

Improvement Planning

Purpose

SchoolWorks Improvement Planning (SIP) is a process by which a school collects and analyzes data on student attainment, curriculum implementation and classroom instruction to inform school improvement planning. It is also a process by which schools monitor the success of their improvement initiatives and make decisions about how best to manage teaching and learning.

Benefits

The benefits of SIP :

- It is based on years of research about effective school practices.
- It can work in unison with a wide range of curriculum initiatives because it is not dependent on any particular approach to instruction or the adoption of any specific curriculum program.
- It fosters good school management through use of data about students, staff and daily school practices.
- It is implemented by school personnel under SchoolWorks guidance and, therefore, is not heavily dependent on trainers and coaches from outside the school.
- All of the components of SIP have been used in Philadelphia Public Schools, which have seen remarkable gains over the last three years.
- SIP is designed to integrate with external school reviews, such as charter accountability reviews. SIP makes use of such reports to add to data available for analysis and to set priorities for improvement.

Research Base

SIP is based on proven strategies to improve teamwork and organizational capacity. It helps a school examine itself through the lens of what research says are effective school practices.

Process and Results

The central activity in the process is the monthly meeting of the SchoolWorks Improvement Team (SIT). In these meetings, the school engages in an ongoing inquiry about its performance. The inquiry moves through the following questions:

- What do available student assessment data tell us about our students' strengths and needs? What do we need to understand about assessment to use these data to help students?
- How do we link demographic data to student assessment data and why? What do we need to know about demographic data to help specific student groups?
- How well do our school practices reflect what research says schools should do in terms of leadership, teaching and learning, and climate and culture? What do we need to learn and do in order to better adopt effective school practices?
- What capacity and resources does our school have to implement change?
- What are the most important things to affect improved student learning that are also within our capacity and resources to influence?
- What are specific goals, benchmarks and strategies to get the most important things done?

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The approach of SIP is two-fold. First, the SIP establishes a culture of short-term focus on just a few goals. Good decisions to inform improvement must be based on a careful analysis of student and school performance, but the need to thoroughly analyze data must be balanced with a need for action and for simple plans that can be quickly implemented and easily monitored. The second purpose of the SIP is to build the knowledge and capacity of school leadership teams so that they can identify gaps in school quality and close those gaps over the long term.

By taking the two-pronged approach described above, schools can make immediate gains and simultaneously build capacity for long-term improvement. While schools initially focus on key goals for immediate attention, they will also develop a deep grasp of student achievement data and school quality data. This

is accomplished through steady progression of monthly SIT meeting topics and other activities that help the school to develop a clear profile of its performance in the areas of leadership, teaching and learning, and climate and culture. The end products of this longer term process are: better data analysis skills, a stronger improvement plan for future years and management skills to help better implement and monitor the success of improvement initiatives.

Who participates in the SIP process?

The SIT is usually comprised of four to six members of the school administration and faculty (existing school leadership team structures may be used) and a SchoolWorks facilitator. During the early phases of SIP, other SchoolWorks representatives may help the facilitator to gather baseline data on school performance.



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