

Eight Stages of School Improvement Planning Process (School Improvement Planning Tool)

1. Assess Readiness to Benefit

Staff 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. The School Retreat Team will need to adjust strategies and activities based on the abilities and willingness of each participant. It is important to increase staff awareness. *Let staff know:*

- Reason for school improvement efforts
- Process taking to get there
- Input from all staff is needed and valued
- School Retreat Team (representative leaders) will meet, plan, and share information back with full staff. Expect to be challenged

Some first steps that promote the abilities and willingness of staff are:

- Effective processes for conducting meetings
- Clear understanding of how decisions are made
- Decision-making strategies for working toward consensus
- Time to meet and resources for supporting this work
- Open communication and trust among staff
- District support and understanding of school improvement planning

2. Collect, Sort, and Select Data

Data can tell a school’s story. Collecting and using information about the school and the school’s community moves the message from feeling to facts. What are the school’s strengths? Which programs and services have the greatest potential for growth based on current data? By the end of this stage the School Retreat Team will gather current data on achievement, demographics, staff/student/parent perceptions, and school programs and share it with the rest of the staff.

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
- Develop an understanding of the school’s demographic profile, including racial ethnic, and socio-economic factors

3. Build and Analyze the School Portfolio

This stage helps all stakeholders understand the school’s story. Displaying achievement and other data types in ways that are understandable to all audiences stimulate shared responsibility for education among teachers, parents, community members, and the students themselves. 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.

Readers of the data 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 parents, community, and students involved in the school?
- What is important to the staff, students, and parent community?
- Do we provide equitable education for all students?



Eight Stages of School Improvement Planning Process (Continued)

4. Set and Prioritize Goals

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. Challenges/concerns will be grouped into themes. Goal statements are (S.M.A.R.T.) specific, student-centered, measurable, attainable, related to achievement, and time bound. Once goals have been written by the team, they should be reviewed by the rest of the staff.

Goal-setting involves questions such as:

- What goals are already required by the state?
- What are the areas of greatest need?
Which of these have the highest potential for impact?



5. Research and Select Effective Practices

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. Staff members will conduct research on school practices related to their school improvement goals.

6. Craft Action Plan

The action plan pulls together the team's finding into a commitment to act. Introducing change into the busy, complicated enterprise of a school requires carefully thought out and well articulated plans. Organized around the 3-4 school improvement goals that were 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

7. Monitor Implementation of the Plan

During this stage, the School Retreat 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.

The key outcomes of this stage are to:

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

Before you get started make sure that:

- Resources are secured for implementation
- Realistic timelines are established
- Staff development plan developed
- School Improvement Plan published and approved Stakeholders review and refine the plan

8. Evaluate Impact on Student Achievement

Evaluate the impact of the action plan to bring 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 state assessments and other measures to determine if school improvement goals were met and if the action plans were successful in improving student achievement. Celebrate successes and set new goals!

