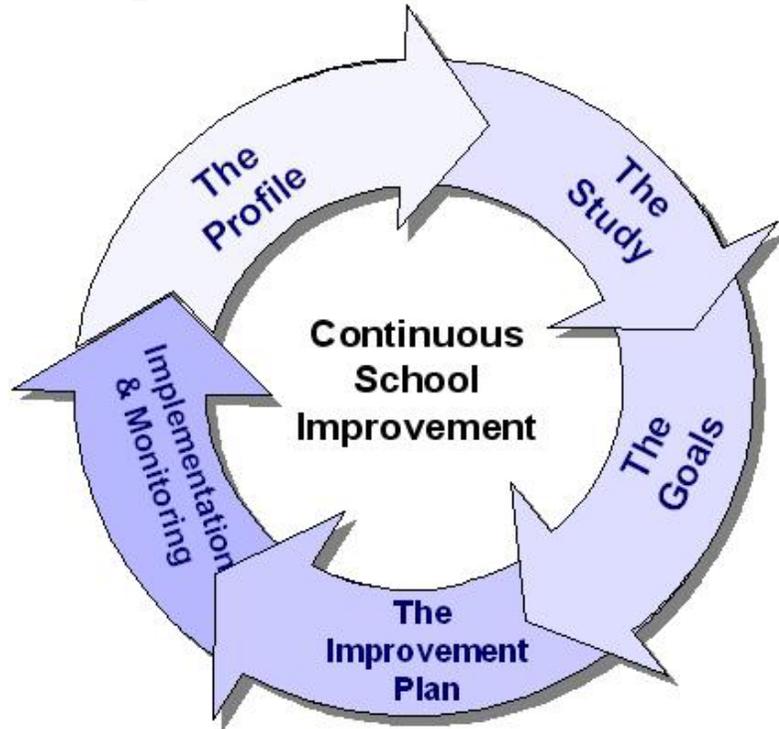
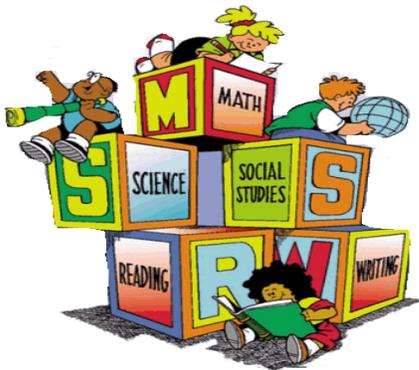


# The Nebraska Framework For School Improvement



## A Guide For Schools And External Visitation Teams



Nebraska Department of Education  
Updated August 2005

# **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

**A systematic process**

**Involving all staff**

**To**

**Improve learning**

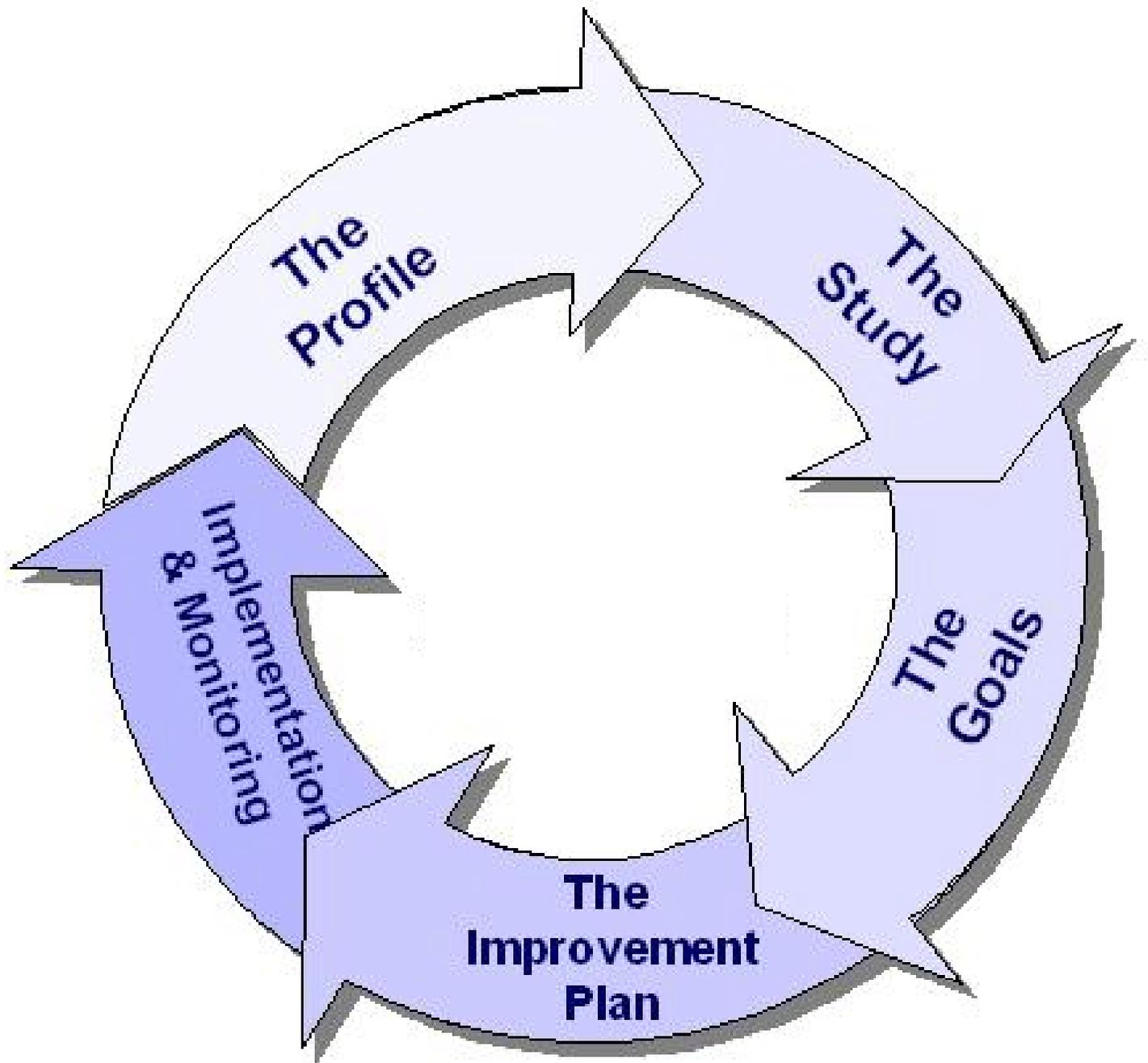
**And learning opportunities**

**For all students**

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# Continuous School Improvement





## PART I: THINKING ABOUT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### THINKING ABOUT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

We all keep working at school improvement, adjusting, revising, tweaking – striving to get it right. Whether we ever get it exactly “right” is unlikely, but about one thing there is no doubt: it is the right thing to do. Educators cannot be content with the status quo when they focus on improving student learning for all.

This edition of *The Nebraska Framework for School Improvement* continues to refine the process. Readers will recognize much of the content from earlier editions, but they should also note two or three modifications. First, the continuous nature of school improvement is reemphasized. Accreditation requirements result in regular recurrences of such significant parts of the process as the external team visit at least once every five years. But the work of school improvement really has no beginning or ending; it is something we do every day, every week, every year. Second, this edition takes a broader look at the nature of improvement goals. The central focus remains the improvement of student learning, but we recognize that learning often intersects with factors of organization and management, and that schools need to examine and react to those overlapping concerns.

Those who work in schools are entrusted with society’s most precious possessions, its young. Teachers, administrators, bus drivers, counselors, board members, and cooks say to parents, “Send your children to us. We will be responsible for seeing that they learn and perform as you and we have jointly determined they should. We pledge to treat your children fairly, to believe in them, to welcome them and nurture them in a safe and secure environment. To achieve those ends, we promise to do our best, and we will challenge your children to do the same. We will be responsible for using wisely the resources you provide us to achieve those purposes. Furthermore, we pledge to be accountable to you, to report frequently on your children’s progress and on our efforts to carry out your trust.” Some may question the time and effort required by the school improvement process, arguing that it would be better if we simply allowed teachers to do that for which they have been trained. Quite frankly, school improvement is really about that, because what teachers do is evaluate, prescribe, implement, and assess. School improvement supports those functions, formalizes them, and encourages a coordinated, focused school-wide approach to carry them out. School improvement is one significant way through which those who work in schools can carry out society’s trust and demonstrate that this trust is well placed.

This version of the *Frameworks* is, like its predecessors, intended as a guide, a collection of advice to school leaders who design and implement improvement processes for their systems. And again, we invite your comments and suggestions for future editions.

## WHY CHANGE?

Nebraska schools have an enviable record of achievement. Our students consistently score well on nearly all measures of performance; Nebraska-trained teachers are warmly welcomed – indeed, recruited – in many states. One could logically ask, “Why fix something that isn’t broken?” Education in Nebraska clearly is not “broken,” but, is it as good as it can be? If it is, then all students will learn and achieve regardless of their differing backgrounds and circumstances. As we have grown more sophisticated in gathering and analyzing data, we have come to realize that there is room for improvement, that we have not achieved the level of equitable opportunities or equitable results that are essential to a truly effective education system.

To some extent, schools have always changed. As governmental entities, they have responded to political, economic, and societal forces. However, school improvement, as discussed here, is not the reactive kind that relies upon outside motivation. Rather, school improvement as practiced in Nebraska schools is inwardly motivated. It grows from a data informed analysis of student and system performance and needs, and it rests on the realization that an institution cannot stand still.

## IMPROVE WHAT? (THE NATURE OF GOALS)

The improvement of student learning and performance remains at the core of school improvement. By and large, when we speak of school improvement we speak of improvement of academic achievement. This linkage has paralleled the focus on accountability marked by such initiatives as Nebraska’s STARS (School-based Teacher-led Assessment and Reporting System), and the more recent federal effort of NCLB (No Child Left Behind). Schools have responded by choosing student-centered goals primarily in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. As science and social studies/history are added to the STARS schedule, and as reliable data about performance in those areas become available, corresponding improvement goals may emerge. Rule 10, *Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools*, continues to require that at least one goal focus directly on student learning.

However, student learning is also a result of the opportunities provided for students. An analysis of learning opportunities, instructional programs, and learning climate may lead to the selection of other school improvement goals. A good place to begin a study of opportunities for learning is in Effective Schools Research and the Effective Schools Correlates.

## **EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS CORRELATES AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

If one believes what schools do makes a difference for students, then one must support the concept of school improvement. Ronald Edmonds, Lawrence Lezotte, et. al., in extensive research over nearly 30 years, examined schools across America in a variety of settings including schools populated largely by students from poverty backgrounds. They found some schools where students were learning effectively, and compared those schools with others that were not making a difference for students. The researchers found common characteristics among the successful schools. Their work resulted in what we now know as Effective Schools Research and the Effective Schools Correlates. Subsequent studies have replicated the results. The shared characteristics are called the Correlates of Effective Schools, and are listed below:

1. **Clear School Mission** – Staff shares an understanding of and commitment to the goals, priorities, procedures, and accountability of the school. Staff accepts responsibility for students’ learning.
2. **High Expectations for Success** – Staff believes and demonstrates that all students can attain mastery of the essential content and skills.
3. **Instructional Leadership** – The principal is an instructional leader, effectively communicating to the public, students and staff the central mission of the school and managing the instructional program to achieve maximum effectiveness.
4. **Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress** – A variety of assessment procedures are used frequently, and the results of assessment are used to improve individual student performance and the instructional program.
5. **Opportunity to Learn and time on Task** – Teachers allocate a significant amount of classroom time to teacher-directed, planned learning activities in the essential content and skills.
6. **Safe and Orderly Environment** – The school climate is not oppressive, but is orderly, purposeful, businesslike, and free from the threat of physical harm.
7. **Home-School Relations** – Parents understand and support the school’s mission and play an important role in helping achieve it.

As indicators of system performance, the Correlates should be considered within a school improvement process. They can, for example, form at least part of the basis for inquiry as schools build their profiles. Moreover, the Correlates offer a “handle” on the sometimes nebulous but critical subject of school climate. The correlates can impact strategies in an improvement plan, while contributing to staff discussion and learning for overall school improvement.



## PART II: PLANNING FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

### ACCREDITING AGENCY REQUIREMENTS

One accreditation requirement of both the Nebraska Department of Education and of the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCACASI) is that schools engage in a school improvement process. The models and processes recommended by each agency share many of the same features. This guide will address the process designed primarily for those districts and schools that are meeting the Nebraska accreditation requirements.

### NEBRASKA ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS

Rule 10, Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Schools, includes the following statements regarding school improvement. Items 009.01A through 009.01B are requirements of all Nebraska public schools and accredited nonpublic schools.

#### 009    School Improvement.

**009.01 Quality Indicator: A systematic on-going process guides planning, implementation, and evaluation and renewal of school improvement activities to meet local and statewide goals and priorities. The school improvement process focuses on improving student learning. The process includes a periodic review by visiting educators who provide consultation to the local school/community in continued accomplishment of plans and goals.**

009.01A The school system develops and implements a school improvement process to promote quality learning for all students. This process includes procedures and strategies to address quality learning, equity, and accountability. In public schools, the process incorporates multicultural education as described in 004.01G. In all school systems, the school improvement process includes the following activities at least once within each five years.

009.01A1 Review and update of a mission or vision statement.

009.01A2 Collection and analysis of data about student performance, demographics, learning climate, and former high school students.

009.01A3 Selection of improvement goals. At least one goal is directed toward improving student performance.

009.01A4 Development and implementation of a plan which includes procedures, strategies, or actions to achieve goals.

009.01A5 Evaluation of progress toward improvement goals.

009.01B The school improvement process includes a visitation by a team of external representatives to review progress and provide written recommendations. A copy of the written recommendations is provided to the Department. The external team visits are conducted at least once each five years.

## **NORTH CENTRAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT REQUIREMENTS**

The North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCACASI) a regional accreditation agency, requires that schools be involved in an improvement process that includes the following:

- Meeting the Strategic Planning Criteria (section SP) of the NCA CASI Standard and Criteria
- Selecting goals based on an analysis of local assessment data and other information
- Focusing on goals to improve student performance
- Implementing an improvement plan that includes strategies and a staff development plan
- Preparing a Documentation Report showing progress in achieving the goals
- Hosting a Quality Assurance Review (External Team Visit) at least once each five years.

NCA schools may use the *Nebraska Framework for School Improvement* as their school improvement guide. Additional information is available at:

<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/NCA/NCA/html> and the Commission web site: <http://www.ncacasi.org>.

## **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LEADERSHIP THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

The role of the Steering Committee (other titles include Leadership Team or School Improvement Team) is central to school improvement. This is the group that organizes and coordinates all school improvement activities. It is recommended that the Steering Committee have at least five members. The committee should represent all stakeholders, and, in most districts, all buildings, but it should not be so large that it becomes unwieldy. Because the process is continuous, length of terms should be established and staggered. The Steering Committee Chair is clearly a key appointment.

### **COMMITMENT TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

Commitment begins at the top. The school system that believes in and supports school improvement will signal its belief in ways such as the following:

- The board regularly schedules time in its agenda for a report of school improvement activities and endorses actions by formally adopting a mission statement, goals, action plan, etc.
- Membership in professional organizations is valued, for example, through system-supported participation in professional conferences and meetings.
- The leadership of the school provides time for staff to carry out the work of the school improvement process. The process cannot succeed if it must depend upon volunteer time alone. Chances might improve, however, if the system matches volunteer time with system-provided time.

### **COMMUNICATING THE PURPOSE**

People are unlikely to commit to a process they do not understand, so care must be taken to remove any mystery about the purpose of continuous school improvement to raise the overall quality of achievement for all students. To secure staff buy-in, those affected by improvement plans must participate in making them. The process must be dynamic, not dormant, so staff needs to hear of plans and developments frequently and regularly. The administrator is responsible for insuring that school improvement is visible and vital, but the administrative staff relies upon and acts through the Steering Committee to carry out much of the work of the process.

### **ESTABLISHING TIME LINES**

One of the functions of the Steering Committee is to establish and monitor time lines. In a continuous process, it is important to maintain momentum and to mark progress. A time line is essential. It should usually span several years with specific detail for the current

year and with clear expectations and deadlines. The Steering Committee should make the timelines known to everybody and should issue regular reports and reminders.

Some goals may be adopted in response to emerging issues at the local, state, or federal levels, and the school may not have several years to plan, implement, and demonstrate progress. This may cause multiple time lines to operate concurrently within the improvement process. It is the responsibility of the Steering Committee to manage and coordinate timelines with subcommittees assisting in the determination of activities and professional development.

## **UPDATING THE MISSION STATEMENT**

Goals are by their nature somewhat transient. That is, goals are adopted; a plan to achieve them is developed and implemented; they are achieved and go into “maintenance.” Mission statements tend to be more permanent. A statement of belief about what students need to know and do and how they are to learn should stand for some time as a reassuring and guiding presence in the daily flow of events. However, just as the statue in the town square needs refurbishing and cleaning from time to time, the mission statement and accompanying statements of values and beliefs need to be revisited and “re-viewed” periodically, if for no better reason than to reaffirm them and remind everybody of what lies at the core. Writing philosophical statements by committee is a daunting task, so much so that one is easily tempted to assign the job to a subcommittee. To do so, however, would neglect the opportunity to engage stakeholders in a stimulating and rewarding examination and declaration of core beliefs and values, a declaration that serves as a touchstone and guide for decision-making and operation.

The principal and/or steering committee may begin by gathering a number of examples of mission/value/belief statements. Request examples from other schools or perform an Internet search. From these examples, select a limited number of good ones, move stakeholders through a process of examining examples, and their own beliefs, and move to a consensus on the best expression of the school’s mission and beliefs. A compelling and novel mission statement is a good outcome, but a better statement is one that is acted upon. It is one thing to declare, “All children can learn.” It is much more important to implement that belief to insure that all children, regardless of limiting factors do, indeed, learn. The periodic review and occasional revision of a school’s mission and beliefs can help translate statement into action.

## **ALIGNING CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, AND ASSESSMENT TO SUPPORT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

Since many local, state, and federal initiatives are intended to improve student achievement, the School Improvement Steering Committee can be the group to integrate all the improvement activities and assure they are mutually supportive. This includes incorporating the Nebraska Department of Education procedures for Improving Learning

for Children with Disabilities (ILCD), the specifications for technology plans, and other state and federal program procedures into the local school improvement process. In addition, there may be other local committees responsible for curriculum development, assessment planning, and/or staff development.

In some districts the same people will assume responsibilities for more than one of these areas. The size of the district will impact committee organization, but regardless of district size, these components are important to quality school improvement.

## **CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

The instructional program should be based on an agreed-upon written curriculum for all subjects in all grades. This should guide teachers in instructional planning and help assure that the district's curriculum is comprehensive, up-to-date, and aligned across content areas. The following components in curriculum development should be considered in school improvement planning:

- Chairpersons for curriculum committees may also be leaders in school improvement committees or coordinate with leaders of goal committees.
- Curriculum committees should coordinate long-range curriculum review, develop and clarify standards and local expectations, assure alignment with standards, and help monitor progress on local improvement goals.
- All staff members should participate routinely in discussion of their respective curriculum areas. This will serve as a source of information in the school improvement process. As ownership of curriculum develops, school improvement goals, common to all staff, can become a focused priority.

## **ASSESSMENT PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

The local assessment plan should guide the school in developing and implementing assessment processes. School leaders should establish an assessment committee to coordinate assessment implementation by all staff and help staff develop assessment literacy and skill in the use of data for guiding instruction.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

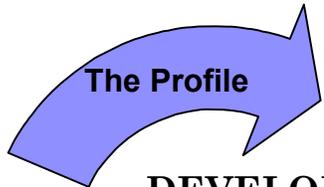
It is crucial that professional development be connected with the school improvement process. This can include whole staff activities, local learning teams, individual work, and other related activities. A professional development coordinating committee or a combination of other local committees may be responsible for the development of this plan.

## **INCORPORATING MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION – WHY AND HOW**

Public school districts are required in Rule 10 (accreditation) to incorporate multicultural education in the school improvement process. Multicultural education has many aspects, but always includes a concern for equity. Equity can be examined through analysis of achievement patterns. Do these patterns suggest that disproportionate numbers of racial or ethnic minorities tend to be concentrated in certain classes or be minimally represented in others? Equity also includes concern for achievement. When class rankings, honor roll membership, ACT scores, and other indicators are examined through disaggregation, are some groups notable by their absence? Disaggregation of data is a necessary component of the multicultural program. Disaggregation allows a staff to see beneath the surface. If an overall dropout rate of less than 2 percent includes a rate of over 30 percent of a particular ethnic sub-group of students, what appears on the surface to be strength may actually be a concern. This analysis and identification of equity needs should assist staff members in selecting and including Action Plan strategies and activities to meet the needs of all students.



## **PART III: THE CONTINUOUS SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS**



### **DEVELOPING THE SCHOOL PROFILE**

The success of school improvement lies in the purposeful and continuing collection, organization, and reporting of relevant data in the School Profile. The core of the Profile is data gathered over time to indicate trend information about student performance and demographics, and other information. The School Profile reports current levels of student performance, disaggregated by subgroups, and places them in the perspective of multiyear trends. It does the same with demographic data, perhaps projecting the trends into the future. It includes perceptual data that quantifies what students, teachers, and others feel or believe about the schools and the educational program. The Profile may address the instructional program, curriculum, assessment, and community data. It should include information about such programs as Special Education, Title I, and Perkins. It may address resources like computer hardware and software, time, and staff. The Profile frequently includes a review of current and emerging trends, also known as an “environmental scan.”

Much of the data should be presented in graphical formats such as charts and tables. Labels, titles, and explanations should clearly indicate grade levels, form of assessment, and dates of administration.

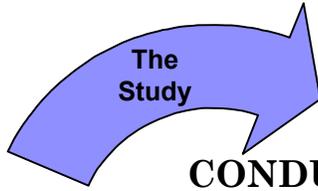
The data-gathering process should be on-going to capture changes in such elements as performance on STARS and other assessments, enrollment, graduates’ college or career progress, etc. The School Profile, therefore, requires annual review and updating.

### **EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS CORRELATES AND THE PROFILE**

Assessment results, enrollment totals, teacher experience, and graduation rates are easily documented in the School Profile and are important data elements that help build an accurate description of present conditions. The Effective Schools Correlates (See page 3) offer a framework on which a staff may conduct a study of climate. They suggest the questions that need to be asked. If a school has high expectations, how does it look? Does it simply set high criteria, or do teachers truly expect all students to learn and set about making those expectations reality? One of the correlates links achievement with time on

task and opportunity to learn (a familiar concept to Nebraska teachers involved in the STARS process). In addition to aligning curriculum to standards, a staff needs to explore enrollment in elective courses and to identify sources of interruption in the learning process. How frequently is the daily schedule disrupted? Is there a pattern to those disruptions? Is there any correlation to performance?

The assessment of Effective Schools Correlates may contribute a great deal of information and insight to the development of the School Profile. The research base upon which they rest suggests that the time spent to explore them is time well spent.



## CONDUCTING THE STUDY

Data presented in the School Profile informs decision-making in the School Improvement Process, but before decision-making can take place, an important step remains: analysis. The Profile serves to identify problems; it does not provide solutions. It may reveal, for example, that reading scores drop between grade 4 and grade 8 – clearly a problem.

Analysis begins by asking, “What does the data indicate?” What may be the causes? What may be the solutions? To answer that question, the Steering committee and other staff first need to determine the accuracy of the data and to establish that a problem truly exists. Trust in the data can be developed through examining trends, triangulating the data, and disaggregating the data. (These actions may have been incorporated in the development of the Profile, in which case the Steering Committee needs only to verify the findings.)

### TREND DATA

Data collected over several years is more useful and more reliable than scores from one year. This is especially true when one works with small classes or groups of students found in many Nebraska systems. As a general rule, if there are fewer than ten students in a class, valid conclusions cannot be drawn. In such cases the school must develop longitudinal data by examining performance over a span of years. Even in larger districts, concentrating on trend data will contribute to a higher degree of confidence in the data.

### TRIANGULATION OF DATA--WHAT AND WHY?

The term *triangulation* is frequently used in this context as a metaphor for seeking multiple sources of confirming evidence. In physical terms, triangulation refers to locating something – a building, a person, an artillery target, etc. – by drawing lines from three or more vantage points. The intersection of those lines marks the “spot.” When a steering committee examines and compares student scores on criterion referenced assessments, norm referenced assessments, and classroom based assessments, they are triangulating, or confirming, the data. Those scores become the baseline data, the “pre data,” against which scores from later assessments, the “post data,” may be compared to measure progress toward goal attainment. The precision with which a geographic location is determined increases with the number of vantage points used in the triangulation process. The confidence with which one can reach a conclusion about student performance or the need for a program also improves with the number of sources of information and opinion one seeks.

## HOW SHOULD THE DATA BE ORGANIZED?

Data should be organized in charts and graphs to help draw out the meaning. Each chart or graph should include a narrative statement, developed by the data committee, or by other staff, indicating the change in student performance, if any, for the time encompassed. For example, a statement might indicate something like this: “This graph shows that student performance in reading comprehension improved slightly between 1999 and 2002.” Be sure that all charts and graphs are clearly labeled to show content area, grade levels, dates, type or name of assessment and any other significant information.

## THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

In simplest terms, an environmental scan consists of looking at present and emerging developments to help us make decisions about future needs. Effective educational leaders engage frequently in this activity because they know students in today’s schools will be living and working in environments vastly changed from today’s world. Educators must continually ask, “Are we preparing students to live in our present world, or in the world of the student’s future?” An environmental scan, by focusing on emerging issues and situations, should help shape target goals and interventions so they fit both current and future needs of students rather than the traditional need of yesterday’s school. A scan can help determine what knowledge and skills will be essential for students to learn in order for them to be successful in the careers and vocations of their futures. It can indicate changes we may anticipate in communication, technology, recreation and leisure, demographics of a community, or issues related to cultural diversity. Without the direction provided by an environmental scan, a school improvement plan is destined to maintain the status quo rather than preparing our students for their futures.

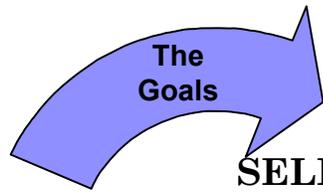
## HOW TO PREPARE A STATEMENT OF ANALYSIS

When all the information is collected and all the graphs and tables containing it have been printed, something else remains: a statement of analysis. The Steering committee or a sub-committee appointed for the purposes of data gathering and analysis need to summarize the data and to draw conclusions. **Even if the data seem to point clearly to a conclusion, that conclusion must be stated clearly in writing.** That statement becomes the rationale for designating target areas, for selecting goals, and for the design and implementation of the action plan. It should not be assumed that the data indicate the same thing to everybody, nor should community members, board members, and external team members be expected to provide their own analyses. The statement need not be long or detailed. Rather, it should consist of brief one- or two-sentence summaries of pertinent data and a conclusion.

## IDENTIFYING TARGET AREAS

The Statements of Analysis should result in a list of potential target areas in which student performance needs to improve. Target areas are typically words or phrases, such as *respect*

*for self and others, mathematics computational skills, or reading comprehension.* These areas will be converted to goals as work continues in school improvement



## SELECTING GOALS

The Steering Committee and staff as a whole review the target areas, data, and supporting rationale. This review will determine goals and may indicate how success will be determined. If sufficient baseline data has not been obtained, it must be gathered at this point. The Steering Committee must remember that the selected goals will be the focus of school improvement activity for some time. Therefore, they must be significant and worthy of the investment of time, energy, and financial resources that will be necessary in order to impact student learning and school improvement.

### HOW MANY GOALS?

The number of goals will depend upon the nature of the goals. If they are significant; that is, if they relate directly to improving learning, and if they involve all or a significant share of the teaching staff, two to three goals may be selected. If the goals are somewhat narrower and involve specific subgroups of the faculty or specific buildings, a longer list may be appropriate. Remember that the process is continuous, so every concern need not be addressed at once.

### TYPES OF GOALS

The school improvement plan may include two or more types of goals. These may include:

**Student Performance Goals** These are goals intended to increase student achievement. At least one of the goals, and preferably more, should be student learning-centered. These goals should begin with “*All students*” and will be written in the active voice.

For example:

- All students will improve reading skills.
- All students will increase knowledge and skills in the use of computer technology.

The Steering Committee should guard against goals such as “Students will be provided a broad curriculum so they may prepare for successful adult careers.” Such goals are too vague for focusing improvement strategies. (Such language may more appropriately fit in the district’s mission statement.)

**Learning Opportunity Goals** These are goals which improve or increase the opportunities or potential for improved learning. They are often goals for adults in the school. Learning opportunity goals could focus on updating curriculum, improving the climate, involving parents, improving facilities, etc.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF WELL-WRITTEN GOALS**

### **GOALS FOCUSED ON IMPROVING STUDENT PERFORMANCE. . .**

- Are stated in a complete sentence with *Students* as the subject
- Are written in active voice with a verb such as *will increase* or *will improve*
- Are free from educational jargon and are unambiguous
- Are measurable, but do not identify the measures to be used nor the expected level of change in the goal itself
- Do not contain the strategies to be used to attain the goal

### **GOALS FOCUSED ON IMPROVING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES. . .**

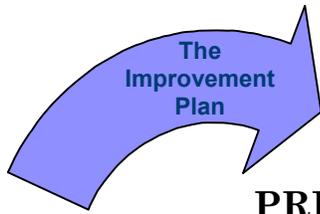
- Are related at least indirectly to improving student learning
- Are free from educational jargon and are unambiguous
- May include target date for completion
- May identify those responsible for implementing action, e.g., All teachers, Administration, etc.

## **DEFINING THE “ESSENCE” OF A GOAL**

Determining evidence of success often depends upon defining the essence, or meaning or intent of the goal. For example, if a goal targets student “responsibility,” care must be taken to insure that everyone agrees on the meaning of the term. To some, it may mean that students remain obedient and attentive in class. To others it may be embodied in homework completion, regular attendance, or a reduction in discipline referrals. Yet to others it may mean the exercise of initiative and personal management or the consideration of the social impact of our actions. While it is true that such affective goals are probably subject to wider interpretations than are cognitive ones, some care needs to be taken to assure that the intended improvement is clear and acceptable to all staff. Even cognitive goals may be subject to interpretations. If a steering committee selects this goal: “All students will improve skills in written communication in all curriculum areas,” what do they wish to be the outcome, the evidence of success? Will spelling improve? Will students write more fluent, longer pieces? Will technical writing improve? The goal statement that tries to incorporate all these outcomes will be too awkward, but there needs to be broad understanding of what “skills in written communication” means.

## **EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS**

When the school staff adopts a goal, they also must decide what success will look like, what will constitute evidence of change, or goal attainment. If care has been taken in building the student profile, baseline performance data will have been collected and arranged in understandable formats. Representative staff members or a designated committee should provide a description of the change or improvement expected for each goal. This statement should be included in the action plan template for each goal and will guide all staff as they work toward achievement of the goal.



## PREPARING AN IMPROVEMENT PLAN

This is time to decide what is to be done to meet the goals. The Improvement Plan (sometimes called the Action Plan) includes clear statements of what is to be done and who is responsible for specific parts of the plan. It includes the time line, any related staff development, and the resources needed to implement the plan. The Improvement Plan identifies what teachers and administrators will do and what resources will be provided to help achieve the goal. If the goal is the destination, then the Improvement Plan is the roadmap.

### SUGGESTED STEPS FOR DEVELOPING THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN:

1. **Select Goal Committees.** Committees should represent the grade levels and content areas included in the goals.
2. **Review/update knowledge base for each goal.**

The following are sources of information for researching potential strategies for the action (or improvement) plan:

**School staff:** The school staff will bring a great deal of expertise to this phase of school improvement. Teams of teachers and administrators in study teams, especially using resources such as those that follow, will be valuable sources of knowledge and experience for selecting strategies for the action plan.

**ESU:** Nebraska's Educational Service Unit staff development offices have resources to assist the development of School Improvement Plans. They can assist in identifying characteristics of effective schools, to steer schools toward sources of information in selected areas, and to assist in the process of school improvement generally.

**Professional organizations:** Professional organizations such as National Council of Teachers of English provide relevant research that can assist school improvement committees or local learning teams.

**Internet:** School improvement is not limited to Nebraska; it is a nation-wide activity. Consequently, many Internet websites related to school improvement generally or to subject areas or strategies specifically can be located through a search engine. As an example, the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) maintains *Pathways to School Improvement*, a website devoted to resources and information about the process and about strategies for achieving improvement goals.

**Nebraska Department of Education:** Staff in Curriculum and other Teams at NDE are a source of help when committees are building Action Plans.

North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement: Schools accredited by NCA will find materials and training opportunities designed to assist in the improvement process. This information can be found on [www.ncacasi.org](http://www.ncacasi.org).

**3. Determine which practices have most potential for success in your school.**

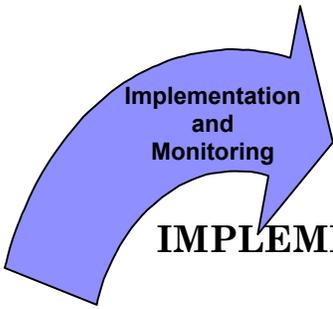
After potential strategies have been identified, each goal committee, with the input of other staff members, will need to identify strategies that appear to have the greatest potential for success. Those are the strategies that should be considered for inclusion in the Improvement Plan.

**4. Select or design an Improvement Plan template or format.**

The template should include space for the goal, the strategies, timelines, staff development, evidence of success, and any other useful information. A sample template is found on page 33.

**5. Select strategies, staff development needs, timelines and resources for each goal**

Based on the strategies selected in Step 3, determine staff development needs, resource requirements, persons with primary responsibility, and a timeline.



## **IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN AND MONITORING PROGRESS**

Implementation is just what its name implies. Teachers and others initiate and carry out the strategies outlined in the Improvement Plan (also called Action Plan). Monitoring is critical to assure that the plan is proceeding as planned and that it is achieving results. When effects fall short of those desired, some mid-course corrections may be in order. Some goals may need review, re-emphasis, and perhaps redirection. Progress reports should be presented regularly to the board and administration, and through them to all stakeholders.

### **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE – HEAD ADMINISTRATOR, STEERING COMMITTEE, GOAL SUB-COMMITTEES, AND SCHOOL STAFF.**

The Steering Committee is responsible for monitoring and reporting the progress of the total Action Plan. The Committee should establish a schedule for feedback from goal area committees and from teachers implementing the strategies in their classrooms. Based upon that feedback, the Steering Committee may decide that the Action Plan and/or the timeline should be revised. Patience here, as elsewhere, is a virtue. Overnight changes in student performance cannot usually be expected. Should performance levels rise after a semester or a year of implementation, the Committee should issue interim reports to the Board and the community regarding the status and progress of the SIP. The Committee's ability to judge effectiveness of the plan will hinge upon the precision with which it earlier identified evidence of success, or the indicators that illustrate or point to changes in student performance.

### **GOAL COMMITTEE ROLE**

Goal Committees may perform many of the same functions as the Steering Committee in this phase. For example, they monitor student performance and report to the Steering Committee. However, their work focuses on the goal to which they have been assigned. Because most Goal Committee members are likely to be teachers charged with classroom implementation, they are positioned to readily detect problems and to see progress. When a problem is detected, the Goal Committee corrects it at the classroom level or recommends system-wide changes to the Steering Committee.

### **CELEBRATION AND CLOSURE**

Continuous School Improvement does not mean that the new plan begins the day after the last one ends. As a practical matter, plans may conclude at the end of the school year in May, and the next one will commence sometime in the following fall. Even were this not true, stakeholders need some time to pause, take a breath, review where they have been, celebrate successes, and diagnose disappointments. Steering committees would be well

advised to consider a celebratory event—or a series of them—to mark the achievement of a school improvement goal. School and community customs will affect the types of celebration – formal congratulations or a gag gift, or other types of recognition. At least part of such ceremonies should include sincere congratulations for hard work and accomplishments—and both will have occurred when everybody understands and commits to school improvement.



## **PART IV: THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL AND THE EXTERNAL TEAM IN PLANNING AND CONDUCTING THE EXTERNAL VISITATION**

### **PURPOSE OF THE VISIT**

The overall purpose of an external team visit is to add an outside, objective view of the progress of the work accomplished by the school. There is a degree of validation of the work of local committees, but the primary purpose is to enlist the professional advice and collaboration of colleagues from outside the district. The relationship is therefore collegial, not supervisory nor evaluative.

The Team Leader is appointed by the Nebraska Department of Education, and team members are selected by the host school in collaboration with the Team Leader. The specific purpose of each visit is determined by the Steering Committee in consultation with the External Team Leader. The Steering Committee should, therefore, include the External Visit on the long-range timeline and determine, well in advance, the intended purpose for each visit.

Team visits typically occur after the action plan has been developed, and again after two-three years of implementation of an action plan. This visit can serve a number of purposes, one of which may be a celebration as visitors verify that goals have been reached and that the process has been successful. By confirming success and congratulating local committees for a job well done, the external team can help energize those appointed to lead the next phases. When the effort has not achieved the planned results, the external team can be helpful in analyzing the process and recommending corrective action for the next improvement plan.

### **PLANNING FOR THE EXTERNAL TEAM VISIT THE SCHOOL'S ROLE**

#### **SCHEDULING THE VISIT**

**The minimum requirement, as specified in Nebraska Accreditation requirements, is one visit each five-years, but schools may request a team visit whenever one would be considered helpful.**

## **CONFERRING WITH THE EXTERNAL LEADER**

Once the team leader has been appointed by NDE, the school should contact the external leader to discuss preliminary information about the school's plans, the timeline (particularly the anticipated dates for external visits), and names of contact persons. Telephone, e-mail, or correspondence all work well for this exchange, but it is also beneficial for the leader to visit the school prior to the first team visit.

The external leader and host school representative (either the Steering Committee Chair or an administrator) should jointly plan the visit. They should discuss and determine the following:

1. Composition of the visiting team (how many people, what is their purpose, what qualifications do they need)
2. Agenda for the visit
3. Logistical and material needs for the team

To successfully assist with the above planning tasks, it is essential that the host school have a clear purpose for the team visits and that the purpose be communicated to the external leader.

## **SELECTING AND INVITING EXTERNAL TEAM MEMBERS**

The host district should select the members of the external team, with the concurrence of the external leader. The size of the team is determined largely by the number of goals to be reviewed and by the number of school buildings in the district. As a minimum, the team must include two members other than the external leader. At least one member should be assigned to each goal; optimally, two members will be assigned to a goal. For multi-building districts, larger teams may be needed.

Team members are usually chosen on the basis of their expertise, so host schools should select team members who can be objective in reviewing improvement plans. This generally means, for example, that previous members of the staff or relatives of current staff members may not be good choices. Once the team is agreed upon, the host district issues invitations.

## **PLANNING THE AGENDA FOR THE TEAM VISIT**

The agenda for each visit is a joint responsibility of the host school and the Team Leader. A number of factors enter the planning stage, including the purpose of the visit, the number of buildings in the system, and whether this is the initial visit or a follow-up. One of the strengths of the continuous improvement model is the collegial relationship that can and should develop among the local staff and their visitors. A two-day visit is recommended to afford team members the time need to develop those relationships.

The External Leader and Host School representative(s) should plan for the following components in the agenda. See sample below:

## Sample Agenda for the External Team Visit

### DAY 1:

- 8:15-8:30 a.m.      **Arrival of Team**  
Welcome by host school representative, refreshments, pick up materials, greetings, etc.
- 8:30-9:00 a.m.      **Team Orientation**  
The Team Leader discusses the purpose and procedures for the visit, especially emphasizing the team role as consultants in helping the school achieve success in the SIP, and the format for the written report. (If the leader wishes the team to use the *School Improvement Rubric* as a device to frame their inquiry and remarks, it should be introduced at this time.)
- 9:00-10:15 a.m.      **Host School Presentation**  
This is a relatively formal presentation by the steering committee and others that includes a chronology of the SIP, committee structures, an overview of data-gathering procedures and instruments, decisions, goal overviews, strategies, issues, questions, etc.
- 10:15-12 noon      **Small Group Meetings**  
Host school committees such as goal committees and others meet with External Team members to present and to discuss details of the local improvement plan.
- Noon      **Lunch**
- 1:00-3:00 p.m.      **Interviews**  
Visit the school building and interview representative staff. Some teachers not included in the SIP committee structure should be contacted so the team may gauge the degree of involvement, understanding, and belief in the improvement process.
- 3:00-4:00 p.m.      **External Team Meeting**  
The team should compare notes and impressions, identify areas for further review or inquiry, and discuss how to handle any problematical matters that have arisen in their meetings with staff members. This would be an appropriate time to review the *School Improvement Rubric* or to use it to frame part of the discussion.

## Sample Agenda for the External Team Visit. . .continued

### DAY 2

8:30-10:30 a.m.

#### **Interviews, Report Drafting**

The team follows up on matters discussed at the conclusion of day 1 or begins drafting the written report. If more than one team member is to draft a section, it is critical that they have time to plan the report.

10:30-Noon

#### **Team Meeting**

Team meets to review and concur on the major content of the visit report. This is a sharing and strategy session during which individual members outline orally or on chart paper what they intend to include in their sections of the report as recommendations to strengthen the SIP or move to next steps. If team members in addition to the Team Leader are to participate in the exit report, that needs to be planned here.

Most importantly, identify which team member the leader should contact if the written remarks are not received by the deadline set by the leader. The final report is due back to the school and to NDE within **three weeks** of the visit, so a one-week deadline is appropriate for team member reports.

NOTE: Before adjourning the team, the leader should determine that expense vouchers (if any) have been turned in appropriately.

Noon

#### **Lunch and Oral Exit Report**

Although the preceding example is typical of many visits, a number of variations are possible. Two full days (or more) will probably be necessary if several buildings must be visited. The visit can begin with a half-day visit starting after lunch. Team orientation and host presentation can take up much of the afternoon. An optional reception and/or dinner may be provided for visitors and hosts to become acquainted.

### **PREPARING MATERIALS AND PLANNING LOGISTICS**

If the external team is to accomplish its purpose, the host school must prepare for the visit by making logistical arrangements and by providing information the team needs. External leaders and their hosts need to confer about and agree upon the following arrangements in planning the visit.

**A. Advance communication with the visiting team members should include:**

1. A written letter of invitation from the host school specifying dates, times, purpose of the visit, and intended assignment and other needed details.
2. Follow-up mailing at least two weeks in advance of the visit that includes a copy of the action plan and any other summary material to assist team members in preparing for the visit.

**B. Logistical matters include providing the following:**

1. A room for the team to meet and carry on discussions in privacy throughout the span of the visit. (Provision of computers with word processing software installed is a helpful option.)
2. Work materials and name tags for visitors
3. Expense reimbursement procedures and forms. (The host district is responsible to reimburse—at rates established by the local board of education—meals, mileage, and lodging expenses of team members.)
4. It may also be advisable to arrange for procedures to follow in the event weather or other circumstances force a postponement of the visit (calling list, radio stations, etc.)

**C. Materials to be furnished by the school at least two weeks prior to the visit:**

- \_\_\_ Summary of school profile
- \_\_\_ School mission
- \_\_\_ Improvement goals
- \_\_\_ Draft of an action plan that includes
  - \_\_\_ Strategies selected to support the improvement goals
  - \_\_\_ Related staff development plan

# CONDUCTING THE EXTERNAL VISIT THE EXTERNAL TEAM LEADER'S ROLE

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LEADER

The NDE Accreditation and School Improvement Section appoints the external leader. This appointment is typically made in September of the visitation year, and is based on a survey sent to each district.

While the work of external leaders is essential, the list of responsibilities is quite short. External leaders are expected to carry out the following:

1. Advise the host school in making preparations for the visit
2. Lead the external team visits
3. Prepare and distribute two copies of a written report of each visit—one to the school and one to Accreditation and School Improvement Section, NDE

Sometimes external leaders are also asked by their host districts to serve as advisors throughout the process. While such arrangements may be helpful to the district and while external leaders may volunteer to provide such assistance, it is neither a required nor expected part of the responsibilities that one accepts with the external leader assignment.

## LEADING THE VISIT

During the visit, the external leader orients, guides and supports the team in carrying out the purpose for the visit. The agenda (as described on page 24) is implemented to help the team prepare a report of findings and recommendations for the host school. In general, the leader should:

- Help all team members understand the purpose of the visit and their individual roles
- Organize and manage the visit agenda, discussion, and report preparation in order to provide a quality report to help the school accomplish school improvement purposes and goals

### **A. Orientation Meeting. During the orientation meeting, the team leader should:**

1. Assist all team members in understanding the purpose for the visit and the role of each person
2. Review the agenda for the visit to assure that team members follow the plan and purpose for the day(s)

3. Distribute an outline for the written report and provide directions for completing the report
4. Distribute all or parts of the Nebraska School Improvement Rubric and discuss how it may be used to fulfill the purpose for the visit

**B. Oral Presentation By Host School Representatives.** The Steering Committee or other representatives of the host school must orally present information about local school improvement. A time for this presentation must be included in the agenda. This orientation should include:

1. A brief history of the improvement process and a description of the committee structure
2. A description of the school profile, including the methods by which it was developed, along with the decisions that grew from collected data
3. An explanation of how goals are related to profile data and how the steering committee plans to measure improvement
4. If the team is to review the Action Plan, an explanation of how and why strategies were selected as well as how success is to be measured
5. Staff development activities and plans connected with the school improvement process

Some of this information may be included in a written report, sent to the team in advance; but it must also be presented orally so visitors can gain a deeper understanding and have an opportunity to ask questions about the progress.

**C. Visitation in the School.** A school building visit can be important in contributing to a useful team report. Team members may be assigned to visit specific buildings, staff members, areas, or functions. This should provide supportive details or additional insight to the school improvement process.

**D. Small Group Meetings.** It is usually helpful for visiting team members or subcommittees to discuss accomplishments and plans with local subcommittees, particularly goal committees. Such meetings enable team members to develop a fuller understanding of the area to which they have been assigned and assist them in writing their section of the team report.

**E. Team Meeting Time.** This is time for the team to review findings and to discuss and agree upon successes and recommendations to be included in the external team report. This time should be scheduled near the end of the visitation and should be chaired by the External Leader.

**F. Oral Exit Report.** At the conclusion of the visit, an oral exit report should be presented by the external team as a whole or by representation of the team. The exit

report should be presented to the steering committee and administration, but is frequently open to anyone interested in hearing it, including faculty, school board, and community members. The oral report is a summary of the team's impressions, concerns, and recommendations. This should include general commentary about the improvement process, compliments to the staff for their accomplishments, encouragement for their efforts, and recommendations for continued implementation of the improvement plan or process.

## **PREPARING THE EXTERNAL TEAM REPORT**

The External Team Leader is responsible for editing and preparing the final copy of the report and for forwarding one copy to the host school and one copy to the Accreditation and School Improvement Section, Nebraska Department of Education, Box 94987, Lincoln 68509.

As editor, the team leader is expected not only to proofread team members' contributions and to correct for "typos" and mechanical and grammatical errors, but also to make such changes as the leader believes will improve the report's cohesion and logical flow. The primary concern is to produce a report that is clear, accurate, and useful to the school. **Copies of the report should be sent to NDE and the school within three weeks of the conclusion of the visit.** A recommended outline for the full report is on page 30.

## CONTENTS OF THE EXTERNAL TEAM REPORT

Each report should contain the following:

- I. **Title Page** (school name, date of visit).
- II. **Table of Contents**
- III. **Team Members** (names, positions, schools or agencies)
- IV. **Purpose** (purpose for the visit)
- V. **School Improvement Goals** (a list of the goals identified by the host district)
- VI. **The Improvement Process** This section of the report should assist the Steering Committee in continued leadership of the School Improvement Process. It may also address topics, such as the school profile, that impact all goal areas.
  - A. **Successes** (components of the process completed successfully or functioning well)
  - B. **Recommendations to the Steering Committee** for leading and managing the school improvement process.
- VII. **Action Plan Reports.** Each goal/action plan is addressed separately by the member(s) of the team assigned to that goal. The Team Report should include separate sections that correspond with each school improvement goal.
  - A. **Introductory comments.** This section introduces the reader to this section of the report
  - B. **Successful activities or strategies; and/or significant accomplishments.** This section should affirm for the host school those activities that have been successfully accomplished or hold promise for success.
  - C. **Recommendations for adjustments or next steps.** This section provides advice and suggestions for consideration by the local district staff.
  - D. **Respond to questions or requests by the Steering or Target Area Goal Committee.** Occasionally, local committees may ask for particular information, for resources, for close scrutiny of an element of their plan. If such questions are not previously addressed, they may be answered here.

# APPENDIX

# SELECTING IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

School Improvement Goal:

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A. Research Needed to Determine Quality Strategies

- *Ex.: Review professional resource materials (learning team)*
- *Review web site for . . . . .*
- *Attend Excellence in Education Conference*
- *Confer with ESU staff*

B. Potential Strategies for Consideration

- 
- 
- 
- 

C. Strategies Selected

- 
-

### SAMPLE ACTION PLAN

Target Area: \_\_\_\_\_ Committee Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Target Area Goal: \_\_\_\_\_ Committee Members: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategy: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity	Person Responsible	Timeline		Resources	Staff Development Related to Goal
		Start	Complete		
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
<b>Evidence of Success in achieving the goal: (How will we know that the school has achieved this goal?)</b>					

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT RUBRIC**

September 2004

**I. COMMITMENT, PLANNING, ORGANIZATION**

	<b>Ineffective (1)*</b>	<b>Effective (3)*</b>	<b>Most Effective (5)*</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Awareness</b>	Few staff members display knowledge and understanding of the school improvement process (SIP)	Many staff members know about the purpose and procedures of the SIP.	All or nearly all staff members know and understand the purpose and procedures of the SIP..	
<b>Commitment</b>	Few staff members support the school improvement process.	Many staff members support the school improvement process.	All or nearly all staff support the school improvement process.	
<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>	Few staff understand or support the leadership structure of the school improvement process.	Many staff understand and support the leadership structure of the school improvement process.	All or nearly all staff understand and support the leadership structure of the school improvement process.	
<b>Committee Composition</b>	Membership of steering committee lacks rationale for selection, is not representative of all groups, or consists of volunteers only.	Steering committee membership is representative of staff and administration.	All groups are represented in the committee structure, including (when appropriate) community and student body.	
<b>Timeline</b>	The timeline identifies only the end of the 5-year cycle and the external team visit.	The timeline also identifies dates for significant events and activities of the SIP.	The timeline identifies specific dates for completion of each phase or activity.	
<b>Mission Statement Development</b>	Few staff members and no community members participate in the development of the mission statement.	Many staff members and some community members participate in the development of the mission statement.	All staff members and many community members participate in the development of the mission statement.	
<b>Mission Statement</b>	The mission statement is lengthy, jargon-filled, and apparently unconnected to decision-making.	The mission statement is clear and direct, but its connection to decision making is not always apparent	The mission statement is memorable and provides a rationale for many of the decisions in the improvement process	
<b>Leadership</b>	Steering committee meets irregularly and exerts little or no control over process	Steering committee meets on a regular schedule and reports progress to administration.	Steering committee meets on a regular schedule, coordinates and monitors improvement activities, and keeps all staff members informed.	

\*Numbers are relevant to each row, but are not intended to be averaged for an overall score for the improvement process. They may be used for self-analysis as a staff looks for progress over time in the sophistication and effectiveness of the process.

**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT RUBRIC**

September 2004

**II. GATHERING AND ANALYZING DATA**

	<b>Ineffective (1)*</b>	<b>Effective (3)*</b>	<b>Most Effective (5)*</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Community Data</b>	The profile committee collects no community information or collects irrelevant and unorganized community information and does not relate it to school improvement	The profile committee collects, organizes, and presents community information relevant to the SIP.	The profile committee collects, organizes and clearly presents community information, with an analysis of the relation of that information to the SIP.	
<b>Student Demographic Data</b>	The school profile contains little or no student demographic data.	The school profile contains longitudinal demographic data, including projections for future enrollments, and an analysis of the trends.	The school profile contains comprehensive, disaggregated, and longitudinal demographic data including subject enrollment trends and an analysis of the data.	
<b>Student Performance Data</b>	The collection of student performance data meets state and federal requirements but lacks analysis (or bases analysis based on minimal data)	Multiple sources of longitudinal performance data (NRT, CRT, classroom assessments, etc.) are clearly organized, disaggregated where appropriate, graphically displayed and at least superficially analyzed.	In addition to a comprehensive collection and clear presentation of performance data collected over time, the school profile contains a thoughtful analysis of the implications drawn from that data.	
<b>Data Collection and Reporting Process</b>	The school profile contains limited or irrelevant data collected irregularly from a few sources and lacks organization.	Data collection is an on-going process drawing from many sources. Information is clearly organized and graphically displayed.	The data collection process is comprehensive, continuous, and focused on trend data. Results are appropriately disaggregated, clearly presented, and thoroughly analyzed.	
<b>Data Display</b>	Display of data is unclear, unexplained, and difficult to interpret.	Data is displayed in clearly labeled graphs and charts.	Data is displayed in clearly labeled graphs and charts accompanied by an explanatory narrative.	
<b>Use of Data for Decision-making</b>	School profile data appears unrelated to school improvement decisions.	School profile data is analyzed and is generally used to guide goal selection.	The school prepares a description of its strengths and needs based on the school profile. A process of applying these conclusions to decision-making and goal setting is documented. Further diagnostic data needs (if any) are identified.	

**III. TARGET AREA GOALS**

	<b>Ineffective (1)*</b>	<b>Effective (3)*</b>	<b>Most Effective (5)*</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Use of Data in Goal Selection</b>	The school makes no connections between the school profile and the goals selected.	The school makes connections between profile data and each goal, although the connection may be implied rather than expressed.	The school makes clear, logical, and expressed connections between data in the school profile and the goals selected.	
<b>Focus</b>	No goals focus on student performance, and goals are unrelated to the mission statement.	At least one goal focuses on student performance and is at least broadly supportive of the school's mission.	All performance goals clearly focus on student performance and support the mission statement.	
<b>Scope and Impact</b>	Performance goals refer to some, not all students, and/or their achievement would do little to improve learning and performance for most students.	Performance goals refer to all students, and their achievement would positively affect learning for many students.	Performance goals clearly refer to all students, and their achievement would significantly improve learning and performance for all students.	
<b>Measurability</b>	The school cannot determine goal achievement because the goals rest on "soft" data such as teacher opinion, because only one measure of student performance provides the rationale, or because baseline levels of performance have not been established.	The school can determine goal achievement because most goals are measurable and rest on multiple sources of data that serve as baseline levels.	The school can clearly determine goal achievement because baseline levels of student performance from at least three sources support all student performance goals.	
<b>Goal Statements</b>	Goal statements lack a growth verb, are jargon-filled, or are ambiguous.	Goal statements contain a growth verb, are clearly worded and unambiguous.	Goal statements are clear to all readers, and staff understands the intent or "essence" of each goal.	

## IV. THE ACTION PLAN

	Ineffective (1)*	Effective (3)*	Most Effective (5)*	Comments
<b>Staff Involvement</b>	Few staff members participate in preparing or are aware of the action plan.	Many staff members participate in developing the action plan or are informed of progress	All staff participate in or are regularly informed about the development of the action plan.	
<b>Selection of Improvement Strategies</b>	Strategies are based on suggestions of a few staff members.	Strategies are selected based on thoughtful review or study of resource materials, workshop participation, local learning teams, etc.	All or representative staff review or study potential improvement strategies and participate in selecting those with most potential for improving student learning.	
<b>Strategies/Interventions</b>	Few strategies align with goals or are differentiated to meet specific needs of subgroups.	All strategies align with the general intent of the goal, and some are differentiated to meet specific needs of identified subgroups.	All strategies align with the goal and are tailored to the specific needs of identified subgroups.	
<b>Resources</b>	The action plan does not clearly identify needed resources or align them with goals.	The action plan identifies needed resources and aligns them with most goals in the initial years of the improvement cycle.	The action plan identifies and aligns specific resources with each goal throughout the improvement cycle.	
<b>Responsibilities</b>	The action plan assigns no responsibilities or authority to use allocated resources.	The action plan assigns responsibilities and authority to groups of staff members.	The action plan clearly assigns responsibilities, expectations and authority among individuals and groups.	
<b>Staff development</b>	The action plan includes limited staff development; staff members are expected to seek their own professional development in relation to goals.	The action plan includes a staff development plan related to goals.	The action plan includes immediate and long-range staff development for goals and strategies at the knowledge and skill level with follow-up activities as necessary.	
<b>Evidence of Success</b>	The Action Plan does not establish evidence of success or limits that evidence to a single source, such as NRT scores	The Action Plan establishes evidence of success based on results of multiple assessments of student performance compared to baseline data.	The Action Plan establishes evidence of success based on results of multiple assessments disaggregated to measure achievement of identified subgroups compared to baseline data.	

**V. IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE ACTION PLAN**

	<b>Ineffective (1)*</b>	<b>Effective (3)*</b>	<b>Most Effective (5)*</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Implementation Leadership</b>	Few staff understand the leadership structure for the implementation phase or are unsure of administrative support for implementation decisions.	Many staff understand the leadership structure for implementation and assume administrative support of implementation decisions.	All staff understand the leadership structure, which consists of the steering committee, working through target area goal committees with the support of the administration.	
<b>Time Management</b>	The school calendar provides little or no time for staff members to plan and monitor implementation.	The school calendar includes planned times for those charged with implementing and monitoring the action plan.	The school calendar provides time for reflection, discussion, and adjustment of strategies; for review of student work; and for necessary staff development.	
<b>Data Collection</b>	The school collects no formative data during implementation.	The school collects annual NRT and CRT results as formative data.	The school collects formative data following a planned data collection schedule using multiple sources of performance data, including classroom assessment, NRT, and CRT results.	
<b>Monitoring the Implementation</b>	The steering committee pays little or no attention to how strategies are being implemented.	The steering committee periodically receives information from staff to determine success of implementation.	The steering committee regularly receives information from staff and on the basis of that information adjusts the action plan as necessary.	

**VI. REVIEW AND UPDATE THE ACTION PLAN**

	<b>Ineffective (1)*</b>	<b>Effective (3)*</b>	<b>Most Effective (5)*</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Assessment of Results</b>	The school does not assess formative or cumulative results of the improvement process.	The school assesses cumulative results of the process by comparing performance results with baseline data.	The school regularly assesses formative results and prepares a report of cumulative results including a graphic display of pre- and post- results and a brief but insightful narrative description of progress.	
<b>Analysis of Results</b>	The school prepares no analysis of results.	The school prepares a description of changes from baseline performance levels.	The school compares pre- and post- performance levels, reports the results graphically and clearly, disaggregates results when appropriate, and organizes the information to assist in planning for the next cycle.	
<b>Use of Results</b>	The school reports the obvious results (performance comparisons) to the board and the public but takes no further action.	The school reports the results of the improvement process, reviews results and prepares recommendations for goals in the next improvement cycle.	The school reports the results of the improvement process, reviews the results, recognizes and celebrates successes and analyzes causes of unsatisfactory results. This analysis leads to recommendations for the steering and action plan committees in the next cycle.	

Rubric Update Committee: Barb Elliott, ESU #9; Rex Filmer, NDE; Vernon Fisher, Lincoln Public Schools; Barb Friesth, ESU #7; Don Fritz, ESU #6; Pat Geary, ESU #3; Lynne Klemke, Garden County High School; Freida Lange, ESU #16; Michelle Lembke, ESU #13; Bob Lungrin, ESU #10; Dick Moore, Chadron Public School; Donlynn Rice, NDE; Cyndi Rotter-Hansen, Battle Creek Public School; Tom Seib, Pius X High School.