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ABSTRACT
                This guide was developed to provide assistance and
direction for members of local school communities as they plan to
improve instructional programs for students. Supplemented by a
resource handbook, the guide is designed for teachers, parents,
administrators, and support staff members in schools receiving
funding through the following programs: (1) School Improvement
Program; (2) State Compensatory Education Program; (3) ECIA, Chapter
1; (4) Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program; (5) Gifted and
Talented Education (GATE) Program; (6) Miller-Unruh Reading Program;
and (7) Staff Development Program. While the basic process for
program planning remains the same, this guide has been changed
significantly from previous planning guides and reflects the
curriculum renewal effort currently under way in California. Included
in the guide are four chapters which focus, sequentially, on
revitalizing the elementary school program, organizing the planning
process, preparing to write the school improvement plan, and writing
the school improvement plan. The guide also provides a description of
a generic planning process, and a description of the major features
of a school improvement plan. Illustative examples of the main
features of school program planning are incorporated throughout this
guide. Appended materials provide school planners with a tool to use
in assessing the results of their planning efforts. (RH)

Elementary School
Program Planning Guide

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Bill Honig—Superintendent of Public Instruction ● Sacramento, 1986

Elementary School Program Planning Guide

Prepared under the direction of the
OFFICE OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
California State Department of Education

Publishing Information

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PREFACE

The Elementary School Program Planning Guide and the accompanying Resource Handbook have been developed to provide assistance and direction for members of the local school community as they plan for improving the instructional program for students. The publications are designed for teachers, parents, administrators, and support staff members in schools receiving funding through the following programs:

o   School Improvement Program
o   State Compensatory Education Program
o   ECIA, Chapter 1
o   Bilingual/Bicultural Education Program
o   Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) Program
o   Miller-Unruh Reading Program
o   Staff Development Program

These publications will be especially helpful as teachers, parents, administrators, and support staff members develop and implement their written school plan. While the basic process for program planning remains the same, this planning guide has been changed significantly from previous years' guides and reflects the curriculum renewal effort currently under way. In accordance with the thrust of the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria, the major focus of school improvement planning is on a rigorous curriculum, one with high expectations and standards for all students. Much of the busy work and duplication associated with planning has been eliminated, allowing program planners to direct their attention to those important strategies for improvement that will offer the greatest benefit to students.

The Elementary School Planning Guide contains the following four chapters, plus an appendix:

o   Chapter I, Revitalizing the Elementary School Program
o   Chapter II, Organizing the Planning Process
o   Chapter III, Preparing to Write the School Improvement Plan
o   Chapter IV, Writing the School Improvement Plan
o   Appendix

The guide includes a description of a generic planning process, plus a description of the major features of a school plan. In order to show how the significant features of school program planning work together, examples of the main features are incorporated throughout this guide. These examples are meant to be illustrative; they are not to be considered a mandate. Such examples are set apart from the regular text. The appendix is designed to provide school planners with a tool to use in assessing the results of their planning efforts.

While the Elementary School Program Planning Guide provides an overview of school level planning, a companion document, the Resource Handbook, was designed as an encyclopedia and contains titles of specific reference materials useful in the program planning process.

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Sections are clearly labeled for easy reference. Planners need not review the entire Resource Handbook; but, having read through the Planning Guide, planners should be able to locate additional reference materials pertinent to their planning responsibilities in the Resource Handbook. The Resource Handbook is comprehensive in scope and is intended to be used as a reference for specific program information and special planning strategies. These programs include interpretation of California Assessment Program (CAP) results; evaluation of texts; and implications for the use of frameworks and other documents, such as the Model Curriculum Standards.

As a result of the passage of Senate Bill 1155 (Education Code Section 52034), school level plans are no longer submitted to the State Department of Education. Instead, the completed plans are reviewed at the local level and kept at the school site. These reviews may be conducted either within the school district or by individuals from outside the district. In many cases, school district personnel are joining neighboring districts in consortium-type arrangements in order to ensure an independent point of view as the plans are read. This method of utilizing personnel from outside the district closely mirrors the way in which staff are utilized and shared during school program quality reviews.

Under Education Code Section 64001 (c), the cycle for the review of plans, which is three years, remains unchanged. However, as annual planning activities and program quality reviews often result in modifications to the plans, some school level planners may want their plans read more frequently. The development and review of the school plan should be considered an integral part of the school's improvement process that will yield information helpful to the school community as it continues its pursuit of a high quality instructional program. This process should be guided by the central goal of supporting the school's improvement effort and should enhance the likelihood that each student will receive the necessary skills and knowledge that will enable him or her to become an educated person.

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Chapter I

Revitalizing the Elementary school Program

The revitalization occurring in California's schools is the result of many factors. Significant among these factors are the substantial and increasing body of educational research, the impact of several national reports, the influence of the California legislation, and the commitment of districts and individual schools across the state. This reassertion of excellence in schools has provided a focus for the efforts of professional educators and interested, involved citizens at all levels of the educational system--from preschool to post-graduate institutions. The effects of this movement to improve the quality of schools are already being realized. Statewide, students are engaged in more rigorous academic course work, and achievement levels are rising.

The basis of the excellence movement is the effort and commitment of local school teachers and administrators who are planning an improved instructional program that will raise the interest and achievement levels of all students. School improvement planning generates a shared perception of what the school is like and a vision of how the school can be improved. Effective planning practices help the members of the school community to concentrate on the significant issues affecting the quality of the school's curriculum and instructional program. Effective planning practices provide a vehicle for communication and collaboration among teachers, parents, administrators, and support staff members. Good planning culminates in written agreements between members of the school community regarding what is to be done to improve the instructional program, how the improvements are to be made, and who is responsible for carrying out improvement activities. High-quality planning efforts are dynamic, ongoing, and self-sustaining. They continue from month to month and year to year and result in comprehensive and challenging instructional programs that ensure the success of all students.

Students must be prepared and empowered to participate fully in civic life through a curriculum that imparts the importance of strong values and reasoned choices. Careful planning with a focus on curriculum and instruction provides a secure context for defining the common culture and for reflecting the ideals and morals that distinguish our history. The primary focus of the planning effort, then, is improvement of the content of the curriculum and the instructional activities that support the delivery of that curriculum. The planned improvements in curriculum and instruction must result in high-quality education that is accessible to all students in the school, including limited-English-proficient (LEP) students, those students achieving at a level significantly below their peers, gifted and talented students, and those receiving instruction in special education.

After the planning process is completed and a high-quality instructional program is established, the program should provide students with a solid foundation in three kinds of learning--skills, knowledge, and values. The program should have a clear academic focus, building on a base of oral language, reading, writing, and mathematics. The program should provide students with extensive experience in literature, science, history and

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social science, fine arts, physical education, and health. The planned program should instill in students an understanding of the history, culture, and common ideals essential to a democracy. The program should build on students' interests and help students to hone their critical thinking skills. Within the context of a strong academic program, expectations for success should be held for all students at the school.

High-quality instructional programs are characterized by a core curriclum that is clearly defined. In a high-quality instructional program, teacher-directed instruction, student learning activities and assignments, and instructional materials and assessment procedures are aligned with the curricular goals. Significant features of the program include increasing the time students spend actively engaged in learning, promoting students' natural curiosity about the world around them, and capturing the excitement of both teachers and students about the teaching/learning enterprise. As a result of careful planning, a deliberate and orderly learning environment is established. Expectations for learners as well as school staff members are understood and agreed upon. Fairness and equity are apparent, and the importance and dignity of learning are modeled and transmitted. That is, adults respect and understand students, and students understand and respect adults. Activities that support direct contact with the teacher through instruction, guidance, and encouragement are built upon the fundamental human need of each student to be recognized, respected, and cared for in a healthy learning environment.

The previous description of the ideal instructional program and learning environment gives a cursory view that is more completely developed in the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria. These standards may be used in planning to provide both the direction and a framework for the critical questions members of the school community must ask in order to focus on the most significant issues for improvement. There is a variety of ways in which a central focus on the priority issues at school can be established for the purpose of planning. Among them are a regular process of self-study, staff meetings to discuss the status of curriculum and instruction at the school, and council meetings focusing on curriculum and instruction as the main agenda items. The particular method the members of the school community select will depend on the personal attributes of administrators, staff members, and parents as well as the current situation at school. However, the following ingredients contribute to the commonality of purpose and the success of the planning effort:

- o Commitment of the superintendent, principal, and the councils
- o Professional consensus of the staff members
- o Broad participation in the development of the plan
- o The inspiring leadership of one or more individuals

Also necessary to achieving a quality educational program is the instructional ability of the teachers themselves; successful teachers must know and love the subject matter for which they are responsible and must have a repertoire of successful instructional techniques for conveying knowledge, skills, and values to their students. Finally, in order for the planning effort to have a positive effect on students, planning must promote a valid idea of what an educated person should learn at school; it must encompass aspirations for all children; and it must incorporate intelligent ideas of how to make instructional programs more effective.

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Chapter II

Organizing the Planning Process

Effective school planning is a continuous process. How school plan-
ners elect to proceed with the process will be dependent largely on their
previous planning experience; the effectiveness of ongoing planning
routines; the complexities of the programs; and the readiness of the
school's administration, staff members, and parents. It is essential that
planners realize how certain aspects of their orientation to the task will
affect the outcome of school planning efforts. Of particular significance
in the early planning stage is the degree to which the planners share a
sense of purpose. Sharing a sense of purpose allows planners to communi-
cate their vision for an improved school both in discussions and through
the written plan. Each participant's conception of what represents the
best in schooling is shared in a collaborative way with others so that a
vision of a better school may emerge and the most important questions about
the school's program may begin to surface.

Establishing a Planning Strategy

The planning cycle spans three years. In the course of those three
years, all of the curricular content, which is organized in specific sub-
ject areas, offered at the school is addressed in the plan to ensure that
the improvement effort is comprehensive and encompasses a balanced curricu-
lum. Evaluation and planning activities are also an integral part of the
ongoing effort toward improvement and will guide members of the school
community through subsequent program implementation and revision. The
completion of the planning document does not mark the end of the planning
process. Good planning is self-renewing, with improvement efforts being
developed, incorporated in the plan, and implemented throughout the three-
year planning cycle. The written plan, when annually updated, will remain
largely intact as the new cycle begins.

How events in the planning process occur and the sequence in which
they occur are up to members of the school community. Some school program
planners, particularly those planners engaged in planning for the first
time, will focus their attention on two or three areas during the first
year. Additional curricular areas to be highlighted will be added in the
second and third years. By the end of the three-year cycle, the members of
the school community will have completed a comprehensive review of their
programs and will be well on the way to implementing their improvement
activities. Then the cycle begins again.

Experienced school program planners may choose to move more quickly,
taking on three or four subject areas in the first year and the balance of
the subject areas in the second year and devoting the third year to
monitoring and evaluating the effects of the planned improvements. Others
may adopt an integrated or contextual approach to planning that allows all
curricular areas to be addressed simultaneously on a continuing basis over

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the length of the planning cycle. A contextual approach organized along curricular lines may address the impact of such broad areas as curriculum development, instruction, staff development, and special needs of students on each of the seven curricular criteria. Coordinating the planning effort with the textbook adoption cycle also will facilitate a thorough review of the featured curricular area in each textbook adoption year.

However the school program planners elect to proceed, it is important that consensus be reached and decisions communicated to all concerned teachers, parents, administrators, and support staff members. The success of the school plan may rest on the extent to which constituents are actively represented and involved in the improvement process.

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November

The initial discussion about renewing the school plan began at a council meeting. Members acknowledged that to yield the best results planners should use the planning process to do the following:

o   Focus the attention of the members of the school community on improvements in curriculum and instruction by concentrating on change.
o   Utilize the Elementary Program Quality Criteria (the major document used to interpret the effect of instruction on students) as a basis for comparing what is known about the current instructional program.

The council identified seven key planners. The key planners, including the principal, agreed to develop a schedule for the planning process and report the results to the entire council at the December meeting.

The key planners agreed to do the following before the next meeting:

o   Thoroughly review the Elementary Program Quality Criteria and the curriculum "point of view" statements.
o   Examine the "Model Curriculum Guides, K-8" to determine the professional consensus of what high-quality programs should include.
o   Solicit recommendations for identifying a planning leader who is knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction and who will assume responsibility for the development of the written plan.
o   Address ways to maximize staff involvement

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in the planning process and be ready to
discuss those ideas.
- o Identify the information (California
Assessment Program data and self-study
results), materials (districts' scope and
sequence and a list of available state
frameworks), and assistance (a presenta-
tion on Teacher Education and Computer
Center (TECC) activities and consultation
on test data analysis) needed to plan
effectively.

Choosing the Key Planners

It is well known that the extent to which those affected by decisions
have been involved in the decision-making process will directly and appre-
ciably affect the implementation and success of the plan. Ideally,
involvement should extend to all those who have a stake in the planning.
As a practical matter, however, major planning tasks usually will be accom-
plished by a few knowledgeable and motivated individuals known as key
planners. Functioning as a group, these key people will assume leadership
roles in the planning process. The group will include committed teachers,
active parents, involved administrators, and interested support staff mem-
bers. In order to ensure a productive, collaborative planning effort,
appropriate and meaningful tasks should be distributed among all planning
participants. The tasks should be relevant to the role of the participant
(parent, teacher, principal, or support staff member) and make a meaningful
contribution to the written plan. The planning group functions in a
leadership capacity for members of the entire staff and school community.
The role of the planning group will be to guide all participants through
the planning process, to focus the attention of all participants on the
critical issues at hand, to devise a means for consensus building and
decision making, and to communicate the planning goals and progress toward
meeting these goals to all the school's constituencies.

The key planner's role is one that requires knowledge, sensitivity,
and understanding. It is also a role that promises great rewards for those
who invest their best efforts on behalf of the school's students, teachers,
and community members. The role of key planner offers opportunities for
interested adults to be at the center of the decision-making process and
function in a true leadership capacity. The role also provides a means by
which the individual can significantly broaden his or her knowledge about
the full range of attributes that characterize effective schools. In many
cases these opportunities and benefits will serve as enticements in the
recruiting of key planners.

The size of the planning group will vary to fit the circumstances
surrounding each school. Ideally, the group will be large enough to be
representative of the school's constituencies and small enough to function
effectively as a unit. Planning groups consisting of five to ten people,
including the principal, have proven workable in most schools. It is
vitally important that the principal work closely with and support the

efforts of the key planning group. Without the continuing support of the principal, the effectiveness of the group's work may be impaired. At the same time, members of the group should recognize that effective leadership is a responsibility of all participants and commit themselves to supporting one another in the mutual effort to improve the quality of education for the children of the school.

Scheduling Planning Activities

Before starting to plan, it is important for members of the key planning group to acquire background information, including the information in the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria, curriculum "point of view" statements, the "Model Curriculum Guides, K-8," relevant sections of the Elementary School Planning Guide and Resource Handbook, and any other important local planning materials, such as district policies and school goals. Given a common base of key concepts, professional consensus, and program development information, it is likely that the group will successfully maintain its focus and approach planning tasks with understanding and a sense of direction.

The first two duties of the planning group will be to determine a basic organizational approach to the task, and to establish a calendar of events and activities. It is important to consider the time constraints that impinge on the school community and the school staff members. For example, in many schools it will be difficult to assemble the entire staff at the same time. Some schools will have a regular schedule of minimum days included in their calendar, and others will have one or more days each year set aside for professional growth. These and other factors should be considered in developing an organizational format for program planning.

Once the outline of activities and a time line have been determined, it is important to communicate that information to all concerned. A clearly delineated approach that is known to everyone will reduce confusion and help planners concentrate on the task over time. Communicating the basic approach to performing the task will also serve to help all participants to understand their roles and the importance of the group planning effort.

Throughout the process all participants should be kept informed of progress. Keeping participants informed may be achieved by distributing a brief summary of meeting results. In addition, a continuing and active dialogue should be encouraged with all segments of the school community. The quality and effectiveness of any improvement effort will be enhanced if everyone understands what tasks are to be accomplished and how the decisions to accomplish the tasks came about. The direct involvement in the planning process will have a far greater impact on the effectiveness of implementation than would a perfunctory reading of the written plan.

Preparing to Write the School Improvement Plan

Successful school planning is founded on well-understood standards of quality and a logical, straightforward organizational format. Clear defi- nitions of quality will establish a shared view of the purposes of planning for improvement and unify the efforts of the planning group. A simple, sequential approach to the format of the written plan will assist all members of the school community to understand fully the basis for the improvement efforts, as well as the specific changes that will be under- taken by the school's staff members. As planning progresses year to year, a simplified plan format will facilitate the inclusion of additional improvement activities as they are developed.

Establishing Quality Standards

The anchor of the planning process is the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria, a set of standards for high-quality curriculum, in- struction, and schoolwide effectiveness. These are the same criteria with which schools are compared in the program review process. The criteria are reliable sources of information about high-quality schools and provide a gauge for judging the effectiveness of educational programs. The criteria serve not only as a benchmark against which current programs may be assessed but also as a standard for guiding future improvements in schools. Inherent in the criteria are the specific characteristics, approaches, and components that will guide the school's program planners toward meeting their improvement goals. The criteria help program planners to focus on the critical attributes that typify an excellent school. The Elementary School Program Quality Criteria is the single most important document that the program planners will use.

The introduction to the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria is especially helpful in the early stages of planning. The most salient aspects of high-quality education are highlighted and a set of attributes of effective schools are described. A summary of the promising results that can accompany the school improvement process are included in the foreword, and the elements of leadership and participation that will make improvement possible are described.

Finally, the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria contains descriptions of specific characteristics, activities, and methodologies that apply to the most effective curriculum, instruction, staff development, and leadership practices. The descriptions can be directly translated into improvement strategies common to almost all schools. For example, the reading quality criterion defines literature as a major part of a high- quality reading program. Many program planners would find the basis of an improvement strategy in this concept. This concept as well as others contained in the criteria go far beyond the intended scope of this planning guide. Familiarity with them, as well as curriculum frameworks, School Performance Quality Indicators, and other resources will greatly facilitate the ability of the key planning group to zero in on the priorities for school improvements. The Resource Handbook, which accompanies this

planning guide, contains additional information designed to assist the
school planners to attain their improvement goals quickly and logically.

Self-study, a locally conducted version of the more formal school
program quality review, offers an excellent vehicle for gathering pertinent
data on current conditions in the school. Using the quality criteria as a
basis for comparison, school planners may employ direct observations; inter-
views with students and staff members; and a review of materials, records,
and documents to obtain an overall reading on the state of current conditions
in the school. This activity may serve as a foundation for the inclusion of
additional assessment data compiled from other sources.

As the key planners organize the development of the plan, they should
gather several types of information that will comprise the significant
ingredients of the planning process and elements of the written plan. Some
of this information will be quantitative and describe the student popula-
tion and achievement through numerical indicators. Other information will
be qualitative and serve to explain the context in which the hard data can
be interpreted. The interplay of quantitative information, such as the
number of writing assignments students are expected to complete, and quali-
tative information, such as the ways in which students are prepared for
written assignments, form a knowledge base for planners as they begin to
analyze the school's program. Through this process of program analysis,
questions emerge that planners can use to guide the identification of those
activities that are likely to have the greatest influence on instruction.

It is important for planners to consider those aspects of the instruc-
tional program where the application of effort is most likely to have the
greatest influence on student learning. Identifying these aspects, or
leverage points, will help guide planners toward the most productive and
rewarding program strategies.

The Resource Handbook identifies the following four main areas in
which planners may wish to exert leverage:

1. Student input -- what a student brings to the program
2. Educational background -- institutional variables such as staff
   knowledge and attitudes
3. Instructional treatment -- the instructional program offered by
   the school
4. Community background -- conditions outside the school that
   affect the school program

Being able to identify the leverage points and knowing how to take
advantage of them can significantly affect the impact of improvement activ-
ities.

Determining the Plan's Format

The precise format and content of each school's written plan will
differ. These differences reflect the realities, methods, and preferences
unique to that site. There are, however, certain characteristics and
components that should appear in virtually all written plans. It is
reasonable to anticipate that most written plans will include in some form

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the following components (fully explained in Chapter III, "Writing the School Improvement Plan"):

o **A description of the school.** This section offers members of the school community an opportunity to set forth their own views of existing circumstances and the programs presently in place.

o **Statements of goals and schoolwide vision.** This statement or series of statements should succinctly summarize the fundamental goals of the school and convey the vision of the school as conceived by the members of the school community. Most often, these statements are written in terms of what and how students should learn and are expressed as goals, desired outcomes, or benefits of the educational process.

o **An analysis of current conditions.** In order to plan logically for effective improvements, it is necessary to know and understand existing conditions in the school. The analysis is based on a collection of data, objective and subjective, that is sufficiently complete that reasonable conclusions may be drawn and future direction indicated. The analysis will consist generally of a summary or conclusion of all information known about a given topic or curriculum area.

o **A statement of specific improvement priorities and objectives.** Specific learning objectives are natural outgrowths of the analysis of current conditions. These objectives should also represent a professional decision to make the student the focus of improvement activities. Focusing on student achievement provides a means for measuring progress toward the desired improvement and reflects the school's specific expectations for accomplishing the objective.

o **A description of the improvement activities.** In order to make improvements, it is necessary to understand the changes to be made, new activities to be implemented, and different practices necessary to effect the desired improvements. This implementation plan will serve as a guide and readily usable reference for the staff members and parents of the school.

o **A design for continuous planning and evaluation.** Each school needs a system for routinely reviewing its progress, measuring the extent to which objectives are being met, and planning for future improvements. The continuous planning and evaluation section contains descriptions of activities in sufficient detail so that expectations and procedures will be well understood, manageable, and usable.

o **Budget information.** The budget supports the school plan; it illustrates how resources are managed. Resources are linked directly to instructional activities and are an expression of the instructional priorities of the school.

As a whole, the plan will represent a logical, sequential, and systematic approach to strengthening school programs and instruction. The written plan is a working document; it will be in the hands of teachers,

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parents, and other adults in the school. If it is to be useful to them, the plan must be clear, concise, and straightforward. It should describe what is to be accomplished, what reasons underlie the changes, and who will be responsible for carrying them out. The plan should not be a compendium of all existing programs and practices in the school but instead should focus on the changes that will occur to bring about improvements.

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Chapter IV

Writing the School Improvement Plan

Each written plan for improving a school is unique. Each plan will
reflect a wide variety of circumstances, opportunities, and pressures that
influence a particular school's plan and significantly affect the form and
substance of the resulting improvement. The planning components outlined
in this chapter do not comprise an exhaustive listing but instead are
intended to provide a sample approach to successful improvements in the
instructional program. Again, the extent to which the improvements may be
suitable for a given school rests entirely on the circumstances and plan-
ning environment surrounding that particular site.

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December

Materials circulated in advance to prepare
council members and key planners for the meeting
included the following:

   o The Elementary School Program Planning
      Guide and Resource Handbook
   o The Elementary School Program Quality
      Criteria
   o A statement of the district's goals
   o The school's policy statements
   o The School Performance Report

The key planners and the council members
reviewed the proposed planning schedule and began
to discuss the following important questions that
would frame the planning process:

   c What are the most important skills,
      knowledge, and values our school can offer
      students?
   o What should our school be like if students
      are to receive this kind of education?
   o What information can be drawn from the
      current educational research, accepted
      practices, and other professional journals
      that may help to frame our thinking?
   o What actions relative to these goals are
      within our power to influence?

The main purpose of the meeting was to allow
the key planners an opportunity to hear the
thoughts and feelings of all persons involved in
the planning process and to set some general goals
within the context of the school community's
educational philosophy. By having this discussion
early in the planning process, the key planners

established a precedent of concentrating on the instructional core of the curriculum and working from a basis of broad consensus among the school community.

Some of the goals that enjoyed wide agreement included the following:

o The students will recognize the joy and value of learning.
o When students leave our school, they will have a strong foundation in three kinds of learning--skills, knowledge, and values.
o The students will demonstrate a basic sense of responsibility.
o All students will participate in a balanced educational program that includes oral language, reading, written language, and mathematics. They will have extensive experience in literature, science, history, social science, fine arts, physical education, and health science.

The key planners agreed to organize the input from the council meeting. They were also asked to think about the ways in which the discussion might influence the next meeting on the analysis of the school's program. They agreed to note the sources of information that may be tapped to understand events at school, particularly events that concern curricular and instructional issues. This information will help planners develop an accurate portrayal of the school as it is, while allowing them to form realistic goals for school improvement.

Each key planner was given a copy of "School Data Summary" to use as a source of background information.

Describing the School

The description of the school and its current programs provides a context for the planning effort and the improvement strategies that will follow. Typically, the description will include basic geographic and demographic information, as well as pertinent general information on the curriculum, instructional approaches, staff development, and program coordination at the site. Constraints that affect the improvement activities the school planners wish to undertake should also be addressed in this description. Elements which may help to set the stage for school improvement may include staff seniority or turnover, parent participation or

volunteerism, and availability of school and community resources. Additional support and technical assistance from the district, neighboring schools, program review consortia, and county offices of education. When taken together, this information forms the basic program and its component parts. The development of the description of the school serves as a frame of reference for the school planners as they record agreements about what changes should be made and how they should be made to ensure improvement in the instructional program. This description need not be complex, lengthy, or particularly comprehensive, but it should address the circumstances or issues that exist in the school that may have a direct bearing on the improvement strategies or on the planning format the school selects.

Establishing Goals and Incorporating a Schoolwide Vision

Any comprehensive planning process will need a point of departure that planners can use to focus and unify the effort over the length of the planning cycle. Establishing broad goals that represent the mutually supported aspirations of the school and community will serve as a common starting point for the process and help planners identify the desired and agreed-upon outcomes that will affect student learning. These broad goals constitute a shared vision of the school's fundamental purpose and allow the members of the school community to reach a consensus as they set targets for improvement. A vision of the school contains elements that unify all aspects of change and tie the efforts of individual staff members to one coordinated whole.

These goals or outcomes represent the global concepts of the educational system and should not be confused with specific learning objectives. Here, the emphasis is on identifying those aspects of learning and child development that are endorsed by the entire school community and constitute the school's primary mission. Expressing these goals in terms of student outcomes or benefits and obtaining consensus among the school community will set the tone and direction for subsequent planning activities.

In developing goals it is helpful to limit the scope to the essential functions of the school and to resist the temptation to include superfluous detail. Typically, planning groups will focus on a half-dozen basic concepts and express them in simple and concise terms. When well-drafted, these concepts generally will fit on a single page. In this form the concepts are readily communicable to all participants, students, and members of the school community.

As program development activities continue, the unifying goals may be repeatedly referenced and will help to maintain a clear vision of the collective aspirations of all those working to improve the educational experiences for students.

January

The key planners met for a full day to establish a base of knowledge on which the improvement activities would be built. The principal reviewed

the educational goals of the school that were
developed at the December council meeting. Then,
the key planners discussed the district's goals
and the contents of the quality criteria. Some
planners felt that wrestling with all the issues
presented was taking on too much at one time. The
key planners discussed the data and agreed to
conduct an in-depth study on two or three areas of
improvement within the curriculum as part of the
yearly planning cycle. This decision was based on
a review of the following data and considerations:

o The CAP scores over a three-year period
o The results of the most recent program
  review
o The results of the most recent self-
  study
o The informal interviews held with staff
  members
o The comments about the instructional
  program included in the past minutes of
  the council meetings
o Professional hunches of the key planners

Within the body of data examined, planners
found that:

o A focus in reading appeared timely, new
  reading texts were up for adoption, and a
  staff development program to broaden the
  base of the reading program was planned
  by the district. Student reading scores
  showed comprehension to be an area of
  relative weakness.
o There was no planned program for science;
  professional expertise is low.
o Two years of intensive training in the
  area of writing recently had been com-
  pleted; students' writing scores were up;
  and the new writing materials were widely
  used. The improvement activities devel-
  oped during last year's planning process
  appear to be on target.
o Everyone agreed the students' skills in
  math need to be improved, but students'
  scores were holding in primary grades and
  rising in upper elementary grades. Teach-
  ers felt high test scores were deceiving:
  although students seemed to be test-wise,
  they experienced difficulty in problem
  solving.
o History/social science, while not coor-
  dinated, was taught by grade level
  according to themes and was centered on a
  holiday calendar in the primary grades.

Teachers felt a need to address the common thread of the history/social science curriculum in all grade levels.

It was noted that the information derived so far from the data was general. To get an idea of exactly what needed to be improved and how to improve within the scope of reading and science, planners needed to dig deeper.

The group began to review in greater detail the data available in reading (after an effective model was established for reading, a model for science would be developed later in the day). Some of the data uncovered by the planners included the following:

o After three years of CAP reading results were considered, grade three scores were stable and relatively high, but sixth grade scores were uneven over time and, in some areas, consistently low. CAP results also highlighted comprehension as a relative weakness for two of the three years.

o Teachers noted a trend that suggested students were unable to apply reading skills and knowledge beyond the reading text.

o Teacher-made tests indicated phonetic and word recognition skills were stable and on target.

o Third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers reported that the texts were strong in teaching students the mechanics of reading but were relatively weak in teaching students to learn through reading. Results of the program quality review confirmed the staff's suspicions that students were experiencing difficulty in the transition from learning to read to reading to learn.

o The school librarian reported that the media center functions largely as a "recreational reading and game center." Staff cuts forced the elimination of the "learning, language, and literature" program.

o Students rarely were asked to discuss what they read in class because time was devoted to lengthy assignments in their work books.

o Teachers continued to identify and discuss what was happening in their classrooms, what students were doing, and how the program received by students compared to

the ideal described in the quality
criteria.

o The program review team and the key plan-
ners identified "reading to learn" a
likely next step during the program
review. When teachers compared what was
happening in their classrooms to the
<u>Elementary School Program Quality Criteria</u>,
they were able to identify this area of
weakness in the reading program.

o The suggestions for increasing the effec-
tiveness of the school program included
eight steps toward implementing a school-
wide literature program.

After the data were reviewed, the key plan-
ners began the critical task of analyzing what
those data suggested about the reading program.
Planners considered the following questions:

o Are the texts doing the job for us of
taking students from the point of learning
to read to reading to learn?

o Is the school library adequately supplied
and staffed?

o Does the curriculum promote the idea of
reading to gain new knowledge?

o Are remedial students required to perform
drill and not encouraged to apply what
they have learned?

o Do our evaluation systems balance skill
development and applied knowledge?

o Is high-quality literature available to
students?

o Do limited-English-proficient (LEP) stu-
dents have access to high quality
literature?

As the discussion progressed, planners began
to identify clear directions for improvement
activities. As the improvement effort began to
take shape, the planners experienced a sense of
ownership of the school plan, as well as a feeling
of efficacy that they would actually implement the
plan in their school and affect the quality of the
instructional program.

As part of the improvement plan, they would
develop instructional activities that:

1. Incorporate literature into the regular
   reading program.
2. Focus on reading to learn in science and
   social studies.
3. Incorporate literature into the compensa-

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tory education, bilingual, and resource
specialist programs.
4. Make literature the primary focus of the
upper-grade Gifted and Talented Education
(GATE) Program for four months as a pilot
project.

At the end of the day, the analysis of the
reading and science program were recorded to be
considered later by the council. A tentative pro-
gram objective in each curricular area was also
drafted for the council to review.

Analyzing Current Conditions

After describing the school generally and establishing goals in
terms of the schoolwide vision, it is necessary to conduct a more focused
review of what conditions exist and why. The primary question to be posed
should address whether (or to what degree) the school's program concen-
trates on the established goals. Key planners should check to see if the
curriculum targets are being met. Using assessment data and strategies
previously described, planners should determine whether the classroom
instruction addresses the curriculum described in their goal statements.
This goes beyond simply checking to see if certain topics are treated
sometime during the school year. Planners should investigate the nature of
assignments required of students and check the types of activities in which
students are engaged. Investigating assignments and checking activities
require planners to look at students' progress throughout the program to
determine if students are learning basic skills in the primary grades and
using these skills to acquire broader knowledge in the intermediate grades.

The planners should also ascertain if conditions at the school site
foster reaching the curriculum targets. Here, planners should determine
whether staff development programs and instructional materials are
available to assist staff and are clearly seen as contributing to the
instructional goals of the school. Planners need to do more than just
check textbooks and training plans for consistency with the general goal
statements. Staff development and instructional materials should be eval-
uated in terms of how each relates to specific school improvement
objectives.

The Elementary School Program Quality Criteria provides key planners
with a powerful tool for accomplishing this analysis. The criteria de-
scribe a high-quality program and allow teachers to identify and compare
the instruction received by students in their classroom to the ideal estab-
lished in the quality criteria. Teachers are able to focus on their
individual responsibilities to the school improvement effort and consider
and compare how their role relates to the schoolwide vision of improvement.

The Elementary School Program Quality Criteria document is the frame-
work around which key planners organize improvement planning. The criteria
help teachers reach agreement on what to look for in their own classrooms

and throughout the school. This process of comparison enables teachers to identify areas in their school's curriculum that fall short of the ideal described in the quality criteria. At this stage of program analysis, a wide range of options is available. Planners may elect not to address the identified area of need at this particular time, or they may develop the area into a specific program improvement. As the analysis of the instructional program at the school takes place, the information contained in the quality criteria can be used to compile an agenda. Planners should discuss all of the criteria and compare them with the curriculum offered at their school.

As planners analyze data and look for trends, they should focus on the best available information. Indicators that are most potent for improvement planning, such as CAP scores from at least three consecutive years, offer reliable and useful information that can be readily translated into improvement strategies. However, school planners should avoid the pitfall of focusing just on what is easy to measure when determining program priorities. Typically, data will consist of the following items:

o   Test results (CAP, CTBS, SAT, (and so forth)
o   Reviewing curriculum against "Model Curriculum Guides, K-8"
o   Performance Report for California Schools
o   Program review and self-study findings
o   Proficiency standards and test results
o   Attendance records
o   Behavior observations and discipline records
o   Information on the attitudes of parents, staff members, students
o   Quantity, quality, and circulation of the library collection
o   Condition of equipment and materials

Information exists that might be classified as subjective but may offer insight into the effectiveness of the instructional program. Such information is extremely valuable and should not be discarded or discounted merely because it is not formalized or in some way quantified. Examples include the following:

o   Opinions of parents, staff members, students, and members of the community about the curriculum and instructional program
o   Availability of supplementary materials
o   Parent participation and attendance at conferences or school functions
o   Students' attitudes toward school
o   Appearance of the school

The professional judgment of school staff members is an extremely valuable source of information. School professionals are closest to the source because they are at the center of the teaching/learning interaction. Their best judgment or hunches can lend insight into the particular characteristics of the school or its students that will affect the effective implementation of the high-quality programs sought. The opportunity to exercise professional judgment in cooperation with colleagues is a legitimate activity and a critically important step in moving the school toward meeting its improvement goals.

Compiling and organizing information to draw a complete picture of a

given area does not have to be an unduly complex or time-consuming task. In most instances the data easily can be sorted into obvious categories such as curriculum topics, student achievement, staff development, instructional materials, numbers of bilingual students, home-school communications, students' behavior and discipline, curriculum development, and so forth. With assessment information organized into major topic areas or contexts, it is a relatively straightforward task to review and analyze what is known about the school. Out of that analysis will emerge conclusions that will cover a range of areas and include some degree of specificity. It is important that these conclusions be in writing. These analytical summaries may be organized as the school planners see fit, but they will be most manageable and understandable if they parallel the basic goals established by the school, address the specific contexts that influence the school, or follow the categories described in the quality criteria.

Examining the existing programs and conditions in a school is a vital first step to making informed judgments about what is necessary in order to bring about improvements. Such an examination will also establish a base line from which future progress may be measured and from which priorities may be determined. This analysis will further serve to identify strengths that exist in the present program and help planners determine approaches for improvement that have a high probability for successful implementation.

This information should be distributed to all staff members, even if they are not a part of the key planning group. This will provide a means of communicating planning progress to all concerned as well as an opportunity for receiving additional advice from staff members who may have had only limited prior involvement.

Identifying Priorities and Establishing Objectives

The analysis of conditions will yield an overall view of the school's program, including the program's relative strengths and weaknesses. The comparison of the school's program with the quality criteria will immediately suggest specific aspects of the program that can and should be improved. At this point the planning discussions should be aimed at achieving agreement on the major improvement areas to be addressed and the relative urgency of each. For example, because the existing reading program is heavily skills-based in the upper grades rather than being literature-based, school planners may determine that the reading curriculum is its highest and most immediate priority. Planners may also conclude that the scope of the school's reading curriculum and the variety of instructional activities provided need to be examined with a view toward incorporating literature and writing in the curriculum and strengthening the basal reading approach. The more specific details of how this might be accomplished will be addressed in that part of the plan that specifically describes the individual implementation activities that will be undertaken.

Having identified the high-priority improvement needs of the school's program, the planners should set forth specific objectives that will help them to focus and monitor the improvement effort over time. The objectives need not be elaborate but should include a specific level of achievement or skill to be attained by students, an appropriate time frame, and a means of

measuring and evaluating the degree to which the objective has been achieved.

To the greatest extent possible, improvement objectives should be structured around time lines and measurement devices that already exist in the school's program. Creating a new set of deadlines and evaluation activities may be redundant and burdensome. Another strategy for avoiding the assessment crunch, which often occurs at the end of each academic year, is to stagger assessment deadlines over several months. This approach may become increasingly attractive as additional improvement areas are added over the course of the three-year planning cycle.

The objectives should cover the major areas for improvement that have been identified through the program analysis. Some of these objectives will be immediate and short-term targets in which substantial progress can be expected in a limited time. Others will be broader in scale, cover a much longer time, or address areas that are not so readily measurable.

Once again the planners should take care to organize the improvement objectives in a logical and easily manageable way. The measurement respon- sibilities should not represent a new set of things to do or drain the energies or divert the attention of the staff members, but should provide a clear indication of progress based on measurement activities that are already occurring in the school.

Developing Improvement Activities

Once improvement areas and objectives are in place, the school's planners should develop their strategies for reaching the improvement goals. The framework for these strategies has already been established through the analysis of the school's programs and identification of poten- tially powerful leverage points upon which improvements can be built. These activities constitute the core of the improvement effort because they describe what the planners want to change or do differently and signal the beginning of implementation. The description of improvement activities need not include a comprehensive statement of the school's current prac- tices. The focus should be on the specific approaches that the planners wish to employ in order to bring about the desired changes.

The quality criteria will provide a base of information from which improvement approaches can be derived. Indeed, the criteria are so com- plete that they may suggest some very specific strategies that will help move the school toward its desired goals. In most cases approaches will take the form of curriculum development strategies, improvements in instructional techniques, staff development activities, the acquisition of program materials directly related to the specific improvement effort, and achievement expectations across grade levels and throughout the school. As new strategies are selected, activities and expenditures from previous years will need to be reconsidered and sometimes reduced or eliminated.

Most improvement activities will entail doing something differently rather than generating additional responsibilities. Retraining staff members, rethinking the priorities in the curriculum, and making the most of allocated instructional time may become significant alternatives to

adding new activities to an already packed classroom schedule.

Planners should be aware of the fiscal impact of hiring additional personnel because hiring may require the commitment of a substantial percentage of available resources. A commitment to instructional aides, coordinators, or other long-term support personnel will substantially limit the range of improvement activities available to the school. If improvements are to be long lasting and effective over time, they must be designed to accommodate the certainties of escalating personnel costs and the uncertainties of funding sources. Categorical program money is "risk capital"; thus, schools should avoid making commitments to personnel that could limit the implementation of improvement activities.

Organization of the improvement activities should be developed by the members of the school community. Activities should be linked to the analysis and objectives upon which they are predicated, however. A structure that follows the quality criteria, major curriculum lines, or a contextual approach (see page 3) is most common and will facilitate the subsequent implementation of the school's specific improvement activities. Many improvement activities, particularly support features such as staff development and leadership, cross the structural lines of the plan's format. These vital activities should be built in and related to the improvement areas that they will impact.

In comparing data with the quality criteria, many potential approaches to improvement will surface. The key planners should review these in light of the school's current conditions and capabilities to determine the strategies that best fit. Selecting the approaches that offer the greatest potential for improvement and achieving consensus among members of the key planning group and the staff members who will implement the plan are important aspects of this phase of planning. Planners may wish to enlist the aide of curriculum specialists or other experts in designing improvement activities.

February

A special staff development day was set aside so that school staff members, the principal, support staff members, and parents could develop the activities that would improve the reading and science programs for the students. In preparation for the staff development day, the key planners reviewed the improvement activities outlined at the January meeting as well as the goals and objectives of the school's planned program, their own individual responsibilities for implementing the program, and methods for carrying out their responsibilities. The planning leader reminded the group that in order for the plan to make a meaningful contribution, improvement activities should signify a change from the ongoing program. The principal added that while school improvement should be viewed as a schoolwide planning activity

and therefore will require input from the parents
and members of the community, it is important to
maintain a degree of flexibility in designing the
improvement activity so that teachers are able to
meet the needs of their students.

Because all activities were to grow out of
the goals, objectives, and analysis of the in-
structional program, each participant was asked to
review all material for the school plan developed
to date. The teaching staff also reviewed the
Handbook for Planning an Effective Reading Program,
the Science Framework Addendum, and Becoming a
Nation of Readers. As the activities were devel-
oped, participants were asked to consider the
following questions:

o Does this activity address the concerns
  raised in the analysis?
o Is this activity likely to help us achieve
  the desired result?
o Is this really an improvement activity
  signifying change in the instructional
  program or are we back to "business as
  usual"?
o Is the expectation sufficiently high to be
  appropriately challenging for all stu-
  dents?
o Is this activity likely to be the most
  effective leverage point in improving the
  program for all students?
o Are we prepared to implement this activity
  or do we need to incorporate additional
  staff training?

Some of the activities that stood up to the
planners' test included the following:

o Students in grades three through six will
  utilize science and social studies texts
  during the regularly scheduled reading
  period on Tuesday and Thursday.
o In order to participate fully in science,
  limited-English-proficient (LEP) students
  will receive assistance in reading and
  understanding the science text from
  assigned support staff members. Students
  will be arranged in small groups and will
  review the material presented during the
  lesson and complete the regular science
  assignment.
o All classroom teachers will participate in
  a science staff development program focus-
  ing on teaching the concepts (including
  facts, principles, and theories) of

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science and the processes, techniques, and
applications of science.
o On a monthly basis classroom teachers will
highlight a selection from the schoolwide
reading list for the entire class. On a
regular basis students will have an
opportunity to discuss the literature read
to them from the selected samples. Work-
book assignments will be reduced to
accommodate more classroom discussion.
o Staff development activities will balance
the development of skills and knowledge in
the area of science with those content-
specific teaching skills necessary to im-
part the science curriculum.

Designing a Planning and Evaluation System

The completion of the written plan and the initial phases of its
implementation do not signal the end of the program development process.
Improvement is a continuing activity that builds upon its own success.
Every school needs a manageable and understandable system that planners and
administrators can use to monitor progress and adjust approaches as stu-
dents experience and respond to the improvement activities. This system
should be described in the plan in sufficient detail so that activities and
responsibilities are clearly understood.

To a large extent the monitoring activities will already be in place
in most schools. The direct link to improvement approaches will come
through the measurement activities described in the improvement objectives
and through self-study and program review. These vehicles provide both
formative and summative information that can be directly applied to the
ongoing planning function in the school. Using these data, school planners
may add, delete, or modify improvement approaches to maximize benefits to
students. Typically, monitoring activities occur on a regular and prede-
termined schedule. The improvement objectives include time lines and
measurement devices. Self-review or program review activities or both
generally occur on an annual basis in most schools. School planners and
administrators should examine the methods they use to determine the most
efficient and effective ways of analyzing and disseminating evaluation data
to key planners, the school staff members, and members of the community.

Many school planners and administrators schedule a regular series of
program development meetings. These meetings often are included in regular
faculty meeting agendas, grade-level or cross-grade-level meetings, or
periodic meetings of the key planning group or as a part of regularly
scheduled staff development activities. However the school planners and
administrators seek to organize the ongoing planning function, it should be
clearly outlined and communicated to all concerned.

It is helpful if ongoing planning and evaluation responsibilities and
schedules are established in advance. Establishing responsibilities and

schedules in advance becomes increasingly important as additional curriculum areas are incorporated into the improvement process. A clearly delineated schedule along with an equitable distribution of assessment responsibilities will facilitate the organization and management of these important functions.

As the improvement process continues in each school, the ongoing planning process will become a routine function in sustaining and expanding quality improvements for students. The drive for excellence will gather its own momentum as these activities are integrated with the day-to-day efforts of the school's staff members. The results will be seen in the commitment of the members of the entire school community and the accomplishments of its students.

March

The key planners met prior to the council meeting to develop a model for checking on the progress of the improvement activities, evaluating the results of those, and identifying additional "next steps" in program planning. The model developed contained a mid-year progress check by the council and a spring self-review conducted by two key planners and a teacher from another school within the district. Student progress was to be monitored over the three-year period through CAP. Suggestions for increasing the effectiveness of the school's programs that emerge from a formal review and scheduled for year three of the plan will be used to provide a focus for the next cycle's planning effort. The planners checked the school data summary section of the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria, the locally developed portion of the quality indicators, and the district-developed evaluation system to eliminate redundant evaluation exercises. Much of the required information was already collected, leaving the council's central task as one of analyzing the data.

Preparing a Budget

The plan justifies expenditures associated with the school improvement program and demonstrates how resources are currently used or will be used at the school site. Resources are linked directly to improvement activities, support the development of curriculum and instructional practices, and provide for staff development opportunities. The budget is a direct expression of the instructional priorities of the school improvement effort. No more than two-thirds of the budget should be used for continuing activities, and one-third should be retained for investments in new

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improvement activities. School administrators should avoid entering into long-term contracts that will be vulnerable to rapidly escalating personnel costs.

April

At the April council meeting, council members and key planners discussed proposed resources for the next school year. Sources of information on the budget included district budget records for the special programs at the school. Key planners were asked to assist the principal in developing a set of budget proposals that would link resources to proposed improvement activities. The proposals were to be discussed with the school staff members as well as the council as a whole.

Some important questions raised by the budget planners included the following:

o To what extent do budgeted activities reflect priorities established in the plan?

o How are expenditures linked to the needs of students and the capability of the program to meet those needs?

o Do the proposed expenditures give us some flexibility in our improvement efforts, including staff development, materials, program review, and personnel resources?

Having successfully designed and implemented significant improve ments in the school, planners will find that revising and rewriting the plan also will become an increasingly meaningful and important activity. The experience of the first three-year planning cycle will form a foundation for continuing improvements and facilitate the incorporation of planning activities into the school's routines. Finally, the rewards of planning for excellence are realized in seeing the effects of high-quality educational experiences reflected in the performances of successful students.

Elementary School Self-check for Program Planning

Introduction

The "Elementary School Self-check for Program Planning" reflects a significant change in focus for the development and evaluation of a school level plan. The material has been designed to provide a base for improving the quality of the curriculum and instructional program for students. The shift away from technical considerations and specific format underscores a strong focus on developing a school plan that, when implemented, will reflect thoughtful attention to the development of the educated person and promise to lead the school community toward a high quality instructional program as described in the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria. This self-check is also meant to encourage schools to create plans which are simple in format, straightforward, easily read and understood, and useful to the entire school community.

The "Elementary School Self-check for Program Planning" is to be used by members of the school site council, school advisory council, and other program planners as they develop their school plan. It is suggested that the program planners use the self-check throughout the planning process rather than applying the entire document to a finished product. Using the self-check in this way may help to keep the planning process on track and increase the likelihood that the plan will meet the standards set in the "Self-check Criteria for the Planning Process."

Use of the Self-check for Program Planning

To determine the potential effectiveness of their planning process, the members of the school community should apply the criteria which follow to the various elements of the planning process. Then they can make a judgment regarding the extent to which their planning process matches those criteria. The result of each stage of this self-checking process should be discussed among the school planners, and the planning process should be adjusted according to the needs of the school community.

In order to make an accurate judgment regarding the quality of the planning process, the school planners must first become thoroughly familiar with the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria, as the criteria establish a general frame of reference regarding the direction of the improvement effort. Planners should then become thoroughly

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familiar with the Elementary School Program Planning Guide and the
criteria contained in the "self-check." The self-check mirrors the
Elementary School Program Planning Guide but should be used in concert
with, not as a replacement for that guide. Each step of the planning
process should then be assessed by means of the self-check criteria that
appear in the next section of this guide. Areas where the planning
process meets the criteria should be noted, as well as those areas where
the planning has fallen short.

Self-check Criteria for the Planning Process

The description of the school identifies circumstances and issues that have a direct bearing on the improvement process. The description is complete enough to provide school community members with a foundation for a discussion of the quality of the curriculum, instructional approaches, how well students are learning, effect of staff development, and ways in which programs are coordinated on site. Pertinent information regarding the students at school is provided including information on limited-English-proficient students, educationally disadvantaged students, average ability students, gifted and talented students, and students receiving special education instruction and service. The description should:

o Portray the current state of curriculum and
   instruction, staff development, and expecta-
   tions for students and staff.
o Incorporate demographic and other background
   information that may influence the instruction-
   al program and the support services offered.
o Describe the special need programs currently in
   operation.

The Goals of the School

The goals included in the plan reflect a common vision around which the plan for improvement is built. Implicit in these goals are a clear academic focus and the belief that the school is a place to learn. It is apparent that the goals will help establish an atmosphere in which all students can succeed. The goals for the school should:

o Express common aspirations and broad goals for
   all students.
o Reflect high standards and are based on a
   strong academic philosophy.
o Include a focus on intrapersonal development,
   as well as interpersonal skills and prosocial
   judgment.

The Analysis of Current Conditions

The analysis included in the plan addresses the quality of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the instructional program for all students. It also addresses how well students are learning and under what conditions further growth can be fostered. The analysis helps school planners explore the conditions that exist at the school and why they exist. A broad base of information is used in the analysis, including California Assessment Program (CAP) data, norm-referenced test scores, criterion-referenced test information, student work samples,

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attendance and tardiness patterns, student assignments, teacher judg-
ment, and student opinion. The analysis of current conditions is
complete enough to provide a foundation for making judgments about the
direction of the improvement process. Improvement activities and
resource allocations included in the plan flow out of the conclusions
reached in this analysis. The analysis is summarized in succinct state-
ments which form a basis for the improvement effort. The analysis
addresses each area of the curriculum and is composed of:

o The assessment summary, sufficiently complete so
  that reasonable conclusions can be drawn about
  each curricular area.
o Factors that may influence the delivery of the
  curriculum are described. All students are
  considered, including those with special needs.
o Performance data, by subgroup, from a variety
  of sources are considered for the scho ',
  including:
    - The extent to which the existing program
      parallels the high quality program
      described in the Elementary School Program
      Quality Criteria
    - Performance Report for California Schools
    - Local performance report
    - District test results
    - State assessment scores
    - National test norms
    - Attendance trends
    - Surveys of teacher, parent, and student
      satisfaction
    - Participation levels in extracurricular
      activities
o Staff development activities are analyzed in
  relation to their impact on the instructional
  program.
o Performance data are analyzed with respect to
  goals for the improvement effort.

The Improvement Objectives

The objectives included in the school plan reflect high-priority
improvement areas identified in the analysis of the instructional pro-
gram. They convey achievement and skill levels that are realistic and
challenging for targeted students. The objectives provide an adequate
measure of the effect of the instructional program on the students.
Objectives are structured so that evaluation results are likely to be
helpful in identifying areas of program strength and where additional
improvements should be made. Objectives:

o Grow out of the analysis and relate directly
  to the improvement activities described in the
  plan.
o Are measurable.
o Include at least one objective for each major

area of improvement included in the plan.
o Reflect reasonably high expectations for the
  students and staff of the school.

The Improvement Activities

The improvement activities grow out of the analysis of the instructional program and directly support the selected goals and objectives. The improvement activities use specific approaches designed to bring about needed changes in curriculum, instructional methodology, and schoolwide effectiveness. The improvement activities are structured so that the various resources at the school site are coordinated to provide a coherent instructional program for all students. When implemented, it is likely that these activities will result in a high quality instructional program for all students, including limited-English-proficient students, educationally disadvantaged students, average ability students, gifted and talented students, and students receiving special education instruction and services. The improvement activities:

o Reflect a rigorous curriculum and high
  academic standards for all students, including
  compensatory education students, limited-
  English-proficient students, GATE students, and
  students receiving special services, as
  reflected in the Elementary School Program
  Quality Criteria.
o Serve as a useful guide for staff and others at
  the school as they implement the planned
  program.
o Provide staff development opportunities for
  all staff, with the expressed intent to build
  skills in high priority curriculum areas.
o Are grounded in current educational research
  and theory and are based on exemplary program
  practices and sound pedagogical assumptions.

Ongoing Planning and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation design included in the plan is structured to provide information which can be directly applied to the ongoing planning cycle at the school. The evaluation design will enable the school community to monitor how well the plan is being implemented. The ongoing planning and evaluation process is likely to provide critical data that will enable the school community to plan modifications for continuing program improvement. Specifically, the school plan includes a comprehensive evaluation design that will:

o Enable the school community to determine the
  effectiveness of the program.
o Provide the school community with useful
  information that will enable it to plan
  modifications for continuing improvement.

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The Budget

Available resources are focused and allocated in a way that provides for students' success in school. The plan demonstrates how these resources are currently used and justifies expenditures associated with improvement of the instructional program. There is a direct link between the improvement priorities and activities included in the school plan and the resources included in the budget. The budget ensures that:

o The budget supports the planned improvement activities.

o Expenditures of consolidated application funds are warranted in light of the described program and are necessary to achieve the objectives for students.

o The planned supplemental expenditures will improve the eligible students' access to and benefits from a balanced educational program.

o A portion of the budget is reserved for ongoing improvement and is unencumbered by long-term personnel commitments.

Elementary School Plan Review

Approval of the Written Plan: Quality (Check one of the following:)

_____   The school plan, including the budget, reflects thoughtful
            attention to the development of the educated person and
            promises to lead the school community toward a high quali-
            ty instructional program as described in the Elementary
            School Program Quality Criteria. It can be approved.

_____   The plan, with the exception of _____
            reflects thoughtful attention to the development of the
            educated person and promises to lead the school community
            toward a high quality instructional program as described
            in the Elementary School Program Quality Criteria. It can
            be approved with the understanding that this area(s) will
            be improved and that the plan will be resubmitted.

_____   The plan is of low quality and cannot be approved.

Approval of the Written Plan: Technical
                    (Check N for "not approved" or A for "approved")

                                                        N   A

1. The school site plan, including the budget,   _____   _____
    has been developed by the school site council
    and approved by the governing board.   (SIP)
2. Identified Ch. 1, SCE, and LEP students   _____   _____
    receive the full and balanced curriculum
    provided to all students through base
    resources; they receive additional
    instructional assistance made possible
    through Ch. 1, EIA, LEP services which help
    them participate successfully in the
    curriculum provided all students.   (Ch. 1,
    SCE/LEP)
3. The plan includes a brief description of how   _____   _____
    special services and regular services are
    coordinated and articulated. (Ch. 1, SCE/
    LEP)
4. The plan includes a brief description of how   _____   _____
    parents are involved, consulted, and informed
    of their children's progress.   (Ch. 1, SCE)
5. The school site plan addresses improvement in   _____   _____
    the major instructional areas offered by the

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school, including reading, written and oral language, math, science, social science, the visual and performing arts, and physical education. (SIP)

6. The school site plan includes staff development activities for teachers and other school personnel that directly support the development and delivery of the activities for teachers and other school personnel that directly support the development and delivery of the instructional program. (SIP) ____ ____

7. The expenditures included in the school plan support proposed improvement activities and do not supplant funds provided by the district. (SIP, Ch. 1, SCE/LEP) ____ ____

8. Field trips, if included in the written plan, must support and enhance the instructional program. (Ch. 1, SCE) ____ ____

9. A description of the evaluation and modification procedures used to determine the effectiveness of the improvement program is included in the school site plan. (SIP) ____ ____

COMMENTS

I. Areas in Need of Improvement:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

II. Recommendations:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

III. Areas of Strength:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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