of student population, the full staff, ESD or other assistance provider, parent(s), students, community members as appropriate.

How Much Time is Needed for This Stage?

Two to four weeks.

Process

1. **Make contact with district and ESD staff.** The principal discusses the school improvement process with district staff to assure the district supports the effort, time, and resources that will be spent on the process. The principal contacts the ESD to provide support and guidance.
2. **Increase staff awareness.** In a staff meeting, let them know: 1) reasons for embarking on a school improvement effort; 2) it is a guided eight-stage process; 3) the input of all staff will be needed; 4) there will be a representative leadership team in place that will meet, plan, and share information back with full staff.
3. **Put together a leadership team.** The team should include a representative cross-section of the teaching staff (not the entire English department, or just the primary teachers), a paraprofessional, and if possible, a parent(s) and community members. Both genders and the diversity of the students and community must be taken into consideration. If it is a secondary school, students can also be incorporated into the leadership team.
4. **Have a leadership team meeting.** See *Leadership Team Meeting: Agenda 1*, Appendix A1. The first meeting is an important time to set the tone and expectations for the leadership team. Like the first days of teaching, it's best to be very explicit and intentional about expectations and processes right away!
5. **Leadership team conducts General Readiness Assessment.** See *General Readiness Assessment*, Appendix C3. The Leadership team will spend about 30-60 minutes discussing the readiness of staff to engage in the process of school improvement planning. Other activities at this meeting include planning for the next full staff meeting.
6. **Have a full staff meeting.** Take 30-60 minutes to acquaint staff with the eight stages of school improvement and lay the groundwork for their involvement, do the *Jigsaw activity*, B1 and/or the *School Improvement Process School Improvement Process Puzzle*, Appendix B3.
7. **Have second leadership team meeting.** Bring the leadership team together again to plan for the next faculty meeting. See *Sample Leadership Team Meeting Agenda 2*, Appendix A2. The focus of this meeting is to explore common understandings regarding beliefs, vision, and mission of the school and to begin looking at the use of data in preparation of the next stage.
8. **Reconvene full faculty.** Some activities for building common understanding are suggested. See *Telling Our Own Story*, Appendix B10, and the two activities related to beliefs, vision, and mission statements, Appendix B11 and B12-14.

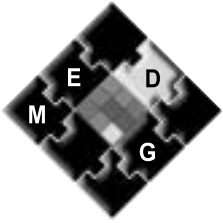
Caution

Readiness Assessment is not a one time event! The Leadership Team must constantly assess the readiness levels of constituents to engage in each stage of the planning process and adjust leadership strategies accordingly. You may be tempted to skip the “fun” stuff and get right to work. Don't! It's the conversation and thinking that builds the readiness and capacity for staff to make the kind of changes in practice that truly affect student outcomes.

Resources

- *Readiness Assessment---General Readiness, Appendix C3*
- *Sample First Leadership Team Meeting Agenda 1, Appendix A1*
- *Leadership Team Meeting: Agenda 2, Appendix A2*
- *Planning Calendar for SIP Stages, Appendix B7*
- *Jigsaw Procedure for School Improvement Planning, Appendix B1*
- *School Improvement Process Puzzle, Appendix B3*
- *Telling Our Own Story, Appendix B10*
- *Beliefs, Vision, Mission - Creating a Clear & Shared Focus, Appendix B 11*
- *Unpacking the Mission Statement - Appendix B12*

Collect, Sort, and Select Data



Overview of This Stage

Data can tell a school's story. Collecting and using information about the school and the school's community moves the message from feelings to facts. What are the school's strengths? Which programs and services have the greatest potential for growth based on current data? Gathering the right data from a variety of sources can:

- Create a baseline on student skills and stakeholders' attitudes and beliefs
- Provide an accurate picture of current school processes and programs
- Guide actions taken to change outcomes
- Allow school staff to measure progress over time

Readiness

Do leadership team members understand that school improvement is a multiple-step process? Does the faculty understand how to read charts and graphs of WASL, ITBS, and other local data? The steps highlighted in the previous section help set the tone for this stage. The Collect, Sort, and Select Data Readiness Tool, Appendix C4 will help determine staff readiness for this stage.

Outcomes

By the end of this stage in the school improvement process the leadership team will gather current data on achievement, demographics, staff/student/parent perceptions, and school programs. The sources of information that help "tell the story" of the school will be prepared so the full faculty can carefully consider the data in the next stage.

Who Should Be Involved?

The school leadership team first, and then the full faculty. Ideally, the school's leadership team will decide what data is needed for each category of measurement. Then the full faculty will have an opportunity to look at a list of what is being gathered—so they can add their thoughts on sources.

How Much Time is Needed for This Stage?

This varies depending on how readily available the data is, how many people are working on it, and how short the timeline is. This stage takes four to six weeks.

Process

1. **Schedule a leadership team meeting to discuss data.** See Leadership Team Meeting: Agenda 1, Appendix A1. During this meeting the staff will assign tasks for collection of data that tells the current state of your school in four main categories using the *What to Collect Worksheets*, Appendix C12:
 1. Achievement
 2. Demographic information
 3. Programs
 4. Perceptions
2. **Ask what does this data tell us? What more do we need to know?** Collecting data about the school can be like an archeological dig—sifting through a lot of debris to find the artifacts that tell the story.
3. **Consider what additional data needs to be collected.** The leadership team considers the types of data, where to find it, and whether additional data needs to be found (for instance, you may need a more recent parent survey). Team members will complete data collection worksheets that can be shared at a full staff meeting.
4. **Plan for and schedule a full staff meeting.** This will take about 45 minutes and is a way to continually build buy-in for the school improvement process. There are two segments of this meeting:
 - Full group of staff does *Why Use Data* activity, Appendix B15, (15 minutes)
 - Staff in small groups of 4-5 staff members consider data and sources. Staff looks at completed data collection worksheets *What to Collect Worksheets*, Appendix C12 (prepared by the leadership team at their first meeting for this stage) and adds their ideas on additional sources, if needed.
5. **Meet with leadership team again to review staff input and plan for the data carousel activity.** See *Leadership Team Meeting: Agenda 2*, Appendix A2. This meeting gives the leadership team an opportunity to go over staff input for additional data collection, check in on what data was collected, and plan for Data Carousel activity with full staff—the first activity in the “Build and Analyze Portfolio” stage of School Improvement Planning Process.

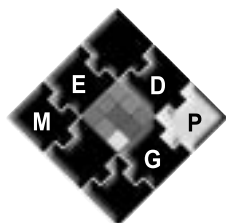
Cautions

Allow enough time to collect a wide variety of data—it can’t be a last minute job! Also, it’s very tempting to jump into analyzing data as soon as it’s collected. There’s nothing wrong with this but it can bog a team down and add a lot of extra time. Urge staff to hold off on problem solving for now, this comes later.

Resources

- *Collect, Sort and Select Data Readiness Tool*, Appendix C4
- *Leadership Team Meeting Agenda 3*, Appendix A3
- *Leadership Team Meeting Agenda 4*, Appendix A5
- *Why Use Data? Activity*, Appendix B15
- *“What to Collect?” Worksheets*, Appendix C12
- *The SIPT web-based tool facilitates data collection and analysis, greatly expediting the process.*
- *Other resources: Query, Just For Kids Website: www.spu.edu/wsrc*

Build and Analyze the School Portfolio



Overview of This Stage

This stage of school improvement planning is about helping all stakeholders understand the school's story. Displaying achievement and other data types in ways that are understandable to all audiences stimulates shared responsibility for education among teachers, parents, community members, and the students themselves. Readers of the school portfolio should be able to find the answers to these questions:

- What is the demographic makeup of our school?
- How are the students at our school performing on various measures?
- What school programs are in place here?
- How are the various stakeholders involved in the school (such as parents and community)?

Readiness

The leadership team has:

- collected data from multiple indicator areas (demographics, perception, achievement, programs).
- determined the appropriate degree of detail so that the staff will focus on high level themes that later become goals, rather than strategies that support goals
- created displays of the data that enhance staff understanding.

The *Build and Analyze the School Portfolio Readiness Tool*, Appendix C5, will help determine if staff and/or leadership team is ready for this stage.

Outcomes

All staff will analyze data showing the current status of the school. It will become clear where there are areas of concern, what the strengths are, and what to celebrate. A prioritized list of challenges will be generated and used in the next stages to develop goals and an action plan. Optionally, Narrative statements may be put into the Build and Analyze the School Portfolio section of the OSPI web-based SIP Tool.

Who Should Be Involved?

The whole faculty participates in the Data Carousel activity. The leadership team meets to process the information gathered from that meeting.

How Much Time is Needed for This Stage?

2 1/2 to 3 hours for staff to review data and write narrative statements.

Process

1. **Schedule a full staff meeting to do the Data Carousel Activity.** See Data Carousel Activity, Appendix B16 and the *Full Staff Meeting: Agenda 5*, Appendix A6 for a description of how this two-step process works. It can be done all at once or divided into two meetings with staff. This is a hands-on opportunity for staff to look at the data and work in small groups to figure out what the data contributes to the school's story. Prepare to be energized!
2. **Craft narrative statements.**
During the Data Carousel Activity, the small groups considering the data will write descriptive non-evaluative statements about each data source. See *Three Tips for Writing Powerful Narrative Statements*, Appendix B18.
3. **Decide which of the narrative statements are strengths and which are challenges.**
Some will be both strengths and challenges! Statements such as "English Language Learners have increased by 25% between 1998 and 2001" can be a challenge because instruction must accommodate these students' needs but also be a strength because this population adds to the diversity of the school.
4. **Prioritize challenges.**
Using the *Prioritize Challenges Worksheet*, Appendix B19, compile narrative statements that are designated as challenges. The worksheet gives three ways of prioritizing the challenges—by level of dissatisfaction, by severity, and by how much control the school has over this particular challenge. Each individual staff member prioritizes the challenges and these ratings can be tallied to determine an overall ranking.
5. **Create the school portfolio on the OSPI Web-based School Improvement Tool.** (Optional)
After the narrative statements are created in each of the four areas: achievement, demographics, perceptions and contextual data (under custom data tab in SIP Tool), they can be entered and connected with the data sets you have selected. The narratives will also be entered as strengths, challenges, or both in the tool. See SIP Tool, Portfolio.
6. **Find a way to make the portfolio visual to stakeholders.** The leadership team discusses ways to make the information accessible such as wall displays, notebooks, or folders.

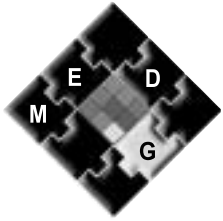
Cautions

Some have learned the hard way that raw data can cause confusion and be misinterpreted. Data should always be clearly labeled and displayed so that all stakeholders can read and understand it.

Resources

- *Build and Analyze the School Portfolio Readiness Tool*, Appendix C5
- *Data Carousel Activity*, Appendix B16
- *Full Staff Meeting Agenda 5*, Appendix A6
- *Three Tips for Writing Powerful Narrative Statements*, Appendix B18
- *Prioritize Challenges Worksheet*, Appendix B19
- *Victoria Bernhardt and Edie Holcomb books in Appendix D11 & D15*

Set and Prioritize Goals



Overview of This Stage

The team and larger community now have a clearer picture of how the school functions along a number of dimensions, from teaching and administration to relationships and other resources. The ultimate goal is improving student achievement. Goal-setting involves questions such as:

- What goals are already required by the state, ie: reading, math, etc.? (See *OSPI Reading and Math Goal Requirements*, Appendix D8)
- What are the areas of greatest need?
- Which of these have the highest potential for impact?

To prioritize the goals, the team must work back from the end point to consider what has to happen first, next, and continuously.

The team will follow a systematic process to develop focused, student-centered, measurable, realistic, and time bound goals to improve student achievement.

Readiness

Staff has worked together to collect data and create narrative statements about the data. Strengths and challenges have been identified prior to this stage. The *Set and Prioritize Goals Readiness Tool*, Appendix C6, will help determine if staff is ready to move on to this stage.

Outcomes

Challenges/concerns will be grouped into themes. Goal statements that are student-centered, clear, measurable, and time bound are written and prioritized.

Who Should Be Involved?

The Leadership team will be involved in writing the goal statements. Full faculty will have an opportunity to read through and comment on goal statements created by the leadership team.

How Much Time is Needed for This Stage?

2-3 hours.

Process

1. Schedule a leadership team meeting to review narratives and write goals.

The OSPI SIP Tool has a specific format for inputting narratives, indicating if they are strengths or challenges and then for writing goals. As a leadership team, your group can review what was done after the Data Carousel activity to decide on strengths and challenges. See *Set and Prioritize Goals—Leadership Team Meeting: Agenda 7*, Appendix A9.

2. Challenges are grouped into themes.

Regarding challenges, what are the themes that emerge repeatedly in the different data categories? These might be reading, the process strands of math, thinking skills and behaviors, or achievement gap issues. The *Emerging Themes Worksheet*, Appendix B21, may be useful for grouping prioritized challenges.

3. Write goal statements.

Using the *Goal Writing Worksheet*, Appendix B23, staff members write SMART goals—those that are specific, student-centered, measurable, attainable, related to achievement, and time bound. Encourage conversations about the goals. Regarding measurable goals, it's important to use formative (ongoing school or classroom based assessment) and summative measures (WASL) to determine if goals are met.

4. Review goal statements.

Once the goals are written they should be reviewed by any staff not involved in writing them to gain their insight and support.

5. Prioritize goals.

Based on the conversations among staff members in leadership and full staff meetings, staff comes to consensus on the school's most pressing needs and priorities, see *Working Toward Consensus Methods*, Appendix B8. It is important for all staff to in some way participate in the decision on priorities, but how to do this will vary by school.

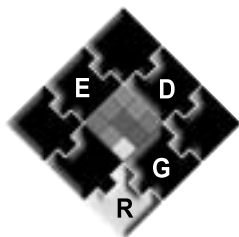
Cautions

It has been said that having clear goals is indispensable to accomplishing what is desired and that “it is better to aim high and miss than to aim low and hit.” To set appropriate goals, Leadership teams must be aware of what is possible by looking at high performing schools with similar demographic conditions. Also, leadership teams must be careful to make the distinction between goals and strategies. A strategy is a way to get to your goal.

Resources

- *OSPI SIP Tool*
- *Set and Prioritize Goals Readiness Tool*, Appendix C6
- *Set and Prioritize Goals--Leadership Team Meeting: Agenda 7*, Appendix A9
- *Emerging Themes Worksheet*, Appendix B21
- *Goal Writing Worksheet*, Appendix B23
- *Working Toward Consensus Methods*, Appendix B8
- *OSPI Reading and Math Improvement Goals*, Appendix D8
- *Research on Nine Characteristics*, Appendix D19

Research and Select Effective Practices



Overview of This Stage

Just as we expect doctors to draw on a body of scientific knowledge before making a decision, educators are obligated to base instructional practices on reliable research. A significant amount of evidence exists to guide schools in creating classrooms where deep learning occurs. This includes lessons from similar schools that have achieved these goals.

Readiness

Make sure there are structures in place to support the research process, such as release time resources, and clearly stated support from the principal. The *Research and Select Effective Practices Readiness* Tool Appendix C7, will help determine if staff and/or leadership team is ready for this stage.

Outcomes

Staff members will conduct research on school practices related to their school improvement goals. They will thoroughly investigate what other schools with similar demographics have done to deal with the same types of issues the school faces. This will be accomplished by contacting other schools, and by reading and discussing scientifically based research and articles related to the school's improvement goals. School teams will look deeper into the data and will select strategies for each of the goals.

Who Should Be Involved?

The entire school faculty should be involved, though the leadership team can provide extra assistance in locating, gathering materials, and facilitating study groups. Additionally, ESD school improvement staff can provide assistance in this stage (see Appendix D1 for *Statewide School Improvement Contacts*).

How Much Time is Needed for This Stage?

The amount of time varies, but can take 3 to 5 days over the course of 1-2 months. Time spent searching for, reading about, and discussing effective practices is a form of professional development.

Process

1. **Schedule a leadership team meeting.** Decide which method you will use; 1) engage full staff in studying and selecting best practices through study groups or, 2) use the leadership team to do the majority of the work, involving full staff less extensively, and report back to staff on findings. In either case, the leadership team is involved. See *Leadership Team Meeting: Agenda 8 —Research and Select Effective Practices*, Appendix A10.
2. **Access various sources for information on your goal areas.** The OSPI SIP Tool allows you to type in the goal area and search for related articles and research in sixteen major databases such as ERIC and the Regional Educational Laboratories.
3. **Dig deeper into your data.** What does it tell you about content area instruction? Be sure to track down information on areas of weakness.
4. **Access information about schools with similar demographics.** This can be a great way to see how other schools with the same ages and mix of students are performing. If this is a school that has dealt with challenges your school is currently facing, you may want to schedule a visit there.
5. **Decide which studies and other resources speak to your school's goals.** For example, if reading achievement is a goal area, you may find that larger blocks of time for instruction in reading is a research-based strategy for improvement. As you look at the amount of time your schedule allows for reading instruction, articles and research on use for time and strategies for reading instruction should be addressed in your research. The *Resource List: Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools*, Appendix D20, provides a listing of websites and publications.
6. **After staff has been involved in the study process, the full faculty meets to discuss the best practices.** Some creative ways to provide staff with hands-on reading and discussion about strategies that may be linked to your goals include using a jigsaw approach or rotating staff to several table presentations of the research and information on best practices.

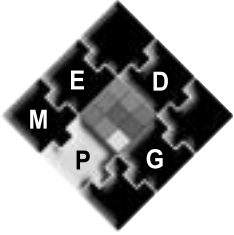
Cautions:

Don't skip this step! Involve the full faculty as much as possible. Using professional development days and budgets for staff research possibilities will be money well spent. Taking enough time for staff to seek information, see other schools, and to discuss options builds excitement and buy-in for changes.

Resources

- *Statewide School Improvement Contacts*, Appendix D1
- *Research and Select Effective Practices Readiness Tool*, Appendix C7
- *Leadership Team Meeting: Agenda 8--Research and Select Effective Practices*, Appendix A10
- *Resources Available Through OSPI SIP Tool*, Appendix D10
- *Study Group Report Form*, Appendix B25
- *Study Group Report Sample* Appendix B26
- *School Visitation Questions Guide*, Appendix B27
- *Study Process Planning Grid*, Appendix C26
- *Just for Kids Website*: www.spu.edu/wsrc
- *Resource List: Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools*, Appendix D20

Craft Action Plan



Overview of This Stage

The action plan pulls together the team's findings into a commitment to act. Organized around the 3-5 school improvement goals that were identified based on data, the action plan outlines:

- What the goal is
- What the activities/steps are for achieving the goal
- Who is responsible
- What the timeline is
- What resources are needed, including professional development
- What the impact will be
- How it will be evaluated

Introducing change into the busy, complicated enterprise of a school requires carefully thought-out and well articulated plans. Time spent in detailed planning at this stage will save time down the road making up for plans not carefully thought through!

Readiness

The major school improvement goals have been identified.

The *Craft Action Plan Readiness Tool* Appendix C8, will help determine if staff and/or the leadership team is ready for this stage.

Outcomes

Creation of specific action plans, focused on each goal area that describe the specific activities, timelines, persons responsible, and outcome measures for each strategy.

Who Should Be Involved?

The leadership team can create the action plan. The whole faculty should have an opportunity to provide input.

How Much Time is Needed for This Stage?

Approximately 3-6 hours.

Process

1. **Schedule a leadership team meeting.** See *Leadership Team Meeting: Agenda 9 —Craft Action Plan*, Appendix A11-12. During this meeting the leadership team should take each of the goals and break them into all the possible steps it will take for them to be accomplished. Next the team will discuss who is responsible, the timeline, resources, and how the activity will be evaluated. See *Action Plan Outline*, Appendix C27.
2. **Consider Resources.** Take stock of what resources and other grants are available. You may have existing resources that can be restructured or options to obtain additional resources through grants or other sources.
3. **Use best thinking about how the action steps will affect the existing program and people.** You've done the hard work coming up with the goals and thinking through what the baby steps are to achieve the goals. Now is the time to carefully consider the impact the action step will have on staff and programs. Use the *Thinking it Through Worksheet*, Appendix C29, to address these issues.
4. **Plan to share the action plan and "Thinking It Through Worksheet" with whole faculty.** This can be done by the leadership team first and then with the full staff. A strategy that can save time is to have the leadership team go through the *Action Plan Outline*, Appendix C27 and the *Thinking it Through Worksheet*, Appendix C29 first and then share the work back with the full staff during a staff meeting.
5. **Keep the action plan public and alive.** One way to do this is to create a large chart in the staff lounge, the office, or some place staff is likely to see it. A large red arrow can be put next to the activities as they are implemented. The reason for this is that we pay attention to what we see.

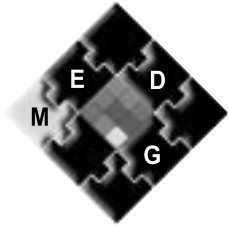
Caution

Action planning gives your team and full staff a chance to really think through how to bring the research-based strategies you have selected to life. New plans will displace what is currently in place and may alter the workload or type of work some staff members do. Now is a good time to acknowledge that this is an "ending" and to check in with staff who will be affected.

Resources

- *Craft Action Plans Readiness Tool*, Appendix C8
- *Leadership Team Meeting: Agenda 9 --Craft Action Plan*, Appendix A11
- *Action Plan Outline*, Appendix C27
- *Action Plan Outline Sample*, Appendix C28
- *Thinking it Through Worksheet*, Appendix C29
- *Annotated Bibliography*, Appendix D11
- *Transitions*, a book by William Bridges, can be helpful in assisting staff members to move on to new programs and processes. See *Annotated Bibliography*, Appendix D12.

Monitor Implementation of the Plan



Overview of This Stage

During this stage of your plan, your learning improvement team should monitor the progression of the action plan **and its impact on student achievement** and make sure the activities and tasks in each goal are moving forward under the identified timelines. Attention to the adopted schedule and “Start - Completion” dates will help your school continuously move forward to accomplish the overall learning improvement goals which shall systemically increase student achievement in your school.

Readiness

Before you get started, make sure that...

- Resources are secured for implementation (money, people, etc.)
- Realistic timelines are established
- Staff development plan developed
- Learning improvement plan published and approved
- Stakeholder review and refine the plan

The *Monitor Implementation of the Plan Readiness Tool* Appendix C9, will help determine if staff and/or leadership team is ready for this stage.

Outcomes

Formative measures such as classroom based assessments and analysis of student work will be used to see if progress has occurred in each of the goal areas. The key outcomes of this stage are to:

1. Demonstrate progress
2. Focus attention on the plan
3. Provide basis for making necessary changes
4. Give reasons to celebrate efforts of staff, students, and parents

Who Should Be Involved?

The leadership team can be responsible for actual monitoring of progress. The entire staff should remain informed about implementation progress.

How Much Time is Needed for This Stage?

Monitoring the plan should continue until the activities outlined are completed AND they become part of the school’s culture. Embedding the activities and plan into the natural practices of the school may take several years.

Process

1. **Use formative measures to check on implementation.** The *Action Plan Outline*, Appendix C27, will indicate which measures will be used to determine if efforts are on track. **Your team should not wait until WASL scores return to see if what you are implementing is working!** The *Monitoring the Activity Timeline*, Appendix C31, is a useful tool for checking on implementation and making adjustments for unanticipated events or barriers.

It is critical that staff understand that interim assessments are used as formative measures to monitor student progress toward meeting each goal. Some formative techniques that are used to monitor implementation include:

- Classroom assessments and pre- post- achievement measures
 - Surveys of Staff
 - Observations of students
 - Student work analysis
 - Oral/written work
 - Checklists of student behavior
 - Student interviews
 - External review teams
2. **Schedule a regular check-in time at leadership and/or staff meetings.**
Schools are such busy places that it is easy to make assumptions that things are in place because we planned them to be!
 3. **Designate staff members to monitor what's happening and be cheerleaders for progress.**
These may be people who were on the original leadership planning team. Their task is to check on progress on a regular basis throughout the school year. They must also be charged with keeping up communication on progress and planning any celebrations (how about treats at a meeting or a sparkling cider toast to the efforts of folks most affected by changes?).

Caution

This stage is very important to the continuous progress at your school. It must be kept up throughout the school year—this is not an end of the year event, it's a constant gentle process of paying attention and making adjustments when necessary.

Resources

- *Monitor Implementation of the Plan Readiness Tool*, Appendix C9
- *Action Plan Outline*, Appendix C27
- *Monitoring the Activity Timeline*, Appendix C31
- *Rubric for Implementing the School's Action Plan*, Appendix C32
- *OSPI SIP Tool, Monitoring the Plan*.

Evaluate Impact on Student Achievement



Overview of This Stage

Evaluating the impact of the action plan brings the process full circle. This is not the end of school improvement planning, it's a chance to measure effectiveness, determine if practices are institutionalized, and to start the process again. The team collects and analyzes data from the WASL, ITBS, ITED and other measures to determine if school improvement goals were met and if the action plans were successful in improving student achievement.

The leadership team's role shifts from driving the process to helping staff assimilate key strategies and actions into the school culture—including the improvement process itself. Celebrating successes reinforces valued performance and reminds the community that however challenging, school improvement means students are successful.

Readiness

Methods for determining if school improvement efforts had any impact were identified in the action plan, so the designated evaluative measures must be administered and compiled. The *Evaluate Impact on Student Achievement Readiness Tool*, Appendix C10, will help determine if staff and/or leadership team is ready for this stage.

Outcomes

The WASL, ITBS, and other summative measures specified in the action plans will be analyzed. By doing this, stakeholders will determine how much progress has been made toward improving student achievement.

Who Should Be Involved?

Leadership team members and the full faculty.

How Much Time is Needed for This Stage?

2.5 to 3 hours. This is an annual event that will lead to a new process of self-reflection and action.

Process

1. **Review action plan.** What measures were designated to measure effectiveness? Have these measures been administered?
2. **Determine if additional measures are needed.** This may be a great time to conduct focus groups or to readminister the survey(s) to staff, parents, and students.
3. **Measure progress on achievement measures.** Look at the goals and what was to be used to measure effectiveness—most often school-based assessments using pre- and post- benchmarking and standardized and criterion referenced assessments (ITBS, ITED, WASL) are used. How close did the school come to the targets that were set? Is student achievement improving? How did your students do on disaggregated measures?
4. **Determine how effective the implementation of the school improvement plan has been.** Look through the action planning sheets. Did people follow through? Perception data from focus groups, conversations with staff, and additional surveys will also give important information about implementation and its high and low points.
5. **Celebrate successes and acknowledge the need to redouble efforts.** Even the best plans meet with unpredictable obstacles and distractions. If everything didn't get implemented or measured ask why and determine if this is something that should be started in the next year/period of implementation. There are bound to be successes and things to be proud of—exploit these successes!
6. **Begin again.** Continuous improvement means there are always new ways to improve. The team can move on to new goals when original goals are achieved, regroup, revise the action plan, and start the cycle over again.

Caution

The school's improvement plan should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. The ultimate goal is to have your school learning improvement strategies become part of the school culture. Sometimes changes become internalized and it may not be readily apparent just how different things are, be sure not to miss these things.

Celebrate your successes and set new goals!

Resources

- *Evaluate Impact on Student Achievement Readiness Tool, Appendix C10*
- *Evaluation Worksheet, Appendix C33*
- *The OSPI SIP Tool, Assessing and Evaluating the Plan*
- *Moving Toward Second Order Change, Appendix D18*

