No Child Left Behind Program Series

NCLB

Improvement Plans

This document has been updated to reflect new fiscal, accountability, and program guidelines as of August 2015.

No Child Left Behind Improvement Plans

This school planning tool was developed to guide Texas public school districts, charter schools and campuses in developing, reviewing and revising improvement plans which address required federal and state components and provide focus for each level of the organization. The purpose is to align goals, objectives, strategies, and actions which will ultimately reflect high levels of performance for all students and student groups, close achievement gaps, and support systematic change to sustain excellence over time. The planning process is directly linked to, and begins with, the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA). When conducted thoroughly, the CNA provides identified strengths, weaknesses and specifies priorities for developing and revising plans which address student achievement outcomes through challenging academic standards and performance expectations.

The NCLB Improvement Plans document formalizes the process an organization uses to define improvement and focuses school and district improvement efforts on student needs by bringing together all stakeholders to target identified priorities. Organizations make a lasting difference when they focus on specific goals and strategies which support what is working and address areas of need. Improvement planning is an ongoing process in which schools identify needs, set goals for improvement, and make decisions about how and when these goals will be achieved. The plan ultimately serves to inform stakeholders about how the organization intends to close achievement gaps between subgroups of students, build school and district capacity, and make connections between the funds that flow to the organization and its intended actions. Therefore, a focused and well-developed plan provides clear direction, defines programming, and creates accountability for growth and improvement within the organization. It also serves as one of the primary financial and program audit documents for use of federal, state, and local funds.

The improvement planning process is required in both state and federal statute. Site-based decision making, which includes a planning component, has been mandated for all Texas school districts since 1992. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) defines site-based decision making as follows:

> Site-based decision making is a process for decentralizing decisions to improve the educational outcomes at every school campus through a collaborative effort by which principals, teachers, campus staff, district staff, parents, and community representatives assess educational outcomes of all students, determine goals and strategies, and ensure that strategies are implemented and adjusted to improve student achievement.

The expected outcome of site-based decision making is improved student performance as a result of:

- Effective campus and school district planning for the purpose of improved student performance;
- Improved community involvement in the school improvement process;
- Clearly established accountability parameters for student performance;
- Increased staff productivity and satisfaction;
- Improved communication and information flow;
- Consensus-based, decision making;
- Pervasive and long-range commitment to implementation;
- Increased flexibility at the campus level in the allocation and use of both human and fiscal resources; and
- Coordination of "regular" and special program or service components.

State Improvement Plan Requirements

Although central administration may maintain overall responsibility for these services, site-based administrators and staff should be significantly involved in planning, decision making, supervision and related activities.

Texas Education Code (TEC) 11.252 charges the campus principal and site-based decision making team with an annual improvement planning process including the development, review, and revision of improvement plans focused on increasing student academic achievement. Statute emphasizes attention to all student groups and special programs. TEC continues to direct campuses to set goals and performance objectives related to state performance indicators, including special programs and populations of students. Plans must determine how each student will achieve the objectives, identify resources to carry out the plan, identify responsible staff to ensure the plan is implemented, set timelines to achieve the goal, and include measures to evaluate the plan. In addition, TEC Section 11.251(f) requires LEAs to ensure that all pertinent federal planning requirements are addressed through the district- and campus-level planning process.

Each school district is required to adopt a policy and have administrative procedures in place to establish a district- and campus-level planning and decision-making process. This process must involve professional staff of the district, parents and community members in establishing and reviewing the district's and campuses' educational plans, goals, performance objectives and major classroom instructional programs (TEC 11.251 (b, d)). This collaborative process creates buy-in and shared accountability for achieving the goals and increasing student performance.

School districts are required to establish district- and campus-level planning and decision-making committees whose membership must include:

- Professional staff,
- Parents of students enrolled in the district,
- Community members, and
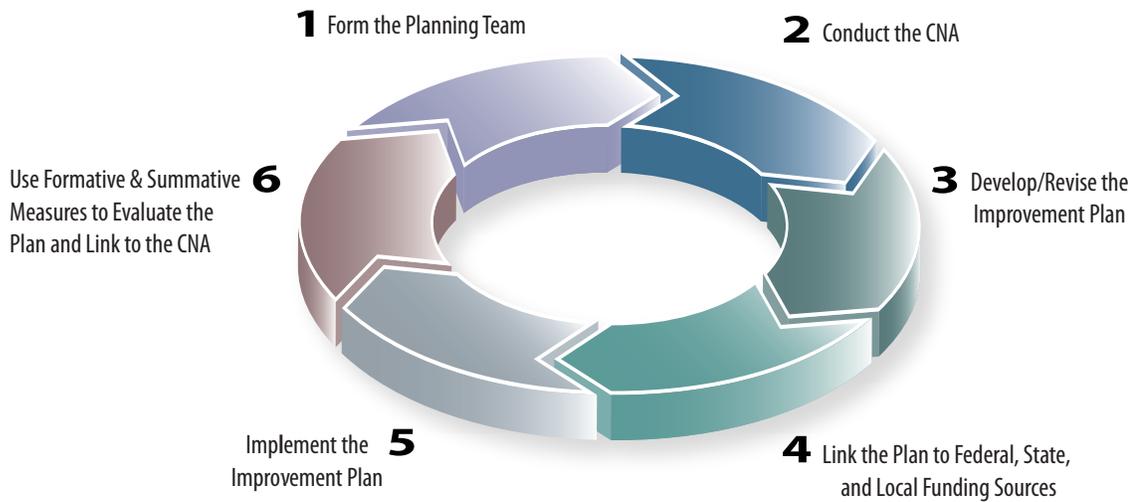- Business and industry representatives.

The selection process for the district- and campus-level committees must be conducted in a manner that provides for appropriate representation of the community's diversity (TEC 11.251 (e)). These committees must hold at least one public meeting per year which must take place after the receipt of the annual district performance report from TEA. These meetings are for the purpose of discussing the performance of the district and the district performance objectives (TEC 11.252 (e), 11.253 (g)).

Each campus improvement plan must:

1. Assess the academic achievement for each student in the school using the State's indicators for performance;

2. Set the campus performance objectives based on the academic excellence indicator system, including objectives for special needs populations, including students in special education programs under Subchapter A, Chapter 29;

3. Identify how the campus goals will be met for each student;

4. Determine the resources needed to implement the plan;

5. Identify staff needed to implement the plan;

6. Set timelines for reaching the goals;

7. Measure progress toward the performance objectives periodically to ensure that the plan is resulting in academic improvement;

8. Include goals and methods for violence prevention and intervention on campus;

9. Plan and conduct awareness education and training on Dating Violence for students, staff, and parents; and

10. Provide for a program to encourage parental involvement at the campus.

Organization and Development Process: State and Federal

1 Form the Planning Team

2 Conduct the CNA

3 Develop/Revise the Improvement Plan

4 Link the Plan to Federal, State, and Local Funding Sources

5 Implement the Improvement Plan

6 Use Formative & Summative Measures to Evaluate the Plan and Link to the CNA

Federal Improvement Plan Requirements

Schools operating as Title I, Part A Schoolwide or Targeted Assistance campuses are also required by Title I, Part A federal law to annually develop or amend an annual plan that incorporates federal 'schoolwide' and 'targeted assistance' planning requirements, as applicable to the school's program status. The plans must clearly include the required components; describe how the school will use Title I, Part A resources to implement the components; and list how state and federal funds are consolidated to implement the program, if applicable; and must include sufficient activities to address the needs of the intended beneficiaries of the federal program funds. District and campus plans must also adopt the NCLB Goals. The primary goals of NCLB are that:

- All students will achieve high academic standards by attaining proficiency or better in reading and mathematics.

- All students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.

- All students will be educated in schools and classrooms that are safe, drug free, and conducive to learning.

- All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English.

- All students will graduate from high school.

TEA has established System Safeguards, AMAOs, highly qualified requirements and other systems to evaluate district and campus progress towards NCLB goals and objectives.

The schoolwide campus plan requirements for a Title I schoolwide campus are to be incorporated in the campus improvement plan, as are the targeted assistance program components for Title I, Part A targeted assistance campuses. Specific requirements related to Title I, Part A schoolwide planning are as follows:

- Title I, Part A funds on a schoolwide campus may be used only to support activities identified by the comprehensive needs assessment and described in the campus improvement plan.

- Any eligible school that wishes to operate a schoolwide program shall first develop, in consultation with the LEA and its school support team or other technical assistance provider under P.L. 107-110, Section 1117, a comprehensive plan for reforming the total instructional program in the school that—

  1. Incorporate the requirements of a Schoolwide Plan as cited in P.L. 107-110, Section 1114(b);

  2. Clearly incorporate the ten components of a Schoolwide Program;

  3. Describe how the school will use Title I, Part A resources and other sources to implement the ten components;

  4. Include a list of state and federal programs whose funds will be combined to implement a schoolwide program;

  5. Describe how the intent and purposes of the federal programs whose funds are combined on a schoolwide campus are met; and

  6. Include sufficient activities to address the needs of the intended beneficiaries of the federal programs whose funds are combined on a schoolwide campus for upgrading the entire education program.

Specific Federal Requirements

Per federal statute, the comprehensive plan shall be:

1. Developed during a one-year period, unless—

   a. the LEA, after considering the recommendation of the technical assistance providers under Section 1117(c) and (e), determines that less time is needed to develop and implement the schoolwide program; or

   b. the school was operating a schoolwide program on the day preceding the date of enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, in which case such school may continue to operate such program, but shall develop amendments to its existing plan during the first year of assistance under such Act to reflect the plan provisions;

2. **Developed with the involvement of the parents and other members of the community to be served and individuals who will carry out such plan, including teachers, principals, and administrators (including administrators of programs described in other parts of Title I), and if appropriate, pupil services personnel, technical assistance providers, school staff, and, if the plan relates to a secondary school, students from such school.**

3. In effect for the duration of the school's participation in Title I, Part A and reviewed and revised, as necessary, by the school;

4. Available to the LEA, parents, and the public, and the information contained in such plan shall be in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent feasible, provided in a language that the parents can understand; and

5. If appropriate, developed in coordination with programs under the Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational.

Title I, Part A Schoolwide Components

Component	Clarification
1. A comprehensive needs assessment of the entire school (including taking into account the needs of migratory children as defined in section 1309(2)) that is based on information which includes the achievement of children in relation to the State academic content standards and the State student academic achievement standards described in section 1111(b)(1).	The use of schoolwide planning teams helps create a school culture that engages staff in a data-driven process to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment, allowing them to: • clarify their vision for reform, • create a school profile, • identify data sources, and • analyze data to ensure that the learning needs of every student are met.

2. Schoolwide reform strategies that–
(i) provide opportunities for all children to meet the State's proficient and advanced levels of student academic achievement described in section 1111(b)(1)(D);
(ii) use effective methods and instructional strategies that are based on scientifically based research that—
    (I) strengthen the core academic program in the school;
    (II) increase the amount and quality of learning time, such as providing an extended school year and before- and after-school and summer programs and opportunities, and help provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum; and
    (III) include strategies for meeting the educational needs of historically underserved populations;
 (iii)
    (I) include strategies to address the needs of all children in the school, but particularly the needs of low-achieving children and those at risk of not meeting the State student academic achievement standards who are members of the target population of any program that is included in the schoolwide program, which may include–
      (aa) counseling, pupil services, and mentoring services;
      (bb) college and career awareness and preparation, such as college and career guidance, personal finance education, and innovative teaching methods, which may include applied learning and team-teaching strategies; and
      (cc) the integration of vocational and technical education programs; and
    (II) address how the school will determine if such needs have been met; and
(iv) are consistent with, and are designed to implement, the State and local improvement plans, if any.
	Schoolwide reform strategies must provide opportunities for all children to meet the state's proficient or advanced levels of student performance. These strategies should be based on effective means of improving achievement of children.
	
	Instructional strategies and initiatives in the comprehensive plan must be based on scientifically-based research, strengthen the core academic program, increase the quality and quantity of learning time, and address the learning needs of all students in the school.

Component	Clarification
3. Instruction by highly qualified teachers.	Instruction by highly qualified teachers must be provided to all students. High poverty, low-performing schools are sometimes staffed with disproportionately high numbers of teachers who are not highly qualified. To address this disproportionality, NCLB requires that all teachers of core academic subjects and instructional paraprofessionals in a schoolwide program school meet the qualifications required to be highly qualified. Student achievement increases in schools where teaching and learning have the highest priority, and students achieve at higher levels when taught by teachers who know their subject matter and are skilled in teaching.
4. In accordance with section 1119 and subsection (a)(4), high-quality and ongoing professional development for teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals and, if appropriate, pupil services personnel, parents, and other staff to enable all children in the school to meet the State's student academic achievement standards.	Teachers and other staff in schoolwide program schools must be equipped to face the challenge of helping all students meet the State's academic achievement standards. To do this, they must be familiar with the goals and objectives of the schoolwide plan, and receive the sustained, high-quality professional development required to implement them. The statute requires that professional development be extended, as appropriate, to those who partner with teachers to support student achievement, such as principals, paraprofessionals, and parents.
5. Strategies to attract high-quality teachers to high-need schools.	Although recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers is an on-going challenge in high poverty schools, low-performing students in these schools have a special need for excellent teachers. Therefore, the schoolwide plan must describe the strategies it will use to attract and retain highly qualified teachers.
6. Strategies to increase parental involvement in accordance with section 1118, such as family literary services.	Research continues to demonstrate that successful schools have significant and sustained levels of parental involvement. Therefore, it is important that schoolwide plans contain strategies to involve parents, especially in helping their children do well in school. In addition, parents must be involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the schoolwide program. Schools demonstrating meaningful parental involvement strategies use a variety of strategies to engage all parents in supporting student learning that occurs in the home and at school.

Component	Clarification
7. Plans for assisting preschool children in the transition from early childhood programs, such as Head Start, Even Start, Early Reading First, or a State-run preschool program, to local elementary school programs.	Plans for assisting preschool students in the successful transition from early childhood programs to local elementary school-wide programs—This component emphasizes the value of creating a coherent and seamless educational program for at-risk students. Early childhood programs, including Early Reading First and others, provide a foundation for later academic success, and effective schoolwide programs capitalize on this strong start. Title I, Part A preschool programs provide young children with the early learning experiences that will enable them to meet academic standards throughout elementary and secondary school.
8. Measures to include teachers in the decisions regarding the use of academic assessments described in section 1111(b)(3) in order to provide information on, and to improve, the achievement of individual students and the overall instructional program.	Effective schools incorporate a data-driven instructional process that relies on standardized or statewide testing as well as classroom and informal assessment tools and provide staff with professional development to assist them in using and generating a variety of data forms. In addition to State assessment results, teachers need current and ongoing assessment data that describe student achievement. These data often come from less formal assessments, such as observation, performance assessments, or forms. The schoolwide program should provide teachers with professional development that increases their understanding of the appropriate uses of multiple assessment measures and how to use assessment results to improve instruction.

Component	Clarification
9. Activities to ensure that students who experience difficulty mastering the proficient or advanced levels of academic achievement standards required by section 1111(b) (1) shall be provided with effective, timely additional assistance which shall include measures to ensure that students' difficulties are identified on a timely basis and to provide sufficient information on which to base effective assistance.	Schools that focus on addressing the needs of every student develop structures to identify struggling students and implement targeted strategies to support student learning through routine data analysis. The schoolwide program school must identify students who need additional learning time to meet standards and provide them with timely, additional assistance that is tailored to their needs. This assistance must be available to all students in the school who need it.
10. Coordination and integration of Federal, State, and local services and programs, including programs supported under this Act, violence prevention programs, nutrition programs, housing programs, Head Start, adult education, vocational and technical education, and job training.	Effective schools draw on a wide range of resources from within and outside of the system and monitor the impact of their use in order to ensure that all students receive a quality education and achieve high academic expectations. Schoolwide program schools are expected to use the flexibility available to them to integrate services and programs with the aim of upgrading the entire educational program and helping all students reach proficient and advanced levels of achievement. In addition to coordinating and integrating services, schoolwide program schools may combine most Federal, State and local funds to provide those services. Exercising this option maximizes the impact of the resources available to carry out the schoolwide program.

Source: Excerpts from the ESC-16 Ten Components of a Schoolwide Program

Title I, Part A Targeted Assistance Components

To assist targeted assistance schools and local educational agencies to meet their responsibility to provide for all their students served under this part the opportunity to meet the State's challenging student academic achievement standards, each Title I, Part A Targeted Assistance program includes eight required components which must be included in the improvement plans for targeted assistance campuses. Each Targeted Assistance program shall—

1. use such program's resources under this part to help participating children meet such State's challenging student academic achievement standards expected for all children;

2. ensure that planning for students served under this part is incorporated into existing school planning;

3. use effective methods and instructional strategies that are based on scientifically-based research that strengthens the core academic program of the school and that

   - give primary consideration to providing extended learning time, such as an extended school year, before- and after-school, and summer programs and opportunities;

   - help provide an accelerated, high-quality curriculum, including applied learning; and

   - minimize removing children from the regular classroom during regular school hours for instruction provided under this part;

4. coordinate with and support the regular education program, which may include services to assist preschool children in the transition from early childhood programs such as Head Start, Even Start, Early Reading First or State-run preschool programs to elementary school programs;

5. provide instruction by highly qualified teachers;

6. in accordance with subsection (e)(3) and Section 1119, provide opportunities for professional development with resources provided under this part, and, to the extent practicable, from other sources, for teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals, including, if appropriate, pupil services personnel, parents, and other staff, who work with participating children in programs under this section or in the regular education program;

7. provide strategies to increase parental involvement in accordance with Section 1118, such as family literacy services; and

8 coordinate and integrate Federal, State, and local services and programs, including programs supported under this Act, violence prevention programs, nutrition programs, housing programs, Head Start, adult education, vocational and technical education, and job training.

State Compensatory Education (SCE) Planning Requirements: Linking SCE to Title I, Part A

TEC Section 11.251 requires each LEA to have a district and campus improvement plan or charter instructional plan, as appropriate. The SCE program must be described in the campus improvement plan if the program is implemented at the campus level or be described in the district improvement plan if SCE is implemented districtwide. The district/campus improvement plan serves as the primary record supporting expenditures attributed to the SCE program.

TEC also requires that the board of trustees ensure that the LEA and all campus plans be developed, reviewed and revised annually for the purpose of improving the performance of all students. Annual board approval must ensure that the district and campus plans are mutually supportive to accomplish the identified objectives and support the state goals and objectives listed in TEC Chapter 4.

In addressing the needs of students at risk of dropping out of school, the SCE program must be addressed in the comprehensive needs assessment, be described in the campus improvement plan if the program is implemented at the campus level, or be described in the district improvement plan if the program is implemented districtwide. The district and/or campus improvement plan, as appropriate, must also include the following:

- Comprehensive needs assessment: conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing programs, practices, procedures, and activities

- Total amount of SCE funds allocated for resources and staff

- Identified strategies–aligned with the comprehensive needs assessment

- Supplemental financial resources for SCE

- Supplemental FTEs for SCE must be noted if district and campus personnel are paid from SCE funds. (This is not necessary if the schoolwide campus is at or above 40% and is combining SCE funds to support their Title I, Part A program using a program intent code of '30.')

- Measurable performance objectives–stated in terms of what the student is expected to do and stated in terms of measurable and/or observable behavior to ensure that the plan is resulting in academic improvement

- Timelines for monitoring strategies and reaching goals–with a specific schedule for data collection during the school year

- Formative and summative evaluation criteria–periodic measures that are utilized during the actual implementation of the overall project and process evaluation and SCE funds may be used on a Title I, Part A Schoolwide campus to upgrade the educational program where the actual poverty percentage of the campus is 40% or greater as long as the SCE funds allocated to the campus are supplemental to the costs of the regular education program. To determine a campus' poverty percentage, school districts use the same auditable poverty data used for Title I, Part A to identify Title I campuses in the NCLB Consolidated Application for Federal Funding, located on the Title I Campus Selection Schedule (SC5000). The use of these funds must be described and evaluated in the schoolwide

campus improvement plan. SCE resources must be redirected when evaluations indicate that programs and/or services are unsuccessful in producing desired results for students at risk of dropping out of school.

The LEA must have established criteria for every grade that receives services under Title I, Part A targeted assistance programs. Any supplemental identification criteria established at the campus level must also be described in the Title I, Part A targeted assistance campus improvement plan. Students must be identified on the basis of multiple, educationally related, objective criteria established by the LEA and supplemented by the school. The LEA's criteria for identifying students for Title I, Part A services must be clearly defined in the LEA's district/campus improvement plans or charter school instructional plan. Any supplemental criteria established at the campus level must also be described in the corresponding campus plan. The LEA must have criteria for every grade that receives services under Title I, Part A targeted assistance programs.

Direct costs for SCE programs must relate to substantive programmatic strategies as indicated in the LEA's school needs assessment, district/campus/charter school improvement plans, and must be supplemental to direct costs necessary to provide the regular education program.

The comprehensive needs assessment for small enrollment school districts and charter schools may often establish class size reduction as a primary strategy for SCE program and reflect this strategy in the campus improvement plans (for school districts) or the campus instructional plans (for charter schools).

For additional information regarding SCE planning requirements, visit TEA's website.

Organizational Planning Cycle

1 Conduct Comprehensive Needs Assessment

- Use multiple sources of data
- Focus on various aspects of the organization
- Create the school profile
- Identify priorities and summarize needs

2 Establish SMART Goals

- Approved by the board
- Aligned with the mission, vision and beliefs
- Address priority needs

Improvement planning is an ongoing process in which schools identify needs, set goals for improvement, and make decisions about how and when these goals will be achieved. The plan ultimately serves to inform stakeholders about how the organization intends to close achievement gaps between subgroups of students, build school and district capacity, and make connections between the funds that flow to the organization and its intended actions.

9 Evaluate Progress: Summative

- Compare summative outcomes to goals and objectives
- Identify changes in outcomes for specific student populations
- Critically evaluate the system
- Identify where the system is getting results
- Identify new insights in the planning process to refine the new cycle

8 Periodically Evaluate Progress: Formative

- Celebrate successes
- Establish processes and procedures for monitoring against attainment of goals and objectives
- Assess for evidence of implementation and evidence of impact

- Provide progress updates to staff and district
- Adjust the plan accordingly
- Track and communicate changes

3 Determine Measurable Objectives

- Identify specific, measurable, expected results aligned with goals
- Address indicators for improvement
- Target all student populations
- Focus on closing achievement gaps

4 Identify Research Strategies

- Identify how goals and objectives will be reached
- Include scientifically research-based strategies
- Identify a sustained course of action

5 Define Activities: Actions Steps

- Provide a detailed step-by-step process for implementing strategies
- Clarify how the organization will carry out the strategies

6 Determine Other Planning Needs

- Provide clarity for:
  - Person responsible
  - Resources
  - Timelines
  - Evidence of implementation
  - Evidence of impact
  - Formative assessments
  - Summative assessments

7 Implement the Plan

- Ensure alignment between district and campus plans
- Create a common understanding of the plan
- Communicate expectations for implementation of the plan
- Assess and monitor how staff carry out the plan

Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Improvement plans are developed to address priorities identified in the CNA process and review of data. The data helps staff monitor and assess the impact of programs and instruction on student achievement and includes developing a school profile. A complete and thorough CNA will guide the development of the improvement plan and ensure that the priority areas are determined from the data, rather than assumptions or perceptions.

The process provides schools with identified strengths and weaknesses and specifies priorities for addressing student achievement and meeting challenging academic and performance standards. Conducting a CNA is a process, not an event. While there may be specific times during the school year when targeted data analysis occurs, the data collection and analysis process is ongoing to ensure that progress toward the school's objectives, goals, mission and vision are being realized.

The NCLB CNA tool, available at
http://www.region10.org/capacity-building-initiative/capacity-building-links/nclb-publications,
focuses on several areas:

- demographics;
- student achievement;
- school culture and climate;
- teacher quality, recruitment and retention;
- curriculum, instruction and assessment;
- family and community involvement;
- school context and organization; and
- technology.

During the CNA process, a number of areas of needs will be identified. It is both unrealistic and impractical to address every need from the CNA in the improvement plan. While all issues identified in the CNA are important, the impulse to tackle every issue will fragment the improvement process. The improvement plan development team must narrow the identified needs to those that will produce the greatest impact on student performance, particularly for those subgroups which are performing below expectations.

Guiding Questions

1. What additional questions are raised by the CNA?

2. What priorities and areas of focus did the CNA highlight?

3. What process will be used to narrow the list of priorities?

4. Which priority areas are most critical to school improvement and gains in student achievement?

5. What is the relationship between the district's priority needs and those of the campus(es)?

6. How do priorities and needs correlate with justification for state and federal program expenditures?

7. How are strategies and expenditures supporting closing achievement gaps and improving achievement for intended beneficiaries in schoolwide and targeted assistance programs, including migrant, ELL, special education and other student groups?

Identifying SMART Goals

The greatest thing in this world is not so much where we are, but in which direction we are moving. Oliver Wendell Holmes

Once the priority needs have been identified, those needs are addressed through improvement 'goals.' Goals are broad statements of expected outcomes aligned with the mission and vision of the organization. They reflect statements of results, targets, or the 'end.' Goals should be straightforward and emphasize what you want to happen; they can be described as an ideal state. It is how the system will look and perform when the priority or need has been resolved.

Guiding Questions

1. What should the organization strive to become?

2. How do the goals support the organization's mission and vision?

3. How do the goals create a vision for change?

4. How do the goals support the intended outcomes for student achievement?

5. What is the alignment between the goals and federal/state expectations for student performance?

6. Is the goal lofty enough to inspire, yet attainable?

7. What will the organization look like once the goals are obtained?

8. To what degree do the goals address the priority needs?

SMART Goals

The acronym **SMART** has a number of slightly different variations, which can be used to provide a more comprehensive definition for goal setting:

S Specific, Significant, Stretching

The goal should identify a specific action or event that will take place. Specifics help us to focus our efforts and clearly define what the organization will ultimately accomplish.

Specific is the **What, Why and How** of the SMART model.

- **What** are you going to do?
- **Why** is this important to do at this time? What do you want to ultimately accomplish?
- **How** are you going to do it?

M Measurable, Meaningful, Motivational

The entire goal statement is a measure of accomplishment; if the goal is accomplished, there is success. However, there are usually several short-term or small measurements that can be built into the goal.

Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal. When staff measures progress, stays on track, and reaches target dates, the organization experiences achievement that facilitates continued effort required to reach goals.

A Attainable, Achievable, Acceptable, Action-Oriented

The goals should be attainable, yet stretch the organization and stakeholders.

The organization works towards developing attitudes, abilities, skills, and financial capacity to achieve the goals.

R Realistic, Relevant, Reasonable, Rewarding, Results-Oriented

Realistic, in this case, means "do-able" and the direction fits with the overall strategy and goals of the organization. Realistic goals may challenge the skills and knowledge of the people working on them, yet they are still reasonable with consistent effort. The bar should be set high enough for satisfying achievement!

T Time-Based, Timely, Tangible, Trackable

Time must be measurable, attainable and realistic. Time frames set direction and create a sense of urgency for movement towards attainment.

Objectives

District and campus performance objectives identify expected results or outcomes for all student populations served. These objectives target observable behaviors that provide indicators for measuring change, e.g., student performance. State statute requires all districts to adopt measurable district performance objectives for all appropriate State indicators and student populations. This includes objectives for special needs populations, including students served through special programs such as Title I-Part A, Title I-Part C, Title III-Part A and others.

Guiding Questions

1. What is the relationship between the goals and the objectives?

2. How will meeting the objective move the organization closer to the goals?

3. How will the objectives be measured?

4. What are the set specific federal and state targets?

5. How do they address student performance for all student populations served?

6. How do the objectives close achievement gaps?

Strategies and Action Steps

Strategies include carefully devised action steps which set direction to achieve a goal. They are statements that indicate how available resources will be used to accomplish identified long-range goals and annual performance objectives and include specific action steps that support implementing the strategy. Strategies may address the use of organizational, physical plant, spatial, material, human, fiscal, technological, and/or informational resources. Strategies should link the selected measurable performance objectives to accomplish the desired district or campus goals. When identifying and adopting strategies and initiatives, districts and campus are required to ensure that these strategies are scientifically research-based and proven to support student achievement. Federal funding requirements outlined in NCLB statute and the funding 'provisions and assurances' outline this condition. Well-researched and proven strategies should be sufficient in the improvement plan to positively affect student achievement. This ensures fidelity of implementation of the strategies and action plans to clearly assess implementation and impact.

Guiding Questions

1. How are the strategies aligned with objectives and goals?

2. How can we document that the strategy or initiative is research-based?

3. If the strategy is funded through federal (NCLB) funds, how do we justify that it is supplemental?

4. In what ways do the strategies address the schoolwide and/or targeted assistance components?

5. How does the plan identify a sufficient and reasonable number of strategies to address meeting the performance objective and goals?

Persons Responsible

This section includes identifying a person or position responsible for ensuring the strategy or initiative and action steps are implemented as planned. It also creates accountability for implementation of the strategies and activities within the improvement plan.

Guiding Questions

1. Who should be assigned as the person(s) responsible?

2. What kinds of supports will the responsible person(s) need?

3. What knowledge and skills are needed by the responsible person(s)?

4. What type of reporting is required to keep others informed?

Resources

Identifying needed resources, labeling funding sources, and stating specific allocations is the minimum standard for improvement plan reporting. The resources in the improvement plan create the financial link and audit document for the accounting of Federal, State, and local funds. It is important when identifying resources that specifics are reported.

Guiding Questions

1. What are the financial resources needed to implement this strategy or action?

2. What resources are required other than funding?

3. How do the resources indicate the specific need?

4. How do the resources support the initiative or action step?

Timeline

Implementation timeline in improvement plans should provide specific dates for the initiation of the strategy or action step, monitoring timeline for implementation through formative evaluation measures, and timelines for summative evaluations to measure the impact of the strategy in relation to goals and objectives.

Guiding Questions

1. What date will the strategy begin?

2. What timeline will be used to monitor the implementation of the strategy?

3. When will formative and summative evaluations occur?

Evidence of Implementation/Evidence of Impact

This section of the improvement plan describes the documented steps an organization uses to ensure that the strategies and activities are implemented with fidelity (Evidence of Implementation) and how the impact will be measure (Evidence of Impact). In order to accurately evaluate the impact of the strategy or activity, it is imperative that staff is clear about how to implement what is expected and are supported accordingly.

Guiding Questions

1. How do we know that the strategy or initiative is being implemented with fidelity?

2. What outcomes do we expect the strategy or activity to yield?

3. What is the documented evidence of full implementation within the organization?

4. What is the relationship between full implementation and classroom/student performance?

Evaluation

Evaluating improvement plans has two dimensions: formative and summative. The formative, or frequent, ongoing evaluation activities should be guided by expected results and incremental timelines associated with the activities developed to accomplish the performance objectives. The summative, or annual, evaluation is conducted to assess the degree to which the district or campus actually accomplished the school year's targeted performance objectives and goals. This evaluation measure is determining if the improvement strategy had the intended effect on overall performance. The evaluation of the improvement plan strategies, objectives, and goals begins the CNA process.

Guiding Questions

1. What will be used to measure implementation?

2. What documentation will be used as data?

3. What will be used to measure impact on student achievement?

4. What other forms of assessment should be used?

5. How will adjustments be made to the plan based on data collected during evaluation?

6. What are our timelines for formative and summative evaluations of the plan?

Quality Plans

Creating quality plans is an intense, collaborative process. Once the plan is in a final draft stage, it is critical to step back and evaluate the quality of the plan and to see if will address the desired results. The following rubric serves to assist improvement planning teams in self-assessing the overall quality of the plan. An additional checklist which includes the requirements for the improvement plans is available at
http://www.region10.org/capacity-building-initiative/capacity-building-links/nclb-publications.

	Ideal Level of Development and Implementation	Limited Level of Development and Implementation	Little/ No Evidence of Development or Implementation
Comprehensive Needs Assessment	• Full consideration of the campus was assessed with multiple stakeholders involved. • Multiple sources of data were collected, analyzed and applied to creating the campus profile. • A clear campus profile of strengths, needs and priorities was developed and tied to the planning process. • There is clear alignment between the profile, mission, vision and desired results.	• Various aspects of the campus were assessed with limited stakeholders involved. • A few sources of data were collected, analyzed, and applied to creating the campus profile. • Some strengths and needs were determined based on limited data. • Limited efforts were made to align the needs/priorities to the planning process.	• At a minimum, student achievement results were assessed. • At a minimum, student achievement data was collected, analyzed, and applied to determine campus needs. • There were no efforts to align the needs/priorities to the planning process.
Clearly Defined Goals and Objectives	The goals and objectives • are measurable, • directly address the priorities for addressing student learning, • stretch the campus, and • are attainable within a reasonable time frame.	Most of the goals and objectives • are measurable, • reflect some of the priorities for addressing student learning, • are somewhat challenging, and • could be attained within reasonable time frame.	The goals and objectives • do not reflect the priorities, • are not related to student learning, and • are not challenging or measurable.
Aligned and Scientifically Research-Based Strategies and Supporting Action Steps	The strategies and supporting action steps • are based on validated scientifically research-based principles for teaching and learning, • are directly aligned with the goals and objectives, and • include comprehensive action steps.	The strategies and supporting action steps • are sometimes based on validated scientifically research-based principles for teaching and learning, • are partially aligned with the goals and objectives, and • include limited action steps.	The strategies and supporting action steps • are not research-based, • are vaguely aligned with the goals and objectives, and • include vague actions.

	Ideal Level of Development and Implementation	Limited Level of Development and Implementation	Little/ No Evidence of Development or Implementation
Clearly Defined Responsibilities, Resources, and Timelines	• Staff assigned with planning responsibilities model clear leadership and accountability. • Resources are fully dedicated to implementing the strategies and action steps; and achieving the goals and objectives. • Timelines are reasonable and depict clear actions.	• Staff responsible for leading and implementing is assigned. • Adequate resources are dedicated to fulfilling the strategies, action steps, goals and objectives. • Timelines are somewhat reasonable.	• Assignments of staff responsible are vague and unclear. • Inadequate and/or no resources have been provided to support the plan. • Timelines are not established and/or are not reasonable.
Evidence of Implementation and Evidence of Impact	• There is a systematic and comprehensive process to collect evidence that strategies are implemented with fidelity, and this information is documented and tracked. • Periodic assessments are consistently used to assess the impact of the strategies.	• There is a means for evaluating implementation, but evidence is insufficient to adequately assess the extent of implementation. • Periodic assessments are conducted to determine levels of implementation.	• There is inadequate or no evidence of evaluating implementation. • Evidence of impact is not assessed.
Formative and Summative Evaluation Measures	• The campus has highly effective and efficient assessment and data collection systems tied to the plan. • There is a systematic and comprehensive process to periodically assess the plan for the purpose of refining and adjusting actions. • There is a systematic and comprehensive process to evaluate the plan based on target goals and objectives.	• The campus uses some assessments and data to evaluate the plan. • Some periodic assessments are used to determine progress towards goals and objective. • Summative assessments include a review of student achievement data results, although not necessarily tied to the target goals and objectives in the plan.	• There is no system to collect data and periodically evaluate the plan. • Formative assessments are used, but not tied to the plan. • Summative assessments include a review of student achievement results as a final assessment.

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