
DATA-BASED SCHOOL ACTION PLANNING
for Improved Student Learning
FACILITATOR'S MANUAL

Introduction and the Facilitator's Role

INTENT OF THIS WORKBOOK:

This workbook has been designed to make it possible for schools to do practical, realistic, useful action plans for student improvement. The results are also intended to support school growth plans, and to meet provincial requirements. It is intended for use with a representative group of staff, parent advisory council members, and administration of a school. Students may also be involved where appropriate.

The process is based on a continuous learning perspective, which celebrates accomplishments and learnings from the past, and acknowledges what needs to be worked on in the future.

ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR :

This process starts from the standpoint that wise plans result from pulling together the insights and wisdom of the stakeholders. With carefully planned processes, a representative group of staff, school council members, and administration can work together productively to create plans that all are committed to carrying out. With commitment from all stakeholders, positive change is much easier to accomplish.

The role of the facilitator in this process is to ask questions and provide the structure around the task that allows the best wisdom of the group to surface. The facilitator is not an expert who has the "right" answers, but the one who has the questions. The workbook provides the logical steps that will result in carefully thought-through plans.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK:

Preparation:

- Think through who needs to participate in the process. The steps are designed to be used with a group of up to 20 or so without adaptation. For best results, include as many staff as possible, the principal and vice-principal, representatives of the school council, and students where appropriate.
- Choose the facilitator - the facilitator should understand the situation, but not feel compelled to participate in the process. It is necessary that the facilitator trusts the group's wisdom and the process.
- Set the time and make invitations. The whole process should take no more than 5 hours. Although it is best to do it all at once, it can be broken up into a 1-hour and a 4-hour session, or 1-, 2-, and 2-hour sessions, with reflective time between sessions.
- Gather the relevant information about school achievement ahead of time, and make sure there are enough copies for everyone in the planning session.
- Distribute data for study before the planning session if possible.
- Make copies of pages 4-7 for each participant, with extras of page 6.
- The facilitator needs to "walk through" the process as described on page 2 ahead of time, and make sure each step is clear.
- Set up the room in a rectangle or circle, or around tables in small groups, not in theatre style. Each person should be able to see other participants and the "front" of the room. The "front" of the room should be a flat blank wall or a blackboard. If there is no board, a flipchart is useful.

With the group:

Follow the steps as described in overview on page 2 and in detail on pages 3-7.

Afterward:

Ensure that work plans are collected from each group, and are documented verbatim. If necessary, a small group may take the results through a further refinement to meet requirements.

Follow up on plans to celebrate accomplishments, and unblock any actions that get stuck.

At the end of the year, facilitate a review that evaluates progress and makes plans for the next year.

Data-Based School Action Planning: Procedures Overview

WHOLE GROUP

INTRODUCTION

1. Open the workshop
2. Give the context
3. Hold the conversation "Interpreting School Data"
4. Make assignments to action planning teams, one for each priority
5. Introduce the action planning workbook:
6. Determine how many years you are planning for (i.e. 3 year, 2 year and 1 year goals)
7. Tell people how much time they have to work.

60 min.

RATIONAL AIM (S)

clear, step-by-step priorities, goals and action plans for improved student learning within the school

EXPERIENTIAL AIM (S)

commitment to a defined task; motivation to accomplish tasks

ACTION PLANNING TEAMS

DETERMINE THE GOALS

1. Write the name of the Priority on the line.
2. List strengths
3. List weaknesses
4. List benefits
5. List dangers
6. Brainstorm possible goals...
7. Write down Goals and dates

(suggestion: one three-year goal, and one one-year goal)

30 min.

DECIDE SPECIFIC ACTIONS AND INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

8. Write down Priority
9. Copy first Goal and date (from step 7.)
10. List problems & assets of students
11. List actions that will address the problems, build on assets, and accomplish the goal.
12. Sequence actions...
13. State the visible indicators that will measure success.

(Repeat steps 9-13 for each 1-yr. goal.)

30 min.

CREATE THE ACTION TIMELINE

14. Write down Priority
15. Copy Goals and Indicators.
16. Divide timeline into time blocks. Write actions in timeline
17. Name Impl. Team
18. Write down costs

Write Goals. from 15, each action from 16, Imple. Team from 17, Cost from 18, each on a separate card. Put on wall timeline for plenary session (Sample layout - p. 9)

30 min.

WHOLE GROUP

COORDINATE THE GROUP'S PLANS

INTRODUCE THE PLENARY PROCESS

ONE TEAM REPORTS (uninterrupted)

1. Goals and indicators.
2. Quick summary of actions
3. Cost
4. Implementing team

WHOLE GROUP RESPONDS

1. Questions of *clarity*
2. Are these the goals we need? (adjust)
3. Are these the actions that will make them happen? (adjust)
4. Celebrate!

Repeat for each team.

FINAL CONSENSUS

1. Is this the overall plan we need? (adjust)
2. Celebrate!

90 min.

CONCLUSION

REFLECT ON THE WORKSHOP

NEXT STEPS

- Documenting-who will do it, and when will results be available?
- Refining the report - who will take it the next step?
- Evaluating progress at the end of each year - how will it be done?

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CLOSING

30 min.

Interpreting School Data

Ahead of time: Select relevant school data from the list and make copies.

- **District data** : District goals and indicators
- **Provincial Data** : EQAO school achievement data, Foundation Skills Assessment, Provincial Exams, Scholarships, Graduating with Honours, etc.
- **School data** : Reporting information, Report Cards, Parent/Teacher Conferences, Demographics, Parent/Community context, Exemplars, Representative student portfolios, Facility information, etc.

Pass out copies to all participants:

Take a short time to skim through the data.

(This may be done in small groups, highlighting relevant facts. A “jigsaw method” may be used where small groups focus on certain sections of the data, then share observations.)

Lead a Focused Conversation on the data:

Objective level:

What data catches your eye?

What questions of clarity do you have? - What is unclear?

Reflective level:

What surprises you in this information?

What most concerns you?

How does this data compare with your intuitive or personal experience of students’ achievements?

Interpretive level:

Where are we strong relative to expectations? (Write on board.)

Where are we weak relative to expectations? (Write on board.)

What may be some of the underlying causes?

Which of these is most important for you? Why?

Which of these needs to be dealt with first? Why?

What are some emerging themes in all this information?(Write on board.)

Decisional level:

From the standpoint of building on our strengths and dealing with weaknesses, what subjects or strands do you hear the group saying are the highest priorities for improvement in our school? (Write on board.)

Which do you hear the group saying are the lowest priorities at this time?

What are the (three or four) of these high priority subjects or strands that we most need to focus on for improvement in the next few years?

Choose a manageable number of priority subjects or strands for school improvement (more than three or four is probably not manageable).

Decide who will work on the plans (and the actions) for each priority.

Turn to the following workbook to create an action plan for each priority.

DATA-BASED SCHOOL ACTION PLANNING WORKBOOK

for Improved Student Learning

1. PRIORITY

Write in the name of the priority.

A D V A N T A G E S

2. STRENGTHS

In implementing this priority at this time, we have the following strengths:

P
R
E
S
E
N
T

L I M I T S

3. WEAKNESSES

In implementing this priority at this time, we have the following weaknesses:

4. BENEFITS

In the future, the benefits of implementing this priority are:

F
U
T
U
R
E

5. DANGERS

In the future, the dangers of implementing this priority are:

6. POSSIBLE GOALS

Brainstorm possible goals that build on the advantages and acknowledge the limits.

7. GOALS

Choose goals which • are catalytic, • are realistic,

- will have a substantial impact, • will inspire commitment and action,
- are measurable, • are focused on student achievement, • are simply stated.

eg. "all students will be reading at or above grade level by June 2000"

Taking all the above into consideration, we are committed to the following goals:

_____ by _____ (date)

_____ by _____ (date)

_____ by _____ (date)

(recommended: one three-year goal and one or two one-year goals)

8. PRIORITY

Write the name of the priority on this line.

9. GOAL

Write the goal that you are committed to on this line (from step 7).

10. SPECIFIC ACTIONS

What problems are the students demonstrating that are blocking their achieving this goal? (brainstorm)

-
-
-

What assets/strengths do students have that will assist them in achieving this goal? (brainstorm)

-
-
-

11. What specific actions can you take to address the problems, build on the assets and accomplish the goal indicated above?

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

12. Number the actions in the sequence that you will do them.

13. INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

What are the concrete, measurable outcomes or results that will indicate that you have reached this goal? How will they be measured?

e.g. "90% of students will be at the appropriate benchmark level on the Writing Assessment."
or "data from the report card will reflect the increase"

14. PRIORITY

Write the name of the priority on this line.

16. ACTION TIMELINE

Divide the timeline into the appropriate number of blocks and write the actions (from step 12) that you have selected in the appropriate timeblock on this timeline.

15. GOAL AND INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

Copy from step 7 and from step 13.

17. IMPLEMENTING TEAM

Who will be responsible for implementing this action plan? (at least one person in the planning group; name, not roles)

18. COSTS AND RESOURCES

Write the costs (time and money) of implementing this action plan on lines below:

MONEY _____

TIME _____

OTHER _____

Action Plan Evaluation

A Focused Conversation to Evaluate Action Plans:

This conversation is designed to debrief and evaluate the work of the teams in carrying out action plans. It compares intended and actual outcomes, and allows for learning that can be used to make the next round of action planning more successful.

Gather the “indicators of success” information that was named in the action planning process. Give the group a chance to look carefully at the data.

Then lead a focused conversation on the indicators.

Objective Questions:

- 1) What do you notice about these indicators?
- 2) What questions of clarity do you have about these indicators?

Reflective Questions:

- 3) What surprises you here?
- 4) What is exciting?
- 5) What is disappointing?

Interpretive Questions:

- 6) What differences do you notice in what we intended to accomplish and what we actually accomplished?
(both successes and where there are shortfalls)
- 7) What are possible reasons for these differences?

Decisional Questions:

- 8) What have we learned about what we need to do in our action plans for next year?

Celebrate the successes and commitment of the group!

Go through the action planning process again to plan actions for the next period of time.

Sample Action Plan Timeline

Sample of the Timeline of Action Plans																	
Priority	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	1 Year Goals	3-Year Goals	Indicators of Success	Implementing Team	Costs
Communication in Math																	
Level of Instruction Expectations																	
Problem Solving																	
Sustaining Community Involvement																	