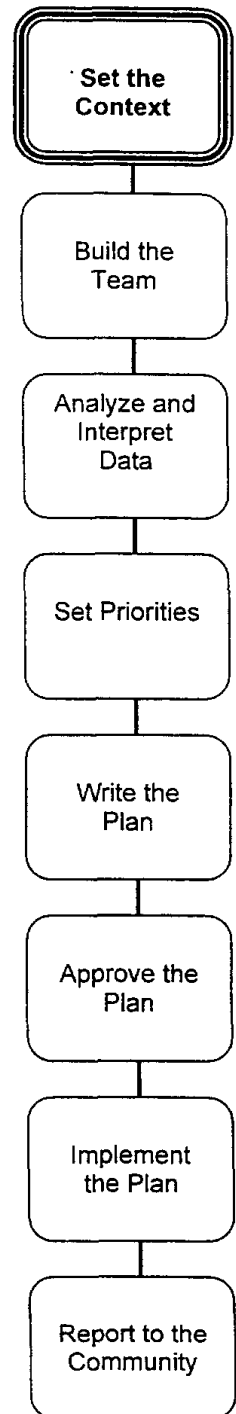


EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE

Set the Context for Action Planning

Action planning is the key to continuous school improvement. It allows for a mapping out of tasks that will result in improved student performance. Real student data (standards-based assessments, norm-referenced tests, classroom assessments, etc.) are collected, reviewed, and analyzed in order to create doable strategies with specific timelines and targets. Action plans developed at the school building level have the greatest impact on student achievement when those closest to the implementation of strategies, *teachers*, are members of the action planning team.



Action Planning: The Key to Continuous Improvement

Why action planning?

Action planning is the key to continuous school improvement. It ensures that the educational programs students receive will provide the content, knowledge and skills to meet rigorous academic standards. Action planning focuses the efforts of educators on measureable goals. It relies on student performance results that are collected, reviewed, and analyzed. Action plans developed at the school building level have the greatest impact on student achievement when those closest to the implementation of strategies, *teachers*, are members of the action planning team. Through action planning, *equity and excellence* can be achieved. We can increase the number of students who meet or exceed standards, and we can ensure equity by decreasing the gaps in performance between different groups of students.

What if you already have an action plan?

Consider the following if you have developed an action plan:

- Is your current action plan related to standards?
- Is the plan based on student performance data?
- Are the goals cast in terms of student performance results?

What is the relationship of an action plan to a strategic plan?

A good strategic plan should include among its goals strategies to improve student learning. Ideally, your action plan will dovetail with the strategic plan. The difference is that the action plan should be cast in terms of student achievement that are keyed to state and local comprehensive assessments. The goals in your action plan are student performance targets. All of the activities, especially professional development and curriculum work, should be focused on attaining those goals. For example, a strategic plan goal may be deemed as successful or completed when you have provided all middle school staff with training in

Key Ideas



The Action Planning Process

- ▶ Set the context
- ▶ Build the team
- ▶ Analyze and interpret data
- ▶ Set priorities
- ▶ Write the plan
- ▶ Approve the plan
- ▶ Implement the plan
- ▶ Report to the community

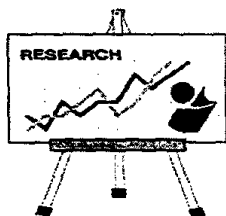
Strategic plans are not action plans

- ▶ strategic plans address all aspects of the school
- ▶ strategic plans have broad goals
- ▶ strategic plans are developed for a 3-5 year period

Action Plans

- ▶ action plans have goals focused on student achievement
- ▶ action plans are reviewed and updated annually

Action Plans are written in terms of student achievement



"Data is an invaluable tool which tells us what is working, what is not, and how to monitor and adjust our efforts toward improved student performance."

Source: Schomaker, Mike. (1996). *Results: The Key to Continuous Improvement*, ASCD, Alexandria, VA

See Action Planning Rules on page (iv)

standards-based assessment. An action plan that had similar training as a component would not be considered successful unless there was a resultant improvement in the number of students achieving the standards. In addition, strategic plans generally have a broader scope and longer time frame than action plans.

Why use data?

The foundation for action planning is student performance data. An action planning team purposefully and intentionally uses data to drive planning and decision making with the singular goal of improving how well students achieve. Essential elements of data use are:

- Gathering and analyzing data on progress and achievement
- Setting clear student achievement goals based on data (For example, by April 1999, 70 % of 4th grade students will achieve the standard on the New Standards Reference Exam /Language Arts, Basic Reading.)
- Using data to monitor ongoing progress toward meeting student achievement goals

Important!

Successful student achievement occurs when students in a school are meeting or exceeding *Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities* or comparable standards. Action plans are created to assist all students in meeting the standards. Activities, such as curriculum alignment, staff development courses, and review of staffing patterns are strategies which might be part of the action plan. The ultimate goal is to have students meet standards. The performance targets of the action plan must be clearly stated in terms of student results using measurable data that serve as signposts for helping all students reach standards.

This year schools will receive results from state-level assessments in early reading, mathematics, English/language arts, and science. As schools develop their action plans, they should consider state results as well as local data to help focus their plans on the most underserved students and the highest priority area(s).