

Sustainable
School
Improvement

Making
**Good
Choices**

Making Good Choices:

Sustainable School Improvement

Written by

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for the

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine a school characterized by a culture of rigorous expectations, strong leadership, high-quality teaching, research-based instruction, ample resources, parent involvement, widespread public support, and effective infrastructure. If you are chuckling or shaking your head at the impossibility of such a school, you are most likely among the significant portion of us living in the real world. This publication is intended to help school leaders—superintendents and principals—and, to some degree, district leaders cope with this real world in their efforts to sustain promising efforts. As a strong, realistic leader, you are committed to helping your school improve, but you may be facing one or several roadblocks: Your staff isn't buying into the reform strategy; or your staff is enthusiastic but doesn't have the needed skills to implement; or the two teachers who really spearheaded the effort have left; or perhaps everyone knows what to do and would be willing to try, but who has the time or the necessary resources? These and other obstacles are the common challenges to sustaining school improvement.

What do we mean by *sustainable school improvement*? Clearly, the constant change brought with new district administration or passing education fads does not constitute sustainable reform. However, sustainability also is not defined as "lack of change." Rather, sustainability is about *continuous improvement*. Consider what a monumental improvement the wheel meant for transportation; then consider how we'd all be getting around today if the improvement efforts had stopped there. The often-used metaphor of school improvement as "a journey, not a destination" is apt; improvement needs to be the never-ending story of education.

And though improvement must be never-ending, this publication is not. Indeed, in keeping with the real-world time constraints faced by most school leaders, it is divided into five chapters—Building Commitment, Developing Capacity, Finding Time, Increasing Staff Retention, and Finding Money—and each chapter is intended to be concise and accessible in multiple ways. For those wanting simply a quick overview of strategies to facilitate sustainability, each chapter can be read in 15 minutes or less. For those ready to plan and implement a sustainable improvement effort, this guide includes comprehensive, relevant tools to help you plan and put into place suggested strategies. It also provides an Additional Resources section (located at the end of the book) by topic to alert you to other practical tools, software, and guidance in sustainable improvement. Although this guide does not propose to lay out in detail every characteristic and every strategy that may further sustainability, it does help school leaders raise questions about and gain ideas for the school's continuous improvement efforts.

Each of the five sections tackles an often-asked question related to sustainability. These questions are as follows:

- How can we build **ongoing commitment** to our improvement effort?
- How can we develop the **capacity** to implement our improvement effort successfully?

- How can we find the **time** to do the necessary “big picture” planning?
- How can we increase **retention** of effective staff as necessary for sustainability?
- How can we find the **money** for our continuous improvement efforts?

These questions and the corresponding strategies and tools are based in part on conversations with numerous school principals, district superintendents, professional development providers, school program directors, and other practitioners who have been successful in maintaining their education improvement measures over the long term. We also have consulted researchers and conducted a literature review to provide additional insight into this issue of sustainable improvement.

Many of the listed strategies likely will sound familiar, but we hope that the narrative offers a new perspective on each strategy, provides new “actionable” suggestions that help you live out the strategy, or poses questions that prompt an in-depth or comprehensive examination of the issue. To these ends, each chapter presents sample concrete tactics, included in an “Actions” table, for living out the proposed strategies. Each chapter also includes an assessment tool (based on the detailed “Questions to Consider” in the text) that is designed to push school leaders to think through what they are doing and what they could be doing to propel their schools towards long-term excellence.

As a final note, we applaud all school and district leaders who are striving to create sustainable improvement in their schools, but we also add a note of caution: You must be willing to live by the adage “If you’re going to do it, do it right.” Though leaders may agree with those words in theory, pressures to do something may impel leaders to make choices they know aren’t right. Something is *not always* better than nothing—especially if the “something” requires the expenditure of limited resources without any appreciable improvement in outcome. Professional development that is not targeted and measured for change in teacher practice and eventual improvement in student learning, site-based decision-making structures that do not include needed time and training for teachers, and a host of other well-intended but poorly supported strategies will drain critical resources without yielding any significant advantages—thus becoming a “something” that is worse than “nothing.” Commitment to sustainable improvement is commitment to efficacious change. The work is difficult, but the payoff is significant—and necessary.

We envision this tool as a “living document.” Please use the form at the back of the publication to tell us what was useful and what could be improved, and most important, to share with us any strategies, tools, and resources that have helped you sustain your efforts towards school improvement. We look forward to hearing from you!

CHAPTER 1 – BUILDING COMMITMENT

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Belief is a powerful force. It can help the outnumbered triumph and the disadvantaged succeed. By the same token, a lack of belief can fell any effort, no matter how promising its substance. In the realm of school improvement, belief is no less important. Schools can make up for many missing ingredients in the short term, but there is no making up for staff commitment. If staff members do not believe in the improvement effort, implementation fidelity will be lowered and success will be unlikely. This statement does not mean all school improvement efforts not initiated at the school level are doomed to failure, but it does indicate that any efforts introduced by others (such as the district) must include *explicit* and *continuous* steps to develop the type of teacher ownership that is initially and more naturally present in school-initiated improvement efforts.

The following strategies outline a complementary host of ideas that both school and district leaders can employ to build staff commitment to an improvement measure. Though leaders may choose not to focus on every listed approach, successful commitment building requires employing a coordinated set of strategies, not simply one or two stand-alone tactics.

CHAPTER STRATEGIES

1. Provide rationale for change.
2. Solicit and use teacher input continuously.
3. Select an effective improvement measure.
4. Make change as transparent as possible.
5. Extend ample technical assistance and support.
6. Provide incentives for change.
7. Mobilize support outside the school staff.

CHAPTER TOOL

Tool 1: Assessment of How Well We Are Building Commitment

This survey tool, based on the “Questions to Consider” found in this chapter, guides the school in assessing how well it is implementing commitment-building strategies. The survey focuses on statements to be assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, thus providing a snapshot of areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. It also includes questions for reflection to prompt deeper thinking for assessing and planning commitment-building actions. This tool provides a fairly complete overview of the discussion found in the chapter.

STRATEGIES

for BUILDING COMMITMENT

Questions to Consider

- Do teachers believe that what they're doing isn't working as well as it could?
- Do teachers believe that the proposed improvement measure will work better than what they're currently doing?
- What steps have we as leaders taken to prove that the (proposed) improvement measure will yield better student achievement results than the current practices?
- Do teachers feel that the benefits of implementing the (proposed) improvement measure outweigh the costs of doing so?
- What steps have we taken to demonstrate that the benefits of the improvement measure outweigh its costs?
- What steps have we as leaders taken to solicit and address teacher concerns about implementing changes?

Questions to Consider

- What concerns and comments do teachers have about the (proposed) improvement measure?
- How are we soliciting teacher comments and concerns?
- What resources are necessary to address teachers concerns?
- What changes have we made to address teacher comments and concerns?

Strategy 1. Provide rationale for change.

People need a reason to change. Typically, a person will be convinced to change if he or she has any of the following realizations:

- What I'm doing is not working as well as I want.
- What you're suggesting works better than what I'm doing.
- The benefits of using your suggestion outweigh the costs of using your suggestion.

These points were supported by our interviews. Specifically, a number of interviewees noted that teachers didn't initially feel an urgency to change their practices significantly, either because they felt that the school already was performing satisfactorily or because they were skeptical that the "new" improvement measure would be any better or would be around very long. They noted that working with teachers to analyze disaggregated data (showing that average scores masked very low success rates for some groups of students) and providing teachers with plausible evidence of the potential success of the improvement measure as well as effective mechanisms of support were necessary for facilitating changed teacher practice. A possible lesson here is that exhorting change *solely* through consequences for outcomes won't have the desired effect if the teacher doesn't believe that the proposed changes will last long or that they will produce desired outcomes any better than the teacher's current practices. Evidence suggests that having well-informed staff members who have been given choice in the improvement effort results in more successful implementation (Bodily, 1997). Given this fact, providing teachers with concrete, compelling reasons for change may translate into more effective teaching and increased student learning.

Strategy 2. Solicit and use teacher input continuously.

Teachers are the only ones who know how a improvement effort affects a class day-in and day-out. Teacher insight into the improvement effort can therefore have a significant impact on the success of implementation. In addition, *continually* seeking and using teacher input also fosters a sense of ownership for the improvement effort among teachers and builds teacher confidence that school and district leaders will support and sustain the improvement measure. It's important for teachers to gain ownership rather than merely buy-in (Wagner, 2001).

Strategy 3. Select an effective improvement measure.

Well-intentioned but ineffective education programs abound. School and district leaders need to help the school staff wade through the buzzwords and self-generated studies provided by reform providers to accomplish the following:

- Understand how a reform will actually change what happens in the classroom and in the school.
- Discover what third-party objective researchers and practitioners say about the reform program.
- Ensure that the reform targets the school's actual needs.

It's a lot easier to gain commitment for an improvement measure that works than an improvement measure that doesn't! For publications and tools to help educators determine if a improvement measure uses scientifically based research (SBR), refer to "Comprehensive School Reform," "Scientifically Based Research," and "Evaluation" in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.

Strategy 4. Make change as transparent as possible.

Conversations with teachers at reform-implementing schools often reveal that teachers are unable to explain the components of the improvement effort clearly or comprehensively or to identify the responsibilities of new or restructured staff and/or consultant positions. This lack of knowledge may result from the "do it to teachers" tendency that characterizes some school improvement efforts. A better way is to have teachers directly involved in the efforts. Teachers are the absolute heart of most school improvement measures, so it is vital that teachers have as much input as possible into developing the improvement plans. In addition, capable school and district leaders recognize the importance of creating a coherent vision of change and making clear exactly how reforms will affect what happens in the classroom and the school. Defining objectives and responsibilities of restructured and new staff and/or consultant positions is an important part of developing this map for improvement.

Strategy 5. Extend ample technical assistance and support.

School staff members are much more likely to commit to a promising improvement measure if they believe that the school and district will provide or facilitate the necessary training and resources to implement it, and if they trust that the measure will not soon be replaced by the next educational fad. Effective school and district leaders take actions to assure school staff members that their efforts will be supported over the long term.

Though providing the technical assistance needed to facilitate change is a strong step in the right direction, it may not be enough. If there is a contingent of teachers who subtly or not-so-subtly discourage other teachers from

Questions to Consider

- What criteria and process have we used to ensure that the proposed improvement measure is the best choice for our school?
- How does the improvement measure address identified school needs?
- What steps have we taken to verify provider-quoted results of the improvement measure?
- What role have teachers played in selecting the improvement measure?
- How, specifically, will the (proposed) measure affect classroom practice and school operations?

Questions to Consider

- Can the school staff fully explain the improvement measure and its implications for practices at the classroom and school levels?
- What have we done as leaders to make clear the components of the measure?
- Can the school staff fully explain the objectives and responsibilities of new or restructured staff and/or consultant positions?
- What have we done as leaders to make clear the roles of new and restructured staff and/or consultant positions?

Questions to Consider

- What assurances have we given the school(s) that we will support this improvement effort over the long-term?
- Do teachers trust that we will continue to support this effort?
- What resources (money, staff, materials, support infrastructures) have we allocated to this improvement measure?
- Are teachers aware of these resources?
- How have we made teachers aware of these resources?

continued on next page

CHAPTER 1 – BUILDING COMMITMENT Strategies

Questions to Consider (continued)

- Are teachers comfortable in implementing the improvement measure?
- How can we make teachers more comfortable in implementing the measure?

implementing new practices so that they can maintain the status quo, leaders will need to provide support that is proactive, not simply available. Though the strategies included in this chapter will help create a school culture that embraces innovativeness and adaptiveness, the process of reculturing is a slow and complex one. Establishing incentives (discussed in Strategy 6, “Provide incentives for change”) is a strong means for actively encouraging new practice and thus reshaping or strengthening school culture.

Characteristics of a Positive School Culture

Positive, collaborative cultures are noted for a shared purpose and focus on long-term improvement, as well as a supportive environment that includes:

- “A mission focused on student and teacher learning”
- “A rich sense of history and purpose”
- “Core values of collegiality, performance, and improvement that engender quality, achievement, and learning”
- “Positive beliefs and assumptions about the potential of students and staff to learn and grow”
- “A strong professional community that uses knowledge, experience, and research to improve practice”
- “A shared sense of responsibility for student outcomes”
- “A cultural network that fosters positive communication flows”
- “Leadership among staff and administrators that blends continuity with improvement”
- “Rituals and ceremonies that reinforce core cultural values”
- “Stories that celebrate success and recognize heroines and heroes”
- “An overall sense of interpersonal connection, meaningful purpose, and belief in the future”
- “A physical environment that symbolizes joy and pride”
- “A widely shared sense of respect and caring for everyone”

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Strategy 6. Provide incentives for change.

Action is usually the result of one or more of the following four causes: inertia, belief, necessity, and incentives (reward or recognition). We already have noted the power of *belief* to spur action and the difficulties of compulsion (*necessity*) as a sole means of changing teacher practice. Here we will consider *incentive* because it speaks to two innate human drives: to seek that which brings about the most advantage or avoids the most disadvantage, and to behave differently when being observed or evaluated. Strong district and school leaders often utilize rewards and recognition in ways that address those drives. Belief in the goodness of an effort may not be enough (e.g., “I know I should do X, but I simply don’t have the time, energy, or money”). Inertia – the tendency to keep doing the same thing – is such a strong force that district and school leaders must stack the deck in favor of sustainable change by rewarding and recognizing improvement efforts – in addition to helping teachers come to believe in those efforts.

Strategy 7. Mobilize support outside the school staff.

As noted previously, teachers are much more likely to commit to a promising reform if they trust that it will be kept in place for an extended period of time. One important way of ensuring that an improvement measure will be sustained is to gain the support of the community. If teachers see that parents are supporting the reform at home, that citizens are voting on the needed bonds, and that businesses are donating time and resources for the reform, teachers will be more likely to implement the reform to the fullest – trusting that all of their efforts will not be undermined by a hasty scrapping of the reform. School and district leaders can take many steps to build community support through soliciting community input, educating the public about the reform, and affirming their own commitment to the reform. One means of building wider ownership suggested by the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) and a recent cohort of Distinguished Principal Fellows (Laboratory for Student Success, 2003) is distributing leadership to capable school community members. Such distribution of leadership can take the form of *effective* school councils (McCoy & Felton-Montgomery, 2002).

As a concluding note to this chapter, realistic school leaders recognize that even employing all of the preceding strategies may not convince the most stalwart opponents of change. Ideally, concerted efforts over time will soften this opposition, but eventually leaders may have only two choices: getting the naysayers to agree to do their own thing but not sabotage the schoolwide efforts, or encouraging or instigating a parting of ways. The chapter on “Building Retention” presents some ideas on how to make this decision.

Questions to Consider

- What positive incentives have we established to encourage teachers to implement the improvement measure?
- What negative incentives have we established to discourage teachers from *not* implementing the improvement measure?
- Are teachers implementing the improvement measure?
- What means are we using to determine if or how well teachers are implementing the improvement measure?

Questions to Consider

- What steps have we taken to gain the support of parents for this improvement measure?
- Do parents support the measure?
- What steps have we taken to gain the support of organized groups for this improvement measure?
- Do the community’s organized groups support the measure?
- What steps have we taken to gain the support of policymakers for this improvement measure?
- Do the community’s policymakers support the measure?

ACTIONS

for BUILDING COMMITMENT

Strategy 1. Provide rationale for change.

Potential Actions

- Use data to prove the need for the improvement effort. (Disaggregated data often provides a “wake-up call” for schools with average student achievement scores that are satisfactory or even high.)
- Provide a written description of the proposed improvement effort as well as a concise summary of relevant research.
- Collaborate with teachers to map school needs against the components of the improvement measure.
- Explicitly and frequently point out positive impact of changes. (People need to be shown observable outcomes.)

Strategy 2. Solicit and use teacher input continuously.

Initial Commitment

- Form a teacher-led committee to study school needs and potential improvement measures.
- Ask all teachers to assess – either orally or in written form – the proposed improvement measure, including their perceptions of the following: the reform’s strengths, weaknesses, potential impact on teaching and learning, areas that will prove challenging to implement, and areas of desired support or professional development to help with implementation. Synthesize and use this feedback!

Ongoing Commitment

- Implement teacher suggestions, even those you (as an administrator) disagree with.
- Explicitly point out the impact of teacher decisions (e.g., “Per your recommendations, we established a block schedule, which has shown benefits to student learning, teacher practice, and teacher morale.”)
- Meet with a teacher before and after each observation to consult on or work through his or her challenges in implementing the reform effort.
- Establish formal weekly “office hours” in which the principal or district administrator is available for teachers.
- Create and maintain a Web-based, anonymous, “questions and concerns” bulletin board.
- Conduct formal biannual written surveys, focus groups, and/or interviews to gain feedback on improvement efforts.

- Establish weekly meetings with a group of lead teachers who can report teacher input.
- Devote a portion of faculty meetings to soliciting input from teachers in a structured way.

Strategy 3. Select an effective improvement measure.

Potential Actions

- Check independent sources of research on the effectiveness of the reform at schools similar to yours. Don't rely on the data provided by the reform provider.
- Track down schools using the improvement measure and ask them to assess the reform. Try not to rely solely on school names offered by the reform provider; these schools may reflect the best results rather than typical results.
- Visit a school implementing the improvement measure to see it in action.
- Remember that even successful reform efforts may initially exhibit a "dip" in student achievement. Don't scrap efforts because of one year of lower numbers.

Strategy 4. Make change as transparent as possible.

Potential Actions

- Use teacher input to create a map for improvement that outlines a clear vision of expected results, actions, and staff roles.
- Prior to implementation, concretely demonstrate – by modeling or video demonstrations – how classroom practices will change as a result of the improvement effort.
- If role changes will result from the reform (i.e., either due to changes in responsibilities of current staff or due to addition of new staff or consultants), provide a written description of the new roles, including objectives of the role, duties and responsibilities, and time to be dedicated to each responsibility.
- Establish formal, regular opportunities for teachers to ask questions about upcoming or ongoing reform efforts. (See actions related to Strategy 2 on soliciting feedback.)
- In initial stages of implementation, pilot the improvement effort with teachers who are more receptive to or capable of implementing the reform; then, ask these teachers to share what they've learned – through modeling, peer coaching, mini-professional development sessions, or write-up of experience.

- Establish a routine of nonevaluation-related visits to and between teachers so teachers frequently observe and are observed and are comfortable giving and receiving feedback.

Strategy 5. Provide ample technical assistance and support.

Potential Actions

- If you are a school leader, demonstrate your own support of the reform by making it the central piece of the school improvement plan, focusing faculty meetings around the reform, and posting visual reform material around the school.
- Establish an in-house professional library of relevant research and classroom support materials. Remember that “availability” does not translate necessarily into “use.” Provide incentives and structured opportunities for teachers to take advantage of the library.
- Emphasize *ongoing* professional development, such as well-structured peer coaching, study groups, action research, mentoring, and common planning time.
- Designate a staff person to act as a resource person for the improvement effort.

Strategy 6. Provide incentives for change.

Potential Actions

- Formally recognize teachers who are successfully implementing the improvement effort in their classrooms. Use public acknowledgment, extended or duty-free lunch periods, or small gifts.
- If the school possesses flexibility in staffing or budget, designate staff successful in implementing the improvement effort as “lead teachers” and provide accompanying salary increases.
- Establish teacher observation or evaluation criteria based on reform-related practices. (Please note that it might be better to *delay* making reform-related practices criteria for formal evaluation until after teachers have had a chance to receive ample support and professional development. However, teachers should be made aware that principal and peer reviews will be looking at reform-related practices, even if such practices are not part of the formal evaluation.)

Strategy 7. Mobilize support outside the school staff.

Potential Actions

- Distribute a paper or online survey soliciting parent and community feedback as to school needs.
- Analyze survey results and make findings public.
- Establish a school advisory committee with numerous representatives of parents, business leaders, and civic leaders to study school needs and recommend improvement measures.
- Hold “town meetings” about school needs and possible improvement efforts in three to four community centers. Include town meetings as part of PTA or PTO-type meetings.
- Create a parent or community liaison to answer questions about the improvement effort.
- Start a volunteer-recruitment drive to get parents, senior citizens, college students, and employees of local businesses to work in the school. (People are more likely to support efforts that they can see in action and can feel they’re a part of.)
- Develop a community resource area (e.g., in a hallway, library, or extra storage room) that includes materials about school improvement efforts, a comment box, and a volunteer sign-up board.
- Include descriptions of the selected improvement effort in parent newsletters.
- Put up a prominent bulletin board with materials highlighting improvement efforts. The location of this board should not be limited to the school.
- Continually publicize both small and large successes – and those who contributed to the successes.

TOOL 1

Assessment of How Well We are **BUILDING COMMITMENT**

Strategies Discussed in the “Building Commitment” Chapter

1. Provide rationale for change.
2. Solicit and use teacher input continuously.
3. Select an effective improvement measure.
4. Make change as transparent as possible.
5. Extend ample technical assistance and support.
6. Provide incentives for change.
7. Mobilize support outside the school staff.

PURPOSE

You as a school leader can use this tool to record your assessment of the level of stakeholder trust, understanding, and implementation of the improvement effort and to reflect on what commitment-building efforts your school has undertaken or should undertake in the near future.

As an alternative, you may choose to use the assessment statements to create your own surveys that ask teachers about their support. For example, the first statement, “Teachers believe the improvement effort will improve current practice,” could be changed to “I believe the improvement effort will improve current practice” and distributed to teachers to record their level of agreement. Feel free to use or revise this tool as best suits your purposes.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. Work through the entire “assessment” column, circling the number that most accurately reflects your opinion on each statement. Remember, don’t go by gut instinct alone. When recording your rating, ask yourself, “How do I know? On what basis am I making this assessment?”

Step 2. Add together your circled numbers to get your total score. Then divide by 13 to get your average score. Read the descriptions below to determine where you believe your school stands in terms of commitment to the improvement effort.

Total Score from Step 1: _____

Divided by 13=: _____ **(Average Score)**

If your average score is between:

- **1.0 and 2.74**, you believe you likely will encounter a good deal of resistance to the improvement effort. To help facilitate change, consider bringing in a competent, objective third party whom the staff trusts.
- **2.75 and 3.74**, you believe you likely will receive tolerance or lukewarm acceptance of the improvement effort. Consider tapping well-respected staff to champion the improvement effort among other staff and thus increase the level of commitment and implementation.
- **3.75 and 5.0**, you feel fairly confident that the staff will accept and implement the improvement effort.

Step 3. For any assessment statement that you rated a “3” or less, read the accompanying “reflection” questions and think about what your school has done or could do to improve that particular area. Circle any questions that you want to work on.

Step 4. Develop a preliminary action plan to address the assessment statements that you rated a “3” or less. Talk with the staff about ways they believe commitment use could be built. At the bottom of the tool, record your areas for action and preliminary action steps to address these areas.

TOOL 1

Assessment of How Well We are BUILDING COMMITMENT

1 2 3 4 5
 strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

Questions for Reflection

- What steps have we taken to demonstrate the need for change?
- What steps have we taken to demonstrate the potential effectiveness of the improvement effort?

- What steps have we taken to highlight and increase benefits?
- What steps have we taken to address and diminish costs?

- What steps have we taken to involve teachers in selecting the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to involve teachers in improving the implementation of the improvement effort?

- What steps have we taken to establish criteria for selecting the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to match school needs with an appropriate improvement strategy?
- What steps have we taken to document the rigor of the improvement effort selection criteria and matching process?

1. PROVIDE RATIONALE FOR CHANGE

Teachers believe the improvement effort will enhance current practice.

1 2 3 4 5

Teachers are confident that the benefits of change (e.g., increased student achievement, increased teacher capacity, improved school climate) outweigh the costs of change (e.g., additional time and effort requirements).

1 2 3 4 5

2. SOLICIT AND USE TEACHER INPUT CONTINUOUSLY

Teachers believe they have contributed significantly to the selection of the improvement effort and continue to contribute to its implementation.

1 2 3 4 5

3. SELECT AN EFFECTIVE IMPROVEMENT MEASURE

Teachers trust that rigorous criteria and processes have been used to select an effective, targeted improvement effort.

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

4. MAKE CHANGE AS TRANSPARENT AS POSSIBLE

Teachers are quite familiar with and can accurately explain the philosophy, components, and implications of the improvement effort for their classroom and for the school.

1 2 3 4 5

5. EXTEND AMPLE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

Teachers believe that school or district leaders will give this improvement effort the time and support it needs to succeed.

1 2 3 4 5

Teachers are aware of resources available to support this improvement effort.

1 2 3 4 5

Teachers feel confident and comfortable in implementing this improvement effort.

1 2 3 4 5

6. PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR CHANGE

Teachers are fully implementing the improvement effort.

1 2 3 4 5

Questions for Reflection

- What steps have we taken to ensure that teachers understand the philosophy and components of the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that teachers understand the its implications for changes in their classroom and school?
- What steps have we taken to support the improvement effort (e.g., technical assistance, training, resources, and incentives)?
- What steps have we taken to assure school staff of long-term implementation of the improvement effort (e.g., pledges, restructuring of staff and services to support improvement effort)?
- What steps have we taken to provide support to school staff in addressing mandates and other requirements that take time away from the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to reallocate or increase funds towards the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to inform school staff as to resources available for the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to make school staff comfortable with implementing the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to align teacher observations, evaluations, and incentives with expected implementation of the improvement effort?

CHAPTER 1 – BUILDING COMMITMENT
Tool 1

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**
 strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

Questions for Reflection

- What steps have we taken to involve parents in planning and implementing the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to inform parents about the philosophy of the improvement effort and how it will affect their child?

- What steps have we taken to involve business and community group representatives in planning and implementing the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to inform business and community group representatives about the philosophy of the improvement effort and its effects on student achievement and school climate?

- What steps have we taken to involve community members in planning and implementing the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to inform community members about the philosophy of the improvement effort and its effects on student achievement and school climate?

- What steps have we taken to involve policymakers or policy administrators in planning and implementing the improvement effort?
- What steps have we taken to inform policymakers or policy administrators about the philosophy of the improvement effort and its effects on student achievement and school climate?

7. MOBILIZE SUPPORT OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL STAFF

Parents support this improvement effort.

1 2 3 4 5

Businesses and community groups support this improvement effort.

1 2 3 4 5

Other community members support this improvement effort.

1 2 3 4 5

Policymakers or policy administrators support this improvement effort.

1 2 3 4 5

**PRELIMINARY ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS STATEMENTS RATED
A "3" OR LESS**

Area for Action (e.g., "demonstrating need for change")	Preliminary Action Steps

CHAPTER 2 – DEVELOPING CAPACITY

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Each day, science is bringing us closer to comprehending how individuals learn. With greater understanding of learning needs comes greater attention to how to create an effective learning environment. Although practical, political, and financial concerns will limit to some degree how a school and district operate, ideally all the components of running a school will continue to become more greatly aligned with student learning needs and with each other.

In this guide, *capacity* refers to the skills, knowledge, and infrastructure you will need to build an organization focused on meeting these student learning needs. Because schools' starting points, goals, and circumstances differ, areas for capacity building also will differ. However, there are core process strategies (see below) that can aid all schools. These strategies help develop *adaptiveness*—the ability to be aware of and respond to new needs and circumstances (Brandt, 2003; Century & Levy, 2002). Although there may not be one set of teaching methods, one type of governance strategy, or one school organizational structure that always works best for every single school at every single time, there are teaching methods, governance strategies, and school structures that will work best for *your* school. Being able to continually assess and connect your changing school needs with evolving pedagogical and operational approaches is essential for sustainable improvement. The following strategies outline a complementary host of ideas that both school and district leaders can use to develop capacity for implementing a chosen improvement measure. Although leaders may choose not to focus on every listed approach, successful capacity-building requires employing a coordinated set of strategies, not simply one or two stand-alone tactics.

CHAPTER STRATEGIES

1. Know your three-dimensional needs.
2. Establish clear, ambitious, and measurable goals.
3. Develop a theory of change.
4. Combine planning with action.
5. Focus on what happens in the classroom.
6. Emphasize ongoing, job-embedded professional development.
7. Distribute leadership.
8. Incentivize outcomes in addition to processes.

CHAPTER TOOLS

Tool 2: Assessment of How Well We Are Developing Capacity

This survey tool, based on the “Questions to Consider” found in this chapter, guides the school in assessing how well it is implementing capacity-building strategies. The survey focuses on statements to be assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, thus providing a snapshot of areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. It also includes questions for reflection to prompt deeper thinking for assessing and planning capacity-building actions. This tool provides a fairly complete overview of the discussion found in the chapter.

Tool 3: Three-Dimensional Needs Assessment

This tool, which is divided into four separate sections, provides assistance in creating a school assessment team with multiple stakeholders, reviewing quantitative and qualitative data, prioritizing student learning needs, connecting staff and school-level needs to student needs, and anticipating future learning needs.

Tool 4: Connecting Incentives and Support to Expectations

This tool can help schools articulate their objectives for the role of the teacher and analyze how well current incentives and support measures promote those objectives.

Link: Action Planner Tools

www.ncrel.org/pd/toolkit.htm

These tools, from *Professional Development: Learning From the Best* (Hassel, 1999) are useful for designing, implementing, and evaluating professional development.

STRATEGIES

for DEVELOPING CAPACITY

Strategy 1. Know your three-dimensional needs.

Though traditional needs assessments are valuable tools, they may fall short of giving a full picture of a school's situation. Why? Traditional needs assessments are one-dimensional: They look only at what one group thinks is needed for one level of the school system at one point in time. To be truly valuable, a school embarking on sustainable improvement should consider its needs with a "three-dimensional" lens of perspective, level, and time. Such a lens captures the vantage points of multiple stakeholders regarding the needs of students, staff, schools, and districts both now and in the future.

- **Dimension One: Perspectives.** To paraphrase educational researcher Grant Wiggins (cited in Guskey, 1999), people don't know what they don't know. Schools assessing their needs should gather the perspectives of students, teachers, principals, district staff, "critical friends" (people with expertise or experience in school operations, such as a team from another school that visits the school and offers feedback or constructive criticism), community members (e.g., parents, and colleges and businesses to which many students go after high school), and the literature base on school improvement.
- **Dimension Two: Levels.** Encompassed within the term *school needs* are the needs of those within different "levels" of the school. As a starting point, leaders should first examine the needs of the school's direct consumers: its students. What do teachers (as well as students, principals, and others) think students need to be successful? Based on this assessment, individual teacher and principal training, support, and resource needs can be determined. From there, broader school organizational needs—such as decision making structures—and district support mechanisms can be assessed for what is needed to best support students.
- **Dimension Three: Time.** The school system must be a dynamic system, responding to the new capacities and skill gaps of incoming students and to the ever-changing demands of society and the work force. Indeed, some educational researchers argue that school systems today don't require reform because they have failed, but necessitate transformation because they've become obsolete (Wagner, 1998).

Collecting and analyzing data is an essential first step in identifying needs. Schools need to consider both quantitative and qualitative data. Remember that limiting your focus may make the job more manageable and successful. For information on data collection and analysis, refer to "Data Use" and "Data Use: Value-Added Analysis" in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.

Questions to Consider

- Whose perspectives have we solicited in outlining the school's needs? Are we confident that these perspectives offer a 360-degree, inside and out, picture of areas for improvement?
- What research of the school improvement literature have we done to see what other schools are doing to sustain effectiveness?
- Have we separated out needs from problems, wants, and complaints?
- Have we first identified student needs and then moved out from there to consider what teachers, principals, and the school as a whole will need to support learning?
- What are the projected student enrollment and student demographics of children set to enter the school three to five years from now?
- What steps have we taken to establish relationships with institutions providing the next level of education and businesses employing many of our high school graduates in order to find out what skills will be needed in the future?
- Would it be possible to implement a tracking system to monitor how our students fare after leaving the school? How could we use this information to improve our services?
- What type of data do we currently collect around student achievement and demographics, staff capacity, school culture, and stakeholder feedback?
- What technology (e.g., electronic data base) and system (e.g., semiannual review by representatives from all grade levels) do we use to monitor the progress the school makes in student achievement, staff capacity, school culture, and other identified areas?

CHAPTER 2 – DEVELOPING CAPACITY Strategies

Questions to Consider

- How do our multiple sources of data inform our school goals?
- Are the school goals directly connected with teaching and learning needs?
- Have we limited the amount of a school goals to a number for which we can actually maintain focus?
- Have we created concrete goals that enable quantifiable measurement of progress over time?
- What process do we use to ensure that school goals are kept in alignment with district or state standards and goals?
- What process do we use to align individual teacher goals and teacher-team goals with the school goals?
- What role do the school staff and older students play in setting and continually refining school goals?
- Can all of the school staff articulate what the school's goals are? Can the students (age permitting)?
- What steps have we as school or district leaders taken to ensure widespread understanding and awareness of school goals?
- Do we challenge ourselves to meet higher expectations every year?

Questions to Consider

- Did working backwards from our desired goals to identify the necessary intermediate goals, actions, and inputs bring to light any capacity needs that we missed when performing our original school needs assessment?
- Have we talked to other organizations about their theory of change so that we may gain more familiarity with creating and enacting a theory of change?
- What is our concrete theory of change? That is, how do we expect our actions and inputs to bring about our goals?

Schools also will benefit from maintaining an electronic database of school improvement information. Student achievement, staff capacity, and school climate are all areas in which you may want to track progress from year to year. No matter how information is stored and tracked, be clear about how it will be used. Staff, parents, and students have legitimate concerns about privacy issues.

Strategy 2. Establish clear, ambitious, and measurable goals.

The directive to develop school goals is certainly widespread among school districts, but schools often receive little support in creating meaningful goals. School goals, to be meaningful, must be *clear*: able to be articulated by all staff and students (age permitting), few in number (three to five), aligned with state or district standards and other individual goals or teacher-team goals, directly related to student learning and identified needs, and specific. School goals must be *ambitious*: challenging to reach and continually increasing in target and/or scope. School goals also must be *measurable*: able to be assessed (regularly) using quantitative or qualitative indicators that can be reliably compared with previous results to determine progress.

Strategy 3. Develop a theory of change.

Often, organizations create goals and then plan some activities, without having mapped out all of the components necessary for successful implementation, or without having specifically identified how the organization's actions are intended to bring about the goals. Strong, comprehensive implementation of an improvement process is aided by creating a concrete *theory of change*, which lays out *how you expect change to take place*. The process for developing a theory of change starts by considering your long-term goals and then working backwards in a step-by-step manner to think through the activities, inputs, and benchmarks needed along the way. Theories of change often are initially developed graphically with boxes and arrows that record steps, influences, and assumptions. (For information, refer to "Theory of Change or Theory of Action" in the Additional Resources section at the

end of this book.) By taking the time to link proposed activities and resources to desired goals and by making an effort to take a hard look at the actions and inputs of other organizations necessary for success, your school or district may be able to identify the disconnects and gaps that would have kept the improvement effort from being effective.

Sample Theories of Change (or “Theories of Action”)

Public Education Network (PEN) www.publiceducation.org/theoryofact.asp

NewSchools Venture Fund www.newschools.org/strategy/theory_of_change.htm

Annie E. Casey Foundation www.aecf.org/initiatives/mc/theory.htm

Strategy 4. Combine planning with action.

The school improvement plan has become such a dominant piece of the education landscape that some people have lost sight of the fact that this plan is *a tool, not an outcome* (Schmoker, 2002). A school improvement plan should flow from your school’s theory of change (see Strategy 3 above), and it needs to be supported with an infrastructure that allows teachers to take big-picture goals and translate them into actual practice. The infrastructure provides the support needed for creating a professional learning community (Fullan, 1999; Kruse, 1996). Several studies suggest that schools operating as learning communities may experience higher levels of student achievement (King, 2002).

Without mechanisms such as effective teaming, common planning time, peer review, and distributed leadership, teachers will have no opportunity to render goals into an ongoing plan of action. And without an ongoing plan of action, the daily work in the classroom and in the principal’s office soon becomes disconnected from the goals and action steps engraved in the school improvement plan and put on a shelf months before. A school improvement plan must be a relevant document that is reviewed, revised, supported, and—most important—*lived out* continuously.

Questions to Consider

- Is our school improvement plan based on our theory of change?
- How much time did we spend creating the school improvement plan? How much time do we spend formally and regularly reviewing and assessing progress towards its goals? (Try to minimize the school improvement plan’s creation time and maximize its implementation time!)
- Are our school improvement plan and professional development plan closely aligned?
- Do teachers have enough time **together** to share instructional strategies, plan and assess student learning, and discuss school-level issues?
- How do we know that the time teachers have together is well-structured and used?
- Do teachers have enough **individual** time to build their own skills and knowledge and to prepare for their in-class time?
- What resources have we studied to find out more about structures that support and enable school improvement strategies—such as teacher teams, shared decision making, common planning time, peer coaching, and mentoring?
- Does the principal have sufficient time set aside to work with teams implementing school improvement strategies?
- Does the principal have time to further his or her own development and collaborate with other principals?

CHAPTER 2 – DEVELOPING CAPACITY Strategies

Questions to Consider

- Is the question “How will this decision affect student learning?” a constant consideration?
- In reviewing all of the programs in place at our school, are there other programs that might have a greater impact on teaching and learning? (For example, is the student mentoring program having a significant impact on students’ learning and well-being? Might another student mentoring program work better? Might student mentoring be replaced with a different type of program altogether?)
- Have we structured faculty meetings and teacher-team meetings so that the issues of most importance are discussed first and given the most time?
- How much of our faculty meeting time is devoted to administrative matters versus teaching and learning issues?
- How much of our team meetings are spent sharing instructional ideas, planning curriculum, and assessing student progress versus venting frustrations?
- Is our staffing pattern the most effective for supporting teaching and learning?
- Are our staff responsibilities and time allotments the most effective for supporting teaching and learning? For example, should principals spend more time in the classrooms? Should para-professionals and volunteers be used more for lunch and hallway duty to free teachers for professional development and collaboration time?

Strategy 5. Focus on what happens in the classroom.

Given the numerous factors involved in running a school, centering time, decisions, resources, and actions around student learning is often a struggle. Although clearly noninstructional matters cannot be ignored, they should be allotted time and effort appropriate to their importance (e.g., relegate administrative issues to staff newsletters or e-mail rather than faculty meetings). Noninstructional matters also should be connected to improving student learning as much as possible (e.g., refocus discussions on student discipline problems around making instructional strategies more engaging for bored or disruptive students, or around finding a more appropriate learning environment for truly troubled students). This focus on the bottom line has definite implications for student achievement. For example, one Maryland study (Keller, 1998) showed that exemplary schools of every type (e.g., urban, rural, high income, low income) had principals who acted as *instructional leaders*. Lower achieving schools tended to have principals who served primarily as managers and held lower expectations for teacher instruction.

The continually improving school (and its district) also is willing to rethink traditional job responsibilities and staffing structures to better support teaching and learning (Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1997; Odden, n.d.). For example, your school may decide to redirect funding away from “resource” staff positions and toward more structured time for each teacher to develop his or her own capacity. (In many European and Asian countries, teachers are provided 15 to 20 hours of time to work with other teachers. In America, most teachers are given only 3 to 5 hours per week for all planning activities [Darling-Hammond, 1996].) For information on establishing structures (e.g., learning teams) that help keep the focus on student needs, refer to “Professional Development” in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.

Strategy 6. Emphasize ongoing, job-embedded professional development.

How many times would you buy from a company whose product or service only worked a small fraction of the time? The very idea is ridiculous, yet many schools and districts spend their professional development money in such a manner. One study of three schools involved in a three-phase professional development workshop found that without additional support, fewer than 10 percent of the teachers actually used the new teaching strategies introduced in the workshop after they went back in the classroom. However, when teachers were organized into study groups, participated in peer coaching, and were encouraged to use the new strategies immediately and frequently, 88 percent of the teachers were using the new strategies by the end of the first year (Lashway, 1998).

The National Staff Development Council (Sparks & Hirsch, n.d.) recommends that districts spend 10 percent of their budgets on professional development. The importance of worthwhile, ongoing development opportunities for teachers also was echoed again and again in our interviews. This emphasis on collaborative, ongoing development is especially important, given the fact that effectiveness varies more between classrooms within a school than it does between schools (Sparks, 2003). Teachers have much to learn from each other if they're given the opportunity to do so during the course of their work week. The National Staff Development Council (Sparks & Hirsch, n.d.) recommends that teachers should have 25 percent of the school day to collaborate and plan lessons.

In addition to adequate support, schools and districts also need to ensure that the *content* of professional development is relevant and of high quality. A well-structured study group about a topic barely or not at all related to teaching and learning certainly does not serve the school well (Guskey, 1999).

Although the same suggestion for scrutinizing the content, format, support structures, and outcomes of staff development holds for principals, it is worth adding that school leaders traditionally receive even fewer quality development opportunities and support structures than teachers. This fact likely contributes to the fact that “researchers have repeatedly noted a mismatch between what principals profess and what they practice” (Keller, 1998). This outcome is not surprising, given the shortage of effective principal training and lack of time and resources to implement promising practices. Though principals are to some degree at the mercy of what development and support structures are available, leaders also can try to be proactive consumers who seek out and use only those professional development opportunities that meet strong criteria, such as those listed in the following box.

Questions to Consider

- What criteria do we use when selecting effective off-site staff development?
- Is our professional development based on identified student needs?
- Do we formally monitor professional development needs (individual and schoolwide) and progress towards meeting these needs?
- Given that ongoing, job-embedded professional development has a much greater impact on teacher practice than one-shot workshops, do we allocate our resources (time and money) towards these different types of professional development appropriately?
- Do we track the resources used for staff development?
- Do we actively support short-term staff development sessions (e.g., off-site workshops, seminars) with ongoing support (e.g., peer coaching, study groups) and incentives at the school?
- Are teachers using and sharing the strategies and information they gained through their professional development? How do we know?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that teachers use the strategies and information they gained through their professional development?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that teachers share with other teachers the strategies and information they gained through their professional development?
- Do we formally assess the impact of professional development on teacher practice and student learning?

Checklist for Determining if Professional Development Activities Are Satisfactory

- ___ The activities are subject to regular review and revision based on participant feedback and new findings in the research base.
- ___ Instructors have a good deal of expertise in the activity topic.
- ___ The activities are designed to meet specific development needs identified through systemic analysis.
- ___ The activities encourage and/or put into place means (e.g., networks, follow-up activities, tools) to help continue the learning and support once in the classroom or building.
- ___ Participants offer positive feedback on the activities.
- ___ The audience (e.g., teachers, principals) for professional development activities have had input into the design.
- ___ The activities are assessed for resulting changes in practitioner actions and beliefs.
- ___ Efforts are made to evaluate the impact of the training on student learning. Such evaluation demonstrates positive effects.

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Supporting and encouraging high-quality teacher and principal learning through job-embedded, well-structured mechanisms—such as mentoring, study groups, and peer coaching—makes the difference between significantly improved practice and throwing money down the drain.

Strategy 7. Distribute leadership.

As described by Richard Elmore (2002a), *distributed leadership* involves joining together people with differing specializations and competencies in “networks of shared and complementary expertise rather than in hierarchies that have a clearly defined division of labor.” Distributing leadership in today’s complex school environment not only is a virtual necessity for tending to the multiple demands of school operations but also is a capacity-building system for teachers, the principal, and the school as a whole (McCoy & Felton-Montgomery, 2002). Teachers learn to exercise decision making, to take ownership of decisions, and to value themselves and others as capable professionals beyond the classroom. Principals learn that developing leadership in others is a trait of effective leaders and enhances rather than undermines the principal’s role in the school. Finally, distributed leadership strengthens the capacity of the school as a whole in that the organization is better equipped with a structure for good decision making. The results can be significant. In a study of a of low-performing Chicago elementary schools, those schools that made significant gains in reading scores were characterized by having effective school councils, teachers more involved in decision making, and principals more focused on teaching and learning (Keller, 1998).

Of course, distributed leadership, shared decision making, or any form of collaborative autonomy should not be an end unto itself or perceived as automatically leading to higher student achievement. Several studies demonstrate there is no necessary link between school-based decision making and increased student learning (Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, 1999; Elmore, 2002b; Fullan, 1993). Rather, effective decision making depends on a continual focus on teaching and learning, sound structures, and capable, competent people (Mohr & Dichter, 2003). Other important attributes include real authority over budget, personnel, and curriculum; clearly defined roles and responsibilities; strong principal leadership (but not authoritarian control); reward for progress towards school goals; and time to meet together (Briggs & Wohlstetter, 2001; Holloway, 2000; and Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1996). So, although distributed leadership helps develop the capacity among the staff and the school as a whole, distributed leadership also *requires* capacity building to ensure that teachers and principals have the knowledge and skills to identify successful improvement strategies and to utilize distributed leadership to decide upon and implement those strategies.

Questions to Consider

- What formal and informal structures do we have in place for making decisions? Would formalizing any of our informal customs (e.g., adding to or replacing the principal’s informal “open ear” policy with an active, powerful school leadership team) distribute leadership more effectively and more authentically?
- Are our decision-making structures and processes directed towards improving teaching and learning?
- What decisions are teachers and principals empowered to make?
- Do teachers and principals believe they have the opportunity to make meaningful decisions?
- Do teachers and principals believe they have the needed skills and knowledge to make meaningful decisions? What specific skills and knowledge do they lack? (Don’t let a lack of desired skills or knowledge immobilize you. Trying something new often teaches skills more effectively than reading about them.)
- What steps have been taken to build trust among the staff and administration?
- What steps have we taken to build the skills and knowledge needed to employ distributed leadership?
- Have we identified and assessed what skills and knowledge we want school leadership to possess? (See “Professional Development for Principals” in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.)
- Do teachers want to be involved in school-level decisions, or do they perceive such involvement as extra work without much corresponding incentive or impact? What steps have we taken to facilitate their consideration of a shared decision-making structure?
- What steps have we taken to institutionalize our decision-making structures so that they exist beyond the departure of any particular person?

CHAPTER 2 – DEVELOPING CAPACITY Strategies

Questions to Consider

- How do we formally and directly assess whether teachers and principals use skills and knowledge gained from professional development opportunities?
- How do we support teachers and principals in using new skills and knowledge (e.g., through peer coaching, study groups, self-reflection logs, and constructive and nonevaluative observations)?
- How do we reward teachers and principals for using new knowledge and skills (e.g., positive evaluations, promotion to leadership positions, stipends for sharing new skills, public recognition)?
- How do we penalize teachers and principals for not using new knowledge and skills (negative evaluations)?
- What means do we use to encourage students to perform to their highest level?

Strategy 8. Incentivize outcomes in addition to processes.

Just as teaching has refocused on ensuring student learning, rather than on merely covering the material, so too must professional development and other capacity-building efforts be measured based on advancing identified objectives rather than (or in addition to) simple participation in the endeavor (Steiner, 1999). Remember that human nature often requires incentives to overcome inertia. If incentives are tied to professional development workshop *attendance*, schools can expect good attendance. But if incentives are tied to *use* of new skills and knowledge, schools can expect that teachers will use those skills and knowledge. (An added benefit of monitoring the impact of professional development on teacher practice is that teachers will have motivation to assess professional development offerings more rigorously, potentially leading to improved professional development offerings as expectations rise.) Incentives can take many forms, but a large part of incentivizing an action or outcome is just alerting individuals that those actions or outcomes will be looked at. From there, schools and districts can choose what specific incentives (“carrots” or “sticks”) are preferable and feasible.

ACTIONS

for DEVELOPING CAPACITY

Strategy 1. Know your three-dimensional needs.

- *Perspectives* (viewpoints of school staff, “critical friends,” and others)
- *Levels* (student, teacher, principal, school)
- *Time* (changing demographics, changing skill requirements)

Potential Actions

- Collect and analyze relevant student data. (Make sure staff members have training in data use.)
- Regularly survey teachers as to their individual professional development needs. Create individual and school-level professional development plans that are maintained in a password-protected database.
- Perform 360-degree evaluations of school staff—those who work “under,” “with,” and “over” the staff member.
- Invite “critical friends” (e.g., other school staffs, business leaders) to observe the school and offer feedback.
- Establish a position or team to monitor education research and disseminate synthesis to the entire faculty. (Do not rely simply on self-assessment needs because people don’t know what they don’t know.)
- Create your own needs assessment, or use one of the numerous published needs-assessment tools.
- Remember that sometimes what is needed is not more data but *better* data. Focus on collecting and using data related to important indicators rather than collecting all the data you can get your hands on.

Strategy 2. Establish clear, ambitious, and measurable goals.

Potential Actions

- Based on an initial whole-faculty brainstorming session, establish a small team to draft an initial list of one to three school goals. Use for further full-faculty discussion.
- Use concrete numbers (e.g., “90 percent of all students will test at the proficient level or greater on the state standardized test”) rather than generalizations (e.g., “all students will be high achieving”).
- Establish benchmarks that measure progress towards longer-term goals.
- Consult external resources for creating effective indicators.

Strategy 3. Develop a theory of change.

Potential Actions

- Lay out your ultimate goal(s) for the school. Work backward to identify intermediate outcomes, as well as conditions that need to be in place, needed inputs, and needed actions.
- Based on what actions and inputs you deem necessary for achieving your goals, write up a theory of change that narrates how you plan to use identified actions and inputs to produce desired change.

Strategy 4. Combine planning with action.

Potential Actions

- Be data-focused when developing your school improvement plan, but limit the time you spend *writing* it.
- Monitor implementation of the school improvement plan on a regular basis: Review at it faculty meetings, post it around the school, and use it as a basis for professional development.

Strategy 5. Focus on what happens in the classroom.

Potential Actions

- Align professional development with student learning standards.
- Prioritize actions, discussions, and time allotment according to the potential impact on teaching and learning.

Strategy 6. Emphasize ongoing, job-embedded professional development.

Potential Actions

- Form a study group of PK–16 teacher leaders linked to schools of education.
- Use Socratic seminars as means of inspiring reflective questioning and thinking.
- Ask teachers who have attended off-site professional development to present what they have learned to the whole staff.
- Provide online support to teachers where they can participate in professional development, find technical assistance, share and download lesson plans, and ask advice.
- Train specific teachers in adult learning and then tap these staff to provide internal staff development in their areas of expertise.
- If attending a “one-shot” workshop, plan for a related internal follow-up session one month later to see how learned skills are being implemented, what worked and what didn’t, and what additional support is needed.

- Redirect professional development dollars away from one-shot workshops and toward stipends for teachers to participate in study groups, mentoring, action research, and peer coaching.
- Use faculty meetings for staff professional development. Use teacher newsletters and e-mails for administrative matters.

Strategy 7. Distribute leadership.

Potential Actions

- Create a strong school leadership team to serve in place of or in addition to the principal's informal "open ear" policy.
- Offer professional development to build the leadership capacity of teachers and principals. Increase their knowledge and skills around identifying successful school improvement strategies and other strategies that the leadership team believes are needed to make meaningful decisions.
- Take steps to facilitate teachers' involvement in the decision-making process. Find out if they want to be involved and why or why not. Remember to connect incentives to their participation and show the impact of their participation and decisions.

Strategy 8. Incentivize outcomes in addition to processes.

Potential Actions

- Connect with local businesses to provide awards and recognition for outstanding teachers and principals.
- Ask teachers to note in lesson plans how and when they using newly learned strategies in the classroom.
- Provide praise, work perks (e.g., duty-free lunch periods), and small bonuses for the effective practice of newly learned teaching strategies rather than simply recognizing participation in a workshop.
- Provide feedback on the use or nonuse of newly learned teaching strategies during administrator- or peer-conducted teacher observations. Observe and provide feedback to teachers regularly!

TOOL 2

Assessment of How Well We are **DEVELOPING CAPACITY**

Strategies Discussed in the “Developing Capacity” Chapter

1. Know your three-dimensional needs.
2. Establish clear, ambitious, and measurable goals.
3. Develop a theory of change.
4. Combine planning with action.
5. Focus on happens in the classroom.
6. Emphasize ongoing professional development.
7. Distribute leadership.
8. Incentivize outcomes in addition to processes.

PURPOSE

You as a school leader can use this tool to record your assessment of the various capacities at the school—such as needs awareness, data collection, goal setting, action planning, staff development, leadership, connecting incentives to outcomes—and to reflect on what capacity-building work your school has undertaken or should undertake in the near future.

As an alternative, you may choose to use the assessment statements to create your own surveys that ask teachers about their perspectives on capacity. For example, the first statement, “We have considered multiple perspectives from the range of school community members and objective third parties in assessing our school needs (versus wants and problems),” could be modified to create two survey questions: “I believe my input was considered when assessing our school needs,” and “I believe that multiple perspectives from the school community were considered in determining school needs.” Feel free to use or revise this tool as best suits your purposes.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. Work through the entire “assessment” column, circling the number that most accurately reflects your opinion on each statement. Remember, don’t go by gut instinct alone. When recording your rating, ask yourself, “How do I know? On what basis am I making this assessment?”

Step 2. Add together your circled numbers to get your total score. Then divide by 27 to get your average score. Read the descriptions below to determine where you believe your school stands in terms of its capacity to implement the improvement effort.

<p>Total Score from Step 1 _____</p> <p>Divided by 27 = _____ (Average Score)</p>
--

If average score is between:

- **1.0 and 2.74**, you believe your school’s capacity is not sufficient to sustain the improvement effort. If possible, you may want to spend significantly more time (e.g., a year) in strengthening your school’s infrastructure prior to adopting a particular education model. If no delay is possible (e.g., due to a mandate), document all the components for which you or your staff feel are not prepared to support the improvement effort. Ask for additional assistance in these areas. Be ready to prove that any lack of initial success with a particular improvement effort may be due to inadequate initial capacity rather than an unsatisfactory educational model—thus possibly preventing an unnecessary scrapping of a potentially effective reform.
- **2.75 and 3.74**, you believe your school *possibly* has the ingredients needed to sustain the improvement effort, but you aren’t overly confident about it. Work with the district and the union to set aside a “school institute” of sufficient time and intensity so that staff can collaborate to address the capacity issues of concern prior to implementation of the improvement effort.
- **3.75 and 5.0**, you feel your school *probably* has the capacity to sustain the improvement effort.

Step 3. For any assessment statement that you rated a “3” or below, read the accompanying “reflection” questions and think about what your school has done or could do to improve that particular area. Circle any question that you want to work on.

Step 4. Develop a preliminary action plan to address the assessment statements that you rated a “3” or less. Talk with the staff about ways they believe capacity could be developed. At the bottom of the tool, record your areas for action and preliminary action steps to address these areas.

TOOL 2

Assessment of How Well We are DEVELOPING CAPACITY

1
2
3
4
5
 strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

Questions for Reflection

- What steps have we taken to gather input from teachers, principals, other school staff, students, parents, and community members as to school needs?
- What steps have we taken to solicit input from objective third parties, such as staff from other schools, researchers, consultants, and accreditation team members?
- Have we determined an appropriate assessment team? (Part A of Tool 3, the Three-Dimensional Needs Assessment, page 45, can help you determine this team.)

- What steps have we taken to analyze studies and talk with other schools about our improvement measure?

- What steps have we taken to collect, analyze, and prioritize student learning needs?
- Have we trained teachers in data collection and analysis?
- Have we assessed whether all teachers can effectively collect and analyze data?

1. KNOW YOUR THREE-DIMENSIONAL NEEDS

We have considered multiple perspectives from the range of school community members and objective third parties in assessing our school needs (versus wants and problems).

1 2 3 4 5

We have extensively reviewed the research to ensure that our improvement strategy has ample evidence of working in schools like ours.

1 2 3 4 5

We have a solid understanding of what student learning needs our school must prioritize.

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

We have based all staff professional development around identified student learning needs.

1 2 3 4 5

We collect and analyze all the data on student achievement, student demographics, staff development, school climate, and stakeholder feedback needed to make good school improvement decisions.

1 2 3 4 5

We have the process and technology we need to record and analyze relevant data.

1 2 3 4 5

We are aware of projected student enrollment and demographics as well as potential skill needs for the future and are preparing to meet these student needs appropriately.

1 2 3 4 5

Questions for Reflection

- Have we assessed whether all teachers can articulate the specific learning needs of the children in the classroom? Have teachers selected professional development that matches those needs?
- Have we assessed whether all teachers can articulate the learning gaps of the school as a whole? What steps have we taken to create a schoolwide professional development plan been to address these gaps?
- Have we developed a record of staff development needs that have been met and those that still need to be met (at the individual and at the school level)?
- Do we formally monitor progress towards meeting professional development needs?
- Have we used multiple forms of data in setting goals and making decisions?
- What steps have we taken to develop a concrete process of data collection and analysis?
- Have we assessed what technology we have for data collection and analysis and what technology hardware and training we still need?
- What steps have we taken to work with other educators, businesses, and higher education to assess and plan how the school will need to change to meet new student skill needs?

CHAPTER 2 – DEVELOPING CAPACITY
Tool 2

1 2 3 4 5
 strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

Questions for Reflection

- Have we limited our school goals to no more than five?
- Have we created concrete indicators for measuring progress towards goals?
- Have we tied school goals directly to teaching and learning needs?
- Have we increased every year the expectations laid out in our goals?

- What steps have we taken to train teachers in how to perform and benefit from a goal alignment process?
- Have we assessed whether all teachers are aware of district goals and standards?
- Have we taken steps to ensure that all teachers and teacher teams have group and personal goals? (How were these goals aligned with school and district goals?)

- Have we created a process in which all staff members can help develop and revise school goals?
- Have we assessed whether all staff members feel like they have had a voice in creating school goals?

- What steps have we taken to ensure widespread understanding of our school goals?

- Have we researched how to create our own theory of change? (What is our theory of change?)
- Have we determined whether all staff members can articulate this theory of change?

2. ESTABLISH CLEAR, AMBITIOUS, AND MEASURABLE GOALS

We have a limited number of school goals that are challenging, measurable, and tied directly to teaching and learning needs.

1 2 3 4 5

We have established a process allowing us to assess and maintain alignment between school goals, district goals and standards, and teacher-team or individual teacher goals.

1 2 3 4 5

All staff members have a voice in creating and refining school goals.

1 2 3 4 5

All staff members and older students understand and can articulate school goals.

1 2 3 4 5

3. DEVELOP A THEORY OF ACTION

We have a clear understanding of how our actions and inputs will lead to the improvements envisioned in our school goals.

1 2 3 4 5

1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 neutral or don't know 4 agree 5 strongly agree

4. COMBINE PLANNING WITH ACTION

Teachers and principals have enough time *together* and *individually* to plan and implement the actions laid out in the school improvement plan.

1 2 3 4 5

5. FOCUS ON WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CLASSROOM

All of the programs at our school have a positive impact on our school goals.

1 2 3 4 5

Faculty and teacher-team meetings are productive and focused around school improvement.

1 2 3 4 5

Our staffing patterns are the most effective for meeting student needs.

1 2 3 4 5

Questions for Reflection

- Have we surveyed staff members to determine if they believe they have enough common and individual time for planning and implementing the school improvement plan?
- Have we researched and talked with other educators about how to create the time needed to live out the school improvement plan?
- Have we put in place structures for planning and decision making (e.g., teacher teams, distributed leadership, and common planning time)?
- Have we measured how much time staff has for adult learning opportunities? (How does this compare with the National Staff Development Council's recommendation that 25 percent of each staff member's time be dedicated to adult learning?)
- What steps have we taken to select and maintain those programs that further school goals?
- What steps have we taken to measure the impact of school programs?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that we get the most "bang for the buck" from our selected programs?
- Have we adopted processes and structures for ensuring that meeting times are used effectively and efficiently?
- What steps have we taken to focus on teaching and learning issues in meetings and refrain from venting or "administrivia"?
- Have we researched other staffing options for meeting the needs of special education students or student needing remediation or acceleration?

CHAPTER 2 – DEVELOPING CAPACITY
Tool 2

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**
 strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

Questions for Reflection

- What steps have we taken to make sure teachers spend as much time as possible in teaching and planning versus performing administrative or low-priority tasks that can be more efficiently accomplished in other ways (e.g., ask paraprofessionals or volunteers, not teachers, to walk young students to classes).
- What steps have we taken to ensure that school leaders can spend as much time as possible as instructional leaders versus business managers?

- Have we developed specific criteria for selecting professional development?
- Do we examine student needs before selecting our discretionary professional development opportunities?
- Do we receive all relevant student achievement results before planning our professional development? What steps have we taken to petition for receiving standardized test results in a timely manner?
- What process do we use to align our professional development with our school goals?

- Have we examined the amount of time and money spent on ongoing support (e.g., study groups, peer coaching) versus one-time professional development sessions (e.g., conferences, workshops)?
- Do we supplement one-shot workshops with ongoing support and incentives to use the lessons learned once back in the classroom?

Staff responsibilities and time are allocated appropriately, given school needs and finite resources.

1 2 3 4 5

6. EMPHASIZE ONGOING, JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our professional development is based on student needs and aligned with school goals.

1 2 3 4 5

Our professional development focuses on ongoing support rather than one-shot workshops.

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

All staff members use and share the strategies and information they have learned through professional development opportunities.

1 2 3 4 5

Our professional development is having a positive impact on teacher practice and student learning.

1 2 3 4 5

We are dedicating sufficient resources to staff development.

1 2 3 4 5

Questions for Reflection

- What steps have we taken to provide support and incentives (e.g., peer coaching, targeted evaluations) that ensure teachers **use** the strategies and knowledge they acquired in their professional development?
- What structures and incentives (e.g., in-house mini professional development, stipends) have we put into place to ensure teachers **share** the strategies and knowledge they acquired in their professional development?
- What tactics (e.g., “before” and “after” student achievement results, teacher reflections) have we developed to measure if professional development is having a positive impact on student learning?
- Are we keeping track of what professional development opportunities seem to have the most effect on teaching strategies?
- Have we taken steps to ensure that we are comprehensive in what expenditures (e.g., staff time, substitute pay, study group materials) we are including in the cost of professional development?
- Have we measured how much we are spending on staff development? (How does this amount compare with the National Staff Development Council’s recommendation that districts spend 10 percent of their budgets on professional development?)
- Have we measured how much time our staff has for adult learning opportunities? (How does this amount compare with the National Staff Development Council’s recommendation that 25 percent of each staff member’s time be dedicated to adult learning?)

1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 neutral or don't know 4 agree 5 strongly agree

Questions for Reflection

- Do we distribute leadership in a manner that takes advantage of the differing skills, talents, and knowledge of stakeholders? (Who in and beyond our school has input into important school decisions?)
- Do we have formal mechanisms for teachers and other stakeholders to offer their input?
- Do we focus our decision making on improving teaching and learning versus more peripheral matters?
- Have we established a process for making sure we have all needed information before making a decision?
- When we experience a negative outcome, do we examine our decision-making structure to find out what information, steps, and perspectives possibly were missing?
- Have we determined what knowledge and skills we believe staff members need to make good decisions?
- Have we provided the necessary training to impart these skills and knowledge?
- Have we assessed whether staff members believe they have the autonomy they need to make good decisions?
- Have we specified what decisions teachers are empowered to make?
- Have we specified what decisions principals are empowered to make?
- If we believe we need more freedom or flexibility to make necessary decisions, what steps have we taken to petition for and gain this autonomy?

7. DISTRIBUTE LEADERSHIP

Our decision-making structure allows us to make well-informed, effective decisions that have taken into consideration the input of multiple stakeholders.

1 2 3 4 5

Staff members have the capacity to make good decisions.

1 2 3 4 5

Staff members have the autonomy to make good decisions.

1 2 3 4 5

1 strongly disagree 2 disagree 3 neutral or don't know 4 agree 5 strongly agree

8. INCENTIVIZE OUTCOMES IN ADDITION TO PROCESSES

We provide incentives to staff members to use the skills and knowledge they acquire during professional development.

1 2 3 4 5

We provide support and incentives to encourage students to perform to their highest level.

1 2 3 4 5

PRELIMINARY ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS STATEMENTS RATED A "3" OR LESS

Area for Action (e.g., "demonstrating need for change")	Preliminary Action Steps

Questions for Reflection

- What steps have we taken to **support** teachers and principals in using their new skills (e.g., ongoing study groups, peer coaching)?
- What steps have we taken to **encourage** teachers and principals to use their new skills (e.g., using evaluations that take into account whether or not skills are used, designating especially skilled teachers as "lead teachers")?
- What support mechanisms (e.g., study groups, tutors, after-school programs) do we provide to help all students do their best?
- Have we developed a schoolwide discipline policy that allows students to work in an environment that is conducive to learning?
- Do we regularly alert students to the standards they are expected to achieve?
- Do we regularly voice our belief in the students' ability to achieve?

TOOL 3, Overview

THREE-DIMENSIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

PURPOSE

This tool is designed to help schools examine their data and consequently identify needs with regard to a set of objectives for student learning. It can be used by schools in the design stage of their school reform. It also can be used by schools already undertaking school improvement to check their needs assessment—for example, to see if their needs have changed since they first started their improvement effort. In order to make the tool less overwhelming, it is divided into four parts that correspond to the different stages of use:

Part A: Determining Objectives, Indicators, and Data Collection Tasks

Part B: Recording Findings and Prioritizing Student Needs

Part C: Connecting Student Needs to Staff and School Capacity and District- or State-Level Support

Part D: Planning for the future

After prioritizing student needs, schools should be able to identify those staff and school-level capacity areas required for addressing student needs. The last section of the tool (Part D) also guides schools in thinking through potential future needs—based on analysis of incoming student demographics and employment trends.

This tool is intended to be used as a guide for schools that are performing a needs assessment, and thus it outlines the process from a school team’s perspective. However, assessing the needs of the school—through data review, on-site observations, surveys, interviews, or research of the literature—should be performed by multiple parties. Consequently, the school team may choose to break off the “Gathering the Data” piece of this tool to give to the other stakeholders to guide them in performing their assessment.

PRELIMINARY ACTION

Forming the Assessment Team. As noted in the text, people don’t know what they don’t know. Therefore it is advantageous to consider the perspectives of people in different positions in relation to the school. A school may opt to do one of the following:

- Establish one team with representatives from groups with different perspectives (e.g., teachers, community members, students) to perform all pieces of the assessment.
- Ask each individual group to perform a specific piece of the assessment (e.g., parents will conduct school observations, teachers will look at student achievement data, business representatives will compare district standards against needed job skills) and then come together as a group to discuss.

- Select its own method for utilizing different perspectives to assess needs.

Below, mark with an "X" those perspectives represented in the assessment team or teams. Use the space provided to record names if desired. Though there is a great deal of work to be done in needs assessment (gathering data, soliciting opinions, researching the literature), excessively large teams make the work harder to coordinate. You probably will want to limit your team(s) to no more than 15 members total.

___ Teachers at this school _____

___ Administrators at this school _____

___ Students at this school _____

___ District administrators _____

___ Parents _____

___ Business, civic, or community representatives _____

___ Teachers or representatives from other schools _____

___ Other (please specify) _____

TOOL 3, Part A

DETERMINING OBJECTIVES, INDICATORS, AND DATA COLLECTION TASKS

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. Review and revise the objectives based on your school's circumstances. Add additional objectives as needed.

Step 2. Decide what information you will use to determine if the school is meeting those objectives. Do not feel that you need to examine every indicator for every objective. Focus on those objectives and indicators of greatest concern to your school community. The "level of satisfaction" indicator refers to any qualitative information you may gather through surveys, interviews, or focus groups.

Note: Value-added analyses require fairly complex statistical methodology. For background information on value-added analyses, refer to "Data Use: Value-Added Analysis" in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.

Step 3. Determine your potential data-collection tasks. Please note that data most likely should be disaggregated by different student subgroups in order to target needs more accurately. (For specific resources relating to evaluation, self-assessment, surveys, observations, and skill standards, refer to "Data Use" and "Evaluation" in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.)

Step 4. Put a check next to those tasks your team intends to perform.

Step 5. In the space at the end of this section, record those tasks your team intends to perform, the people responsible, and timelines for completion.

TOOL 3, Part A

DETERMINING OBJECTIVES, INDICATORS, AND DATA COLLECTION TASKS

Objective 1. Students will meet learning and performance standards.

Potential Data Collection Tasks

- ___ Review and analyze students' standardized test scores for Grades X-Z.
- ___ Review students' class work (e.g., portfolios, homework).
- ___ Survey or interview teachers as to satisfaction with student learning.
- ___ Survey or interview students as to satisfaction with their learning.
- ___ Observe students during class. (Observers should use a protocol that includes those behaviors that the school expects students to exhibit.)

Objective 2. Students will be taught by well-qualified teachers.

Potential Data Collection Tasks

- ___ Examine personnel files to determine qualifications of teachers.
- ___ Examine pattern of pre- and post- achievement levels of students in teachers' classes.
- ___ Review performance evaluations of teachers.
- ___ Observe teachers in the classroom. (Observers should use a protocol that includes those behaviors school expects teachers to exhibit.)

Objective 3. Students will have access to quality curriculum.

Potential Data Collection Tasks

- ___ Research the literature base for studies of effectiveness of the curriculum.
- ___ Survey or interview teachers about their satisfaction with the curriculum.
- ___ Survey or interview others about their satisfaction with the curriculum.
- ___ Review the curriculum for alignment with standards.
- ___ Review the curriculum for alignment with skills needed for higher education or employment.
- ___ Perform value-added analysis of curriculum.

Potential Indicators:

- Standardized test scores
- Student portfolios
- Student performance assessment
- Performance on homework, class tests, and other assignments
- Level of satisfaction with student learning (by teacher, student, critical friend)

- Certification status
- Years of experience
- In-field and out-of-field teaching status
- Degree attained
- Scores on verbal ability tests
- Value-added analysis: teachers' contribution to student achievement gains
- Evaluation of teacher (by supervisor, peer, critical friend, student)

- Degree of effectiveness of curriculum as noted in research base
- Level of satisfaction with curriculum (teachers, principals, students, critical friends)
- Degree of alignment of curriculum to state or district standards
- Degree of alignment of curriculum to skills needed for higher education or employment
- Value-added analysis: contribution of new curriculum to gains in student achievement

Potential Indicators:

- Degree of effectiveness of the instructional method as noted in the research base
- Degree of student engagement levels
- Level of satisfaction with the instructional methods (teachers, principals, students, critical friends)
- Value-added analysis: contribution of new instructional methods to gains in student achievement

- Number of discipline referrals
- School violence rates
- Student drug-use rates
- Student (and staff) attendance rates
- Teacher and principal retention rates
- Level of satisfaction with school climate (teachers, principals, students, critical friends)

- Student academic achievement
- Level of resource allocation
- Qualification of teachers
- Level of satisfaction with equity (by students, critical friends, and school staff)

Objective 4. Students will be taught using appropriate instructional methods.

Potential Data Collection Tasks

- ___ Research the literature base for studies of effectiveness of the instructional methods.
- ___ Survey or interview teachers about their satisfaction with the instructional methods.
- ___ Survey or interview others about their satisfaction with the instructional methods.
- ___ Using a standardized protocol, assess the amount of student time on task in appropriately leveled tasks.
- ___ Perform value-added analysis of instructional methods.

Objective 5. Students will be educated in a safe, caring, orderly environment.

Potential Data Collection Tasks

- ___ Research quantitative school climate trends (e.g., violence, drug use rates).
- ___ Survey or interview school staff about their satisfaction with the school climate.
- ___ Survey or interview students about their satisfaction with the school climate.
- ___ Survey or interview parents about their satisfaction with the school climate.
- ___ Survey or interview other community members about their satisfaction with the school climate.

Objective 6. All students have access to adequate support and opportunities (equity).

Potential Data Collection Tasks

- ___ Review and analyze students' standardized test scores.
- ___ Review students' classwork (e.g., portfolios, homework).
- ___ Analyze budget expenditures.
- ___ Analyze distribution of teachers.
- ___ Survey school staff about their satisfaction with equity at the school.
- ___ Survey students about their satisfaction with equity at the school.
- ___ Survey parents or others about their satisfaction with equity at the school.

Objective 7. Students are well-prepared to meet the demands of higher education and/or the workforce.

Potential Data Collection Tasks

- ___ Research success of students as they continue to next level of education or the workforce.
- ___ Survey teachers at next level of education about their satisfaction with skills of incoming students.
- ___ Survey employers about their satisfaction with skills of graduates.
- ___ Survey past students about their satisfaction with preparation provided by the school.
- ___ Using a standardized protocol, observe classrooms in action.

Potential Indicators:

- Student achievement levels at next stage of schooling (i.e., how students fare after going on to middle school, high school, college)
- Level of teacher satisfaction with skills of incoming students
- Level of employer satisfaction with skills of graduates
- Level of satisfaction with ongoing teaching and learning in relation to demands of higher education and employment (by students, staff, critical friends)

GATHERING THE DATA

Selected Task	People Responsible	Timeline

TOOL 3, Part B

RECORDING FINDINGS AND PRIORITIZING STUDENT NEEDS

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. Recording Findings. The “Objectives” column provides space for you to record (for each objective) the findings from available data. Include achievement data, feedback from surveys or interviews, findings from classroom observations, and any other information that the assessment team(s) deemed worthy of review by the whole school.

Step 2. Prioritizing Student Needs. Based on the “Findings From Available Data” recorded above or in some other form, the whole school community should come together to determine specific student needs and prioritize them. It’s not necessary to record student needs for every objective—simply those you believe most pressing at the school.

Because a number of perspectives are represented (e.g., teachers, administrators, community members, and others), deciding to focus on one or two priority areas may be challenging. However, schools are urged not to choose more than one or two priority areas at a time. In deciding on school priorities for student learning, the school community may arrive at its decision via consensus, majority vote, vote by the leadership team after whole-school discussion, or some other means. In general, achieving consensus is the most challenging, but this route usually represents the best opportunity for unified vision and action on the part of stakeholders.

TOOL 3, Part B

RECORDING FINDINGS AND PRIORITIZING STUDENT NEEDS

RECORDING FINDINGS

Objective 1. Students will meet learning and performance standards.

Findings from Available Data

- Disaggregate by grade level, subject or skill area, race, gender, socioeconomic status, achievement level (e.g., low-achieving students), as possible.

Record Findings

Objective 2. Students will be taught by well-qualified teachers.

Findings from Available Data

- Look at how teachers of differing qualifications are distributed among students of different races, socioeconomic status, and achievement levels.

Record Findings

Objective 3. Students will have access to quality curriculum.

Record Findings

Potential Indicators

- Standardized test scores
- Student portfolios
- Student performance assessment
- Performance on homework, class tests, and other assignments
- Level of satisfaction with student learning (by teacher, student, critical friend)

- Certification status
- Years of experience
- In-field or out-of-field teaching status
- Degree attained
- Scores on verbal ability tests
- Value-added analysis: teachers' contribution to student achievement gains
- Evaluation of teacher (by supervisor, peer, critical friend, student)

- Degree of effectiveness of curriculum as noted in research base
- Level of satisfaction with curriculum (teachers, principals, students, critical friends)
- Degree of alignment of curriculum to state or district standards
- Degree of alignment of curriculum to skills needed for higher education or employment
- Value-added analysis: contribution of new curriculum to gains in student achievement

CHAPTER 2 – DEVELOPING CAPACITY
Tool 3 – Part B

Potential Indicators

- Degree of effectiveness of the instructional method as noted in the research base
- Degree of student engagement levels
- Level of satisfaction with the instructional methods (teachers, principals, students, critical friends)
- Value-added analysis: contribution of new instructional methods to gains in student achievement

- Number of discipline referrals
- School violence rates
- Student drug-use rates
- Student (and staff) attendance rates
- Teacher and principal retention rates
- Level of satisfaction with school climate (teachers, principals, students, critical friends)

- Student academic achievement
- Level of resource allocation
- Qualification of teachers
- Level of satisfaction with equity (by students, critical friends, and school staff)

- Student achievement levels at next stage of schooling (i.e., how students fare after going on to middle school, and high school, college)
- Level of teacher satisfaction with skills of incoming students
- Level of employer satisfaction with skills of graduates
- Level of satisfaction with ongoing teaching and learning in relation to demands of higher ed and employment (by students, school staff, critical friends)

Objective 4. Students will be taught using appropriate instructional methods.

Record Findings

Objective 5. Students will be educated in a safe, caring, orderly environment.

Record Findings

Objective 6. All students will have access to adequate support (equity).

Findings from Available Data

- Compare the data of students of different achievement levels, races, and socioeconomic status.

Record Findings

Objective 7. Students are well-prepared to meet the demands of higher education and/or the workforce.

Record Findings

PRIORITIZING STUDENT NEEDS

Objective	Specific Student Need	Priority Level (Urgent, High, Moderate)
Student learning	(Example: Reading achievement for grades K–2, especially comprehension and vocabulary skills, needs improvement.)	
Student access to high-quality teachers		
Student access to high-quality curriculum		
Student access to effective and appropriate instructional methods		
Student access to positive school environment		
Student access to equitable support		
Student access to solid preparation for future schooling and employment		
Other		

TOOL 3, Part C

CONNECTING STUDENT NEEDS TO STAFF AND SCHOOL CAPACITY AND DISTRICT- OR STATE-LEVEL SUPPORT

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. After you have determined what student needs your school will prioritize (Tool 3, Part B), you should then think through what capacities and support will be needed from (progressive levels of) staff, school, and district or state in order to address those student needs. The goal here is to base professional development, resource allocation, and general school system operations around student needs (rather than taking professional development, resource allocation, and system operations as “givens” and applying them as effectively as possible to student needs).

Step 2. In the following blank chart, write the possible implications for staff capacity needs and school-level capacity needs at your school. Then write the possible implications for district- or state-level support. A sample completed chart is included.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CAPACITY NEEDS

Student Needs (Categorized by Objective)	Possible Implications for Staff Capacity Needs	Possible Implications for School-Level Capacity Needs	Possible Implications for District- or State-Level Support
Student learning			
Student access to high-quality teachers			
Student access to high-quality curriculum			
Student access to effective, appropriate instructional methods			
Student learning			
Student access to equitable support			
Student access to solid preparation for future schooling and employment			
Other			

IMPLICATIONS FOR CAPACITY NEEDS (Sample completed chart)

Student Needs (Categorized by Objective)	Possible Implications for Staff Capacity Needs	Possible Implications for School-Level Capacity Needs	Possible Implications for District- or State-Level Support
Student learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher professional development in specific content, pedagogy, assessment methods, classroom management • Principal professional development in acting as instructional leader and developing staff leadership • Teacher professional development in teaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared goals and mission • Structures for making good decisions for student learning (e.g., common planning time, study groups, individual planning time) • Criteria for selecting and evaluating professional development • Teacher input in planning professional development • Database of professional development needs • Resource allocations shaped around student learning needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision or facilitation of strong professional development offerings • Flexibility or waivers for allocating time to professional development and planning • Useful, challenging learning standards • Assessment system aligned with standards • Effective accountability system • Central office structure shaped around schools rather than particular programs • Resource allocations shaped around student learning needs
Student access to high-quality teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong programs for preservice teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies, structures, and criteria for recruiting, hiring, and retaining teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of school flexibility in hiring • Establishment of connection with area teaching colleges
Student access to high-quality curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher professional development in specific content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria and process for selecting effective curriculum • Process for aligning curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria and process for selecting effective curriculum • Provision of school flexibility in choosing curriculum meeting defined criteria • Provision or facilitation of strong professional development offerings

<p>Student access to effective, appropriate instructional methods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher professional development in specific instructional strategies • Teacher professional development in how to recognize differing student needs • Teacher professional development in how to differentiate instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structures for supporting good instruction (e.g., common planning time, study groups, individual planning time) • Incentives to encourage good instruction (e.g., positive evaluations, promotion to leadership position, recognition) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision or facilitation of strong professional development offerings
<p>Student access to positive school environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher professional development in classroom management strategies • Teacher professional development in teaming, shared decision making, and other structures for building leadership and professionalism • Principal professional development in building positive school culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structures for building trust (e.g., principal “office hours” for teachers, teacher mentoring system) • Structures for promoting teacher ownership in school operations (e.g., shared decision making) • Schoolwide discipline system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structures for building trust • Provision or facilitation of strong professional development offerings
<p>Student access to equitable support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher professional development in multiculturalism • Teacher professional development in how to differentiate instruction • Teacher professional development in identifying and responding to learning and physical disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System for equitable student assignment to teachers • System for identifying learning disabilities quickly and effectively • System for equitable resource allocation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equitable system for resource allocation • Equitable system for teacher placement • Incentive system for luring high-quality teachers to high-need schools • Provision or facilitation of strong professional development offerings
<p>Student access to solid preparation for future schooling and employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to employer needs (e.g., through joint committees between teachers and employers, teacher externships in local businesses) • Teacher professional development in connecting instruction to real-life applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to building relationship with representatives from the next level of schooling for students • (For high schools) Commitment to building relationship with representatives from frequent employers of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong focus on and structure for building community relations • Provision or facilitation of strong professional development offerings

TOOL 3, Part D

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. Although tracking future demographic and employment sector trends may not be part of your regular, formal needs-assessment process, you should still try to monitor how your local population and workforce requirements are changing. These factors will have significant implications on the school’s services and operations. To begin, consult published research and Web sites related to demographic and employment sector trends. Write your results on the blank chart.

Note: For specific resources to use in planning future needs, refer to “Future Needs” in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.

Step 2. Talk informally with area employers about how their businesses are changing. This communication not only helps you plan for the school’s future needs but also enables the school to develop a stronger relationship with the community. Write your results on the blank chart.

Step 3. Think through how these demographic and employment sector trends will have implications for staff and school capacity needs and implications for resource allocation at your school. Write your ideas on the blank chart.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Trends & Implications	1-3 Years Out	4-6 Years Out
Projected Demographic Changes		
Projected Employment Sector Changes		
Possible Implications for Staff Capacity Needs		
Possible Implications for School Capacity Needs		
Possible Implications for Resource Allocation		

TOOL 4

TEACHER OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, AND INCENTIVES

PURPOSE

This tool is designed to help school leaders articulate their objectives for the role of the teacher and analyze how well current incentives, support measures, and required activities promote those objectives. In some cases, leaders will find that those teacher activities that are incentivized (through “carrots,” “sticks,” and simple monitoring) do not connect very directly with desired objectives. For example, schools or districts may require *attendance* at certain professional development activities or *participation* in a certain number of hours of professional development, while the true objective for such participation—*use of these best practice strategies in the classroom*—is not sufficiently incentivized or supported. This tool will help you ensure that the activities that staff are expected to perform and the related incentives are directly linked to the objectives you hope to achieve.

Although this tool provides a process for looking at how incentives and support are used to foster teacher behavior, the process can be applied to the practices other staff. Feel free to revise and utilize this tool as best suits your purposes.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. List those objectives your school has for the role of teachers. To prompt your brainstorming, a list of potential objectives is provided.

Sample Objectives for the Role of Teachers

- To help all students reach their highest learning potential.
- To employ instructional and classroom management techniques that allow all students to reach high levels of “time on task” in appropriately leveled tasks.
- To be prepared for every class.
- To work collaboratively with other staff.
- To work jointly with parents to improve student learning.
- To contribute to the successful operations of the school.
- To remain as a teacher at the school as long as the job is being performed effectively.

Step 2. List the current expectations for teacher activities for which there are incentives. Remember that incentives consist not solely in positive consequences for performance or negative consequences for nonperformance but also in simple monitoring of a particular activity. When people know that an activity or outcome is being monitored, they are more motivated to attend to it. Thus, monitoring also is a form of incentive.

To prompt your brainstorming, a list of sample expectations is provided. Please note that these activities are simply a short list of what you might find at a typical school, rather than activities incentivized by *effective* schools. Indeed, in many cases, the listed activities should be revised or eliminated as they do not directly promote school objectives.

Sample Expectations for Teacher Activities

- Focus classroom practice so the most students meet proficiency standards on standardized tests.
- Participate in X hours of professional development.
- Turn in lesson plans by X of each week.
- Create individual learning plans for students as needed.
- Maintain student assessment profiles.
- Lead X number of extracurricular activities (e.g., sponsor the school newspaper, coach volleyball).
- Meet with parents when requested.
- Go to faculty meetings.
- Attend grade-level or subject-area meetings.

Step 3. Map the current expected teacher activities against the identified objectives for the teacher role. See the sample on the next page. Then, using the questions in the righthand column as a starting point, ask yourself whether the currently incentivized activities are the best means for achieving desired objectives and whether the school or district leaders could take steps to support more effectively the attainment of identified objectives.

You will use your responses as a basis for the discussion and decisions of Step 4.

Remember, the listed activities do not necessarily represent best practice; they are only expected activities you might find at a typical school.

Step 4. Based on your assessment of how well your current incentivized activities further your desired objectives for teachers, write up a brief overview of your analysis and record decisions made as a result. A sample follows.

Questions We Should Ask

- Are our expected activities directly tied with the objectives we want to achieve?
- Are there any other activities we could encourage through incentives that are more closely linked to desired objectives?
- What current expected activities could we eliminate as not directly furthering our desired objectives?
- For what additional activities should we provide incentives in order to further our desired objectives more effectively?
- How can we better support teachers in fulfilling the identified objectives?

STEP 3 – TEACHER OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED ACTIVITIES (Sample)

Teacher Objective 1. To help all students reach their highest learning potential.

Expected Activities for Teachers

- Focus classroom practice so that most students meet proficiency standards on standardized tests.
- Create individual learning plans for students as needed.
- Maintain student assessment profiles.
- Meet with parents when requested.

Teacher Objective 2. To employ instructional and classroom management techniques that allow all students to reach high levels of “time on task” in appropriately leveled tasks.

Expected Activities for Teachers

- Participate in X hours of professional development.

Teacher Objective 3. To be prepared for every class.

Expected Activities for Teachers

- Turn in lesson plans by X of each week.

Teacher Objective 4. To work collaboratively with other staff.

Expected Activities for Teachers

- Participate in X hours of professional development.
- Maintain student assessment profiles.
- Attend grade-level or subject-area meetings.

Teacher Objective 5. To work jointly with parents to advance student learning.

Expected Activities for Teachers

- Meet with parents when requested.

Teacher Objective 6. To contribute to the successful operations of the school.

Expected Activities for Teachers

- Lead X number of extracurricular activities (e.g., sponsor the school newspaper, coach volleyball).
- Go to faculty meetings.
- Attend grade-level or subject-area meetings.

Teacher Objective 7. To remain as a teacher at the school as long as the job is being performed effectively.

Expected Activities for Teachers

- Focus classroom practice so that most students meet proficiency standards on standardized tests.
- Participate in X hours of professional development.

STEP 4 – TEACHER OBJECTIVES, DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS (Sample)

Teacher Objective 1. To help all students reach their highest learning potential.

Discussion

- We do little to encourage or support individual teachers in improving learning for all students.
- Given accountability pressure, we sometimes focus on “bumping up” those students who are almost meeting proficiency standards rather than attending to the learning needs of all students.

Decisions

- We will increase the number of structured, nonevaluative observations received by teachers.
- We will begin disaggregating all student achievement data so that we may see how all students are faring in all subject areas.

Teacher Objective 2. To employ instructional and classroom management techniques that allow all students to reach high levels of “time on task” in appropriately leveled tasks.

Discussion

- Abiding by district requirements for participation in X hours of professional development has distracted us from (1) targeting professional development needs to student learning needs and (2) encouraging the *use* of new strategies over simple monitoring of attendance at the workshops that teach such strategies.

Decisions

- We will petition the district to provide us student standardized test results in time for us to make good decisions about professional development.
- We will analyze student needs prior to developing our professional development plan.
- We will initiate a peer observation system to provide feedback to a teacher on his or her use of new strategies.
- We will allocate one common planning period a week to sharing professional learning.

CHAPTER 3 – FINDING TIME

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Almost every person interviewed for this guide said that one of the most challenging issues faced by schools and districts is finding time to plan and implement the improvement effort. In schools that are striving for improvement, successful leaders and struggling leaders alike have only 24 hours in a day and generally face similar barriers to using time effectively. The difference is that successful leaders find ways to take greater control over the time they have. While acknowledging that there are obstacles they can do little about, they also challenge themselves by asking, “Have I done everything I possibly can to allocate our time well?”

They may respond to this challenge by distributing leadership for issues that others are capable of handling with a little support. Successful leaders also ensure that the structures and processes shaping time allocation are designed both to further school goals and to promote efficiency, and that all activities are prioritized around teaching and learning. Certainly, there are costs. Some people will be angered, and some things won’t be attended to. But in the case of finite resources, there is rarely such thing as “no-cost” allocation. The goal is to gain the most benefit with the least cost, and it is extremely important in planning, implementing, and monitoring school improvement.

The following strategies outline a complementary host of ideas that both school and district leaders can use to find time for implementing a chosen improvement measure. Though leaders may choose not to focus on every listed approach, finding ways to reallocate time requires employing a coordinated set of strategies—not simply one or two stand-alone tactics.

CHAPTER STRATEGIES

- 1. Delegate leadership**
- 2. Make every minute count.**
- 3. Use all available autonomy to restructure scheduling and staffing.**
- 4. Provide incentives for the outcomes of extra work and responsibilities.**

CHAPTER TOOLS

Tool 5: Assessment of How Well We Are Finding the Time

This survey tool, based on the “Questions to Consider” found in this chapter, guides the school in assessing how well it is using strategies to find more time in the school day. The survey focuses on statements to be assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, thus providing a snapshot of areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. It also includes questions for reflection to prompt deeper thinking for assessing and planning actions to use time more effectively. This tool provides a fairly complete overview of the discussion found in the chapter.

Tool 6: Time Allocation Chart for School Leaders

This tool is designed to help school leaders track how they spend their time each week. It allows principals to record the time they spent daily in different tasks in the categories of school management, school leadership, instructional leadership, media or community relations, and professional development. School leaders are encouraged to revise the template as needed to reflect their personal tasks and categories of work.

Tool 7: Meeting Support Tool

This straightforward tool includes templates for a meeting planner (logistics, objectives, agenda, meeting critique) and a note taker’s report (discussion summary, resolutions, next steps), as well as checklists for effective meetings.

STRATEGIES

for FINDING TIME

Strategy 1. Delegate leadership.

Delegating leadership not only is a capacity-building strategy (see the “Developing Capacity” chapter) but also is a strategy for making good use of time. When principals have to be petitioned by teachers who are capable of making their own decisions, the time of both the principal and the teacher is wasted. Consider a study done in the 1980s, which documented that principals may engage in 50 to 60 separate interactions in an hour (Peterson, 2001). One can only imagine that this frequency is even greater in today’s school environment. With this fragmented daily schedule, principals may have difficulty devoting time to “big picture” issues, such as school improvement planning and monitoring. By establishing a structure in which teachers exercise greater autonomy and in which principals and teachers work together in schoolwide decision making, the potential is created for principals to decrease the once-a-minute interruptions in their work, for teachers to decrease the time spent waiting for permission to make decisions they’re capable of making themselves, and for school-improvement planning and monitoring to capture more of the time and attention of all the staff.

Strategy 2. Make every minute count.

In most schools, teachers have almost no time for anything outside classroom instruction, and principals spend most of their day “putting out fires” and attending meetings. In addition to trying to change these facts (see Strategy 3 on restructuring scheduling and staffing), schools also need to use the limited time they have for collaboration and planning as effectively as possible by allocating activities and time in accordance with a focused set of priorities. Distinctions should be made between high-impact decisions (those affecting teaching and learning) and low-impact decisions (those that fall outside teaching and learning) (Glickman, 1993, cited in Walter, 2001, p. 16).

Meetings, teacher teaming, and general daily time use are areas in which staff can reflect on better uses of time. First, effective use of meeting time requires preplanning, having in place established structures, soliciting feedback, and staying on track. Meetings should be explicitly linked to furthering the school improvement plan.

Second, effective use of teacher teaming means focusing on student learning and refraining from venting. A scale developed by the Center for Prevention Research and Development suggests that teaming should promote work in four areas: curriculum coordination; coordination of student assignments, assessments, and feedback; parent contact and involvement; and contact with other building resource staff (Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 2000). Modeling and training are

Questions to Consider

- *For principals:* How much time do I spend answering questions, solving problems, or making decisions that others are capable of making themselves? What support, structures, processes, and resources have I established to guide others in learning to make their own decisions?¹ How well are these steps working?
- *For teachers:* For what decisions that I feel capable of making have I been forced to seek approval? What steps have I taken to gain some level of autonomy in this area?

¹ Principal inaction is not an effective means for supporting teacher autonomy. For example, a principal who simply sends all discipline referrals back to the classroom to show teachers they should handle discipline issues themselves is building teacher anger, not capacity. Instead, the principal could support teachers in coming up with their own schoolwide discipline policy that is enforced by all staff.

CHAPTER 3 – FINDING TIME Strategies

Questions to Consider

- Are our faculty, team, grade-level, and other meetings explicitly linked to furthering our school improvement plan?
- How much time do we spend on low-impact decisions (e.g., use of the copying machine, themes for Spirit Week)? How much time do we spend on high-impact decisions (i.e., those issues related to teaching and learning)? What steps have we taken to minimize the time spent on low-impact decisions (e.g., established time limits, relegated low-impact decisions to paper or electronic feedback)?
- How would we break down by percentage that amount of teaming time spent in administration, venting, and discipline issues versus curriculum coordination; coordination of student assignments, assessments, and feedback; parent contact and involvement; and contact with other building resource staff?
- Have we reviewed the procedures we use in school (e.g., supply requests, lesson plan procedures, attendance taking, passing periods) to make sure time is used efficiently and effectively?
- Are there any time-saving tools (e.g., templates, databases, budget software) that we could create, borrow, or buy that would help us use our time better?

valuable in helping teachers use teaming effectively. These strategies are more effective than simply carving out time for teaming and hoping that teachers use that time well.

Finally, effective use of time throughout the day can be facilitated if “standard operating procedures” are reviewed periodically to ensure they promote desired goals and are as efficient as possible. For example, perhaps the requirement to hand in lesson plans showing pages to be read and activities to be completed can be changed to handing in objectives and indicating how their attainment will be assessed, thus promoting the idea of achieving outcomes rather than covering material. Or perhaps the process for requesting and obtaining classroom supplies can be centralized and simplified. Though it may be difficult to give up doing things as they’ve always been done, eliminating that which no longer helps schools achieve their goals effectively is part of the work of fostering an adaptive, sustainable system (Sparks, 2002).

All of these uses of time (i.e., in meetings, in collaboration, and throughout the course of the day) potentially can be made more effective with changes in structure or process (as discussed in the Strategy 3 below) and through the use of tools to help streamline processes (for example, an electronic lesson plan template that teachers can submit online to principals). Other examples of tools include databases of student achievement, school climate indicators and benchmarks, school budget planners, meeting planners, professional development databases, and so forth. Although creating and training on the use of tools (electronic or otherwise) requires an investment in time and resources, these investments often can yield true benefits in the long term.

Revising structures or processes and developing time-saving tools are part and parcel of increasing the productivity of the education system. Though applying the term *productivity* to education may make some people grimace with perceptions of forcing schools to do more with less, productivity can be a much more palatable and useful term within education. A focus on productivity can refer to creating structures, processes, and tools that help teachers and principals and system administrators do their jobs. Why should schools have to fill out five different school improvement plan instruments to meet all the federal, state, and district regulations when the information can be consolidated into one? Why should school staff members have to sit through two-hour meetings when an objective-oriented meeting format could have accomplished the same tasks in half the time or less? Productivity, in part, is about using resources wisely. As survey after survey shows, few resources are more precious in running a school than time.

Strategy 3. Use all available autonomy to restructure scheduling and staffing.

In a 2001 survey conducted by Public Agenda, a nonprofit opinion research group, only 30 percent of principals and 33 percent of superintendents felt that the system helped them accomplish goals (Stricherz, 2001). This disturbing but unsurprising statistic speaks volumes about the need for significant change in how the public education system works. And it suggests that until we take seriously the task of recreating structures and processes so they help rather than impede people in doing their jobs, the chance of improvement across all schools (and not simply a school here and there), is zero. (For additional discussion of the role of decision-making structures on furthering school improvement, see the chapter on “Building Capacity.”).

In addition to aligning structures to support administrators and teachers in doing their jobs well (an “outcome”), rethinking structures and processes also is important with regard to finding time (an “input”) for school improvement work. Researchers suggest that teachers receive *at least* three hours of common planning a week in addition to their individual planning time; ideally, this time would be in blocks of 90 minutes (Miles, n.d.-b). What strategies have schools employed in restructuring their scheduling to find time? Schools have extended their school days by a few minutes to “bank” time for early release days or additional days for staff development; have established block scheduling; have scheduled “specials” (e.g., art, music) to take place in one day, thus allowing for large chunks of time for teacher work; or have created activities such as community service led by nonteachers, so students can continue learning while teachers meet together.

Schedule changes help schools find ways to use time more effectively, but schools and districts also should consider changes in staffing patterns. In 1997, only 39 percent of all instructional staff were regular education classroom teachers (Miles, n.d.-b). Although students today may have more complicated and more extensive learning, emotional, and physical needs, separating out functions to special resource positions need not be the only answer. Equipping teachers with the capacity and the time to meet the range of needs of most students can serve as another option that allows the “whole child” to be more readily recognized.² Changing the number and/or allocation of resource staff may gain schools more funding to make available for teacher development and planning time.³

² This recommendation is not meant to imply that a full-service school (which links with other organizations to provide counseling, medical care, and other services) is a bad idea; indeed, in many cases, such a school is a true benefit for the community and a saving grace for a child. Rather, this recommendation is meant to encourage schools to reconsider the widespread use of pull-out programs to attend to the different learning needs of students. With ample training, support, and *time*, one teacher with a close connection to students could be in a better position to provide for the learning needs of all students except for those with the most severe disabilities.

³ For example, according to a *CPRE Policy Bulletin* (Miles & Darling Hammond, 1998), an elementary school in Cincinnati used “multi-age grouping to address diversity in skill levels; used resources freed by eliminating Title I programs to reduce the size of reading groups; and fully integrated special education and resource teachers” (p. 1). See this resource for more examples from schools.

Questions to Consider

- Do teachers have at least three hours of common planning time every week, in addition to their individual planning time? If not, what options have we considered to create the time?
- What steps have we taken (e.g., banking time, grouping “specials” time) to provide teachers with common planning time?
- Do teachers use their common planning time effectively? How do we know?
- What support and resources have we given teachers to use their common planning time effectively?
- What percentage of our staff is primarily involved in direct student instruction? Could resources used for staff and activities not directly related to student instruction be more effectively used to pay for staff development time?
- Are teachers and principals aware of the complete area and scope of the autonomy granted to the schools by the district?
- Are district leaders aware of how much control each individual school can in fact wield?
- What steps have we as a school staff taken to petition for additional and specific areas or scope of autonomy to further our school’s improvement?

CHAPTER 3 – FINDING TIME Strategies

Questions to Consider

- How do we recognize or reward teachers for using their common planning time effectively?
- What objectives do we have for the use of common planning time, and how do we assess progress towards these objectives?
- How do we recognize or reward teachers for effectively serving on leadership teams, leading grade-level teams, and other responsibilities?
- What objectives do we have for leadership teams and grade-level teams, and how do we assess progress towards these objectives?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that the benefits of shared decision making, common planning time, and other strategies outweigh the costs?
- Do teachers believe the benefits of the extra work outweigh the costs?

Schools may face *unintended* restrictions on their autonomy due to the complicated and numerous routes through which regulations and policies are placed on schools. For example, district leaders sometimes discover that “their departments unwittingly combine to limit school options” (Miles, n.d.-a, p. 6). This statement suggests that a dialogue between school and district leaders would be beneficial in outlining what control over scheduling, staffing, and other resources schools actually have. Based on this discussion, schools that currently have limited autonomy also may want to seek specific areas of control that are linked directly to school improvement plans.

Strategy 4. Provide incentives for the outcomes of extra work and responsibilities.

School improvement efforts demand a great deal of time and effort on the part of staff members who already are overwhelmed with work. Though it is anticipated that schools will eventually institutionalize the structures and processes that allow staff to work smarter rather than harder, the transition period likely will be a difficult one. Teachers and principals initially will experience added burdens without immediate payoff. Some studies suggest that the intrinsic rewards of working within a new climate of professional collaboration may not be enough (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1996). As proposed in the “Building Capacity” chapter, however, incentives should be geared towards achieving *concrete objectives related directly to student learning*. Although there are many interesting topics and activities that may indirectly improve teaching and learning, the reality of limited time and resources necessitates that incentives be targeted to high-priority tasks.

ACTIONS

for FINDING TIME

Strategy 1. Delegate leadership.

Potential Actions

- Have teachers lead faculty and team meetings.
- Tap expert teachers to provide training sessions for staff.
- Regularly encourage teachers to share new teaching strategies.

Strategy 2. Make every minute count.

Potential Actions

- Put announcements, basic information, or any topic not requiring in-depth discussion in teacher newsletters or e-mails, in order to free up meeting time for topics needing reflection.
- Prioritize meeting objectives and allot time accordingly. Stick to time allotments.
- Ask teachers to be accountable for their meeting time by handing in meeting minutes that include objectives achieved, decisions made, and time used.
- Create meeting tools (such as Tool 6 and Tool 7) that include objectives, time allotments, and proposed action steps.
- Lobby the district to allow completion of one plan that encompasses the school improvement plan, Title I plan, and any other required federal, state, or district plans

Strategy 3. Use all available autonomy to restructure scheduling and staffing.

Potential Actions

- Add 10 minutes at the start of the day and 10 minutes at the end of the day to “bank” time for additional staff professional development days built into the school calendar.
- Create student “specials” days in which a group of students has a half day devoted to physical education, art, or other nonacademic subjects and their teachers have that half day to use in both individual and common planning time.
- Work with district and union leaders to develop waivers from time-use stipulations.
- Review the school calendar to ensure that it fosters optimal learning time. For example, holding final tests in May but ending school in June can produce a whole month of movie watching.
- Consider a year-round school calendar.

Strategy 4. Provide incentives for extra work time and responsibilities.

Potential Actions

- Apply for a grant to pay teachers stipends to work beyond the normal school day.
- Work out an agreement with the local college to provide in-depth support and mentoring for preservice teachers in exchange for reduced tuition for teachers who successfully serve on the leadership team and want to take graduate classes. Partially or fully fund this reduced tuition for teachers on the leadership team.

TOOL 5

Assessment of How Well We are FINDING TIME

PURPOSE

You as a school leader can use this tool to record your assessment of how effectively time is used at your school and to reflect on what steps the school has taken or should take to ensure the most effective use of time.

As an alternative, you may choose to use the assessment statements to create your own surveys asking teachers about their perspectives on resource-related issues. For example, the first statement, "Our decision-making structure facilitates effective and efficient use of time," could be changed and distributed to teachers to record their agreement with, "I believe that the way decisions are made at our school helps us use time efficiently and effectively." Feel free to use or revise this tool as best suits your purposes.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. Work through the entire "assessment" column, circling the number that most accurately reflects your opinion on each statement. Remember, don't go by "gut instinct" alone. When recording your rating, ask yourself, "How do I know? On what basis am I making this assessment?"

Step 2. Add together your circled numbers. Then divide by 11 to get your average score. Read the descriptions below to determine how well you believe your school is using time overall in implementing the improvement effort.

Total Score from Step 1: _____

Divided by 11=: _____ (Average Score)

If average score is between:

- **1.0 and 2.74**, you believe your school is not using time in a way that will sustain your improvement effort. If possible, you may want to visit other schools to witness how they structure teaming, run meetings, and use technology to use time well. In addition, many schools have found that shared decision making and other structures work best when facilitated by an outside "coach," at least at the beginning. Consider partnering with other schools to hire someone who can advise and coach in wisely structuring and running the components of your infrastructure (e.g., teaming, common planning time, staff meetings) in need of improvement.

Strategies Discussed in the "Finding Time" Chapter

1. Delegate leadership.
2. Make every minute count.
3. Use all available autonomy to restructure scheduling and staffing.
4. Provide incentives for the outcomes of extra work and responsibilities.

- **2.75 to -3.74**, you believe your school is somewhat “hit or miss” when it comes to using time well. Research effective decision-making structures, school schedules, and meeting formats to develop a *consistent* system that will help your staff always use time well.
- **3.75 to 5.0**, you feel your school is doing pretty well in using the precious resource of time.

Step 3. For any assessment statement that you rated a “3” or below, read the accompanying “reflection” questions to think through what your school has done or could do to improve that particular area. Circle any question that you want to work on.

Step 4. Develop a preliminary action plan to address the assessment states that you rated a “3” or less. Talk with the staff about ways they believe time use could be improved. At the bottom of the tool, record the areas for action and preliminary action steps to address these areas.

TOOL 5

Assessment of How Well We are FINDING TIME

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

1. DELEGATE LEADERSHIP

Our decision-making structure facilitates effective and efficient use of time.

1 2 3 4 5

2. MAKE EVERY MINUTE COUNT

All school meetings (e.g., team, faculty, grade level) focus on school improvement.

1 2 3 4 5

Issues discussed during school meetings are allotted time according to their importance and impact.

1 2 3 4 5

Questions for Reflection

- What steps have we taken to ensure that teachers don't have to waste time in seeking permission to make decisions they are capable of making themselves?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that principals don't have to waste time in granting permission for actions that teachers are capable of taking themselves?
- What support structures have we established to help staff members make good decisions?
- How do we monitor whether meetings are focused on school improvement?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that all meetings include concrete objectives, efficient time use, and generation of sound decisions and next steps?
- What steps have we taken to minimize time spent on low-impact decisions and to give more time to and prioritize high-impact decisions?

CHAPTER 3 – FINDING TIME
Tool 5

Questions for Reflection

- What steps have we taken to ensure that an adequate percentage of team time is spent on curriculum coordination?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that an adequate percentage of team time is spent on coordinating student assignments, assessments, and feedback?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that an adequate percentage of team time is spent on parent contact and involvement?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that an adequate percentage of team time is spent on contact with other building resource staff?
- What steps have we taken to ensure that the percentage of team time spent on administration, venting, or low-priority issues is minimal?

- What steps have we taken to demonstrate to district officials how certain regulations and protocols hinder our effectiveness and suggest other ways to get things accomplished?
- What steps have we taken to examine and improve school-level processes and requirements?

- What research have we done to discover what software and other tools are available to help us keep track of data, plan our budget, and submit lesson plans?
- Have we catalogued what skills, knowledge, and resources are necessary to use potential time-saving software?

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**
 strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

3. USE ALL AVAILABLE AUTONOMY TO RESTRUCTURE SCHEDULING AND STAFFING

Teacher teaming is used effectively in our school.

1 2 3 4 5

All of the procedures and requirements in our school help us use time efficiently and effectively.

1 2 3 4 5

We use time-saving tools and software to help us accomplish our tasks more effectively.

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

All teachers have ample common planning time every week.

1 2 3 4 5

Teachers use their common planning time effectively.

1 2 3 4 5

Our staffing patterns help us use time effectively and efficiently.

1 2 3 4 5

Questions for Reflection

- What steps have we taken to provide teachers with enough common planning time? Do teachers have at least three hours of common planning time every week?
- Have we surveyed teachers to determine if they believe they have sufficient planning time?
- What research have we done in finding out how other schools create common planning time?
- Have we documented what resources and commitments we need to provide ample common planning time?

- What training and support have we provided to enable teachers to effectively use common planning time and other collaboration time?
- Have we created long-term objectives for common planning time and other collaboration structures?
- What other structures and requirements (e.g., meeting reports with objectives, discussions, decisions, and next steps) have we established to encourage effective use of common planning time and other collaboration mechanisms?

- Have we documented what percentage of our staff is primarily involved in direct student instruction?
- Have we examined whether resources used for staff and activities not directly related to student instruction could more effectively be used to pay for staff development time?

CHAPTER 3 – FINDING TIME
Tool 5

Questions for Reflection

- Have we assessed and recorded the depth and breadth of autonomy we believe would help us do our jobs better?
 - Have we presented a compelling case to the district for gaining waivers or additional autonomy?
 - Have we made district administrators aware of the ways in which different rules and procedures may inadvertently hinder our school's autonomy?
-
- What incentives do we provide to teachers to use their time for collaboration well?
 - What incentives do we offer to teachers to take on extra responsibilities (e.g., team leaders)?
 - Have we assessed whether teachers believe that the benefits of collaboration outweigh the costs?
 - What steps have we taken to increase the benefits and minimize the costs of collaboration?

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**
 strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

We are satisfied with the level and areas of autonomy granted us by the district or state.

1 2 3 4 5

4. PROVIDE INCENTIVES FOR THE OUTCOMES OF EXTRA WORK AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We encourage the effective use of collaboration through incentives and support.

1 2 3 4 5

**PRELIMINARY ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS STATEMENTS RATED
A "3" OR LESS**

Area for Action (e.g., "teacher autonomy")	Preliminary Action Steps

TOOL 6

Time Allocation Chart for **SCHOOL LEADERS**

PURPOSE

This tool is designed to help you as a principal or school leader track how you spend your time each week. The tool enables you to track your time in the following areas:

- School management
- School leadership
- Instructional leadership
- Media and community relations
- Professional development

You may want to use this tool every day for two weeks to get an idea if your time allocation is aligned with your goals. For example, if you want to be a strong instructional leader but only spend 10 percent of your time in instructional leadership activities, you likely will want to make a change in how you allocate time.

You may wish to record time allocation in different colors: one color for time spent on-site and one for time spent off-site. Although principals must tend to many off-site obligations, a frequent teacher complaint is that the principal is not on campus enough. Recording the actual time on and off-site will help you determine if the school indeed may benefit from your increased presence at school.

Finally, note that several activities overseen by school leaders (e.g., class scheduling, hiring or firing) are not included in the table because these activities usually are concentrated in one period of time (e.g., the beginning of the school year). Feel free, however, to revise the activities listed in the template so that it better fits your school's circumstances. Also, many tasks may overlap categories. Code an activity as best you can and simply remain consistent in coding a certain activity under a certain category. Again, you are encouraged to revise the template to reflect better the activities or categories at the school.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. Make two copies of the blank tool to carry you through two weeks of time allocation. Each day, record the time that you spend in each of the five areas. You may wish to carry the tool with you throughout the day and record your time allocations as they are occurring. If you wish, use one color for time spent on-site and another color for time spent off-site.

Step 2. At the end of each day, determine your total daily hours in each area.

Step 3. At the end of the week, determine your total weekly hours in each activity, your total weekly hours spent in each area, and your grand total hours spent in school leadership.

TIME ALLOCATION CHART FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Area and Activities	Time Spent Each Day					This Week
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	
SCHOOL MANAGEMENT						
Budget, accounting, resource, insurance						
Facilities, maintenance, food services						
Transportation						
Reports to satisfy district, state, federal requirements						
Other:						
Total Hours:						
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP						
Data review and school improvement						
Special education						
Student discipline						
School safety						
Technology						
School programs (athletics, after school, clubs)						
Faculty or staff interactions						
Student interactions						
Parent interactions						
Union interactions						
Other:						
Total Hours:						

TIME ALLOCATION CHART FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Area and Activities	Time Spent Each Day					This Week
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	
SCHOOL MANAGEMENT						
Teacher observations and feedback, informal classroom visits, modeling instructional practice						
Interaction with teacher teams						
Teacher professional development						
Curriculum issues						
Other:						
Total Hours:						
MEDIA AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS						
Interactions with business or community groups						
Media and other external requests for information						
Other:						
Total Hours:						
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT						
Formal professional development activities						
Principal networking						
Individual professional reading						
Other:						
Total Hours:						
GRAND TOTAL						

TOOL 7

MEETING SUPPORT TOOL

PURPOSE

This tool provides guidance for effective meetings through planning, facilitating, and reporting. It consists of three parts:

Part A: Tips for Effective Meetings

Part B: Meeting Planner

Part C: Note Taker's Report

School leaders can distribute Part A of this tool to all staff. It can be used as a resource and guide for developing effective meetings. School leaders can distribute Part B and Part C of this tool to those facilitating meetings and then regularly collect the completed forms as a means of monitoring the objectives, discussions, decisions, and next steps determined at meetings.

For additional information on facilitating meetings, see "Productive Meetings" in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. Distribute Part A to all staff. It contains strategies for facilitating an effective meeting and a checklist for effective meetings.

Step 2. Use Part B to plan a meeting. Determine the date, start and end times, place, facilitator, and note taker. Clearly identify the meeting objectives, and specify the agenda (including topics to be discussed, presenter or topic facilitator, and time allotted). Be sure to distribute the finalized objectives and agenda to everyone attending the meeting.

Step 3. Use Part C during a meeting. The person designated as note taker will record the meeting date, objectives, participants, a brief summary of general progress discussed, and a brief summary of specific topics discussed. This report also includes space to write suggestions for improving the next meeting as well as to determine the date and objectives of that meeting.

Step 4. Collect the completed Part B and Part C for any meeting. Use as a means of monitoring the general effectiveness of the meeting.

TOOL 7, Part A

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Checklist for an Effective Meeting

- Our team meetings center around teaching and learning issues.
- We distribute the objectives and agenda for each meeting to participants at least one day prior to the meeting.
- We make sure that someone (not usually the principal) takes responsibility for facilitating our meetings.
- We make sure that someone takes responsibility for taking notes at meetings.
- We have a mutually agreed-upon format for speaking and listening at meetings.
- We have a formal process for addressing teacher concerns in meetings.
- We review progress towards school goals at our meetings.
- We have formal objectives for team meetings.
- We allocate more time to issues of higher priority.
- We start and end meetings on time.
- At the end of each meeting, participants understand the decisions made and the next steps to be taken
- We relegate as much administrative issues to newsletters, e-mails, or other modes so we can use meeting time for high-priority issues.
- We have a method for ensuring that teachers read newsletters and e-mail related to administrative issues.

Strategies for Facilitating an Effective Meeting

Plan ahead. Before the meeting, send out an agenda with objectives, start and end times, time allotments, decisions to be made, and actions to be taken. Arrive on time and prepared with necessary information and materials.

Provide a structure for discussion. Meetings run more smoothly if everyone understands and abides by a format for how questions and comments should be offered (e.g., speak out, signal for recognition) and how decisions will be made (e.g., majority vote, consensus). Of course, an established structure for discussion is worthwhile only if people feel comfortable speaking out in the first place. If only a few people routinely volunteer input, try to make the setting as welcoming as possible and offer alternative means for gaining feedback, such as giving the opportunity for anonymous written comments or going around the room to hear at least one comment from everyone. As a part of the discussion structure, make sure someone takes notes that summarize the discussion, how and what decisions were made, and actions to be taken.

Facilitate real commitment. Gaining consensus isn't worthwhile if all people haven't spoken their minds. Tacit agreement in a meeting will not carry through to committed implementation if people do not truly agree with a decision. So don't shy away from conflict, but make it as constructive as possible by listening carefully, restating what you heard to avoid miscommunication, refraining from personal attacks, and making sure every side has the opportunity to speak uninterrupted (for a limited period of time).

Stay on track. Ensure that discussions remain focused by writing nonrelevant comments in a "Parking Lot"—a separate piece of paper of issues to be discussed at another time. Many schools also have also "administrivia" from meeting times and instead have written them up in staff newsletters or e-mails, eliminating those items that staff members can simply read by themselves.

TOOL 7, Part B

MEETING PLANNER

GENERAL INFORMATION

Date of Meeting _____

Start Time _____ End Time _____

Place of Meeting _____

Facilitator for Meeting _____

Note Taker for Meeting _____

Meeting Objectives _____

MEETING AGENDA

Topic to Be Discussed	Presenter or Topic Facilitator	Time Allotted
Review goals from school improvement plan and determine progress made.		
<i>Additional Topic:</i>		
<i>Additional Topic:</i>		
<i>Additional Topic:</i>		
<i>Additional Topic:</i>		
<i>Additional Topic:</i>		
<i>Additional Topic:</i>		

TOOL 7, Part C

NOTE TAKER'S REPORT

Date of Meeting _____

Participants (e.g., all teachers, team leaders)

Meeting Objectives

Brief Summary of Discussion on General Progress (Regarding the School Improvement Plan)

BRIEF SUMMARY OF SPECIFIC TOPICS DISCUSSED

Topic Discussed	Decision(s) Made	Steps for Further Action (who, what, when, how)

Suggestions for Improving Next Meeting

Date of next meeting _____ Main objectives(s) _____

CHAPTER 4 – INCREASING STAFF RETENTION

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Successful implementation of any improvement measure depends on *consistent* implementation. Although consistency is possible in an environment of some staff and leadership turnover, it is certainly much more difficult to attain. Sustaining a shared vision, stable leadership, and supportive culture—all characteristics identified as traits of effective schools by both the literature base and the practitioners we interviewed—is quite simply an uphill battle if people are rotating in and out of the building.

Understanding the factors related to retention is important because teacher turnover exacts great costs. In addition to the challenge it presents in creating a stable environment for teaching and learning, the financial implications are quite significant. A study conducted by the Texas Center for Educational Research (2000) found that estimates of direct costs of teacher turnover (e.g., 25 percent of salaries, plus benefits) reached \$329 million annually in Texas alone. If indirect costs (e.g., costs for additional recruiting, hiring, new training) were included, the estimate grew to \$2.1 *billion* annually in Texas (Texas Center for Educational Research (2000).

Because this guide is intended primarily for school leaders, this chapter focuses on strategies for retaining teachers rather than retaining principals or superintendents. Because of the significant importance of stable leadership, though, it is worth noting that principals and superintendents who want to maintain as much stability as possible in the event of their transfer will work hard throughout their tenure to “institutionalize” the school or district’s vision. If a culture has been developed and structures have been established to enact the vision, the sustainability of the improvement effort is more likely. Naturally, any steps you can take to ensure that the next leader will implement the established vision also will promote stability.

As noted, though, this chapter focuses on teacher retention. Some studies suggest that teachers leave their jobs at rates higher than other professions. One study in particular found 17 percent annual teacher turnover compared to 11 percent annual turnover among nonteaching occupations (Ingersoll, 2002). And beyond the studies, countless principals bemoan the fact that no matter how promising their improvement strategy is, they can’t maintain the stability in staffing needed to see it truly take root. Improving retention requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates who is recruited, who is hired and how, and how teachers are supported once on the job—especially during the first few years of teaching.

The following strategies outline a complementary host of ideas for strategies that school leaders—and to some degree district leaders—can use to improve staff retention. Although leaders may choose not to focus on every listed approach, finding ways to improve retention requires employing a coordinated set of strategies, not simply one or two stand-alone tactics.

CHAPTER STRATEGIES

1. Make sure you want the staff you have.
2. Survey school staff members as to why they leave and why they stay.
3. Rethink recruitment, hiring, and induction practices for new teachers.
4. Regularly monitor teacher needs and accordingly prioritize human resource efforts.

CHAPTER TOOL

Tool 8: Assessment of How Well We Are Increasing Staff Retention

This survey tool, based on the “Questions to Consider” found in this chapter, guides the school in assessing how well it is implementing teacher retention strategies. The survey focuses on statements to be assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, thus providing a snapshot of areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. It also includes questions for reflection to prompt deeper thinking for assessing and planning actions to increase teacher retention. This tool provides a fairly complete overview of the discussion found in the chapter.

STRATEGIES

for INCREASING STAFF RETENTION

Strategy 1. Make sure you want the staff you have.

The importance of having a high-quality teacher in the classroom is clear. Consider the Tennessee study (Sanders & Rivers, 1996) demonstrating that at the end of three years, students who had had three successive years of effective teachers achieved math achievement scores more than *50 percentile points higher* than students who had had three successive years of ineffective teachers.¹ Given the influence that teachers can have on student learning, schools have a strong incentive to find and retain high-quality teachers and to remove ineffective teachers. The inability to retain teachers is an important underlying cause of the teacher shortage crisis (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2003). Some degree of turnover is good, however, if it means removing people who should not be teaching or who are not committed to the school’s improvement efforts. And according to surveys and interviews of school staff members, teachers truly appreciate principals who are willing to confront bad teachers and dismiss them if necessary (Keller, 1998).

Of course, firing or not renewing the contract of a teacher often is difficult given district regulations, union contracts, and the pressure to retain enough people on staff. Although there are no easy answers, schools and districts might employ a combination of tactics, such as those listed in “Actions for Increasing Staff Retention” at the end of this chapter to minimize the occurrence of ineffective teaching.

Strategy 2. Survey school staff members as to why they leave and why they stay.

According to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2003), poor working conditions are “at the top of the list” of reasons that teachers cite when choosing to leave their positions (p. 16). A study by Ingersoll (2001) looked at, among other things, specific causes of dissatisfaction among teachers leaving their position to teach elsewhere. This study found poor salary, inadequate administrative support, student discipline problems, lack of faculty influence, and lack of community support as the top five reasons given for leaving the position.²

Of course, other studies suggest that salary or salary alone is not as influential in the decision to teach elsewhere. For example, a Texas study (cited in Viadero, 2002) found that teachers who had been teaching for a decade or less (a group that makes up three quarters of the annual job changes by Texas teachers) tended to

¹ Statistical adjustments were made in order to account for difference in initial achievement scores. In this way, the two groups of students were “even” in terms of their starting points.

² Percentage breakdown of the top five reasons was as follows: poor salary, 47 percent; inadequate administrative support, 38 percent; student discipline problems, 18 percent; lack of faculty influence, 13 percent; and lack of community support, 12 percent.

Questions to Consider

- Have we created or adopted a formal, written list of skills and knowledge that we expect teachers to use in the classroom? Do teachers have a copy of this list?
- Do we assess teacher performance based on this list?
- What additional support do we provide teachers who are not utilizing expected skills? How do we evaluate whether this additional support was helpful?
- Do we dismiss teachers who are still unwilling or unable to utilize expected skills after they have been given additional time and support?
- Have we developed a comprehensive system for gaining a full picture of teacher performance (e.g., classroom observations, review of student work, results of student standardized tests, and teacher portfolios)?

Questions to Consider

- Are we satisfied with our teacher retention rate?
- What steps have we taken to ascertain why teachers leave and why they stay?
- What are the top three specific reasons teachers in our school cite for leaving and for staying?
- What steps have we taken to address the top three reasons teachers leave?
- What steps have we taken to bolster those school conditions that prompt teachers to stay?
- Are teachers satisfied with what the school does to promote teacher retention? How do we know?

find jobs that paid fairly comparably to their previous jobs. The big difference was in the characteristics of the school to which the teacher switched.³ Taken together, these studies suggest that the work environment is a primary factor in teacher turnover but that districts should examine their own data to determine more specific causes.

In thinking through how to collect teacher input, keep in mind that exit surveys given by a school leader may not be a true measure of teacher reasons for departure. A teacher, hoping for a positive recommendation, might be reluctant to divulge that lack of administrator support was a key reason for transferring. In contrast, surveys of departing teachers that are anonymous and distributed by state-level administration, teachers unions, or independent organizations may be more accurate and consequently more useful. As an example of the type of questions that leaders might ask teachers (whether staying or leaving), see the “Working Conditions” survey distributed to every one of the 75,000 teachers in North Carolina (North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission, 2003). Schools and districts also may want to consider finding out what prompts teachers to stay. Especially given the fact that recent (and probably future) entrants into the job market do not stay in their initial job as long as members of past generations did, it is worth exploring what factors do encourage job satisfaction and, hopefully, longer tenure for effective teachers. Research conducted across many fields suggests that factors contributing to job dissatisfaction are not simply the opposite of factors increasing job satisfaction.⁴ Leaders may want to do something as formal as asking an objective third party to conduct teacher focus groups about what contributes to their job satisfaction, or something as informal as initiating personal conversations with teachers, e-mailing them a “question of the month,” and so forth. By regularly monitoring why teachers are choosing to remain at their job, school and district leaders can take steps more readily to prevent the departure of good teachers, which is certainly preferable to and more cost-effective than constantly trying to fill the gaps as good teachers stream out.

³ Teachers who left were more likely to transfer to schools that offered similar salaries but were characterized by lower percentages of minority students, higher test scores, and smaller percentages of low-income students. Rather than proposing that teachers don’t want to teach poor and minority students, the researchers suggested that these characteristics were quite possibly proxies for unmeasured variables such as lack of resources, poor facilities, and large class sizes.

⁴ According to a behavioral theory initially espoused by Frederick Herzberg and long held by businesses, factors that affect attitudes towards work can be grouped into two categories: hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors (e.g., company policy, working conditions, salary) are context factors; the absence or low value of these factors can lead to job dissatisfaction but by themselves don’t bring about job satisfaction over the long term. Motivators (e.g., achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement), on the other hand, can influence long-term job satisfaction. Although some studies suggest that this division of factors does not fit as well within the teaching profession (specifically, that salary may indeed be a motivator for teachers), exploring how teachers can be motivated to stay and remain satisfied when leaders attend to motivators is worth consideration by the school or district. For more information on Herzberg’s theory and its relation to the field of education, see Gawel (1997).

Strategy 3. Rethink recruitment, hiring, and induction practices for new teachers.

Retaining high-quality teachers starts with seeking them out in the first place. Does your school or district actively recruit high-achieving college or graduate students? Does it target education schools that provide strong programs relevant to your environment (e.g., urban education programs, courses that stress the reform strategy used in your school)? Does it connect to well-regarded alternative entry programs that rigorously prepare noneducation majors and midcareer job changers?

It is a general economic rule that supply follows demand. If your school or district demands no more than mediocre applicants who happen to show up at the door, that is more likely what you will get. No one disputes that it is difficult to recruit highly qualified individuals to enter teaching. Higher achieving students are less likely to prepare for a career in education; once there, higher achieving students-turned-teachers tend to leave the job within the first few years (Boser, 2000).⁵ And schools—especially struggling schools—may feel that all they have to offer is long hours, poor working conditions, and low pay. But the fact that there *are* exceptions—that high-achieving individuals do go into teaching, that some preparation programs and schools do boast high retention rates—means that it can be done: *Your school or district can find and keep high-quality teachers if this goal is a priority.* Pursuing high-quality candidates requires more effort and more resources (e.g., traveling to top education schools to recruit versus sitting up a table at a local job fair), but the payoff for student learning is worth the extra work. (For examples of specific tactics for recruiting high-quality teacher candidates, see “Actions for Increasing Staff Retention” on page 92.)

Your school or district may wish to take on the additional effort to improve, at least in a small way, the pool of available teaching candidates.⁶ Then it must follow this effort with an effective hiring strategy. Think through these questions (some of them are more applicable to district leaders):

⁵ According to this research, only 14 percent of college graduates who taught in schools by 1996–97 scored in the top quartile of SAT or ACT test takers, versus 24 percent of graduates who chose other professions. Novice teachers who did score in the top quartile on college entrance exams were nearly twice as likely to leave the profession as those who did not score in the top quartile.

⁶ A school or district wishing to get more deeply involved in improving the pool of teaching candidates may want to work directly with teacher preparation programs to increase or improve the time preservice teachers spend in K–12 schools; create a teacher-exchange program, in which education professors spend significant time in the K–12 schools and K–12 teachers spend significant time as students and instructors in the education program; form a joint panel to review the courses education programs offer; or explore many other options for ensuring that the education received by preservice teachers prepares them for life as a teacher. For more discussion on improving teacher preparation, see Hassel, Walter, and Hayden (2002).

Questions to Consider

- Are we satisfied with the pool of teachers available to us?
- What steps have we taken to develop, demand, seek, and hire the highest quality teacher candidates possible?
- What challenges and obstacles impede us from hiring the most qualified teachers? What steps have we taken to gain waivers from or urge revision of district or union provisions that hamper hiring the best teacher for the school?
- What types of support do we provide new teachers? If I as a school leader have no control or only limited control over the scope of formal induction programs, what have I done informally to offer support to new teachers? Do new teachers find this support effective and sufficient?

- Do we use technology effectively to streamline the hiring process?⁷
- Have we established criteria or processes whereby we actively seek teacher candidates who bring skills needed at the school and who will mesh well with the school culture?
- Do we utilize a database that facilitates accurate projections of student numbers and thus needed teachers?⁸
- Have we worked with unions to plan the timing of hiring to avoid last-minute scrambling for new teachers?
- Do we provide incentives for teachers to teach in high-needs schools and/or subject areas (e.g., math, science, special education)?
- Do teachers and principals have an active role in interviewing and hiring new teachers?

Recruiting and hiring a new teacher is, of course, just the beginning. Because the first few years of teaching is the time most teachers will leave (with the exception of the “20+ years” mark, when teachers begin retiring), creating a strong induction program for teachers during their first two to three years on the job is critical. As noted by educator and author Harry Wong (2001), an induction program should serve at least the following purposes:

- Easing the transition into teaching.
- Improving teacher effectiveness through training in classroom management and effective teaching techniques.
- Promoting the district’s culture: its philosophies, mission, policies, procedures, and goals.
- Increasing the retention rate for highly qualified teachers.

According to the *Schools and Staffing Survey, 1999-2000* (cited in Berry, 2003), 79 percent of new teachers participate in induction programs of some sort. The quality of these induction programs, however, varies dramatically: Only 26 percent of new teachers reported extra classroom assistance, only 36 percent had mentors regarded as helpful “to a great extent,” and only 6 percent had a reduced teaching schedule (Berry, 2003). Although providing a more comprehensive induction program requires more time, effort, and money,⁹ the impact on teacher retention is substantial. Based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future (2003) estimates that

⁷ For example, the school district in Cleveland, Ohio, requires applicants to fill out an online application and take an online 45-minute test. Because Cleveland is moving to a more site-centered hiring system, principals generally use the easily accessible information and test results to screen applicants. See Keller (2003).

⁸ Inaccurate projections of student numbers can combine with teacher transfer rules and poorly planned budgets to undermine effective hiring. See Miles (n.d.-a).

⁹ Effective induction programs are estimated to cost between \$5,000 and \$8,000 per new teacher. See the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2002a).

teachers who are not offered induction programs leave teaching at rates almost 70 percent higher than those who participate in such programs.

Characteristics of Effective Induction Programs

The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (2002) identifies the following characters of effective induction programs for new teachers:

- “Provide opportunities to observe and analyze good teaching in real situations.”
- “Transfer the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes needed to improve student learning.”
- “Provide guidance and assessment by highly trained, content-specific mentors who have mentoring built into their daily work schedule.”
- “Reduce new-teacher workloads to provide more learning time.”
- “Assist novices in meeting licensure standards.”
- “Include rigorous assessments to determine the effectiveness of and continually improve the program.”
- “Invest in rigorous new-teacher assessments.”

From page 1 of “Solving the Teacher Shortage: Improving Support for New Teachers,” Teaching Quality in the South: Best Practices and Policies, Vol. 2, No. 6 (November/December 2002). Copyright © 2002 by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality. Reprinted with permission.

Strategy 4. Regularly monitor teacher needs and accordingly prioritize human resource efforts.

Both through the early years and the veteran years, teachers are more likely to stay at a school if they feel valued, needed, supported, and challenged. School or district leaders concerned with teacher retention will regularly monitor whether teachers believe they are having their needs met, and they will take steps to address gaps. Given resource constraints, a school system cannot expect to provide every support it would like to teachers. Neither should it refrain, however, from allocating resources to provide support “upstream” because it is so concerned with all the money already spent “downstream.”

To illustrate, school leaders may think they do not have enough money to implement an effective induction program. At the same time, though, they are spending millions of dollars repairing the damage (economic and otherwise) resulting from high teacher turnover. In actuality, spending more money on teacher induction (an “upstream” tactic) may save several times that amount in money spent plugging the hole of teacher turnover (a “downstream” issue). When schools and districts solicit and attend to teacher needs, the result likely will be better use of resources, higher retention, more stable schools, and improved student learning.

Questions to Consider

- How satisfied are our teachers with the school’s work environment? What steps have we taken to measure satisfaction with working conditions?
- What do teachers list as shortfalls in the current work environment? How have we addressed these issues?
- What is the ratio between what we spend to support teachers in staying (e.g., through induction programs, community-building initiatives) and what we spend on filling gaps of departing teachers (e.g., costs of long-term substitutes, rehiring, retraining)? Are we happy with this ratio?

ACTIONS

for INCREASING STAFF RETENTION

Strategy 1. Make sure you want the staff you have.

Potential Actions

- Develop a checklist of needed teacher skills and commitments (based on the school needs assessment). Reflect honestly on whether each teacher has or can develop the necessary skills and commitment. (Each teacher also should have a copy of this list and assess himself or herself against it. For standards delineating what teachers should know and be able to do, see the “Staff and Leadership Development” in the Resources section.)
- Provide extra support to those teachers who need it for a defined period of time; then work with them either to build the necessary capacity or find a profession more suitable for them.
- In working *with* teachers unions, start with the mutually agreed-upon objective of having qualified teachers in every classroom. Create a balanced set of strategies (including both more support for teachers and more school or district freedom to remove ineffective teachers) that will achieve the common objective. In suggesting controversial strategies, find out what components and provisions would make the strategy more palatable.¹⁰ Provisions also should be reasonable and financially feasible.¹¹
- Provide regular formal and informal observations and feedback for struggling teachers.
- Develop effective mentoring and peer-coaching programs.
- Create a paired-teaching classroom in which classes are combined and teachers can teach together and gain from the other’s strengths.
- Partner with area teaching colleges to place preservice teachers in a K–12 school for several years of their college experience, thus providing new teachers with much more experience before taking responsibility for their own classroom.¹²

¹⁰ For example, a school’s autonomy to dismiss teachers deemed ineffective could include a provision to provide a review panel staffed half with school leaders and half with union representatives. See Rothstein (2002).

¹¹ Consider a 1994 report from the New York State School Boards Association, which noted that under the state’s teacher tenure system, it took an average of 476 days and \$149,445 (\$317,000 if appealed, according to the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*) to fire a teacher. These figures do not include legal fees, salaries for substitutes, or several other expenses. Such delay and expense is a true disservice to students and taxpayers. See McVicar (1998). (The 1994 report is available by calling the New York State School Boards Association at 518-783-0200.)

¹² For two examples of education programs that place education students in K–12 schools during their freshman year (at California State University–Stanislaus, and Coastal Carolina University), see Hassel, Walters, and Hayden (2002).

Strategy 2. Survey school staff members as to why they stay and why they leave.

Potential Actions

- At the end of the year, conduct a formal written survey of teachers that assesses their satisfaction with their jobs. Track this information in a database and use to plan school improvement measures.
- Ask an independent organization to collect exit-survey information (e.g., satisfaction levels, reasons for leaving) from departing teachers and synthesize the data. (Teachers likely will feel that they cannot be open if they know the principal or other administrator will see their personal responses.)
- Work with a nonprofit organization to conduct an “audit” of your school’s working and learning conditions.
- Establish a teacher team to be responsible throughout the year for soliciting and reporting teacher feedback on working conditions. Work with the whole faculty to devise ways of addressing teacher concerns.

Strategy 3. Rethink recruitment and hiring practices.

Potential Actions

- Create a hiring team that includes teachers so they can help select new hires that will fit within the school’s culture.
- Recruit teachers from those institutions that align well with your school’s needs (e.g., colleges with urban-education programs, colleges that work closely with reform efforts in place in your school).
- Hire only those teachers who will commit to your improvement effort.

Strategy 4. Regularly monitor teacher needs and accordingly prioritize human resource efforts.

Potential Actions

- Actively seek to know what is important to teachers in a supportive environment and try to meet these needs.
- Make efforts to build a caring, collaborative community of staff (e.g., opportunities to socialize outside of school settings, notes of encouragement, real mentoring programs).
- Establish a small budget for school beautification—plants, new paint, rugs.

TOOL 8

Assessment of How Well We are **INCREASING STAFF RETENTION**

Strategies Discussed in the “Increasing Staff Retention” Chapter

1. Make sure you want the staff you have.
2. Survey school staff members as to why they leave and why they stay.
3. Rethink recruitment, hiring, and induction practices.
4. Regularly monitor teacher needs and accordingly prioritize human resource efforts.

PURPOSE

You as a school leader can use this tool to record your assessment of retention-increasing efforts that are being used at your school and to reflect on what retention-increasing efforts your school has undertaken or should undertake in the near future.

As an alternative, you may choose to use the assessment statements to create your own surveys that ask teachers about their perspectives on measures to increase teacher retention. For example, the first statement, “Teachers know exactly what skills and knowledge they are expected to possess,” could be changed to “I know exactly what skills and knowledge I am expected to possess as a teacher at this school” and distributed to teachers to record their level of agreement. Feel free to use or revise this tool as best suits your purposes.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. Work through the entire “assessment” column, circling the number that most accurately reflects your opinion on each statement. Remember, don’t go by “gut instinct” alone. When recording your rating, ask yourself, “How do I know? On what basis am I making this assessment?”

Step 2. Add together your circled numbers. Then divide by 12 to get your average score. Then read the descriptions below to determine where you believe your school stands in terms of increasing retention in order to help sustain the improvement effort.

Total Score from Step 1: _____

Divided by 12=: _____ **(Average Score)**

If your average score is between:

- **1.0 and 2.74**, you believe that not enough is being done to hold on to the good teachers and retrain or dismiss the poor teachers. Consider developing, in conjunction with teachers and based on research, an explicit list of student outcomes, teacher practices, and classroom conditions expected for each classroom. Regularly monitor whether or not these expectations are being met.

- **2.75 and 3.74**, you believe your school's retention efforts are passable but could certainly improve. Consider surveying teachers and/or holding focus group of teachers to examine working conditions. (For a sample survey, see the link to the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey listed under "Human Resource Management" in the Web Resources section.)
- **3.75 and 5.0**, you feel your school is doing fairly well addressing the issue of teacher retention.

Step 3. For any assessment statement that you rated a "3" or less, read the accompanying "reflection" questions and think about what your school has done or could do to improve that particular area. Circle any questions that you want to work on.

Step 4. Develop a preliminary action plan to address any assessment statements that you rated a "3" or less. At the bottom of the tool, record your areas for action and preliminary actions steps to address these areas.

TOOL 8

Assessment of How Well We are INCREASING STAFF RETENTION

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

Questions for Reflection

- Have we researched different examples of teaching or teacher standards?
- Have we taken steps to ensure that teachers have input into the design of the evaluation criteria and process?
- Have we created or adopted a formal, written list of expected proficiencies? (Do teachers have a copy of this list?)

- Do we regularly sit down with each teacher to map out needed skills and develop a plan for gaining those skills?
- Do we offer multiple types of support to teachers needing new skills?
- What steps have we taken to measure whether the support system we provide teachers is sufficient?

- Do we assess teacher performance based in part on an established list of expected proficiencies?
- Have we developed a comprehensive system for gaining a full picture of teacher performance (e.g., classroom observations, review of student work, student standardized test results, teacher portfolios)?
- What steps have we taken to make clear to all staff (prior to evaluation) the criteria and process of evaluation?
- Have we taken steps to survey teachers regarding their satisfaction with the criteria and process used for performance evaluation?

1. MAKE SURE YOU WANT THE STAFF YOU HAVE

Teachers know exactly what skills and knowledge they are expected to possess.

1 2 3 4 5

We provide teachers with support to help them gain needed skills and knowledge.

1 2 3 4 5

Teachers are evaluated through a coherent and transparent procedure.

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

Teachers who don't meet expectations after extra support is given are dismissed fairly and in a timely manner.

1 2 3 4 5

- Do we give ineffective teachers ample opportunity to improve?
- Do we try to find placements for teachers (other schools, other positions) where they might have greater success? (This response does not mean pushing off ineffective teachers to other schools where the teachers will continue to perform just as poorly.)
- What steps have we taken to develop fair and timely procedures for dismissing ineffective teachers?
- Did we develop this dismissal procedure with both teacher and administrator input?

2. SURVEY SCHOOL STAFF MEMBERS AS TO WHY THEY LEAVE AND WHY THEY STAY

We are satisfied with our teacher retention rate.

1 2 3 4 5

- Have we compared our staff retention rate with those of other schools, as well as with district, state, and national averages?
- What steps have we taken to understand why teachers choose to leave our school?
- What steps have we taken to understand why teachers choose to stay at our school?

We have taken ample steps to address the reasons that staff members give for leaving.

1 2 3 4 5

- What concrete measures have we taken to address the top three reasons teacher give for leaving?
- What concrete measures have we taken to strengthen the top three reasons teachers give for staying?
- Have we asked teachers about their satisfaction with the measures taken to promote teacher retention?

CHAPTER 4 – INCREASING STAFF RETENTION
Tool 8

- Have we created a profile of the type of teacher we would like or need at our school? Have we brainstormed where we could find this type of teacher and how we could persuade him or her to teach at our school?
- What steps have we taken to recruit at more selective teacher education programs?
- What hiring criteria and process have we adopted to ensure that we select high-quality teachers?
- What incentives and supports have we offered to encourage high-quality teachers to teach at our school?
- For high school: What measures have we used to encourage top students to enter the teaching field?
- If we are unsatisfied with the current system, have we documented exactly how the system impedes our school's improvement?
- If unsatisfied, have we talked with other schools about the issue and regularly petitioned the district for a waiver or a change of policy in the teacher placement system?
- If unsatisfied, have we initiated discussions with the teacher unions about developing a better teacher placement system (if the union is in place and active in negotiating placement policy in the district)?

1 **2** **3** **4** **5**
 strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

3. RETHINK RECRUITMENT, HIRING, AND INDUCTION PRACTICES

We are satisfied with the pool of teachers available to us.

1 2 3 4 5

We have taken significant steps to improve the pool of quality teachers available to us.

1 2 3 4 5

We are satisfied with the teacher placement system in place in our district.

1 2 3 4 5

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

New teachers are satisfied with the level of support they receive in their first one to three years of teaching.

1 2 3 4 5

- Do we provide a lighter teaching load to new teachers?
- Do we provide an effective, involved, well-trained mentor for new teachers?
- Do we provide additional training for new teachers?
- Do we provide additional and more in-depth observations and coaching for new teachers?
- Do we take extra steps to ensure that new teachers feel welcomed in our school?

4. REGULARLY MONITOR TEACHER NEEDS AND ACCORDINGLY PRIORITIZE HUMAN RESOURCE EFFORTS

Teachers are satisfied with the school's working conditions.

1 2 3 4 5

We are satisfied with the ratio of the resources we spend on supporting teachers in staying to the resources we spend on filling gaps of teachers who leave.

1 2 3 4 5

- Have we assessed what areas teachers list as shortfalls in the current working environment, taken steps to address these areas, and calculated the resources needed to improve the conditions with which teachers are unsatisfied?
- Have we measured how much time and money we spend on supporting teachers in staying (e.g., improving working conditions, providing support to those teachers most likely to leave—usually new teachers; offering incentives)?
- Have we measured how much time and money we spend on replacing teachers who leave (e.g., paying long-term substitutes, searching for new hires, providing training to new teachers)?

**PRELIMINARY ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS STATEMENTS RATED
A "3" OR LESS**

Area for Action (e.g., "Research examples of teaching or teacher standards.")	Preliminary Action Steps

CHAPTER 5 – FINDING MONEY

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The harsh fiscal reality for education today is that times are tight and we cannot expect any dramatic funding increases in the near future. There is no easy answer here for getting new sources of funds. Most of the strategies listed below will help you use available money more effectively rather than discover whole new pools of untapped resources. Still, using resources differently can free up a considerable amount of funding. Consider the radical proposal to eliminate all staffing positions beyond the core of one principal and 20 teachers for a 500-student school.

Depending on the number of regular education specialists, categorical specialists, and instructional aides present, reallocation of responsibilities could result in having more than \$1 million freed to dedicate elsewhere (Odden, n.d.).¹ Certainly, there are other, less radical ways to reallocate money (e.g., cutting certain programs, increasing class sizes in noncore classes, shifting resources away from technology upgrades), but the key point is to assess all expenditures as to how well they are furthering the goals of the school and prioritize accordingly.

As noted in the “Developing Capacity” chapter, a school seeking improvement should have a theory of change that outlines the critical ingredients of its improvement strategy. In times of budget austerity, nonessential elements—no matter how favored or well established—may need to be modified or cut in order to retain focus on the school improvement plan. Maintaining programs that do not measurably contribute to school goals undermine the school’s drive for sustainable school improvement. (Please note that school goals also may focus on goals that are not strictly academic—for example, developing the musical talents, technological skills, or leadership ability of students.) Prioritizing funding doesn’t necessarily assume cutting all nonacademic subjects; instead, it is meant to ensure money follows the goals—whatever they may be—with the realization that state or district accountability requirements still will need to be met.)

The following strategies outline a complementary host of ideas that both school and district leaders can use to find money for implementing a chosen improvement measure. Though leaders may choose not to focus on every listed approach, successful resource allocation requires employing a coordinated set of strategies, not simply one or two stand-alone tactics.

¹ Certainly, taking away someone’s job is not an appealing option for schools; but in some cases, people can be retrained to act as core academic teachers. (According to Miles [n.d.-b], by 1997, barely half of a typical district’s staff were classroom teachers. Within the pool of instructional staff, the percentage of people serving as regular education classroom teachers had fallen to 40 percent.) By increasing the number of core academic teachers, there are fewer types of staffing positions but greater likelihood of smaller average class sizes, greater compensation, more training, and/or more planning time. By using resources to fund these additional teacher supports rather than additional types of positions, the impact on student achievement likely will be greater.

CHAPTER STRATEGIES:

1. Make sure that you want the improvement measure—not simply the money.
2. Align spending with proven outcomes.
3. Track where the money is going.
4. Find new resources.
5. Scale down the original effort.

CHAPTER TOOL

Tool 9: Assessment of How Well We Are Finding Money

This survey tool, based on the “Questions to Consider” found in this chapter, guides the school in assessing how well it is employing effective strategies to find and use resources. The survey focuses on statements to be assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, thus providing a snapshot of areas of strength and areas in need of improvement. It also includes questions for reflection to prompt deeper thinking for assessing and planning actions to better find and use money. This tool provides a fairly complete overview of the discussion found in the chapter.

STRATEGIES

for FINDING MONEY

Strategy 1. Make sure that you want the improvement measure—not simply the money.

Traditional budgeting and resource allocation practices can at times prompt ineffective uses of money. Rules against carrying over leftover funds may cause schools to spend haphazardly at the end of the year rather than lose the funding. Specialized grants may encourage schools to purchase materials that remain unutilized or underutilized, simply because the money was available. Meanwhile, the most basic of classroom needs (e.g., enough texts for all the students, ceilings that don't leak) may go unmet. Multiple funding streams and district-level budgeting in which programs rather than schools are the primary unit of measurement (i.e., the central office monitors how Title I is distributed in the district but may not be diligent in tracking the total budget for Smith Elementary) makes spending that is prioritized according to school needs less likely. Though this issue is primarily for districts and states to address, school leaders can contribute to the solution by understanding what the school's prioritized needs are. By being a knowledgeable advocate for the changes that your school is truly seeking, you are more likely to pursue and obtain money directed towards your improvement effort, rather than acquiring funds that force you to deviate from or dilute your vision for improvement.

A knowledgeable, targeted use of resources also lessens the potential for complaints about pouring money into schools without any significant improvement in outcomes. Leaders who have prioritized their needs will leverage every dollar for its maximum impact on teaching and learning *in accordance with the school improvement plan*. Leaders who grasp for every dollar whether or not it corresponds to the school improvement plan technically may gain a larger budget but, quite likely, not see much improvement; the long-term effect possibly may be greater reluctance on the part of taxpayers and legislators to increase education spending.² School leaders must know their needs and understand how funding is used to address those needs. As Elmore (2002a) notes, "Why give more resources to an organization whose leaders cannot explain how they are using the resources that they already have?"

² People reluctant to spend more money on education may cite the figure that education spending doubled during the 1970s and 1980s, with no real improvement in student achievement. Though there certainly are disputes as to how best to calculate changes in education spending, several organizations—including the Economic Policy Institute (EPI)—suggest that the "doubling" claim is overstated. EPI states that the real per-pupil spending, when adjusted appropriately for inflation, increased 61 percent between 1967 and 1991. Moreover, much of these funding increases went to special populations, who traditionally have not been included in state testing. According to EPI, per-pupil increases for regular education grew 28 percent during these years, at an average increase of about 1 percent per year. A 1-percent increase per year certainly seems a modest investment. For additional information, refer to Rothstein (1995).

Questions to Consider

- What are our prioritized needs?
- Do we pursue funds based on their relevance to our school improvement plan?
- Is our budget allocated based specifically on our prioritized needs or goals?
- Have we petitioned the district to consider other budgeting mechanisms (e.g., by school versus by program; site-based versus centralized; student-based versus staffing-based)?
- Have we asked the district to assess the variation in allocated budgets between schools?³

³ One study of a set of urban school districts found that the lowest funded school might receive *1/3 or less per-pupil funding* than the highest funded school *in the same district*. Only by looking at budgets per school will districts be able to find the funding disparities that are masked by the complex formula-based structure traditionally in place. For additional information, refer to School Communities That Work (2002).

CHAPTER 5 – FINDING MONEY Strategies

Questions to Consider

- Do we regularly compare our resource allocations to our school improvement plan to ensure that our allocations are effectively supporting the school improvement plan? Do we regularly ask if there is any way we can improve the deployment of resources (including staffing, professional development opportunities, curricular materials, technology)?
- Have we identified all of the inputs that we believe are necessary to support our improvement strategies? Have we budgeted for these necessary costs?
- Have we established desired outcomes for the allocation of our resources (e.g., 90 percent of teachers attending the XYZ conference will improve their teaching practice as measured on principal and peer observations)?

Strategy 2. Align spending with proven outcomes.

Elmore (2002a) points out that the way a school is structured may eventually become “unexamined wallpaper”—a way of organizing operations that is no longer given much thought, and hence, critical evaluation. Other experts who work extensively with schools and districts make similar observations. For example, Odden (n.d.) suggests that *school staffing* may be an area ripe for redesign. He notes that many specialist positions (e.g., remedial specialists, guidance counselors) have become so entrenched within schools as to be deemed essential, automatic school allocations. Miles and Darling-Hammond (1997) suggest that rather than funding these types of positions, the money could instead be allocated to school improvement measures and the staffing could be modified to allow regular education teachers, with corresponding increases in compensation and planning time, to take over the roles of the specialists.

Because so much of a school’s budget (more than 75 percent) is allocated to staffing, human resource expenditures are a place where changes can have a sizable impact on the budget. However, completely restructuring a school’s staff is a radical step and may not be the best option for beginning the process of resource reallocation (or necessarily the best option at any point). Even examining seemingly insignificant daily actions is an important beginning. Elmore (2002a) points to the example of school staff members who cannot explain why the teachers are responsible for walking elementary school students between classes; he implies that teacher time probably could be better used. Who walks students between classes is a small matter, but recognizing the need to ask the question is large step forward in being conscious of resource prioritization.

So as noted by the successful practitioners with whom we spoke, don’t hesitate to question the way things have always been. Professional development, computer hardware, supplemental curricular materials—all have the potential to have significant impacts on student outcomes or be tremendous wastes of money. Did the professional development result in teachers teaching better? Was the computer hardware accompanied by training that showed teachers how to use technology to improve student learning? Did the supplemental curricular material support the learning standards that students are expected to achieve? It’s important to ask such questions.⁴ And beyond simply having a positive effect, resource allocation should be measured in terms of having the biggest bang for the buck. In comparing a \$75,000 allocation that results in a 5-percentile point increase in student outcomes versus a \$10,000 allocation that yields a 4-percentile point gain, retaining the \$10,000 measure and having an extra \$65,000 to invest later or elsewhere is a better bet.

⁴ The sample questions illustrate two types of evaluation. It is important that you ask not only about the outcomes of the spending (e.g., the effect of professional development on teaching practice) but also about the *inputs* involved (e.g., training to accompany use of technology). Sadly, some schools and districts do away with potentially effective reforms that don’t yield desired gains when actually the lack of success was due to not having the necessary inputs.

Of course, identifying what expenditure leads to what percentile increase in student achievement is not as simple as the above illustration. And increased standardized test scores is not the only criterion that schools should adopt in determining the worthiness of an expenditure. The underlying message, though, is that a school must set goals, ask questions, and monitor the effects of its resource allocations. Performing those steps is the bottom line in ensuring that spending is aligned with proven outcomes. “The research suggests that school administrators who participate in data-driven, student-centered and results-oriented budget processes may be able to make more effective use of resources than administrators who follow more rigid allocation formulas for distributing resources to campuses and programs,” note Alexander, Boyer, Brownson, Clark, Jennings, and Patrick (2000, p. 14).

Evidence suggests that districts tend to keep “status quo” resource allocation patterns even when they receive additional money. Traditionally, about 60 percent of education expenditures across all states go towards instruction, with all other categories receiving less than 10 percent of the total budget (Clark, Boyer, Alexander, Rudo, & Pan, 2001).⁵ School systems most often direct extra funding toward the category titled “instruction.” Most of the money, however, is spent on new technology, teacher aides, specialists, and staff development related to special student populations—not on staff for the core instructional program (Clark, Boyer, Alexander, Rudo, & Pan, 2001).

A recent study of districts in the state of Texas (cited in Clark, Boyer, Alexander, Rudo, & Pan, 2001) indicated that although high-performing districts tended to have higher per-pupil spending overall, they spent *less* proportionally than low- or middle-achieving districts did on instruction, school and instructional leadership, and guidance and counseling. High-performing districts spent more proportionally on general administration, cocurricular activities, and other operating expenditures. Insights from staff in these high-performing districts suggested that practices such as data-based decision making, in-house teacher preparation programs, pay and sanctions related to student performance, collaborative budgeting, and resource allocation based on student need rather than on a per-pupil basis potentially contributed to the success and efficiency of their efforts (Clark, Boyer, Alexander, Rudo, & Pan, 2001).

⁵ According to the NCES figures cited in the article, 1997–98 education spending across all states was allocated as follows: instruction, 61.8 percent; operations and maintenance of physical plant, 9.8 percent; school administration, 5.7 percent; student support, 5.0 percent; support for instructional staff, 4.2 percent; food services, 4.1 percent; student transportation, 4.0 percent; other, 3.3 percent; and general administration, 2.1 percent. For additional information refer to Clark, Boyer, Alexander, Rudo, and Pan (2001).

CHAPTER 5 – FINDING MONEY Strategies

Questions to Consider

- What percentage of our resources is dedicated to the core academic, regular education classrooms? (What percentage of our students participates in the regular education classroom without additional support?)
- Have we investigated budget software that will allow us to categorize and track our allocations?

Questions to Consider

- Do we know whether our state or district is a State-Flex or Local-Flex site?
- Have we taken advantage of the NCLB legislation to combine up to 50 percent of several federal funding allocations?
- Have we established a team for researching available grant resources?
- Do we use our partnerships with area businesses to *directly further* our school improvement plan?
- If we are responsible for our own budget, can we partner with other schools to share resources and/or gain economies of scale (e.g., professional development opportunities, support staff, bulk materials)?

Strategy 3. Track where the money is going.

How much of your school's budget is dedicated to core instructional activities? How much is allotted to special programs (e.g., student support and pull-out programs)? Some research suggests that almost 50 percent of a school's resources may be dedicated to special programs (Miles, 2000). How much goes to professional development (including more "indirect" costs for substitute teachers when teacher attend training, teacher time spent in common planning, and other situations). Without directly asking the question as to where funding is funneled, your school is most likely *not* allocating money in a way targeted towards your school improvement plan.

Strategy 4. Find new resources.

Despite the challenging economic climate, schools and districts may have access to new and newly flexible sources of funding. In the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, the federal government established State-Flex and Local-Flex programs that allow demonstration sites to consolidate federal program funds.⁶ (The eight current State-Flex states include Vermont, Colorado, Texas, Delaware, Kansas, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. There are numerous district flex sites.) Even if your state or district is not one of these sites, all states and most districts are allowed to combine up to half their formula allocations for some of the major federal programs (Hickok, 2002).⁷ You can find out about sources of available federal grants by accessing the announcements page of the Federal Register Web site (www.ed.gov/news/fedregister/announce/index.html).

Schools also will want to look at state, local, or private sources for new money and/or in-kind resources. Every state department of education Web site should have a section that allows schools to find out about state grant opportunities. Schools may find out about private or corporate grants from a number of resources. Refer to the information on "Funding Sources" in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.

⁶ For information on the State Flexibility Demonstration Program (State-Flex), refer to www.ed.gov/programs/stateflex/index.html. For information on the Local Flexibility Demonstration Program (Local-Flex), refer to www.ed.gov/programs/localflex/index.html.

⁷ Details about flexibility initiatives work can be found at www.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/flexibility/index.html.

Strategy 5. Scale down the original effort.

Finally, a school or district may opt to pare down its improvement effort in the wake of budget cuts. Such cuts may include limiting the target population, reducing the scope of services, condensing the period of time that services are offered, and so forth. Though scaling down services is one cost-cutting option that schools and districts should consider, paring down should not include eliminating necessary support mechanisms. For example, a staff development program that eliminates a teacher study group (which helps teachers apply lessons once back in the classroom) would likely be a big mistake, given the critical importance of supporting what was learned in a workshop on an ongoing basis. Understanding the inputs that make an improvement measure successful is key to knowing where cuts can take place—and where they can't. (To find out more about developing a theory of change and performing formative and summative evaluations of improvement measures, see the "Developing Capacity" chapter as well as "Continuous Improvement," "Evaluation," and "Theory of Change or Theory of Action" in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.)

Questions to Consider

- Do we understand what inputs are critical to the success of our improvement strategy?
- Do we acknowledge that it may be better to cut a program entirely and invest the money elsewhere rather than to so inadequately fund a program that the inputs necessary for effectiveness aren't included?
- Have we considered piloting a program (e.g., in certain grade levels, in a certain subject area, in a certain set of schools) rather than implementing it across the whole school or district?

ACTIONS

for FINDING MONEY

Strategy 1. Make sure that you want the improvement measure—not simply the money.

Potential Actions

- Do a formative evaluation of the improvement effort to look at the impact of the effort’s inputs and activities. For example, the out-of-state conference may have been a great break from the classroom, but did it have any impact on teaching and learning? (Think of less expensive, more cost-effective ways to provide morale-boosting activities.)

Strategy 2. Align spending with proven outcomes.

Potential Actions

- Designate a person or team to review all of the school’s programs to look for areas of overlap and figure out ways to streamline services.
- Review the school budget to ensure that all spending is furthering the improvement strategy.
- Spend money on activities that have a positive impact on teaching and learning; you should be able you can prove that impact. Once you allocate money to it, do it right! For example, “smaller class sizes” may indeed increase student achievement but only the reduction is accompanied by (1) sufficient reductions (i.e., to fewer than 15 to 17 students) and (2) teachers *teaching differently* with the smaller class.
- Reallocate staff positions so that there are more core instructional staff who meet with all students and fewer instructional staff who serve as resources or work only in pullout programs.

Strategy 3. Track where the money is going.

Potential Actions

- Use resources to track the sources, recipients, level of control, and other information for funding. (For helpful charts, refer to the Appendixes in *Freeing School Resources for Learning: The “Missing Piece” in Making Accountability Meaningful* [Miles, n.d.-a]).

Strategy 4. Find new resources.

Potential Actions

- Get into the habit of pursuing grants. Designate a person or team for grant writing.
- Remember that grantors often look at what you have done versus what you will do. Make the case that you have been effective in using other money; it will bolster potential funder confidence that your school will use their money wisely.
- Develop contacts at the district or state level to alert you to grant opportunities.
- Apply for federal grants related to your improvement effort. For helpful Web sites, refer to “Funding Sources” in the Additional Resources section at the end of this book.
- Monitor grant competitions. Some grants don’t get awarded initially because of lack of qualified applicants. The grantor may then loosen the requirements (or make the application process less burdensome) and then reinstate the grant competition.
- Use parents to search for companies that are looking to perform community service and/or to make financial contributions.
- Apply for grants from education-related nonprofits.
- Leverage funding. Apply for matching grants; use receipt of a grant to prove to potential future grantors the belief that others have in your school.
- Petition the school district to evaluate districtwide spending to ensure that money is being spent in a cost-effective way.

Strategy 5. Scale down the original effort.

Potential Actions

- As a faculty, prioritize those components of the improvement strategy; then allocate money accordingly to ensure you’re getting the most “bang for the buck.”
- When focusing on the paring-down process, don’t eliminate necessary support mechanisms.

TOOL 9

Assessment of How Well We are FINDING MONEY

Strategies Discussed in the “Finding Money” Chapter

1. Make sure that you want the improvement measure—not simply the money.
2. Align spending with proven outcomes.
3. Track where the money is going.
4. Find new resources.
5. Scale down the original effort.

PURPOSE

You as a school leader can use this tool to record your assessment of how effectively your school is using and seeking out resources and to reflect on what steps the school has taken or should take to ensure the best use of resources.

You also may choose to use the assessment statements to create your own surveys that ask teachers about their perspectives on resource-related issues. For example, the first statement, “Our budget is allocated based directly on our prioritized needs and goals as found in our school improvement plan,” could be changed to “I believe our budget is allocated according to our prioritized needs and goals” and distributed to teachers to record their level of agreement. Feel free to use or revise this tool as best suits your purposes.

INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1. Work through the entire “assessment” column, circling the number that most accurately reflects your opinion on each statement. Remember, don’t go by “gut instinct” alone. When recording your rating, ask yourself, “How do I know? On what basis am I making this assessment?”

Step 2. Add together your circled numbers. Then divide by 10 to get your average score. Read the descriptions below to determine where you believe your school stands in terms of using resources overall to implement the improvement effort.

Total Score from Step 1: _____

Divided by 10=: _____ **(Average Score)**

If your average score is between:

- **1.0 and 2.74**, you believe your school is not seeking and using material resources in a way that will sustain the improvement effort. It is vital that your school develop a theory of change that lays out exactly what you want to achieve and how you think the inputs and activities will contribute to these goals. Based on this theory of change, evaluate the activities and inputs your school is actually employing and determine what needs to be revised or eliminated. Beyond this concrete activity, deliberately try to build a school culture in which “the way things have always been done” is regularly questioned as to effectiveness.

- **2.75 to 3.74**, you believe your school is doing a mediocre job in efficiently aligning resources to priorities. You know your priorities and generally try to allocate money to the important things. To improve this “general” approach, develop an explicit and formal process for tracking how money is spent. You might be surprised that your priorities aren’t getting the funding they should.
- **3.75 to 5.0**, you are fairly comfortable with how your school is deploying resources. If you are most concerned with the size of the whole pie or the piece of the pie that is handed to you by the district (rather than how you are using it), keep detailed records of your resource allocation and its impact, and research typical expenditures for a similar school with similar programs. Use these records to prove your points to the district and/or to write an impressive grant application for other public and private resources.

Step 3. For any assessment statement that you rated a “3” or less, read the accompanying “reflection” questions to think through what your school has done or could do to improve that particular area. Circle any question that you want to work on.

Step 4. Develop a preliminary action plan to address the assessment statements that you rated a “3” or less. At the bottom of the tool, record your areas for action and preliminary action steps to address these areas.

TOOL 9

Assessment of How Well We are FINDING MONEY

1	2	3	4	5
strongly disagree	disagree	neutral or don't know	agree	strongly agree

Questions for Reflection

- Have we sought out different tools and advice for helping us develop the kind of budget we want?
- What process do we use to ensure that our school priorities are the first items funded?

- Have we sought out different tools and advice for helping us develop the kind of budget we want?
- What process do we use to ensure that our school priorities are the first items funded?

- Have we researched different resource allocation systems (e.g., school-based versus program-based; site-based versus centralized; student-based versus staffing-based)?
- If we are unsatisfied with the current system, have we proposed different allocation systems to district officials?

- Have we laid out what outcomes we expect for our expenditures (e.g., what specific improvements do we want to see as a result of implementing an after-school program or attending a professional development conference)?
- Have we outlined how we will measure whether or not we have attained our desired outcomes?

1. MAKE SURE THAT YOU WANT THE IMPROVEMENT MEASURE—NOT SIMPLY THE MONEY

Our budget is allocated based directly on our prioritized needs and goals as found in our school improvement plan.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

We have identified all of the resources we need to adequately support our school improvement plan.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

We are satisfied with the system that the district uses to allocate funding to schools.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

2. ALIGN SPENDING WITH PROVEN OUTCOMES

We can articulate and measure the outcomes we expect for the allocation of our resources.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

1 2 3 4 5
strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

We pursue additional funds based on their relevance to our school improvement plan.

1 2 3 4 5

3. TRACK WHERE THE MONEY IS GOING

We regularly review our budget to determine if we could better allocate resources to our priorities.

1 2 3 4 5

We are satisfied with the ratio of resources spent on regular education versus special education.

1 2 3 4 5

Questions for Reflection

- Have we committed to remaining true to our school's plan for improvement, even when it means missing out on additional funds (that would force us to implement activities not aligned with our school improvement plan)?
- Do we use grants in the manner for which they were intended (e.g., do we use Comprehensive School Reform funding to develop a whole-school reform effort, not pay for a computer lab?)
- What process have we developed to match our budget allocations to our priorities?
- Do we review our resource allocations to ensure we get the most "bang for the buck"?
- Do we track our spending by many different categories (e.g., source, recipient, objective)?
- Have we investigated any software that will help us track and submit our budget online?
- Have we assessed what percentage of our students participate in regular education classrooms without additional support and compared this amount to what percentage of our time and money go to regular education classrooms?
- Have we assessed what percentage of our students have special needs and compared this amount to what percentage of our time and money goes to special education? (Given the extra resources required for special education, do we spend enough time and money in this area? Do we spend too much time and money in this area?)
- What steps have we taken to simplify and expedite the process for enrolling (and unenrolling, as need be) students in special education? Have we researched different methods for special education referrals?

1 2 3 4 5
 strongly disagree disagree neutral or don't know agree strongly agree

Questions for Reflection

- Have we established a team for researching funding opportunities?
- Have we contacted the district to see what funding flexibility our school qualifies for?
- Have we pursued partnership or sponsorships with area businesses?
- If we have some flexibility over our own budget, have we collaborated with other schools to share resources and/or gain economies of scale?

- Have we constructed a logic model or theory of change to identify what inputs and activities are necessary for reaching our goals?
- Have we explicitly determined what inputs and activities are necessary for reaching our goals? Have we budgeted accordingly?

- Have we internalized the fact that inadequately funding an improvement measure may result in poor results and an eventual unnecessary elimination of a potentially effective reform effort? Have we committed to "If we do something, we do it right"?
- Have we considered implementing a pilot program if we cannot fund a measure across the whole school?

4. FIND NEW RESOURCES

We have taken advantage of all new sources of funding flexibility in the No Child Left Behind legislation and researched all the relevant grants available from the government and private sources.

1 2 3 4 5

5. SCALE DOWN THE ORIGINAL EFFORT

We understand exactly what inputs and activities are necessary for sustaining our improvement measure.

1 2 3 4 5

We will invest our resources elsewhere rather than not fund the necessary inputs and activities of our improvement effort.

1 2 3 4 5

**PRELIMINARY ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS STATEMENTS RATED
A "3" OR LESS**

Area for Action (e.g., "seeking sound advice and useful tools for budget development")	Preliminary Action Steps

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources are not intended to be a “best of what’s available” compilation but simply a collection of documents and Web sites that schools and districts may find useful when pursuing school improvement. They are organized by the following topics:

- After-School Programming
- Community Engagement
- Comprehensive School Reform
- Data Use
- Data Use: Value-Added Analysis
- Evaluation
- Funding Sources
- Future Needs
- Productive Meetings
- Professional Development
- Professional Development for Principals
- Professional Development for Teachers
- Professional Development Through Team Learning
- Resource Allocation
- School Culture
- School Improvement Planning and Decision Making
- Scientifically Based Research
- Teacher Induction, Retention, and Quality
- Theory of Change or Theory of Action
- Time Usage

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

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www.afterschool.org

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COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM

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Web site for NCREL Comprehensive School Reform
www.ncrel.org/csri/

Web site for Research Database on School Reform Models
www.goodschools.gwu.edu/csrm/RDB/index.html

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DATA USE: VALUE-ADDED ANALYSIS

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FUNDING SOURCES

Web site of Business Sources and Grants, Katy Schrock's Guide for Educators school.discovery.com/schrockguide/business/grants.html

Web site of Donors Choose
www.donorschoose.org.

This Web site provides an innovative approach to finding money for school projects. The site allows schools to post a proposal for funding and citizens to choose projects they want to fund.

Web site of *Education Week*
www.edweek.com

Search under "grants" for the appropriate year.

Web site Grants Center, Education World
www.educationworld.com/a_admin/grants/index.shtml

Web site of *Federal Register Documents* (Announcements), U.S. Department of Education
www.ed.gov/news/fedregister/announce/index.html

Web site of Foundation Finder, The Foundation Center
www.fdncenter.org/funders/

FUTURE NEEDS

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www.bls.gov

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www.census.gov

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR PRINCIPALS

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