

Approaching Continuous Improvement By Thinking and Planning Strategically at the District Level

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System Change is a challenging activity and Strategic Planning is very different in the era of fast turn around and the demands of reform. This program focuses on results at the system level and uses a 90-day action planning process designed to align the building and district initiatives that have a direct impact on the classroom and all aspects of district operations.

The process is based on district indicators in the MDE district reporting process and the AdvancED standards. This program will also detail the process used by the Southfield School District prior to achieving District Accreditation

<http://www.southfield.k12.mi.us/page.cfm?p=3589>

Defining Strategic Thinking

- Challenging assumptions and thinking out of the box
- See the big picture and consider all sides of an issue
- strategic thinking and planning are “distinct, but interrelated and complementary thought processes

Strategic Thinking vs. Strategic Planning

Vision of the Future

Strategic Thinking: Only the shape of the future can be predicted.

Strategic Planning: A future that is predictable and specifiable in detail.

Issues to Consider

- Logistics
- Defining Initiatives
- Self Study
- 90 Day Planning
- Reporting
- New Job Accountabilities

District Level Leadership Issues

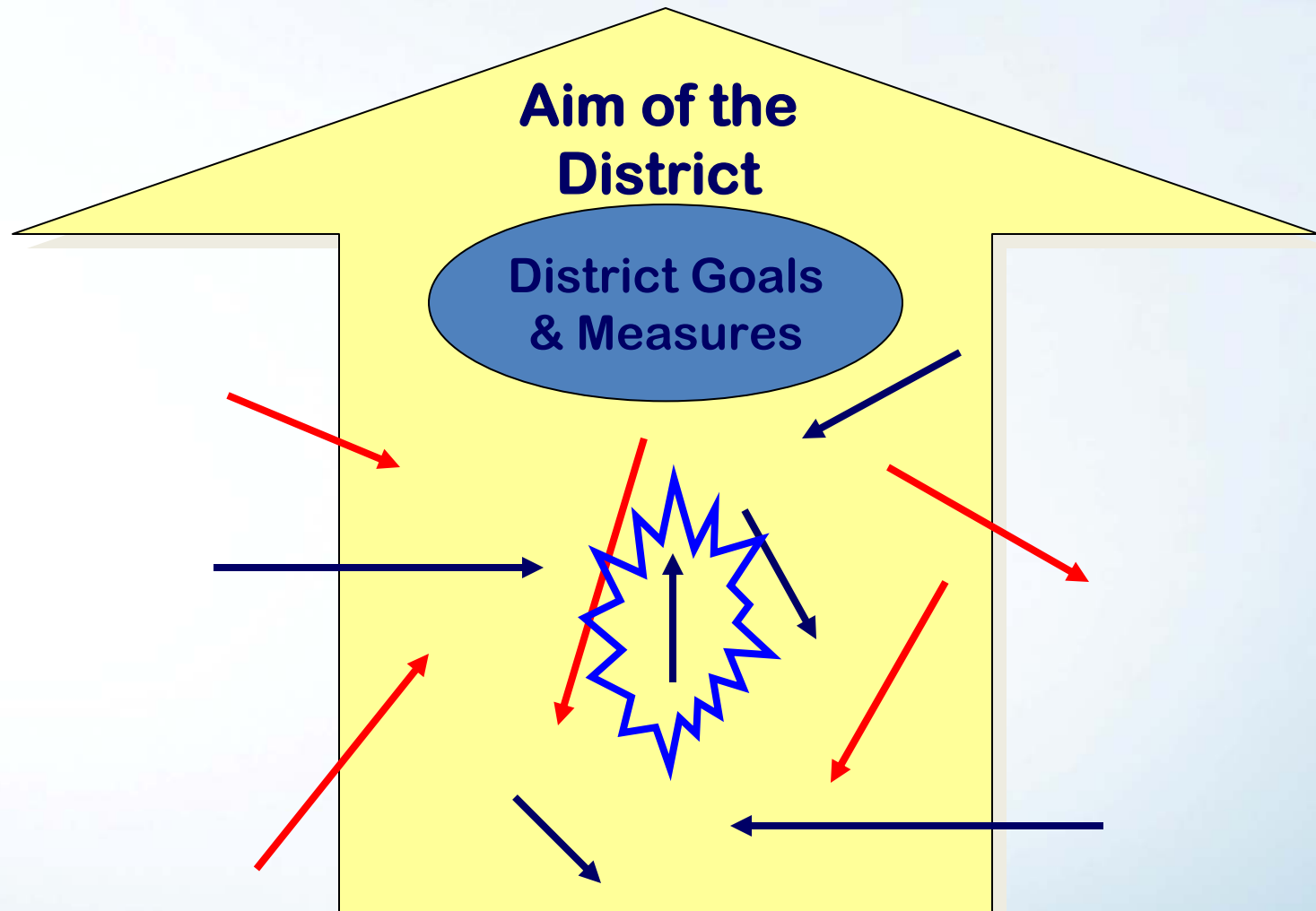
- Goals aligned with building level goals
- Non-negotiables
- Board Alignment
- Use of resources supporting instruction and achievement
- Monitoring
- Defined autonomy

Keys to 21st Century Learning

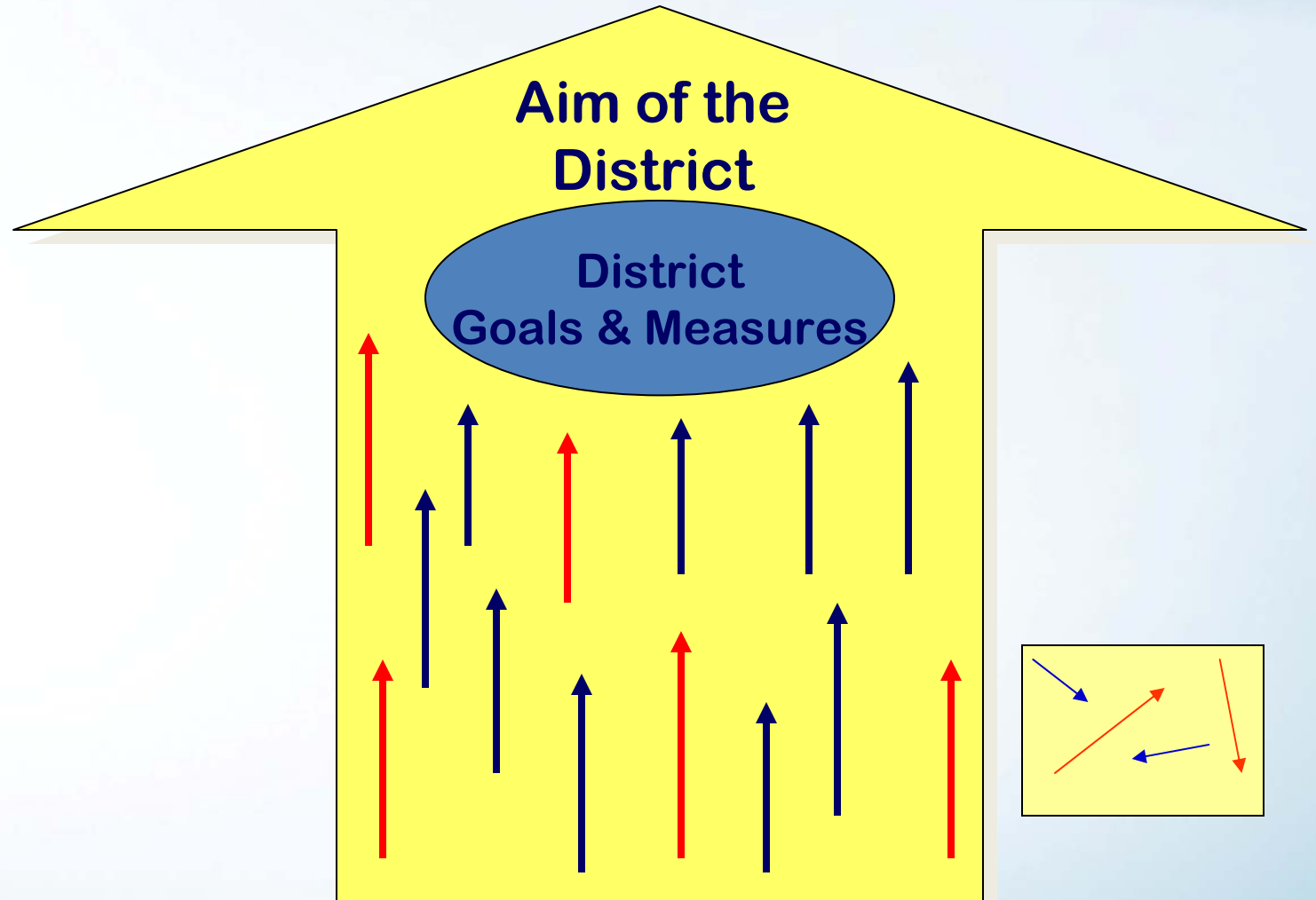
- **Collaboration**
- **Critical Thinking**
- **Oral Communication**
- **Written Communication**
- **Use of Technology**
- **Citizenship**
- **Career Focus**
- **Research and Learning how to Learn**

*The Basics of a
Systems Approach*

Random Acts of Improvement



The Better Big Arrow



Aligned Acts of Improvement

Concepts and Trends

- Failure is not an option
- No Child shall be Left Behind
- If it ain't broke, break it!
- Technology can change how learning is delivered
- Proficiency is the target
- There will be less resources available

Defining the System Non-Negotiables

District Leadership That Works

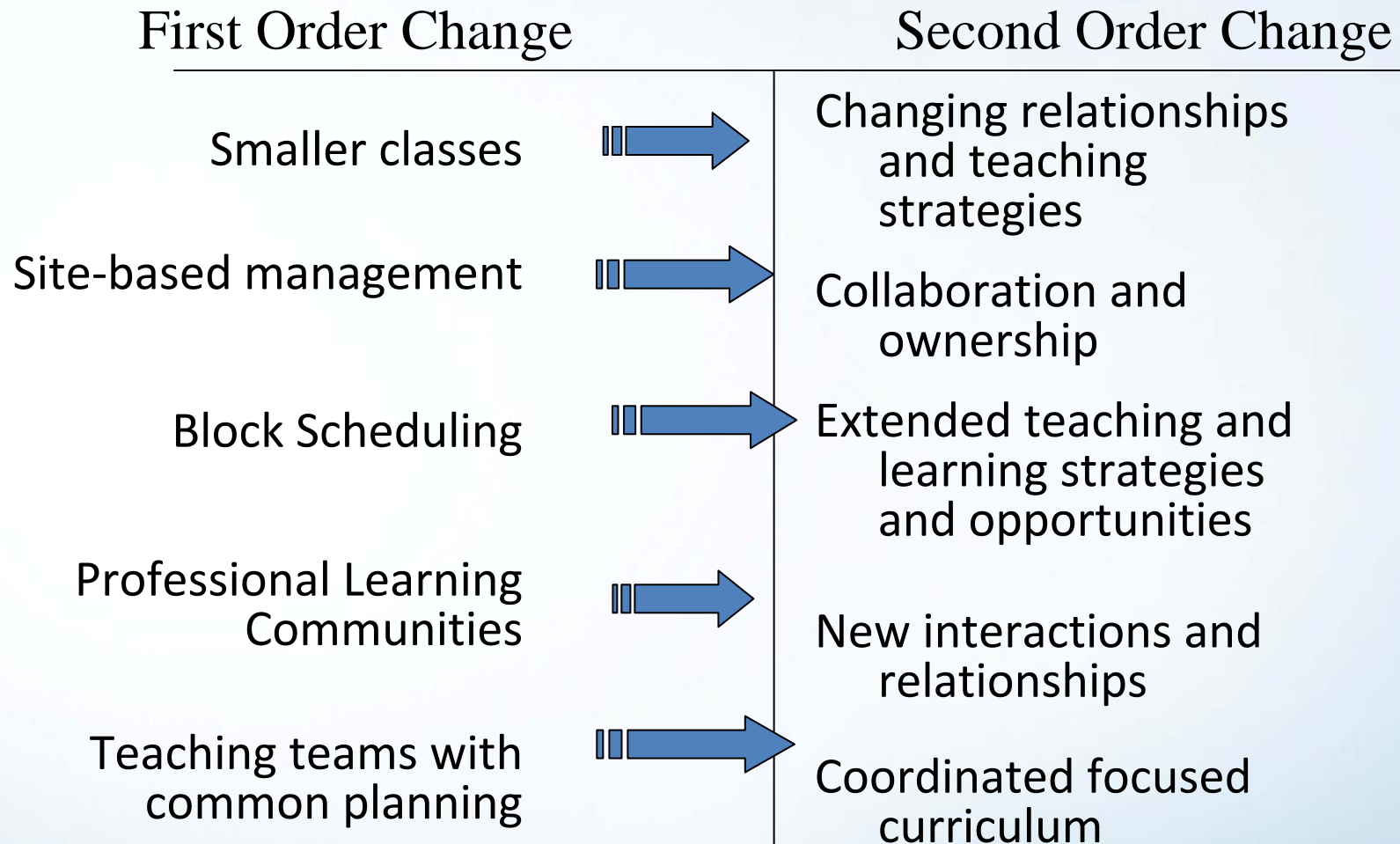
...research-based recommendations for setting and monitoring nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction at district and school levels. While district-defined goals are essential, effective leadership involves a collaborative effort among schools, teacher unions, students, and community members.

Marzano and Waters

Standard 7 Commitment to Continuous Improvement

A system is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the system with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the system and its schools demonstrate progress in improving student performance. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through analysis of student performance, system effectiveness, and assessment of the improvement process.

First & Second Order Change



Source: L. Cuban

AdvancED Standard 7.1

Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the system is pursuing (Vision);

Maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, system effectiveness, and the community (Profile);

Employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (Plan); and

Documents and uses the results to inform future improvement efforts (Results)

Standard 7 Continued

- **7.2 Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement**
- **7.3 Ensures that each school's plan for continuous improvement is aligned**
 - **with the system's vision and expectations for student learning**
- **7.4 Ensures that each school's plan for continuous improvement includes a focus on increasing learning for all students and closing gaps**
 - **between current and expected student performance levels**
- **7.5 Provides research-based professional development for system and school personnel to help them achieve improvement goals**

Standard 7 Continued

- **7.6 Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to**
- **stakeholders**
- **7.7 Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous**
- **process of improvement**
- **7.8 Allocates and protects time for planning and engaging in continuous**
- **improvement efforts system-wide**
- **7.9 Provides direction and assistance to its schools and operational**
- **units to support their continuous improvement efforts**

Relating to District Accreditation



- A ***systems approach*** to continuous improvement that creates a balance of *systematic* and *systemic* thinking
 - By aligning ALL district systems
 - By focusing each system on continuous improvement
 - By assuring positive integration of systems
- A way to ensure that every system in the district is designed to ***help students succeed*** as much as possible.

Forming a Team

Planning structures that Work:

- Steering Committees
- Leadership teams by level, department, building
- External Stakeholders



Structural Considerations

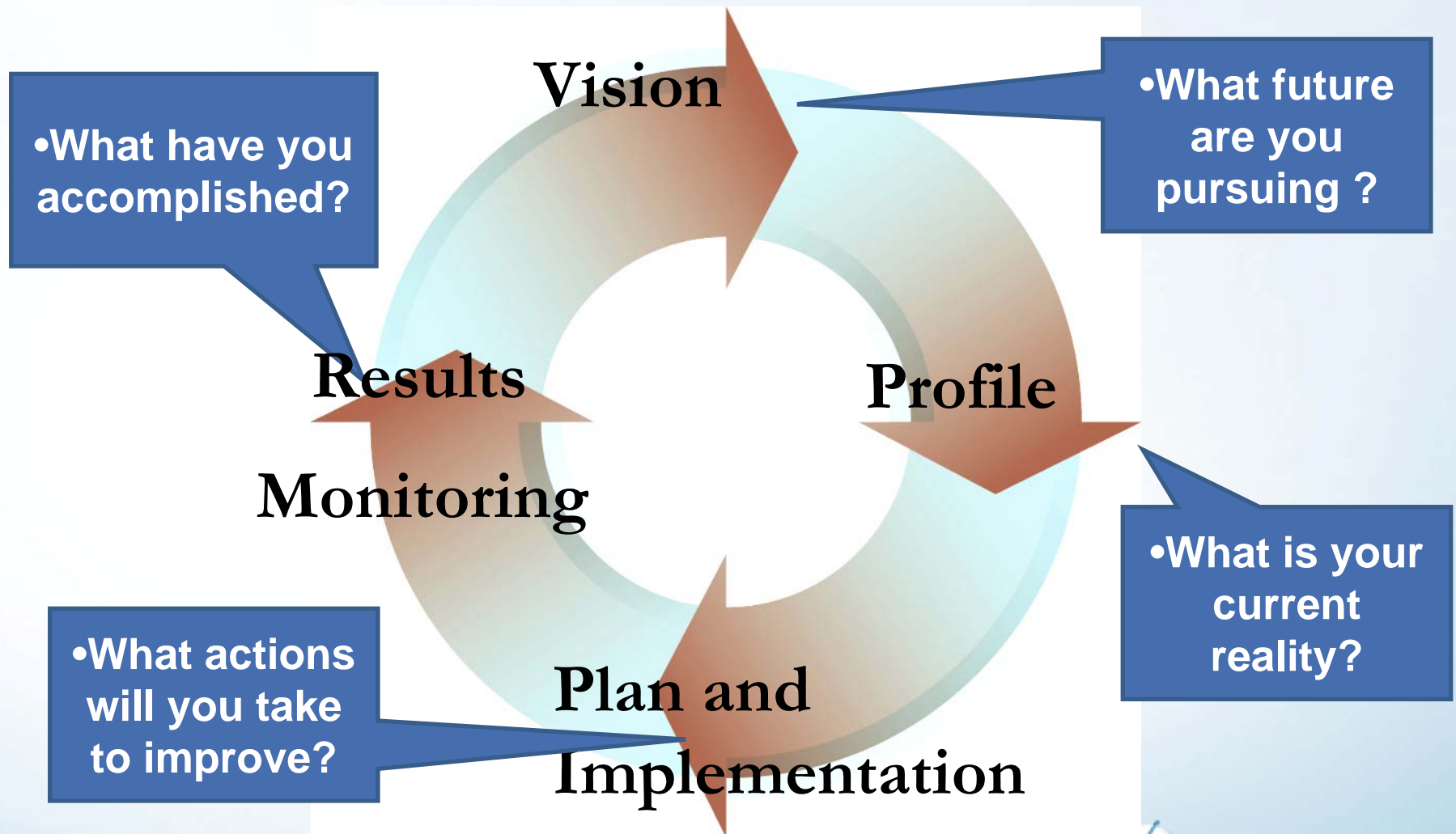
- Community Involvement
- Ad hoc structures
- Management/Implementation Structures
- Advisory vs. Management Issues

Structure Issues

While Strategic Planning may involve a host of stakeholders giving advise, Strategic Management needs to follow when it comes to accountability and implementation



Improvement Process Elements



8 Phases to Improvement

*Continuous
Improvement*

PLAN

1. Make or renew the commitment.
2. Get started.
3. Collect and analyze data.

DO

4. Clarify mission and select goals and measures.

Study

5. Develop the improvement plan.
6. Implement and monitor the plan.

Act

7. Document and analyze results.
8. Act on the finding and continue the process.

Steps In Planning

1. Make or renew the commitment
2. Create a planning team
3. Schedule a time for planning or a retreat
4. Engage representatives of all stakeholders groups
5. Create ad hoc teams to develop the strategies and write action plans

Collect and analyze data

Create the District Profile

- Student Data
- Instructional Data
- Operational Data (including support areas)
- Demographic Data
- Stakeholder Survey Data

Defining the Vision

- Brainstorm a list of beliefs and values
- Look for consensus around the values
- Conduct the Environmental Scan
- Challenge the Beliefs and Values with data
- Do an Internal Analysis on that identifies the gaps between beliefs, values and practice

Select Goals and Measures

- Using the profile data, focus those areas that align closest with the Mission and Vision of the system
- Use the concept of triangulation to create goals and measures.
- Goal statements should stretch the organization and challenge the status quo

Goals and Measures

- Goals are a translation of system requirements into specific, measurable statements of action.
- **NOTE:** System requirements are what they are.
 - They are not negotiable.
 - Requirements that are not met, result in dissatisfaction with system performance.

Using DATA

- Describe the Challenges based on SWOTs...Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats
- Frame the opportunity as a question...what would happen if.....?
- Develop a statement and a list of questions that the action plan must address
- Ask the final question? Will this improve learning for all?

Develop Strategies and Action Plans

- Strategies are interventions for the system. They can be about students, staff or anyone connected with the system **BUT** they must be aligned with the goal, be based on data and reflect best practice.
- Action plans detail the activities, individual coordinating the effort, timeline and a cost benefit analysis

Taking Action

- **Form a plan to plan “team**
- **Decide on a structure**
- **Create the District Profile**
- **Engage as many stakeholder groups as possible.**
- **Hold a planning retreat if you can**
- **Engage an “external facilitator” if possible**

Implementation

- List initiatives
- Create short term objectives
- Provide 90 day action steps
- Set up review and reporting schedule
- Quarterly update for Board

Defining the System Non-Negotiables

District Leadership That Works

research-based recommendations for setting and monitoring nonnegotiable goals for achievement and instruction at district and school levels. While district-defined goals are essential, effective leadership involves a collaborative effort among schools, teacher unions, students, and community members.

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Summarizing

- Beliefs/Mission/Vision
- Profile/Internal Analysis
- Environment Scan/External Analysis
- Strategic Goals
- Strategies
- Action Plans
- Activities/Timelines/Assignments