Casting a Statewide Strategic Performance Net
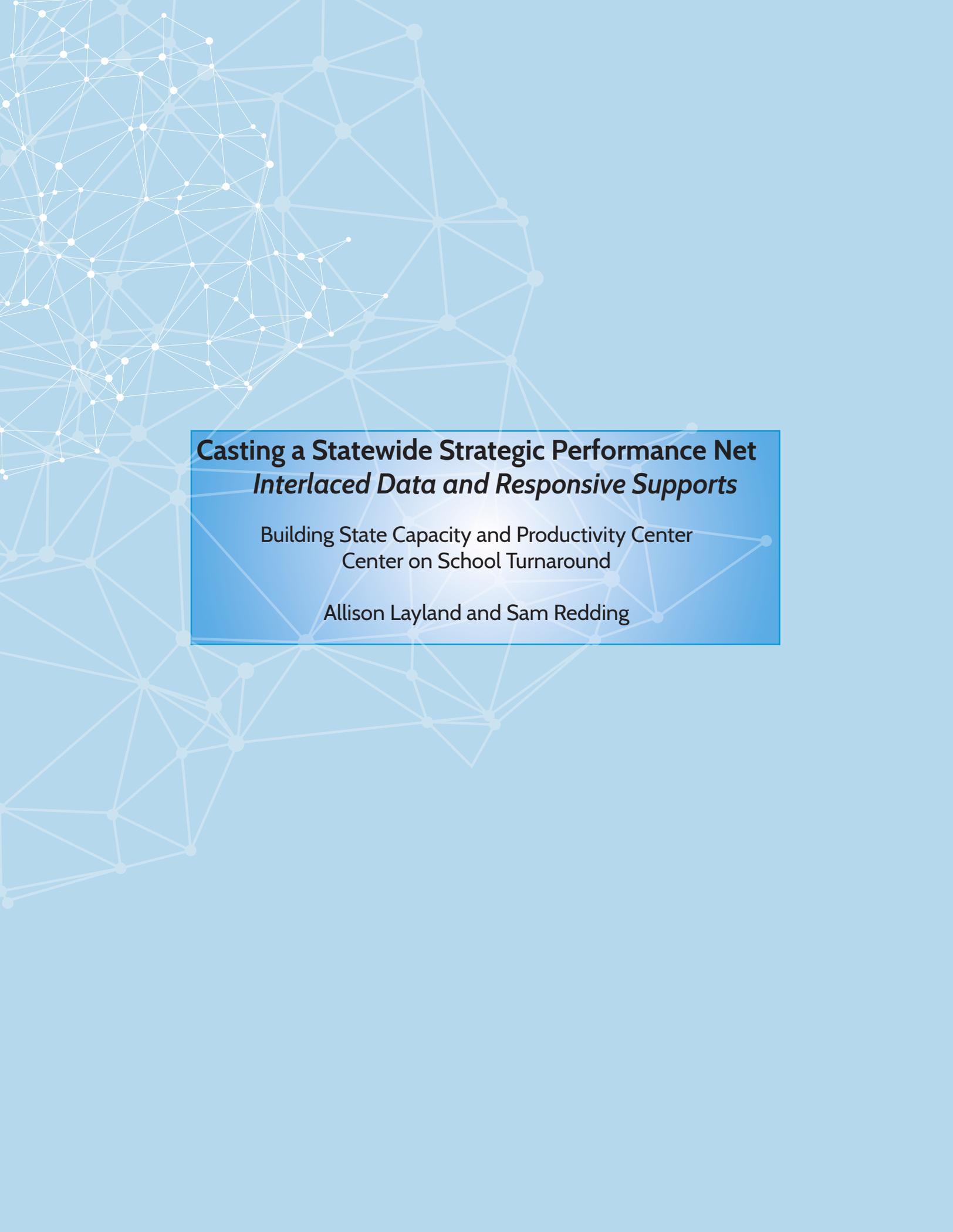
Interlaced Data and Responsive Supports

Allison Layland

Sam Redding

Casting a Statewide Strategic Performance Net
Interlaced Data and Responsive Supports

Building State Capacity and Productivity Center
Center on School Turnaround

Allison Layland and Sam Redding

A copy of this publication can be downloaded from www.bscpcenter.org and also from www.centeronschoolturnaound.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Building State Capacity and Productivity Center

The Building State Capacity and Productivity (BSCP) Center develops publications and tools on Strategic Performance Management (SPM) and provides technical assistance to State Education Agencies (SEAs) to create performance management systems aligned with strategic plans. This work has been agency-wide, headed by the Chief State School Officer (CSSO) and his or her leadership teams.

The BSCP Center provides technical assistance for an SEA or LEA to implement SPM: (1) agency-wide; (2) in a division or strand of work; or (3) across SEAs, LEAs, and schools in a Multi-Organization System (MOS). The BSCP Center and the Center on School Turnaround (CST) combine their expertise to offer guidance for applying SPM in a state's system of support for district and school improvement.

Center on School Turnaround

The Center on School Turnaround (CST) develops publications and tools on school turnaround, rapid school improvement, and state-district-school support systems. CST captures lessons learned from turnaround efforts across the country to build stronger state systems of support and intervention, particularly to improve performance in schools designated for substantial improvement.

Note: For the SEA or LEA, we always recommend implementation of agency-wide SPM, led by the CSSO or superintendent. See the detailed implementation manual—*Strategic Performance Management: Organizing People and Their Work in the LEA or SEA of the Future* (2nd ed.) by Sam Redding and Allison Layland, Building State Capacity and Productivity Center, 2017. But for purposes of SPM in a system of support, we offer here the streamlined version as a way to put in place SPM statewide in the most time-efficient manner.

Part I:
Casting a Responsive Net

The pivot point for educational change is now firmly placed with the district, rebalancing the position of the state and the school relative to the local education agency (LEA). The state education agency (SEA) has been shifting its emphasis for decades, from a compliance-focused authority to a change agent equipped with systems, processes, training, and support to heighten the progress of the local district and its schools. A strategic approach to performance management fit neatly in this new organizational environment. Ideal for organizing people and their work in one entity (SEA, LEA, or school), strategic performance management is equally suited to a multi-organization system where interlaced data and responsive supports are critical. A state system of support is such a system.

Strategic Performance Management (SPM; capitalized for the process specifically advanced by the BSCP) is a kind of performance management that flows from the organization's strategic mission and aims at its strategic goals and transforms the way people work within the organization. Applying SPM to a network of organizations can be equally transformative, but not in a "Big Brother," command-and-control sort of way. Quite to the contrary, a networked application of SPM sharpens each organization's unique direction, enhancing that organization's productivity in pursuing its own goals. Networked SPM, however, adds a multiplier effect to the potency of the whole. Interlaced data create rapid circuits of information that activate responsive supports. Sound mysterious? Read on.

Consider a statewide system of support for district and school improvement. Yes, it is an old concept and one we have never completely mastered in practice. But the concept presents a visual of a large array of organizations—state, districts, schools, service providers, community groups—in a constructive relationship to one another for the purpose of improving educational experiences for students. In reality, the system too often short-circuits, with too little data too tardily transmitted to act upon. Further, the information is variously structured, organization by organization, making meaningful aggregation impossible.

The principal nodes in a statewide network are the districts, with their schools functioning as satellite nodes. With SPM, each node claims its due share of autonomy, determining its organizational goals, strategies, performance measures, and actions. These core elements of SPM are structured in a way that implementation and performance data can flow between district and school and between both and the state, making possible responsive supports.

In a multi-organizational application of SPM, the state agency itself adheres to the same principles of continuous improvement as districts and schools. The SPM processes generate useful, timely data to guide decision-making and course correction within each organization and across them.

Performance management is "the systematic process by which an agency involves its employees, as individuals and members of a group, in improving organizational effectiveness in the accomplishment of agency mission and goals" (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, n.d., para. 1). Dean Nafziger (2013), director of the Building State Capacity and Productivity (BSCP) Center, contributes the term "strategic" to this definition, calling performance management "a strategic approach to improvement in which the entire organization shares the same set of objectives" (p. 1).

In our technical assistance manual (Redding & Layland, 2017), we explain the strategic approach to performance management this way:

Strategic Performance Management (SPM) weds *strategic planning* with *performance management* in a living system that provides direction for people's work while allowing for innovation and course adjustment to produce better results more efficiently. SPM includes elements of strategic planning and connects them to performance measures, productivity considerations, and ongoing processes for gauging progress, improving practice, and exceeding expectations. (in press)

We belabor the definitions to emphasize the fact that strategic performance management is *not* aimed at the evaluation of individual performance (for personnel or students) or for determining district or school status in an accountability system. SPM engages personnel, operating in units or teams, in work aimed at organizational milestones, strategies, and goals, all in carrying out the stated organizational mission. These teams develop their own action plans to achieve the milestones, and conduct regular (usually monthly and quarterly) performance reviews to check progress and make adjustments in course. Performance measures for goals and strategies provide quantitative markers for annual progress.

The crux of the SPM approach is that performance can be strategically managed across many organizations at different levels of the system (state, district, school, for example) if their plans and operational procedures include common elements. Note that this system does not dictate the content of the work, for example the goals chosen, or the strategies employed. It is the structure of a process that results in routine flow of two kinds of data:

- Implementation data in the regular performance reviews of progress status for actions and milestones;
- Outcome data in the performance measures for strategies and goals.

This operational structure and data protocol establish high-quality performance management in each organization (state, district, school) and enable routine reporting of each organization's implementation and performance. Routine and consistent reporting makes possible precise targeting of supports and interventions, adjustment in course, innovation, and efficient allocation of resources.

The following elements of SPM are essential for each organization in a networked system that asserts the appropriate autonomy of each organization, properly relates the organizations to one another, and facilitates interlaced data and responsive supports:

A. Setting Direction	
Step 1.	Mission
Step 2.	Goals
Step 3.	Goal Performance Measures
Step 4.	Strategies
Step 5.	Strategy Performance Measures and Milestones
B. Operationalizing the Direction	
Step 6.	Coordination and Milestone Assignment
C. Designing Actionable Work	
Step 7.	Action Plans
D. Performance and Innovation Cycle	
Step 8.	Review Cycle
Step 9.	Adjustment
Step 10.	Report—Telling the Story

Any program can be fitted to this structure. So, if the SEA requires this structure in LEA and school plans, regardless of the program, the basics of SPM will be in place. Then reporting can be timely and actionable. The organizational mission and goals are the two critical roots for SPM, and the goals must be aimed at outcomes for *all* students.

The Leadership Team. Just who takes the bull by the horns and does the work of installing SPM in an SEA, LEA, or school? In the SEA, if SPM is to be installed for the purposes of the system of support rather than for the agency as a whole, the CSSO or a deputy or assistant commissioner with responsibility for the state's system of support for district and school improvement would head up a Leadership Team. A Leadership Team is comprised of the other key leaders in the SEA's system of support. In the LEA, the superintendent heads the district Leadership Team along with others who may provide support to schools, and in the school, the principal and assistant principals along with teacher leaders might comprise the school Leadership Team.

Performance
Data

A Special Pair of Glasses. Throughout the SPM process, in each organization and across the system, teams step aside from their work at key points in time and look back at it through a special pair of glasses. These glasses are special because they have three lenses:

- **Productivity Lens**—is what we are planning to do (or doing) the most effective use of available resources in moving the dial on performance measures, achieving milestones, and pursuing organizational goals?

- **Best Practice Lens**—is what we are planning to do (or doing) encouraging or applying what is known as best (sound) educational practice?

- **Innovation Lens**—do we have reasonable evidence that a specific deviation from best practice is likely to achieve greater productivity?

For more on the three lenses, see Part IV: Best Practice, Productivity, and Innovation. The section that follows provides a synopsis of the process by which an SEA, LEA, or school would implement SPM. Then we describe how this all comes together in a network that honors organizational autonomy while facilitating responsive support of each other's progress.

Part II:
Synopsis of the
Modules and
Steps for an SEA,
LEA, or School to
Implement SPM

Module A: Setting the Direction

Step 1. Create or Revisit Mission

Mission. The purpose of Step 1 is to identify or confirm the mission of the organization. The mission statement represents what the organization does for its clients (the beneficiaries of its products and services). Who are the clients, and what services do they need from the organization? Who are the future clients, what would their needs be, and how will the organization meet those needs?

Step 2. Create or Revisit Goals

Goals. In most organizations, goals are time-bound, usually three to five years corresponding to the length of most strategic plans; however, in education organizations, goals may not be restricted by time as they express an ongoing execution of the organization's mission. For example, the organization would have a manageable set of broad goals that: (1) highlight desired results for **all** students; (2) take into account both the student outcomes at the time of graduation and the ongoing progress during the years of schooling; and (3) include academic outcomes and student personal competencies (desired personal attributes not directly measured by academic markers). The Leadership Team creates goals, or if current goals exist, they are reviewed to verify they are still relevant, or they are adjusted to ensure they are student focused and represent all students.

Step 3: Establish Goal Performance Measures

Performance Measures. Performance measures are defined for each goal so that progress toward the goal can be determined. Progress toward the goals demonstrates that the organization's mission is being carried out.

By the end of Step 3, the Leadership Team will have a mission statement representing the role and work of the organization and personalized goals with performance measures. Note that the performance measures are not part of the goal statement.

See **Attachment A: Organization's Mission Statement, Goals, and Goal Performance Measures** and **Attachment B: Goal Performance Measures** to assist with Steps 1–3.

Quality Check

☐ 1. The organization's mission statement reflects the organization's purpose and work—what it does.

☐ 2. The goals state outcomes for all students.

☐ 3. Goal performance measures include one or more indicators for each goal, with indicator, data source, baseline, and targets for two years.

Attachment A: The Organization's Mission Statement, Goals, and Goal Performance Measures

Use the charts below to document the organization's mission and goals.

PART I: Organization Direction

Mission:

Goals
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Attachment B: Goal Performance Measures

Performance indicators, data sources, baseline, and targets are documented for each goal. Note: A goal can have one or more measures, and not all goals need to have the same number of measures.

| Goal | Goal Performance Measures | | | |
	Goal Performance Indicators	Data Sources	Baseline	Goal Indicator Targets
Goal 1				Year 1
				Year 2
				Year 1
				Year 2
Goal 2				Year 1
				Year 2
				Year 1
				Year 2
Goal 3				Year 1
				Year 2
				Year 1
				Year 2

Step 4. Determine Goal-Aligned Strategies

A strategy describes an organization's work in pursuing a goal. The strategies need to be constructed in the form of a theory of action, using **If…then…and** statements. The **If** part of the statement describes the work the organization engages in related to the goal. The **then** part refers to the direct impact of the work on the organization's clients (internal or external) related to the goal. The final **and** part relates back to the personalized organizational goals.

Using a possibilities approach, the Leadership Team identifies possible strategies along with the implementation minimum conditions and barriers. Minimum conditions are those that must be true or in place for a strategy to be a viable choice. Then, after examining the conditions and barriers, the Team selects a few powerful organizational strategies that can be implemented to reach each goal. Or it works with the organization's existing strategies, reaffirms the implementation minimum conditions and barriers, and converts them as necessary to state them in the **If…then…and** format.

Strategies focus on the "what" and "how" of the organization's work and the direct and indirect impact of implementing each strategy. Strategies do not necessarily represent what the organization has been doing, but what it could do to effectively support the relevant organizational goals. Productivity and Innovation lenses help to narrow in on the few potent strategies needed to get the maximum results.

Best Practice Lens. For the LEA and school especially, a Best Practice lens is applied to strategies to ensure that the chosen approaches have a high likelihood for success. The Best Practice lens is therefore applied to the **then** part of the strategy statement. Is the strategy reflective of sound practice?

SPM is nimble, enabling the organization to make adjustments to plans and processes in response to data that provide information about progress toward quantitative markers. Once strategies are determined, performance measures are identified for each strategy.

Evidence-Based Strategies

The level of evidence for a strategy's soundness has also been given various labels, including: best practice, evidence-based practice, research-based practice, effective practice, scientifically based practice, promising practice, and emerging best practice. The Leadership Team at each level (SEA, LEA, school) should affirm that strategies are sound in terms of their likely impact on student outcomes.

Step 5. Establish Strategy Performance Measures and Milestones

Performance measures with indicators for each goal have already been set, and now they are set for each strategy. The strategy performance measures focus on the **then** part of the strategy statement. In other words, the measures focus on the specific organization's work and its immediate impact. For example, the measures would focus on the SEA work (**If** we do...) and the impact on the districts or schools (**then** districts or schools will...). For a district, the measures would focus on the district work (**If** we do...) and the impact on the schools (**then** the schools or educators will...). The strategy performance measures serve as the outcome data for not only reporting results, but also reporting interim (typically annual) progress.

For each indicator, the data source is determined, baseline values are set, as are targets for the first two years. By creating two years of targets and using data from year one to either confirm or adjust the second year targets while also creating year three targets, a process is built that provides interim progress data and allows for adjustment based on progress as well as changing contexts and conditions. As part of an ongoing SPM cycle, targets are adjusted annually based on data.

Milestones. In addition to the quantitative performance measures set for each goal and strategy, qualitative, *annual* milestones are set for each strategy, describing work to be completed relative to the strategy in that timeframe. Milestones are set for two years, and each year the next year is adjusted and an additional year added. Milestones are then used for specific action planning .

See **Attachment C: Strategy Development**, **Attachment D: Strategy Theory of Action**, and **Attachment E: Strategy Performance Measures and Milestones** to assist with Steps 4 and 5.

Quality Check

☐	1. Performance measures have been identified for goals and strategies.
☐	2. Performance measures include indicators, data sources, baseline, and annual targets.
☐	3. Measures can realistically be collected, analyzed, and used in making decisions related to the strategies and goals.
☐	4. Specific, relevant milestones were identified for each strategy.
☐	5. The milestones are necessary for the strategy to be implemented.
☐	6. The annual milestones are specified for at least two years.

Attachment C: Strategy Development

Using a *possibilities approach*, identify possible organizational strategies for each relevant goal. For each possible strategy, list the conditions that must occur for the strategy to be accepted, supported, and implemented, as well as the barriers.

Goal	Possible Strategies	Must Have Conditions	Barriers
1.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
2.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
3.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
4.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		
5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.		

Attachment D: Strategy Theory of Action

After discussing the conditions and barriers, the Leadership Team determines which strategies have the most significant impact relative to the goals, have conditions that are right for implementation, and have the fewest barriers that cannot be removed. Each selected strategy is then written as an **If... then... and** statement.

Organization Goals	Strategies (State as *If... then... and... statements*)
Goal 1:	1.
	2.
	3.
Goal 2:	1.
	2.
	3.
Goal 3:	1.
	2.
	3.
Goal 4:	1.
	2.
	3.
Goal 5:	1.
	2.
	3.
Goal 6:	1.
	2.
	3.

Attachment E: Strategy Performance Measures and Milestones

Performance indicators, data sources, baseline, and targets are documented for each strategy as well as milestones for the first two years.

Goal	Strategies	Strategy Performance Measures				Strategy Milestones
		Strategy Performance Indicators	Data Sources	Baseline	Strategy Indicator Targets	
Goal 1	Strategy 1.1				Year 1	Year 1
						Year 2
					Year 2	Year 1
						Year 2
	Strategy 1.2				Year 1	Year 1
						Year 2
					Year 2	Year 1
						Year 2
Goal 2	Strategy 2.1				Year 1	Year 1
						Year 2
					Year 2	Year 1
						Year 2
	Strategy 3.1				Year 1	Year 1
						Year 2
					Year 2	Year 1
						Year 2
Goal 3	Strategy 3.2				Year 1	Year 1
						Year 2
					Year 2	Year 1
						Year 2

Module B: Operationalizing the Direction

Step 6. Establish Coordination and Assign Milestones

All too often, organizations function in silos, duplicate efforts, or treat related initiatives as isolated projects. This can impact productivity and results. It is, therefore, critical to coordinate work and communicate progress on an ongoing basis. For SEAs and LEAs, SPM suggests a three-tiered organizational structure to coordinate the SPM process: (1) Leadership Team (division leaders and key, high-level staff with the chief or superintendent); (2) Division Teams consisting of the leader(s) from each unit in a division; and (3) Unit Teams consisting of all the members of a unit. The Division Team maintains communication and coordination across units within the division. A Unit Team maintains communication and coordination among the members of the unit. The Division Teams and Unit Teams engage in action planning (see Module C) and implement a cycle of review, reporting, adjusting, and creating through performance management (Module D). Figure 1 represents the SEA or LEA team structure.

A school's organizational structure is more commonly the Leadership Team, teacher instructional teams, and other teams such as a School Community Council.

The Leadership Team creates milestones as the objectives relative to each strategy that are to be met in each year for two years. The Leadership Team assigns milestones to lead divisions, which assign them to their units. The **assigned division** is **accountable** for the thorough completion of that milestone. The **lead unit** within the division is **responsible** for the day-to-day work leading to milestone completion. In addition, others needed to assist the accountable division and lead unit in action planning are identified, logistics for planning are determined, and expectations are communicated.

Attachment F: Milestone Assignments is used to capture the milestone assignments.

Quality Check

☐	1. Milestones have been assigned to divisions and lead units or teams.
☐	2. Additional units, teams, or stakeholders have been identified to assist in action planning for each milestone, as appropriate.
☐	3. A schedule, location, and logistics have been identified for action planning.

Figure 1: SEA or LEA Team Structure

Attachment F: Milestone Assignments

Use the chart below to document lead units and other units that may be needed for action planning for each milestone related to a strategy and goal.

Year 1

Goal	Strategy	Milestone	Lead Unit	Others Needed for Action Planning
Goal 1	Strategy 1.1	Milestone 1.1.1		
		Milestone 1.1.2		
		Milestone 1.1.3		
		Milestone 1.1.4		
		Milestone 1.1.5		
	Strategy 1.2	Milestone 1.2.1		
		Milestone 1.2.2		
		Milestone 1.2.3		
		Milestone 1.2.4		
		Milestone 1.2.5		
Goal 2	Strategy 2.1	Milestone 2.1.1		
		Milestone 2.1.2		
		Milestone 2.1.3		
		Milestone 2.1.4		
		Milestone 2.1.5		
Goal 3	Strategy 3.1	Milestone 3.1.1		
		Milestone 3.1.2		
		Milestone 3.1.3		
		Milestone 3.1.4		
		Milestone 3.1.5		

Step 7. Engage Personnel in Action Planning

Each accountable division, lead unit, unit members, accountable team (in schools), and others identified for action planning for a specific milestone work together and develop an action plan to complete the assigned milestone by the end of the year. For a school, the accountable team would engage in action planning to reach or accomplish the milestone or objective by the end of the school year. An action plan details actions, timeline, resources, personnel, outputs (concrete outcomes as a result of the actions), and supports needed to accomplish the milestone. Each team should engage as many of the people who will be doing the work as possible in the action planning. This creates ownership of not only the actions, but the milestones and strategies themselves. Ownership fosters commitment and productivity. Action plans are created using the Action Plan Template or the SPM online tool so progress can be documented on a monthly basis, challenges can be noted and shared, and adjustments can be made to ensure all milestones are completed by the end of each year.

Action plans are created using **Attachment G: Action Plan Template**.

Quality Check

- [ ] 1. An action plan is developed for each milestone.
- [ ] 2. All plans include actions, timeline, resources and budget, outputs, and personnel.
- [ ] 3. Action plans are rigorous, yet attainable.
- [ ] 4. The combined completion of the actions will result in completion of the milestone.
- [ ] 5. Collaborators are identified to support completion of milestones using either the established process of the organization or, if one does not exist, a process defined by the Leadership Team which includes a definition and expectations.

Attachment G: Action Plan Template

Use this template to develop an action plan for each milestone.

Year 1			
Strategy			
Milestone			
Action			
	Start Month:		End Month:
Resources/Budget			
Personnel	Responsible Person (in Unit):		
	Supports (in Unit/One or More):		
Add Units Needed for Collaboration on the Action			
	Need:		
	Unit(s) in My Division:		Unit(s) in Other Division(s):

Module D: Implementing a Performance and Innovation Cycle

Step 8. Create the Performance and Innovation Cycle

A performance and innovation cycle is the regularity with which progress toward milestones is reviewed and necessary adjustments in actions are made. The performance and innovation cycle also includes less frequent review of the milestones and strategies themselves. An organization's Leadership Team and unit or accountable teams manage, monitor, and adjust the work on a continuous basis. Status reports on each action, submitted by the unit or accountable team leaders, and related data give teams necessary information to keep work on pace and seek even better ways to meet milestones and carry out strategies. Some teams may need to meet more frequently, but at a minimum, monthly status reports and quarterly performance reports should be completed.

Step 9. Review and Adjust

Feedback is used to improve processes so productivity is increased and innovation is encouraged and supported. Suggested status and performance reporting and frequencies are listed below; however, the frequencies may be adjusted based on the context and need.

Monthly Status Reporting
Each month, each unit or accountable team meets to review progress on actions, report status, and make adjustments in people and resources, as needed. The

status reports also serve as implementation data and can be reduced to implementation summary data for reporting purposes. The Leadership Team reviews the progress of the teams and irons out any cross-divisional collaboration issues.

Quarterly Leadership Team Performance Review
The Leadership Team reviews the progress of their units and irons out any cross-divisional collaboration issues. Adjustments to milestones are considered, and adjustments to actions are recommended to units in light of data from status reports.

Annual Division Team Performance Review
At least once a year, the Leadership Team meets to review performance data relative to milestones, strategies, and goals. The Team adjusts milestones for the coming year if needed and adds or removes performance measures and milestones for the following year, as appropriate to effectively implement the strategy and move closer to realizing the goal.

Step 10. Reporting—Telling the Story

At least annually, the organization's performance story needs to be told, based on data collected through the multiple measures identified throughout the SPM process. The story has a similar structure to that of any story. The organization's goals provide the purpose of or conflict within the story. The strategies, milestones, and actions make up the plot. The feedback, informed by data and evidence, form the through-line of the story, the invisible line that binds the story together. The through-line provides the meaning or the heart of the story. Data from the performance measures, along with outputs from each action that led to the completion of milestones, are put together to tell about the division's or strand's work and its impact. From year to year, performance patterns or trends are included and inform adjustments or innovations. The story also includes the supports and adjustments made to keep productivity and innovation moving forward. Figure 2 represents the SPM story through the various levels of performance data.

Figure 2: Elements of the SPM Story
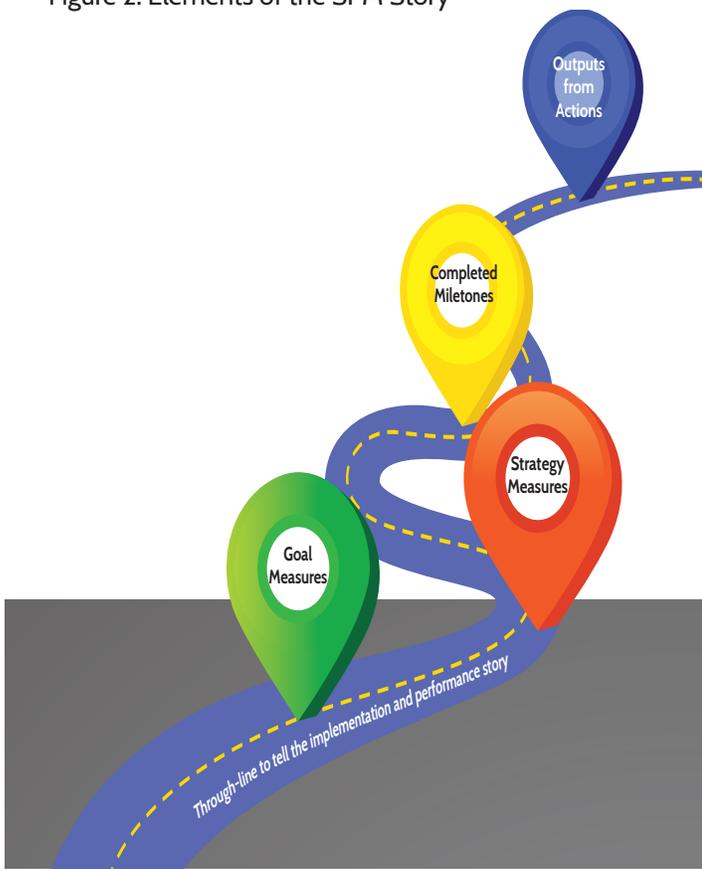
Quality Check

1. Monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting is in place.

2. Analysis of both implementation and performance data are routinely occurring to identify needs and determine responsive supports for improvement.

3. Analysis and reporting is routinely occurring to tell the annual story of work and results to various internal and external stakeholders.

Part III:
Interlaced Data and Responsive Supports

When an SEA leads the implementation of SPM at multiple levels of the education system, the common data structure facilitates a responsive system of support. Interlaced data—for both implementation and performance—provide the timely information that allows for nimble, responsive technical assistance. The district responds to the school, and the state responds to the district (and in some cases the school).

Each organization sets its direction (vision, mission, goals, strategies, and performance measures), creates the structures for its people to pursue that direction, a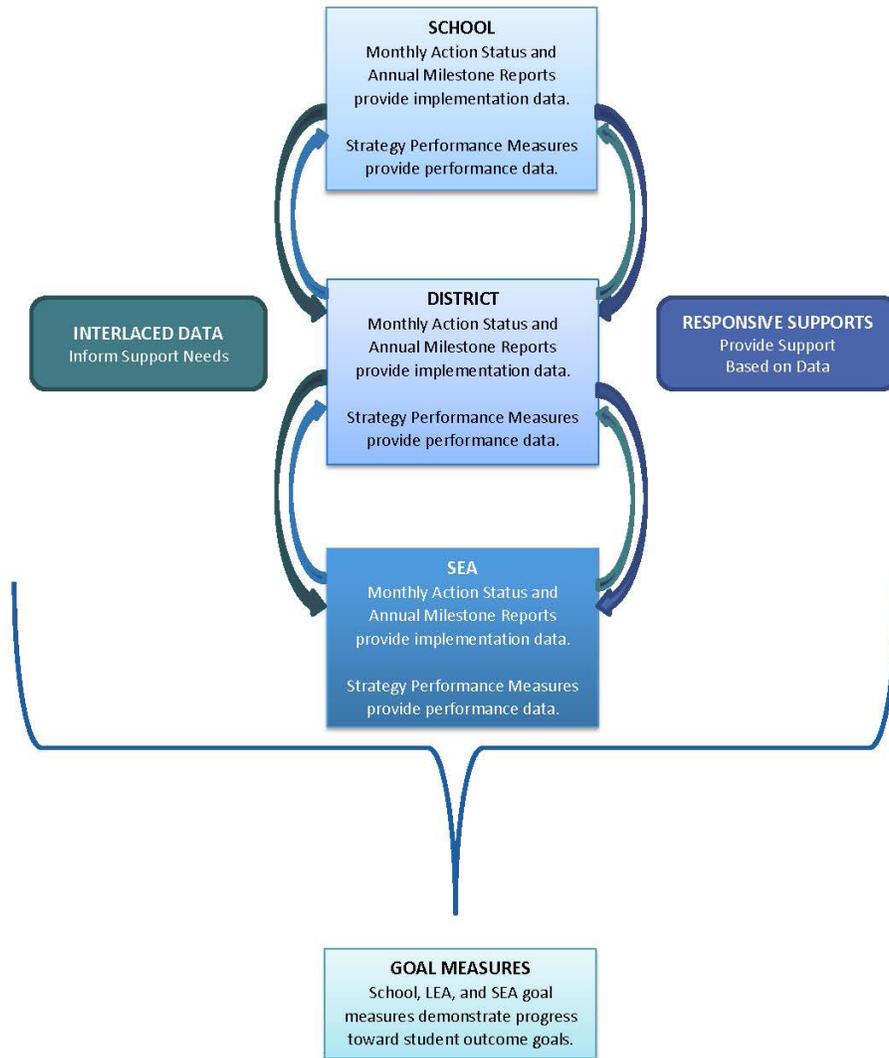nd creates action plans to achieve annual milestones. An action plan details actions, timeline, resources, personnel, outputs (concrete outcomes as a result of the actions), and supports needed to accomplish the milestone. Units within each organization track and report progress with specific implementation and performance data and correct course as the data dictate.

Key Points in Statewide Strategic Performance Management

1. **Autonomy.** The SEA, LEA, and school each is granted the freedom and responsibility to define its mission, set goals, and determine strategies to pursue the goals.

2. **Performance measures.** Goals and strategies are not time-bound, making them applicable across years and for a variety of initiatives. The performance measures for the goals and strategies are separate from the goal and strategy statements, enabling annual adjustment of targets.

3. **Influence.** The SEA influences LEA and school strategies, milestones (annual objectives), and actions through statutes and regulations, conditions for discretionary resources (incentives), and information about best practice. The LEA influences school strategies, milestones (annual objectives), and actions through policy.

4. **Fitness of change.** By first setting a strategic direction that expresses its unique identity and desired future, each organization is able to fit new opportunities (funding, resources, initiatives) into its operational stream.

5. **Interlaced data.** Coding of common data categories for each organization's strategic directions, as well as specific program applications and plans, enable data to flow at regular points in time (monthly, quarterly, annually) for calculations of implementation progress and outcomes (performance). The data may be interlaced, assayed across organizations and organization levels (school, district, state) through category coding to see system patterns.

6. **Responsive supports.** Early and frequent data reporting on implementation progress (monthly status of actions—timeline, resources, personnel, outputs, and supports—and annual milestones) enables responsive and appropriate provision of supports. Supports may be provided by the SEA to LEAs and schools, the LEAs to their schools, and external providers throughout the system. Supports are also adjusted based on annual performance measures for each organization's goals and strategies.

Figure 3 represents the system with interlaced data and responsive supports.

Figure 3: System of Interlaced Data and Responsive Supports

SCHOOL
Monthly Action Status and Annual Milestone Reports provide implementation data.

Strategy Performance Measures provide performance data.

DISTRICT
Monthly Action Status and Annual Milestone Reports provide implementation data.

Strategy Performance Measures provide performance data.

INTERLACED DATA
Inform Support Needs

RESPONSIVE SUPPORTS
Provide Support Based on Data

SEA
Monthly Action Status and Annual Milestone Reports provide implementation data.

Strategy Performance Measures provide performance data.

GOAL MEASURES
School, LEA, and SEA goal measures demonstrate progress toward student outcome goals.

Fitness of Change

Schools and districts have typically developed improvement plans as part of a state accountability system. They have also created a variety of other plans for operational areas, such as technology; program areas, such as special education; and myriad funding and regulatory regimes. Student outcome measures are included as a gauge of progress on most plans, and each plan has its own objectives, timelines, and actions. Success with this type of planning depends upon the:

1. <u>quality</u> of the plan (its likelihood for getting results in the context);
2. <u>fidelity</u> of the plan's implementation;
3. appropriate <u>adjustment</u> of the plan in light of experience; and
4. adequacy of external <u>supports</u>.

In the SPM lexicon, a plan is replaced by the operationalization of the strategic direction. The organization's strategic direction is aspirational and long-term, but it is operationalized with annual milestones, actions, and a performance reporting cycle. New initiatives attach to existing strategies when at all appropriate or generate new strategies when necessary. The new initiative brings new performance measures to the strategies and creates new milestones (annualized objectives) and actions. All efforts continue to aim at the organization's succinct set of student-based goals.

Quality. The quality of chosen strategies, milestones, and actions can be appraised by holding them to the light of research and confirming that similar strategies and practices have been successful in similar contexts. In SPM, this is the application of a best practices lens. Making that determination is the responsibility of the plan creator (district or school, for example), and the plan's strength, likelihood for success, and feasibility are further assayed by the agency (state or district) charged with approving the plan.

Fidelity, Adjustment, Support. This leaves implementation fidelity, appropriate adjustment, and adequate supports as the remaining variables for success. The adequacy of external supports depends, in large part, on the:

- **quality** and appropriateness of supports anticipated in the initial plan,
- **timeliness** and accuracy of implementation data, and
- **agility** with which the support providers can adapt to the evolving implementation data.

Implementation. Timely, accurate, succinct implementation data, expeditiously reported, enables the organization (state, district, or school) implementing the strategies to make adjustments in course, and external support providers to respond effectively. In a system of SPM, the SEA, LEAs, and schools share a common structure for their improvement (or operational) plans and for their various program plans (aligned with the operational plan), and that structure includes goal-aligned strategies, milestones, and actions. Implementation data consists of the monthly status of actions and the completion of annual milestones. That is true for the state, the district, and the school, for each organization's operational plan and for the plans of each program within each organization.

Performance. Implementation of the plan is only half the data equation of continuous improvement. Performance is the other half. If the plan (meaning the strategies, milestones, actions chosen) is right, then high-quality implementation should equal gains in performance. Performance measures for goals aimed at student outcomes and strategies that express the organization's approaches in pursuit of the goals provide the performance half of the equation.

A Scenario for Example

Let's examine a sample of an SPM system using a scenario that includes two schools from District X, School A and School B, all of which are in the State of Anywhere in which the Anywhere SEA oversees education for students across the state. The following tables (1–4) summarize the descriptive and strategic performance data that outline the strategic direction for each school, their district, and their state. Only a sample of goals and strategies are displayed.
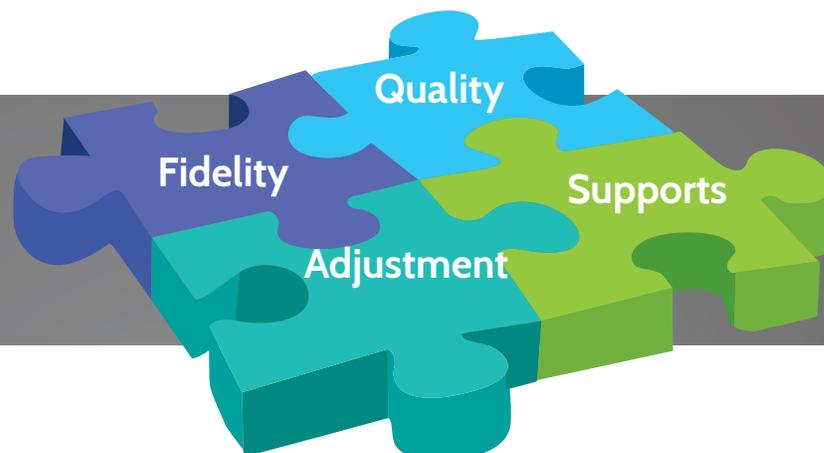
School Level

Table 1: School A—Descriptive and Strategic Performance Data

School Type	Elementary	
Grade Levels	K–8	
ELA Proficiency (3–8)	33%	
Math Proficiency (3–8)	42%	
Status	In need of improvement	
Leadership Team	Principal, Assistant Principal, Grade Level Teacher Leads	
Diagnostic Assessment	Student performance data, professional practice data, stakeholder input from surveys	
Strategic Goals Adopted	3	
Total Strategies Adopted	7	
Total Year 1 Milestones	14	
Total Year 1 Actions	53	
Sample Goal	Each student in grades 3–8 will meet or exceed his/her math and ELA growth targets each year	
Sample Goal Performance Measure	Indicator	% students meeting or exceeding growth targets in ELA and math
	Data Source	State standards-based assessment in Gr. 3–8
	Baseline	ELA = 33%; Math = 42%
	Target Yr 1	ELA = 37%; Math = 45%
	Target Yr 2	ELA = 46%; Math = 50%
Strategy 1 for this Goal	**If we** engage our Instructional Teams in developing standards-aligned units of instruction and examples of lesson plans that personalize instruction, **then** teachers will plan and deliver standards-based and personalized instruction, **and** all of our students will meet or exceed their math and ELA growth projections.	
Sample Strategy Performance Measure	Indicator	% of teachers with more than 80% of their completed (taught and reflections recorded) lesson plans based on standards-aligned units of instruction and personalized learning instructional practices
	Data Source	Online lesson planning system
	Baseline	29%
	Target Yr 1	70%
	Target Yr 2	90%

Table 2: School B—Descriptive and Strategic Performance Data

School Type	High School	
Grade Levels	9–12	
ELA Proficiency (10th Gr)	86%	
Math Proficiency (10th Gr)	82%	
Graduation Rate	88%	
Status	Continuous improvement trajectory	
Leadership Team	Principal, 2 Assistant Principals, Department Heads, School Psychologist	
Diagnostic Assessment	Student performance data, professional practice data, stakeholder input from surveys	
Strategic Goals Adopted	5	
Total Strategies Adopted	15	
Total Year 1 Milestones	32	
Total Year 1 Actions	112	
Sample Goal	Each student, before graduation, will succeed in at least one advanced placement course or complete one or more career and technical education (CTE) certification programs.	
Sample Goal Performance Measure	Indicator	% of graduating students who have received an end-of-course exam score of 80% or better in at least one advanced placement course or earning one or more CTE certificates
	Data Source	Student report cards and CTE certificate lists
	Baseline	43%
	Target Yr 1	65%
	Target Yr 2	78%
Strategy 1 for this Goal	**If we** provide all students with data-based guidance in choosing advanced placement courses and CTE programs and provide academic supports (e.g., supplemental interventions) when needed to enable them to succeed in these courses/programs, **then** more students will enroll in appropriate advanced placement and CTE certification programs, **and** each student will succeed in advanced placement courses or career and technical education certification programs.	
Sample Strategy Performance Measure	Indicator	% of students this year enrolled in advanced placement or CTE as percentage of all students
	Data Source	Class registration
	Baseline	22%
	Target Yr 1	35%
	Target Yr 2	45%

District Level

Table 3: District X—Descriptive and Strategic Performance Data

District Type	Unit; 6 elementary, 2 middle, 1 high school	
Grade Levels	Pre-K–12	
ELA Proficiency	76%	
Math Proficiency	78%	
Graduation Rate	88%	
Status	Continuous improvement trajectory	
Leadership Team	Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, 3 Department Heads, revolving Principals	
Diagnostic Assessment	Student performance data, professional practice data, stakeholder input from surveys—aggregated from all schools	
Strategic Goals Adopted	6	
Total Strategies Adopted	18	
Total Year 1 Milestones	37	
Total Year 1 Actions	128	
Sample Goal	All students will develop learning acquisition (metacognitive) skills appropriate to their grade level and growth trajectories.	
Sample Goal Performance Measure	Indicator	% students earning a rating of Well Done or better on annual examination by teachers of Learning Acquisition Portfolio
	Data Source	District Learning Acquisition Portfolios for all students
	Baseline	NA
	Target Yr 1	TBD
	Target Yr 2	TBD
Strategy 1 for this Goal	**If we** develop grade-level guidelines for Learning Acquisition Portfolios, **then** teachers will facilitate creation of the portfolios for all students, **and** all students will develop learning acquisition (metacognitive) skills appropriate to their grade level and growth trajectories.	
Sample Strategy Performance Measure	Indicator	% of teachers whose students created a Learning Acquisition Portfolio
	Data Source	Teacher report
	Baseline	NA
	Target Yr 1	TBD
	Target Yr 2	TBD

State Level

Table 4: State of Anywhere—Descriptive and Strategic Performance Data

State Type	Mid-size population; urban, suburban, rural	
Grade Levels	Pre-K–12	
ELA Proficiency	72%	
Math Proficiency	69%	
Graduation Rate	86%	
Status	None	
Leadership Team	Commissioner, 6 Assistant Commissioners, 6 Directors	
Diagnostic Assessment	Student performance data, professional practice data, stakeholder input from surveys—aggregated from all districts	
Strategic Goals Adopted	5	
Total Strategies Adopted	20	
Total Year 1 Milestones	42	
Total Year 1 Actions	149	
Sample Goal	Each student will be actively engaged in college, career preparation, military service, and/or competitive employment one year after graduation.	
Sample Goal Performance Measure	Indicator	% graduates enrolled in two- or four-year college for fall of year following graduation
	Data Source	National Student Clearinghouse
	Baseline	39%
	Target Yr 1	41%
	Target Yr 2	42%
Strategy 1 for this Goal	**If we** support schools through a flexible, comprehensive state accountability system that includes graduation rate and first-year post-secondary engagement results, **then** educators employ student engagement, re-engagement, and alternative learning opportunities as needed, **and** students will graduate and become actively engaged in college, career preparation, military service, and/or competitive employment one year after graduation.	
Sample Strategy Performance Measure	Indicator	% of districts with designated student re-engagement programs
	Data Source	District Consolidated Report
	Baseline	37%
	Target Yr 1	50%
	Target Yr 2	60%

Interlacing the Data and Providing Responsive Supports

As each organization implements its SPM system, data flows within and across the organizations and are interlaced to tell the performance story at the state, district, and school levels. Monthly status of actions and the completion of annual milestones are data points that indicate implementation fidelity. Performance data are provided by the goal and strategy performance measures, which are typically calculated annually. The routine reporting of implementation and performance data for purposes of course adjustment is called a Performance and Innovation Cycle. Let's examine a sample of such a system, starting with implementation data.

Implementation Data

Each reporting year begins on July 1 for the SEA, LEAs, and schools. The sample data displayed in tables 5–8 is for November of the first year with SPM, based on succinct monthly reports from each team in each organization. In all cases:

- the data can be <u>disaggregated and drilled</u> to isolate particular goals and strategies in each organization as well as organizational subunits such as departments and teams, and
- coding of the nature of each organization's goals and strategies enables <u>data consolidation and aggregation</u> to ascertain progress across organizations and even across levels of the education system.

Table 5: Implementation Data for School A (November)

Organization	School A			
Actions Reported	Number of Actions On Time	Number of Actions Completed	Number of Actions Not Yet Started	Number of Actions Behind Schedule
100%	45%	33%	12%	30%
Comments	Actions related to a milestone on planning and delivering standards-based instruction are behind schedule.			

School A reported its implementation data, with explanatory notes, including the fact that the actions that are behind schedule are related to lesson planning and design to personalize instruction.

Table 6: Implementation Data for School B (November)

Organization	School B			
Actions Reported	Number of Actions On Time	Number of Actions Completed	Number of Actions Not Yet Started	Number of Actions Behind Schedule
49%	13%	13%	11%	28%
Comments	Actions behind schedule are those related to a milestone on career and technology education planning and delivery of instruction.			

School B reported its implementation data, with explanatory notes, including that the lagging actions are related to career and technology education. A concern is why only 49% are reported. What is the status of the other 51% of the actions? Is implementation fidelity slipping?

Table 7: Implementation Data for District X (November)

Organization	District X			
Actions Reported	Number of Actions On Time	Number of Actions Completed	Number of Actions Not Yet Started	Number of Actions Behind Schedule
98%	63%	17%	8%	12%
Comments	Actions related to monthly meetings with each school are on time, but those related to a milestone on using the state growth model are behind.			

District X reported its implementation data, with explanatory notes, including that the actions related to monthly meetings with each school are on time, but those related to using the state growth model are behind.

Table 8: Implementation Data for State of Anywhere (November)

Organization	SEA Anywhere			
Actions Reported	Number of Actions On Time	Number of Actions Completed	Number of Actions Not Yet Started	Number of Actions Behind Schedule
83%	42%	29%	23%	6%
Comments	The actions behind schedule are those related to milestones on gathering research on personalized learning practices, identifying schools and districts implementing some of the practices, and gathering resources for districts and schools on personalized learning practices.			

The **State of Anywhere** reported its implementation data, with explanatory notes, including significant variation in on-schedule actions among the SEA's major divisions. Also, in general, actions across divisions that were related to a goal for personalized learning are lagging.

Interlacing the Implementation Data

By coding goals and strategies for the topics they include, data from multiple organizations can be examined to determine if patterns emerge. Thus, at the district level, cross-school data is examined, and at the state level both cross-district and cross-school data is examined. Because district data includes the actions of the district itself and not merely an aggregation of school actions, topical data can be analyzed that cuts across both districts and schools. The state can compare its own progress on particular strategies with that of districts and schools on similar strategies.

In the examples, note that the SEA is behind schedule on gathering research related to personalized learning practices, and the district is behind schedule on actions related to the growth model. At the same time, School A and B are behind schedule on actions related to personalized learning. Student performance using a growth model can be very helpful in identifying individual student needs and utilizing personalized instructional practices and supports to meet individual student needs. Could the lags in implementation of actions at the SEA and LEA levels be having an impact on School A's or School B's actions on planning and delivery of instruction? Having common structures (goals, strategies, milestones, and actions) provides opportunity to track progress on implementation at multiple levels and identify the possible impact on work of each organization.

Responsive Supports Based on Implementation Data

Each organization uses its implementation data to adjust course, sometimes in ways that are innovative or more productive. The SEA may shift resources to accomplish the actions that are behind schedule, particularly the research needed to develop guidance and resources to districts and schools on personalized learning; or School B may reexamine the CTE actions and timelines to determine if the timelines were overly ambitious and need to be adjusted.

However, the *real* power is when the data are used to determine what technical assistance is needed across the system. In our scenario, District X, noting that School A is behind schedule on actions related to planning personalized instruction, analyzes implementation data from other schools and finds three additional schools with similar goals but different strategies and milestones, yet they are having the same lag in implementation of actions related to personalized instruction. Utilizing the primary contacts for each of the identified schools and resources from the Learning Services Department, the district provides targeted support to each school and collaborative support across schools, including creating sharing sessions where schools together create strategies to address implementation challenges.

In the meantime the SEA, through analysis of district action status reporting, realized that more than half of the districts were behind on actions related to the state growth plan. A quick survey was used to gather information from those superintendents, and a webinar was conducted to provide more detailed information and answers to critical questions so districts had the information needed to get back on track with their actions. In addition, a new guidance document was created, and regional centers were provided a one-day training so they could assist districts.

By having common data and reporting structures, the schools, districts, and state are able to report on implementation regularly throughout the school year. In addition, the school and district implementation data inform the SEA technical assistance contacts of the type of support needed. Finally, the school implementation data indicate that School B is in need of support in implementing its plan (or at least in reporting status), even though it is and has been a higher performing school.

Of course, monthly reports of action status are only one way to track implementation data, and the prime implementation measures are in the milestones themselves. Quarterly reviews of action progress by each organization consider whether the actions are headed toward fully meeting the milestone by year's end. If not, adjustments are made. At the end of the year, milestone completion is the gauge of implementation fidelity.

Performance Data

At the end of year one, each organization reports on the milestones completed and data from performance

measures for strategies and goals. Multiple indicators are usually required to adequately assess progress toward goals and strategies, and each indicator carries with it a data source, baseline, and annual targets for two years. The out-year target is adjusted each year. A strategy performance measure aims at the **and** portion of the strategy's logic model. That is the part of the strategy that the organization intends to directly affect.

Tables 9–12 summarize the *sample* goal and strategy performance measure results for each organization in the scenario at the conclusion of one year.

Table 9: School A Performance Data—Year 1

Organization	School A
Goal	Each student in grades 3–8 will meet or exceed their math and ELA growth targets each year.
Goal Performance Measure (Indicator)	% students meeting or exceeding growth targets in ELA and math
Target for this year	ELA = 37%; Math = 45%
Performance Results	ELA = 41%; Math = 44%
Strategy	**If we** engage our Instructional Teams in developing standards-aligned units of instruction, **then** teachers will plan and deliver standards-based personalized instruction, **and** all of our students will meet or exceed their math and ELA growth projections.
Strategy Performance Measure (Indicator)	% of teachers with more than 80% of their completed (taught and reflections recorded) lesson plans based on standards-aligned units of instruction and personalized learning instructional practices.
Target for this year	70%
Performance Results	73% of teachers had completed lesson plans based on standards-aligned units of instruction.

School A was behind on actions related to lesson planning and delivery, however the performance data indicate that 73% of the teachers had planned and delivered standards-based personalized instruction, and this seemed to already have a positive impact on student performance in reading. The district provided responsive supports to School A which helped improve implementation. The responsive supports could be expanded to other schools with implementation difficulties. In addition, School A is adjusting year two milestones to include one to address the lack of progress in math, looking particularly at the quality of lesson planning in math.

Table 10: School B Performance Data—Year 1

Organization	School B
Goal	Each student, before graduation, will succeed in at least one advanced placement course or complete one or more career and technical education (CTE) certification programs.
Goal Performance Measure (Indicator)	% of graduating students who have received an end-of-course exam score of 80% or better in at least one advanced placement course or earning one or more CTE certificates
Target for this year	65%
Performance Results	58%
Strategy	**If we** provide all students with data-based guidance in choosing advanced placement courses and CTE programs and provide academic supports (e.g., supplemental interventions) when needed to enable them to succeed in these courses/programs, **then** more students will enroll in appropriate advanced placement and CTE certification programs, **and** each student will succeed in advanced placement courses or career and technical education certification programs.
Strategy Performance Measure (Indicator)	% of students this year enrolled in advanced placement or CTE as percentage of all students
Target for this year	52%
Performance Results	35%

School B's performance data indicate that milestone targets for advanced placement and CTE were not met. Implementation data indicated they struggled with completing many actions, and more guidance is needed on designing instruction aligned to advanced placement and CTE instruction. The school's Leadership Team concluded that based on implementation data and monthly discussion with the district technical assistance contact, they lacked the capacity to implement the large number of milestones and actions in their plan. They are continuing some milestones in year 2 and moved a number to year 3. In addition, teams reviewed actions and prioritized and narrowed down the number of actions. They are requesting more assistance in managing and implementing their plan.

Table 11: District X Performance Data—Year 1

Organization	District X
Goal	All students will develop learning acquisition (metacognitive) skills appropriate to their grade level and growth trajectories.
Goal Performance Measure (Indicator)	% students earning a rating of Well Done or better on annual examination by teachers of Learning Acquisition Portfolio
Target for this year	No Target—Actual will become Baseline
Performance Results	72%
Strategy	**If we** develop grade-level guidelines for Learning Acquisition Portfolios, **then** teachers will facilitate creation of the portfolios for all students, **and** all students will develop learning acquisition (metacognitive) skills appropriate to their grade level and growth trajectories.
Strategy Performance Measure (Indicator)	% of teachers whose students created a Learning Acquisition Portfolio
Target for this year	No Target—Actual will become Baseline
Performance Results	86%

District X set its baselines for its milestones this year because the Learning Acquisition Portfolio was a new program and no data were available. The district ended the year with a high completion rate for its actions (93%) and its milestones (88%). Its Leadership Team concluded that it is on track and made minor adjustments to its Year 2 milestones and actions.

Table 12: State of Anywhere Performance Data—Year 1

Organization	State of Anywhere
Goal	Each student will be actively engaged in college, career preparation, military service, and/or competitive employment one year after graduation.
Goal Performance Measure (Indicator)	% graduates enrolled in two- or four-year college for fall of year following graduation
Target for this year	41%
Performance Results	43%
Strategy	**If we** support schools through a flexible, comprehensive state accountability system that includes graduation rate and first-year post-secondary engagement results, **then** educators will employ student engagement, re-engagement, and alternative learning opportunities as needed, **and** students will graduate and become actively engaged in college, career preparation, military service, and/or competitive employment one year after graduation.
Strategy Performance Measure (Indicator)	% of districts with designated student re-engagement programs
Target for this year	50%
Performance Results	48%

The **State of Anywhere** provided supports to districts on the use of the state growth model, yet instruction continues to be a concern. The SEA actions related to gathering research on personalized learning practices by identifying schools and districts implementing some of the practices were behind schedule early in the year and never recovered. This delayed valuable guidance, information, and resources that could have assisted districts and schools in designing and delivering more personalized instruction. The SEA Leadership Team elevated expectations in its Year 2 plan to make up for lost time. The SEA examined

differentiated technical assistance to districts to support effective implementation of standards and aligned assessments as part of the statewide growth model, utilized the research they had gathered on personalized learning, and adjusted their strategy to support districts in making stronger connections between growth data, standards-based instruction, and strategies to personalize learning.

Interlacing the Performance Data

Performance data is derived from the performance measures for each organization's goals and strategies. The goals are based on desired student outcomes. The strategies describe the organization's major initiatives in pursuing the goals. Annual accounting of progress on goal and strategy performance measures, then, is an indication of the education system's effectiveness as well as the strengths and weaknesses of each organization's efforts. As with implementation data, coding of goal and strategy topics enables analysis of data across organizations and across system levels, even though each organization retains autonomy in setting its direction, including determining its goals and strategies.

Responsive Supports Based on Performance Data

The scenario is an example of how a multi-organization system of strategic performance can result in interlaced data to identify successes and issues at one or more levels within and across organizations. The first response to performance data is from the organization itself, considering its progress toward student goals and organizational strategies. The organization adjusts its milestones and actions for the coming year, and it may reconsider strategies although a single year's data is typically not sufficient to determine the efficacy of a strategy.

Responsive supports from outside the organization may come from external service providers, renegotiating their services in light of the data, or from other organizations (district responding to school data; state responding to district and school data). In addition to adjustments in supports for individual districts and schools, the state, through the interlacing of data, sees larger, system patterns that may shift its broader-gauged technical assistance programs.

The SPM process builds a system of supports focused on implementation and performance results, but this is just one facet of the power of SPM. The next section describes how SPM also addresses the vulnerabilities of a results-based approach to organizational management by utilizing three lenses (best practice, innovation, and productivity) to incorporate and strengthen sound practices.
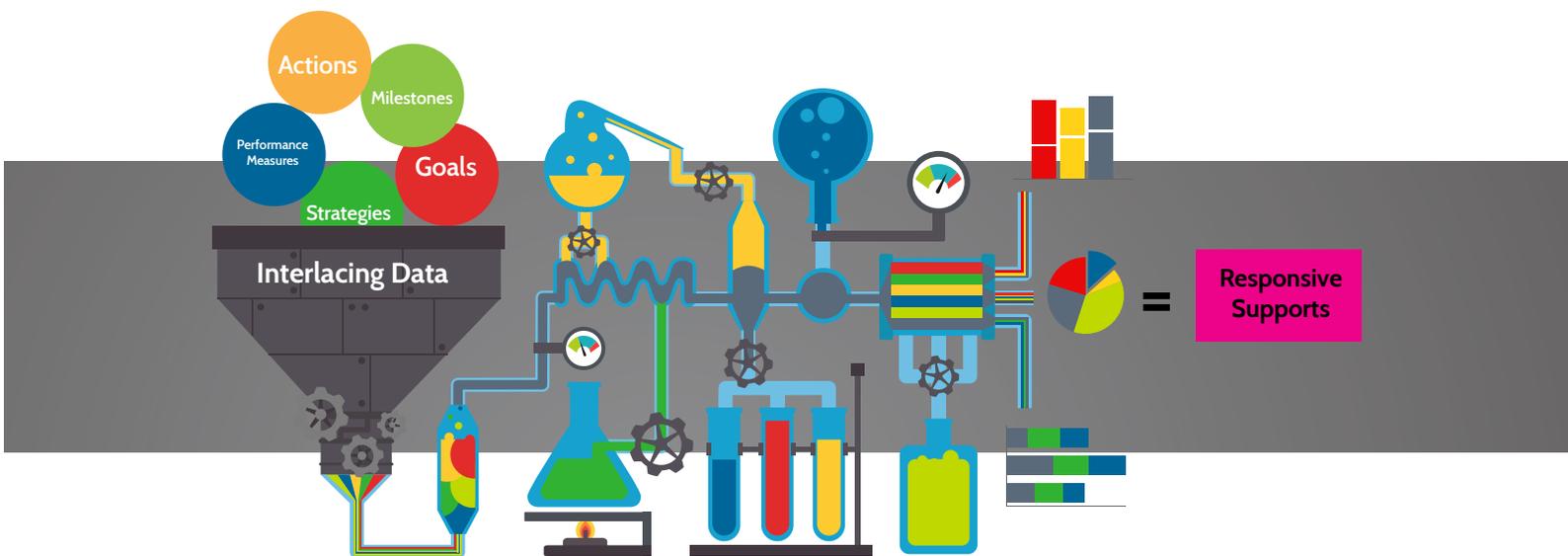
Part IV:
Best Practice, Productivity, and Innovation

Plugging Holes in a Results-Based Approach

The idea of a results-based approach to organizational management and improvement isn't a new one. It seeped into education along with the standards movement and SMART goals in the 1980s. When the National Commission on Excellence in Education released *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, it made a common practice of business and industry an urgent necessity for education. Standards and Expectations were one of its five recommendations to restore America's competitive position in the world. Just two years earlier, George T. Doran, a consultant and former Director of Corporate Planning for Washington Water Power Company published a paper titled "There's a S.M.A.R.T. Way to Write Management's Goals and Objectives" (1981). Today, content standards, standards-based assessments, and SMART goals permeate the education system. The focus on "results" is at home in education as much it is in big business.

The results orientation requires an objective (goal), a way to measure progress (indicator), and a time parameter (target date). In Doran's original definition of a SMART goal, the formulation also included assignability (responsible people) and an analysis that concludes the whole construction is realistic given available resources. What a SMART goal doesn't include is the route most likely to achieve the goal. In other words, the pathway is not part of the goal. Similarly, content standards and their assessments are ends without means—the "results" do not contain within them the strategies and practices that are most potent in their pursuit. This allows for nonproductive effort, churning away at strategies and practices without considering that alternative strategies and practices might be more effective.

Another vulnerability of a results orientation is that the measure becomes the focus of the effort. Choi, Hecht, and Taylor (2013) call this pitfall "surrogation." The "consequence of aligning strategy and performance measures is that managers may lose sight of the strategic construct(s) the measures are intended to represent, and subsequently act as though the (imperfect) measures *are* the constructs of interest" (p. 2). For example, we often focus more on the standardized tests (what they are, how to administer the tests, the scoring and reporting of test results), rather than on the content the tests are meant to measure. Diverting the organizational eyes from the goal and the strategies for its pursuit to the measurement of progress de-emphasizes the strategic pathway and thwarts innovation. Innovation is the discovery of a different way that is also a better way, altering the pathway to more readily achieve the outcome. The pathway is the variable.

The greatest impact of the standards movement has been the setting of standards for the results students are expected to achieve rather than the setting of standards for what teachers and school leaders are expected to do in the performance of their professions. The logic for content standards, similar to the logic for school accountability, is that if educators are accountable for the results students achieve, they will surely figure out ways to reach those marks. The influence of this results-based approach is seen in most school improvement processes—set a SMART goal for student outcomes, and you will somehow see what the adults need to do so that the students reach the goal. This assumption also underlies strategic performance management—an organization, given a process to construct its own goals, will surely select the best strategies to achieve the goals. Strategic Performance Management (SPM), however, includes safeguards to ensure that organizational management and improvement proceed toward results with due consideration for sound practice, productivity, and innovation.

Strategic Performance Management

SPM is a positive and continuous process that sets an organization in motion, every person in it engaged in designing, carrying out, reviewing, and improving upon coordinated work aimed at aspirational goals. In that sense, SPM is forward-looking and ambitious. Goal pursuit, in fact, is always forward-looking, and SPM's Performance and Innovation Cycle offers frequent opportunities to gauge progress toward a goal and adjust course. SPM is basically a *results-based* approach to improvement, but not that alone. A strictly results-based approach to improvement suffers from an inherent flaw; it neglects the significance of choices made on the path to the goal. In education, the choices are called strategies or practices. Attention to sound practice adds considerable traction to the moving wheels of change, and only in contrast to the current best practice can an innovation be confirmed.

SPM addresses the vulnerabilities of a results-based approach to organizational management and improvement by introducing three lenses through which strategies are selected. The lenses are:

- Best Practice Lens
- Productivity Lens
- Innovation Lens

Similarly, the three lenses are employed as the strategic direction is activated, with action plans developed by teams, implementation progress reported routinely, and performance measures attached to goals and strategies. At each decision point, the team is asked to consider best practice, more productive alternatives to the current course, and innovations that would produce better results. In this attention to the pathway to the goal—the strategies, practices, and actions selected—SPM plugs holes in a strictly results-based approach to organizational management and improvement.

Benchmarks for Sound Practice

Especially at the school level, results-based improvement processes can be strengthened by incorporating and bolstering specific sound practices. The question arises: What is sound practice? Knowing it, we would surely adopt it and make it part of the chugging and churning of SPM. Sound practice in education has gone by many names, each with its own distinctions. Various schemes for identifying sound (best) practice have been constructed over the years (see Appendix A), and these itemized practices have served as guideposts or benchmarks, especially for improvement at the school level.

Levels of Evidence

The level of evidence for a practice's soundness has also been given various labels, including: best practice, evidence-based practice, research-based practice, effective practice, scientifically based practice, promising practice, and emerging best practice. School improvement programs typically recommend that local improvement plans include at least one study on an intervention to provide *strong evidence*, *moderate evidence*, or *promising evidence*. In current parlance, as per the U.S. Department of Education's (2016) non-regulatory guidance relative to the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, evidence-based practice can be categorized according to criteria as provided in the Appendix B.

The Grand Synthesis in SPM: Sound Practice, Productivity, and Innovation.

So what is the role of sound practice, regardless of what it is called, in SPM? One could argue that the entire SPM process is sound practice because it provides a well-specified logic model informed by research or evaluation. After all, strategic planning and performance management have been studied over the years, as seen in the research literature contained in journals such as the *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, *Strategic Management Journal*, and *Journal of Business Research*. However, sound practice in SPM goes deeper than the overall process itself. SPM guides decision makers in considering the triad of best practice, productivity, and innovation in making decisions at multiple points in the process.

A strategy is written as a theory of action (**If we** as a state education agency [SEA] or a local education agency [LEA]..., **then** educators will be able to..., **and** students will...) The **and** portion of the statement points back to an organizational goal for students. The best practice lens is applied to the **then** part of the strategy statement. Is what the SEA or LEA wants educators to do as a result of its work reflective of sound practice? In other words, is the SEA or LEA, through the strategy, encouraging and creating the right conditions for the districts and schools to seek and implement best practices? For example, one SEA strategy is to create conditions for educators to deliver more personalized instruction to students. Through a best practice lens, the SEA leadership would examine the *soundness* of personalized learning practices before choosing this as a strategy. If the **If we** of the SEA strategy is to provide differentiated technical assistance to its districts and schools so that they can implement a reading initiative, the SEA leadership would ensure that the initiative stood up to a test of soundness (best practice at a level of evidence deemed appropriate to the SEA).

The SPM also utilizes an "innovation lens" throughout the process not only to encourage innovation, but to foster a culture for innovation which is "the consequence of behaviors, of processes, procedures, and expectations that are embedded in scientific methods" (Redding, Twyman, & Murphy, 2016, p. 2). But what does innovation have to do with sound practice? Redding, Twyman, and Murphy (2013) remind us that an innovation is not just

> a different way of doing something, it is also a *better* way of doing something. In education, an innovation is a deviation from the standard practice that achieves greater learning outcomes for students than the standard practice given equal or lesser amounts of time and resources. (p. 3)

The foundation of an innovation is an improvement on a sound practice that has evidence that it works. Establishing evidence that the new practice is an effective improvement over the standard practice is challenging, but evidence can be gathered through formative evaluations over an initial implementation period before engaging in validation using more demanding research standards.

Redding et al. (2016) also note that processes of *continuous improvement* (narrowing the gap between actual practice and standard practice) and *innovation* (creating and validating practices that improve upon standard practice) occur simultaneously in an organization intent upon getting better at what it does. The Performance and Innovation Cycle in SPM engages SEA or LEA leadership and staff in continuously examining their standard practices and seeking innovative ways of conducting their work. The cycle is not only used to report and manage performance—it can also be used to gather formative evaluation data on specific innovative practices related to the organization's strategies, milestones, and actions. It also provides the structure to support study of the innovative practices so strong, moderate, or promising evidence can be collected and disseminated to expand the use of the innovative practices. Eventually those innovative practices will become the "standard" by which the organization and its people strive to improve

further. Thus, the SPM process fosters an innovative process and assists the organization in striking a balance between sound standard practices and the development and use of innovative practices that can improve productivity.

Productivity, in fact, is the third lens through which organizations using SPM view the selection of strategies, practices, and actions and make adjustments in course based on implementation and performance data. Given available resources, what is the most expeditious pathway to the goal?

Conclusions

As an essentially results-based approach to organizational management, SPM is susceptible to the vulnerabilities of any results-based approach: (1) surrogation of measures for strategic constructs; (2) adoption of strategies, practices, and actions that are not likely to achieve the desired results; (3) selecting pathways to goals that do not make the best use of available resources; and (4) stifling innovation. But through its decision-making lenses at key points in the process, both in its initial implementation and continuing through its performance cycle, SPM plugs holes in a strictly results-based approach. Sound practice, productivity, and innovation, infused into the SPM process, give traction to the system.

Appendix A: Ways to Identify Sound (Best) Practice

1. **Effective Schools.** Choosing the 1970s as a point in time to begin this discussion, we find the effective schools movement. In part a response to the massive Equality of Educational Opportunity Study (Coleman, 1966), also known as the Coleman Report, which reported that family background, teacher characteristics, and social context were more predictive of academic attainment than level of educational resources, the effective schools research sought differentiators between schools that resided in school practices rather than in resources or student demographics. Ron Edmonds, primarily from his work at Harvard's Center for Urban Studies, was a significant contributor to effective schools research, launching a simple list of effective school correlates that was embellished by other researchers over the years. Edmonds' 1979 article, *Effective Schools for the Urban Poor*, listed just six characteristics of schools that attained exemplary results with poor children:

   - Strong administrative leadership
   - High expectations
   - An orderly atmosphere
   - Basic skills acquisition as the school's primary purpose
   - Capacity to divert school energy and resources from other activities to advance the school's basic purpose
   - Frequent monitoring of pupil progress

2. **What Works.** In 1986, the U.S. Department of Education published a booklet of practical knowledge called *What Works: Research on Teaching and Learning*. A layman's presentation of the best sense of experts on a range of topics of advice for the home (8 research findings), the classroom (19 research findings), and the school (14 research findings), *What Works* reduced research to a set of succinct research findings upon which the experts commented and cited related publications. This set of 41 research findings (stated as brief principles) was larger in number than Edmonds' effective school correlates, incorporating home and classroom factors as well as characteristics of the school.

   The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), established in 2002, is administered by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the U.S. Department of Education. The WWC website provides scientific evidence on education programs, products, practices, and policies. The website "offers more than 700 publications and catalogs and more than 11,000 reviewed studies in its database" (Fleischman, Scott, & Sargrad, 2016, p. 12).

   For a few years, the U.S. Department of Education sponsored a Doing What Works website that curated descriptions of programs and strategies that demonstrated efficacy (though not necessarily to the standards of the WWC). The descriptions included interviews with practitioners and examples of practical tools. The Doing What Works website was terminated in 2013 when the Department of Education reported that it lacked the funds to maintain the project.

3. **Evidence-Based Programs.** The Results First Clearinghouse Database website "was created by Results First, a project funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to identify evidence-based programs in education and other related fields. It provides links to eight clearinghouses that review a total of nearly 1,300 programs for their effectiveness" (Fleischman et al., 2016, p. 12).

4. **Best Evidence.** The Best Evidence Encyclopedia, sponsored by Johns Hopkins University School of Education's Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education, "offers access to research syntheses and program reviews of more than 900 programs and approaches in the areas of math, reading, science, early childhood, and whole-school improvement" (Fleischman et al., 2016, p. 12).

5. **Turnaround.** At the beginning of the era of school turnaround, the IES published a practice guide titled *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools* (Herman et al., 2008). The practice guide advanced the following four recommendations with 17 specific practices aligned to them:

   - Signal the need for dramatic change with strong leadership
   - Maintain a consistent focus on improving instruction
   - Provide visible improvements early in the turnaround process (quick wins)
   - Build a committed staff

   In 2017, the Center on School Turnaround at WestEd, based now on several years of national experience with turnaround, released its *Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement: A Systems Framework*. The four domains are:

   - Turnaround Leadership
   - Talent Development
   - Transformational Instruction
   - Culture Shift

   To the four domains are assigned 22 practices, each with roles for the state, district, and school.

6. **Behavioral (Implementation) Indicators.** Margaret C. Wang, as director of the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS), a Regional Educational Laboratory based at Temple University, developed one of the first comprehensive school models validated by the U.S. Department of Education for the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRDP)

in 1998. The model, called Community for Learning (CFL), was based on Wang's research and the adaptive learning environments model (ALEM; Wang, 1992). Wang's ALEM and CFL were characterized by very specific, typically single-variable essential elements (behavioral indicators) organized under critical dimensions. Redding (2006), writing for the LSS, advanced Wang's methodology with the itemization of more than 100 "success indicators."

In 2005, Temple University became a partner with the Academic Development Institute (ADI) in the national Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII). CII continued the work begun by Wang and others at LSS, publishing several books and monographs itemizing specific indicators of effective practice. CII's *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement* (Walberg, 2007) synthesized research on each level of the education system and itemized 168 indicators of effective practice. The *Handbook* received an Outstanding Publication of the Year award from Division H of the American Educational Research Association. In 2012, Temple and ADI partnered in the national Center on Innovations in Learning (CIL), published new indicators of effective practice on personalized learning, and continued to provide resources related to indicators of effective practice in other domains. In CIL's *Handbook on Innovations in Learning*, Redding (2013) contributed a chapter devoted to the logic of an indicator-based improvement process.

Appendix B: Summary of Recommended Study Criteria for Each Evidence Level
From Non-Regulatory Guidance: Using Evidence to Strengthen Education Investments
U.S. Department of Education, 2016
https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceuseseinvestment.pdf

	Strong Evidence	Moderate Evidence	Promising Evidence	Demonstrates a Rationale
Study Design	Experimental study	Quasi-experimental study	Correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias	Provides a well-specified logic model informed by research or evaluation
WWC Standard	Meets WWC Evidence Standards without reservations (or is the equivalent quality)	Meets WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations (or is the equivalent quality)	N/A	N/A
Favorable Effects	Shows a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome	Shows a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome	Shows a statistically significant and positive (i.e., favorable) effect of the intervention on a student outcome or other relevant outcome	Relevant research or an evaluation that suggests that the intervention is likely to improve a student outcome or other relevant outcome
Other Effects	Is not overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence from other findings in studies that meet WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations (or are the equivalent quality)	Is not overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence from other findings in studies that meet WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations (or are the equivalent quality)	Is not overridden by statistically significant and negative (i.e., unfavorable) evidence from other findings in studies that meet WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations (or are the equivalent quality)	An effort to study the effects of the intervention, ideally producing promising evidence or higher, will happen as part of the intervention or is underway elsewhere
Sample Size and Overlap	Includes a large sample and a multi-site sample, overlapping with populations and settings proposed to receive the intervention	Includes a large sample and a multi-site sample, overlapping with populations or settings proposed to receive the intervention	N/A	N/A

References

Choi, J., Hecht, G. W., & Tayler, W. B. (2013). Strategy selection, surrogation, and strategic performance measurement systems. *Journal of Accounting Research, 51*(1), 105-133. doi:10.1111/j.1475-679X.2012.00465.x

Coleman, J. S. (1966). *Equality of Educational Opportunity (COLEMAN) Study (EEOS)*. ICPSR06389-v3. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. Retrieved from http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR06389.v3

Doran, G. T. (1981). There's a S.M.A.R.T. way to write management's goals and objectives. *Management Review, 70*(11), 35–36.

Edmonds, R. (1979, October). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership, 37*(1), 15–24.

Fleischman, S., Scott, C., & Sargrad, S. (2016, August). *Better evidence, better choices, better results.* Washington, DC: Center for American Progress.

Herman, R., Dawson, P., Dee, T., Greene, J., Maynard, R., Redding, S., & Darwin, M. (2008). *Turning around chronically low-performing schools: A practice guide.* (NCEE 2008-4020). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

Nafziger, D. (2013). *Chief performance officer in education.* San Antonio, TX: Building State Capacity and Productivity Center at Edvance Research. Retrieved from http://www.bscpcenter.org/resources/publications/solutions_issue_3_chief_performance_officer-2.pdf

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform: A report to the nation and the Secretary of Education, United States Department of Education.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/index.html

Redding, S. (2006). *The mega system: Deciding, learning, connecting. A handbook for continuous improvement within a community of the school.* Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute.

Redding, S. (2013). The logic of school improvement, turnaround, and innovation. In M. Murphy, S. Redding, & J. Twyman (Eds.), *Handbook on innovations in learning* (pp. 49–58). Philadelphia, PA: Center on Innovations in Learning, Temple University; Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.centeril.org/

Redding, S., & Layland, A. (in press). *Strategic performance management: Organizing people and their work in the SEA of the future* (2nd ed.).

Redding, S., Twyman, J., & Murphy, M. (2013). What is an innovation in learning? In M. Murphy, S. Redding, & J. Twyman (Eds.), *Handbook on innovations in learning* (pp. 3–14). Philadelphia, PA: Center on Innovations in Learning, Temple University; Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.centeril.org/

Redding, S., Twyman, J., & Murphy, M. (2016). *Advancing personalized learning through the iterative application of innovation science.* Retrieved from http://www.centeril.org/publications/InnovationScience%209-12.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (1986). *What works: Research about teaching and learning.* Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

U.S. Department of Education. (2016a). Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act—Accountability and State Plans. Federal Register: Vol. 81, No. 229. Retrieved from https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-11-29/pdf/2016-27985.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2016b). *Non-regulatory guidance: Using evidence to strengthen education investments.* Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/guidanceuseseinvestment.pdf

U.S. Office of Personnel Management. (n.d.). Performance management overview & history. Retrieved from https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/performance-management/overview-history/

Walberg, H. J. (Ed.). (2007). *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement.* Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.adi.org/publications.html

Wang, M. C. (1992). *Adaptive education strategies: Building on diversity.* Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

## About the Authors

Allison Layland, Ph.D.

Dr. Layland is currently an education specialist at the Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center at ETS, provid¬ing technical assistance to state education agencies in areas related to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Dr. Layland also consulted with more than nine states on effective implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Dr. Layland has more than 20 years of teaching and leadership experience in general and special education at the school, district, and state levels. As an adjunct professor, Dr. Layland facilitated special education teacher preparation at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Dr. Layland received a bachelor's degree in elementary and special education from Mount Saint Mary College in New York, a master's degree in special educa¬tion from James Madison University in Virginia, and a doctorate in education administration and policy studies from the University of Denver.

Sam Redding, Ed.D.

Dr. Redding is the executive director of Academic Development Institute and a consultant with the Building State Capacity and Productivity Center. Dr. Redding also serves as the associate director of the Center on School Turn¬around and senior learning specialist for the Center on Innovations in Learning. A former high school teacher and college dean, Dr. Redding has published in the areas of statewide systems of support, school improvement and turnaround, personalized learning and personal competencies, change leadership, innovations in education, and family and community engagement. Dr. Redding has consulted with more than 30 state education agencies and many districts and schools across the country. As a senior research associate at the Laboratory for Student Success, he headed the Lab's research and implementation of comprehensive school reform. He holds masters' degrees in psychology and English, a doctorate in educational administration from Illinois State University, and is a graduate of Harvard's Institute for Education Management.

At the BSCP Center website (www.bscpcenter.org) see:

- Section on **Performance** for additional information and materials about Strategic Performance Management

- Section on **Communication** for information about organizational communication, including a communication tool box
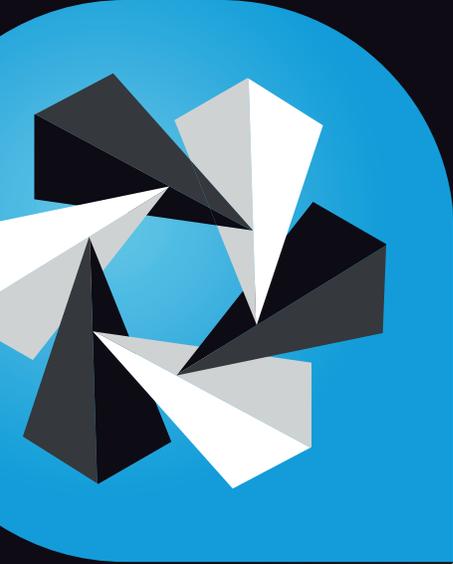
Building State Capacity and Productivity Center

www.bscpcenter.org

The Building State Capacity and Productivity Center (BSCP Center) focuses on helping state education agencies (SEAs) throughout the country, as they adapt to reduced fis¬cal resources and increased demands for greater productivity. As State Departments of Education are facing a daunting challenge of improving student performance with diminishing financial resources, the BSCP Center provides tech-nical assistance to SEAs that builds their capacity to support local educational agencies (LEAs or districts) and schools, and to the 21 regional and content comprehensive centers that serve them, by pro-viding high quality information, tools, and implementation support. The partners in the BSCP Center are Edvance Research, Inc., the Academic Development Institute, and the Edunomics Lab.