Wicomico County Public Schools

Handbook for School Improvement

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The *Handbook for School Improvement* is produced by the Office of School Improvement under the auspices of the Division of Instruction.

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"Every organization is perfectly designed to get the results it achieves."

W. Edwards Deming

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Introduction

Significant progress has been made over the last decade in effecting a systemwide, culture change in Wicomico County Public Schools to improve student learning. Working collaboratively, using an interdependent team model, educators at both the district and school improvement team levels have successfully addressed identified needs using research-based best practices to enhance student performance. Now this model will be extended to the grade/content area team level. This Handbook is designed to assist users in developing a comprehensive approach to school improvement, including the development, implementation and monitoring of the school improvement plan. School improvement is about building the capacity of schools to fulfill their primary function: to provide instruction that results in a high degree of learning for all its students. The heart of real school improvement is a commitment to continuous, data-driven improvement. This process allows participants to:

- Focus on an important learning problem
- Devise a strategy to collect data to identify the root cause of the problem
- Analyze the data
- Take action based on what is learned
- Collect data to see if the action taken has influenced the identified problem

School improvement is hard work. To be most effective, the school improvement process must be both interactive and recursive, engaging key stakeholders and focusing attention on actions leading to continuous improvement. School improvement does not happen in isolation – it must occur simultaneously at the whole school, grade and/or subject team, classroom and student levels. Improving student learning requires resources (e.g., sufficient time and professional development support) and a safe environment to allow teachers the opportunity to reflect on their own practice, share their students' work with colleagues, ask questions, and give and receive feedback.

This *Handbook for School Improvement* provides guidance for individuals and groups engaged in the school improvement process at the whole school, grade and/or subject team, classroom and student levels. As noted in the National Study of School Evaluation's publication, School Improvement: Focusing on Student Performance, if schools are not constantly improving and growing in their capacity to meet the needs of today's students, then they are losing ground and failing in their mission. Today, as a profession, educators have access to a vast body of research on high-performing systems of teaching and learning. Through the school improvement process, it is imperative that we put these best practices to work in behalf of improving student learning.

ORGANIZING FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Schools are no longer judged by the processes in which educators engage, but by the results that students achieve. Improving the capacity of schools to positively impact student learning lies at the heart of the school improvement process. School capacity refers to the potential of a school to fulfill its primary function, which is to provide instruction that results in a high degree of learning for all its students. Newmann, King, & Young state, "School capacity is the crucial variable affecting instructional quality and corresponding student achievement." Key elements of school capacity include:

- Staff knowledge, skills, attitudes and expectations
- Existence of a schoolwide professional learning community
- Teaching and learning program consistency
- Availability of technical support and resources
- Effective instructional leadership by skilled administrators

Judith Warren Little states, "School improvement is most surely and thoroughly achieved when teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice . . . adequate to the complexities of teaching, capable of distinguishing one practice and its virtue from another." To be most effective, the school improvement process must be both interactive and recursive, engaging key stakeholders and focusing attention on continuous improvement. School improvement does not happen in isolation – it must occur simultaneously at the whole school, grade and/or subject team, classroom and student levels with different kinds of decisions being made most appropriately at each level.

Building school capacity by providing resources and developing organizational structures for teachers to engage in meaningful discussions around student work and teaching practice is critical to improving student learning. One of the primary resources available to schools that is always cited as being in short supply is time. Finding time for teachers to reflect on their own instructional practices and to collaborate with colleagues to share different approaches has long been a challenge. The traditional school improvement model used in Wicomico County schools has provided time each month for representatives from various grade levels, content areas or decision-making teams to come together in a team setting to make whole school decisions. The primary intent of school improvement is the adjustment of teaching practice based on student performance data, thus making learning more effective. Adjusting teaching practice occurs at the classroom level and a structure to support decision-making at that level is critical to improved student performance. While the whole school model for school improvement remains valuable for certain types of decisions, in this era of accountability it is evident that a retooled approach to school improvement is in order – an approach

that provides time for teachers at each grade level and/or in each content area to come together and have meaningful dialogue about student achievement. In the retooled school improvement organizational structure, schools will have an Instructional Leadership Team with representatives from various grade levels and/or content areas along with grade level teams at the elementary and middle school level.

Figure A represents the relationship between the Instructional Leadership Team and the grade level teams.

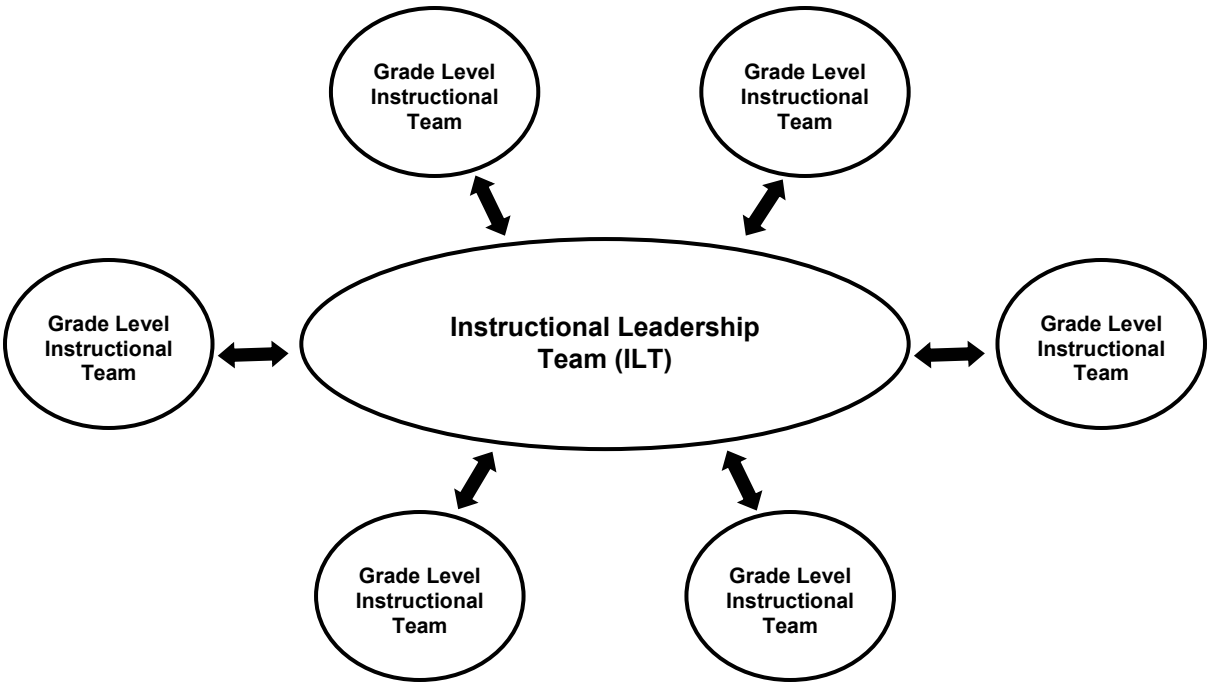


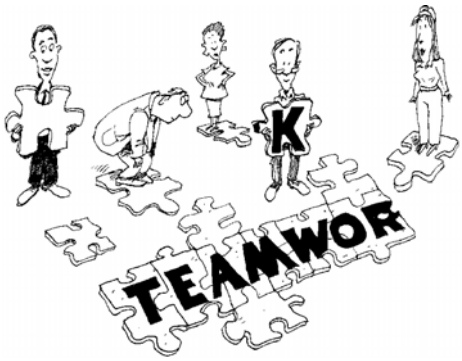
Figure A: School improvement organizational structures

The Division of Instruction, including the Office of School Improvement and the Department of Curriculum and Professional Development, provides support for school-based instructional improvement activities. Along with providing resources (e.g., substitute funds) to allow Instructional Leadership Team and Grade Level Instructional Team meetings to occur during the school day, a calendar is developed each year to assist schools in structuring meeting times and to ensure Central Office support staff will be available to attend team meetings.

USING TEAMS TO ENHANCE THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

What is a Team?

The school improvement process in Wicomico County uses a collaborative, team approach. A *team* is a group of individuals working together to achieve a mutually understood mission. Teams function in a special environment in which all members are equal members, and it is against the "rules" to not speak your mind.



Why Do We Have Teams?

As a part of the mandate outlined in "Guide and Procedures for Maryland School Performance Program Implementation - State, School Systems, and Schools" dated June 1991, each school is charged with the creation of a School Improvement Team. The Team, representative of, and in collaboration with, the entire school community, works to develop, implement and evaluate programs which will improve student performance. The Instructional Leadership Team fulfills this charge in the public schools of Wicomico County.

In addition, there are some *underlying beliefs* that help us to understand why teams can be effective decision-making entities. These include:

- People support what they help to create.
- Recognition is a vital element in getting people involved and participating fully in their work.
- Empowerment means giving team members the authority and information they need to make wise decisions and solve problems.
- No one person can have all the information (the total amount of information in the world is doubling every year or less) - we need to draw on a collective knowledge base.
- Lastly, and most importantly, there must be a belief in the potential of people – not just some people, but all people.

Benefits of Using Teams

- Teams have greater resources of knowledge and information.
- Teams can employ a greater number of creative problem-solving methods.
- Working in teams promotes improved learning and comprehension of ideas and suggestions discussed.

- Members' satisfaction with the team's decision increases because they participated in the problem-solving process.
- Team members gain a better understanding of themselves as they interact with others.
- Teams pool the skills, talents, and knowledge of many people.
- The synergy that comes from people working together productively on an important project is usually enough to sustain the enthusiasm and support, even through difficult times.

Characteristics of an Effective Team

To be effective, teams must pay attention to two things – the *project,* or its goals and objectives; and the *people*, or the feelings, ideas, and participation of its members. It is especially important to concentrate on creating an atmosphere in which the members are willing to share their own ideas and work together to solve problems.

Pre-Meeting Tips

- Distribute the agenda prior to the meeting. Be clear on the details: who, where, when, how long and the objectives. Assign specific agenda items to members and any pre-work ahead of time.
- Invite nonmembers who can help the team achieve objectives.

Physical Arrangements for the Meeting

- Assure that lighting, ventilation and temperature are right.
- Make sure supplies are available (e.g., flip charts, markers, handouts).
- Use a round or square table so that *all* participants can see each other easily.
- Consider changing the seating arrangements from one meeting to the next to dislodge "rigid" thinking patterns and achieve more open thinking.

Agenda Design

Meetings reflect what your group values. Members need to have input into designing their meeting norms and procedures if they are to be invested. Consider the needs of various personality/learning styles. Additional considerations when designing an agenda include:

- Noting the date, time and location of the meeting prominently. If appropriate, note the distribution list with names.
- Identifying roles and responsibilities.
- Using phrases rather than single words to describe topics.

- Noting the amount of time allotted for each item on the agenda.
- Noting the name of the presenter for each item
- Positioning important agenda items early while group energy is high.
- Building in time for team development, induction of new members, airing concerns, celebration, and laughter time.
- Concluding each meeting with an evaluation using the Plus/Delta tool

The Team Meeting

- Start the meeting on time and assign a recorder and timekeeper.
- Develop a list of group norms for the team to follow.
- Wrap up the meeting by summarizing accomplishments, clarifying assignments, and setting the agenda for the next meeting.

Establishing Group Norms

Group norms are the "ground rules" for the meeting. Norms set the tone for how the team will handle its business. Established team norms should be reviewed on a regular basis and always when new members join the team. Some possible ground rules might relate to:

- Attendance and promptness
- Meeting place and time
- Team member roles
- Agendas, minutes, and records
- Interruptions
- Participation and basic conversational courtesies

Useful Group Member Roles in Meetings

Various roles, taken on by team members, help distribute the team's workload more evenly and can provide opportunities for skill development. Useful roles include:

- *Agenda Developer* – during the meeting, listens for items which need to be included on the next (or future) agendas; reviews the list at the end of the meeting
- *Meeting Facilitator* – sets the tone for, and runs, the meeting; encourages participation; keeps the team on track
- *Recorder* – serves as the group's memory by summarizing key discussion points in the minutes
- *Timekeeper* – keeps track of time for each agenda item, signaling facilitator, as needed, of time available

- *Facility Arranger* – responsible for setting up room, materials and equipment as needed for the meeting
- *Refreshments* – provides a light snack for the meeting

Depending on the team's preference, each role may be assumed by a single individual for the entire year or can be rotated among members. In either case, it is helpful to decide during the first meeting of the year, how the work will be divided and if there will be a rotation of roles from month to month. If it is agreed that rotating roles makes sense, then also decide at the first meeting who will be responsible for each role each meeting.

Meeting Follow Up

- Check that minutes are prepared and distributed in a timely manner (e. g, one week after the meeting).
- Assure that any missing member is kept informed.
- Check that Action Items are done.

THE WORK OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP TEAMS

Introduction

The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) is representative of, and works in collaboration with, the entire school community, to develop, implement and evaluate programs that will improve student performance. The ILT is charged with the development, implementation and monitoring of the school improvement plan.

Composition of the Instructional Leadership Team

Instructional Leadership Teams must be representative of the both the school staff and the larger school community. In all cases the Principal should be a member of the Team. Other school-based members might include teachers (classroom and content area), Title I teachers, media specialist, guidance counselor, and support staff. One or more parents should be asked to serve on the Team and at the secondary level, one or more students should also be included. Representatives from community organizations and the school's business partner(s) should be asked to serve as well.

To ensure constancy of purpose, a rotation schedule should be established for school-based positions on the Instructional Leadership Team. For example, if there are three fourth-grade teachers in a school, it might be understood that each teacher would serve for a two-year period of time in rotation. Keep in mind that the rotation schedule needs to remain flexible to accommodate individual situations.

While not every staff member will attend Instructional Leadership Team meetings, every staff member will be responsible for implementing some portion of the School Improvement Plan. Therefore, it is very important that clear and open lines of communication are established and maintained with all staff as well as stakeholders outside the building. It is crucial that Instructional Leadership Team members take seriously the responsibility of reporting the business of the Team to those not present at meetings. It is equally important that Team members discuss issues and concerns with other staff so as to accurately reflect their positions when decisions are made.

The Role of the ILT Chair

The Instructional Leadership Team Chair serves as a teacher-leader for the school improvement process. The Chair acts as a liaison between the Office of School Improvement and the school by attending district level school improvement meetings and professional development sessions and communicating what is learned to the school staff. Working collaboratively with the school's administration and staff, the Chair and other members of the Instructional Leadership Team facilitate the development, implementation and evaluation of the school improvement plan.

Instructional Leadership Team Meetings

Instructional Leadership Teams meet several times during the course of the school year. In general, all schools are expected to use one full day prior to the start of the school year for school improvement business. The Office of School Improvement and/or the Directors of Elementary and Secondary Education will provide schools with agenda items for this day. Substitute funding is allocated by school to provide time during the school day for periodic half-day meetings throughout the school year. Teams wishing to meet after the school day may do so, but are not guaranteed full funding of stipends for teachers attending the meetings. Prior approval for after school meetings is required. The Office of School Improvement will schedule additional days devoted to the business of school improvement during the year as indicated.

District-level ILT Chair Meeting Norms

To function effectively and efficient, any group of individuals must agree on how it will be organized, who will be responsible for certain actions, how meetings will be run, and how decisions will be made. The following norms have been adopted for use at district-level ILT Chair meetings,

1. Decisions will be made by consensus.
2. Speak one at a time.
3. Have fun and enjoy each other.
4. Invest our best selves to make our group fruitful.
5. The meetings will begin on time and we will make our best effort to be on time.
6. We share responsibility to achieve the goals of each session.
7. Limit side discussions.
8. Breaks are flexible.
9. Conclude each meeting with a plus/delta.

Communicating with Staff

Effective communication with staff members is a vital link in building consensus and in achieving the desired results of the action plan. While the minutes of your team's meeting do not serve to replace discussion and dialog with staff, they do serve as a permanent and accurate record of what happened during the team meeting. As such, useful minutes need to identify pertinent discussion points and decisions (including enough information that those who were not in attendance can follow how and why decisions were made). A suggested format for minutes follows.

Format for Minutes

NAME OF SCHOOL

Instructional Leadership Team Minutes

MEETING DATE:

LOCATION:

TIME: (begin - end)

RECORDER:

PRESENT:

Minutes

1.

2.

3.

4. Plus / Delta Meeting Evaluation

   Strengths - Opportunities for Improvement -

5. Date/time/location of next meeting

   Agenda topics

Distribution of Minutes

Send minutes of all meetings via email attachment in a timely fashion to:

- Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Curriculum
- Director of Elementary Education and/or Director of Secondary Education
- Coordinator for School Improvement/Strategic Planning
- Coordinator for School Improvement/Accountability & Assessments
- All ILT members (remember to include Central Office staff, parents, students, business partners, community leaders)
- All staff members in your school

It is also a good idea to send minutes to the ILT Chair(s) and Principal of your paired and/or feeder school(s).

THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Introduction

The School Improvement Plan serves as a blueprint of the actions and processes needed to produce school improvement and improve student learning. Under the leadership of the Instructional Leadership Team, plans are to be developed, implemented and monitored by each school in alignment with the *Bridge to Excellence* Master Plan. Once developed, the School Improvement Plan should guide resource allocation, professional development, instructional content and practice, and assessment. The school needs to focus staff meetings, staff in-service, staff recognition, and staff monitoring around the goals and objectives of the Plan. To ensure that all members of the school community are aware of the School Improvement Plan, on-going communication concerning the Plan's objectives, priorities and action steps is critical.

School Improvement Plan Structure

Each school's Plan is expected to have the following components:

1. Mission and Belief Statements
2. Annual Measurable Objectives and Progress-to-Date
3. Action Plan

Mission and Belief Statements

At the beginning of each year, schools are encouraged to review their Beliefs and Mission Statement and revise each as needed in collaboration with their stakeholders. The school's belief statements summarize its response to the question, "What do we believe about student learning, about teaching and about the characteristics of quality schools?" The mission statement answers the question, "What is the primary purpose of our school?" Both sets of statements should be clearly stated and free of jargon. Many schools include their mission statement on publications such as newsletters, student agendas, and bulletins along with displaying it prominently within the school.

Annual Measurable Objectives and Progress-to-Date

This section of the school's plan serves to focus attention on the objectives to which the school is held accountable under the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) provision of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Along with a brief description of the school's overall demographics and staffing statistics, it depicts the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) for reading, math, and attendance (elementary and middle schools) or graduation rate (high schools) and the school's progress in attaining these AMOs over time.

Action Plan

The school's Action Plan should include steps, aligned with the *Bridge to Excellence* Master Plan, which can be taken to help the school more fully achieve its mission and the desired results for student learning. Factors to be considered when developing the action steps include both the school's Mission and its progress in meeting the Annual Measurable Objectives. The Action Plan focuses on three priority areas:

- Accelerating student learning in reading and math
- Improving student attendance and graduation rate
- Improving school climate to ensure a safe, drug-free environment conducive to learning

Even the best plan will not yield the desired results if it stays "a plan." Only when the plan is fully and consistently implemented is there a chance for success. Therefore, each action step in the School Improvement Plan must also identify the person(s) responsible for carrying out the step and the time frame of the activity. A budget must be developed to provide the resources needed to complete the step as written.

The School Improvement Plan Approval Process

Good alignment is vital to the success of a school improvement plan. Just as the Maryland State Department of Education is expected to align its goals with those articulated in the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, school systems are expected to align with State goals. Taking it one step further, alignment then dictates that the school's mission and objectives must reflect the mission and objectives of the school system. It is important to note that the priorities, action steps, and manner in which resources (human, time, facility and financial) are allocated in each school improvement plan must also target the objectives for student learning. When all systems – state, district and school – are aligned and the plan is implemented consistently, the likelihood of success is much greater.

Criteria for Approving the School Improvement Plan

Ensuring the School Improvement Plan says what it was meant to say and is well aligned can be a challenging task. The following questions provide helpful criteria for reviewing Plans:

<u>Mission and Belief Statements</u>

- Were the beliefs and mission statement developed through a consensus-building process?
- Does the statement of the school's beliefs and mission reflect a focus on student learning as the chief priority for the school?

Annual Measurable Objectives and Progress-to-Date

- How can the school address its limitations and areas in need of improvement in order to strengthen the capacity of the school to support student achievement?

Action Plan

- Is the plan consistent with the school's beliefs and mission?
- Do the action steps outlined in the plan hold the promise of achieving the objectives for improving student performance? Do the action steps reflect research-based findings related to effective instructional practices and optimal organizational conditions to support student learning?
- Has a reasonable timeline for implementing each of the actions steps been identified?
- Have sufficient resources been included in the budget request to support the implementation of the plan?

Who Approves School Improvement Plans?

The Office of School Improvement provides technical assistance and resources to schools as they develop, implement and evaluate their school improvement plans. School Improvement Plans are submitted to the Office of School Improvement for technical review. The Office of School Improvement works with Instructional Leadership Teams to ensure Plans meet the basic requirements stated in this document and other district documents. Plans are then forwarded for additional review to the following individuals:

- Director of Curriculum and Professional Development – Reviews professional development activities for alignment with the district's Professional Development Plan and focus
- Director of Student Services – Reviews Priority B (Improving student attendance and graduation rate) and Priority C (Improving school climate to ensure a safe, drug-free environment conducive to learning)
- Director for Elementary Education or the Director for Secondary Education – Reviews Priority A (Accelerating student learning in reading and math)
- Supervisor of Title I – Reviews plans of Title I schools for compliance with Title I requirements

At the discretion of one or more Directors or the Supervisor of Title I, meetings with the Principal and ILT Chair(s) may be held to discuss modifications to a school's Plan and proposed budget. The Plan will then be forwarded to the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Curriculum for final approval. The Office of School Improvement will

notify each school when its Plan has been approved. Final approved plans will be linked to the district's website for public access.

Implementing the School Improvement Plan

Given the number of competing agendas for a school staff, keeping a sharp focus on the target is a challenge. However, keeping staff focused on school improvement goals is critical to the attainment of those goals. The Principal of the school plays the primary role in keeping this focus. It is the Principal who determines how staff time is used, what is monitored, what is recognized, and how in-service time and resources are used. The School Improvement Plan, developed using a consensus approach, provides a roadmap to maintain this focus. Therefore, it is strongly encouraged that the Principal engage in the following:

1. Use regularly scheduled time with staff –
    - Identify on the monthly school calendar activities that staff will discuss or complete during staff, team, and department meeting times to advance school improvement goals.
    - Regularly discuss school improvement efforts and progress at these meetings.
    - Monitor PA announcements to ensure they promote the school's priorities and not other things.
2. Use written communications –
    - Include in the staff newsletters progress updates on school improvement goals.
    - Use back to school paperwork, end of year paperwork, improvement goals and other correspondence to focus on school improvement goals and progress.
    - Ensure that expectations and priorities given orally to staff are also given to them in a written format for later reference.
3. Ensure that all staff development activities are aligned to school improvement goals and state standards.
4. Use the physical environment, including bulletin boards and entryway signs and signboards reflect the school's priorities.
5. Identify strategies to recognize those activities and staff that support school improvement goals, including showcasing at staff meetings promising practices in using data to monitor individual student progress or to inform instruction.

Evaluating the Success of the School Improvement Plan

The *Annual Measurable Objectives and Progress-to-Date* section of the School Improvement Plan serves as one measure to evaluate the success of the Plan. This

section shows the school's progress in meeting the objectives to which it is held accountable under the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) provision of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. It depicts the Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) for reading, math, and attendance (elementary and middle schools) or graduation rate (high schools) over time. Other criteria used to measure the success of the Plan include an assessment of the extent to which the Plan is fully implemented and the degree of stakeholder satisfaction as measured by district-designed Parent, Teacher, and Student Surveys.

THE ROLE OF GRADE LEVEL INSTRUCTIONAL TEAMS

Introduction

The continuous and collaborative examination of student work along with the personalization of schooling are the two critical strategies for transforming schools to be high performing learning organizations. Kate Nolan, Director of Re-Thinking Accountability for the Annenberg Institute of School Reform, believes "The process of studying student work is a meaningful and challenging way to be data-driven, to reflect critically on our instructional practices, and to identify the research we might study to help us think more deeply and carefully about the challenges our students provide us. Rich, complex work samples show us how students are thinking, the fullness of their factual knowledge, the connections they are making. Talking about them together in an accountable way helps us to learn how to adjust instruction to meet the needs of our students."

Though teachers have always examined student work as part of their grading process, the new focus on accountability and standards has driven a more structured and collaborative examination of student work. The focus of the examination has shifted from a summative evaluation of student performance to a diagnostic evaluation of student performance, teacher assignment, and implications for instruction. The following questions can be used to focus the examination:

- What does this work tell us about how well the student meets a particular standard?
- What does this work indicate the student knows and can do?
- What do the students' responses tell us about the effectiveness of the assignment? How might the assignment be improved?
- What does this work tell us about how well the student understands the concept of the assignment?

Teachers rarely have time in their professional lives for meeting with colleagues about important questions about teaching and learning. Providing time during the school day for teachers to engage in these important discussions is a key element of efforts to improve student learning. We know that looking at student work is a big part of every teacher's job. Teachers score, grade, and comment on their students' classwork and homework. They may also use samples of student work as models or for diagnostic purposes. Typically, though, teachers look at their students' work on their own rather than with colleagues. They usually try to review all the work, to mark or grade, rather than focus on a deep analysis of what students are learning and how to improve that learning. Grade level instructional team meetings provide time for teachers to focus on the student work and to engage in an in-depth, insightful, conversation about teaching and learning.

What is the Principal's Role?

Principals play a critical role in setting up the expectation that examining student work should be an ongoing, collaborative process. Principals need to identify strategies that would promote this and provide time for it to happen. They need to consider how they could use staff meeting time to build capacity and set expectations for how teams or departments would examine student work as a regular activity at their team meetings. Principals must also monitor this process and champion it when it happens.

What is Student Work?

Student work takes many forms, including essays, drawings, projects, reports, presentations, portfolios, etc. It is usually in response to a teacher's assignment for classwork or homework. It may be completed by an individual, for example, a child's drawing, or collaboratively, for example, a group presentation. Worksheets and tests are also examples of student work, though they may not provide as rich a basis for collaborative discussion and reflection as pieces that call for more student creativity and choice.

Using a Protocol to Examine Student Work

The Looking At Student Work (www.lasw.org) association of educators offers the following insights for the examination of the student work.

> "In schools, many people say that time is of the essence, and time is the one resource that no one seems to have enough of. As teachers come together to examine student work then it is important that we make the most of the time people do have. (Have you ever been to a meeting where you have a burning issue you want to discuss, and what happens is that everyone "dumps" his or her issue, and feeds off each other, but then you walk away from the meeting feeling unsatisfied, not really having learned anything new of significance that will help you with your issue? Using a protocol, or set of standard procedures, to examine student work guards against this.)

> "Protocols for looking at student work provide a safe environment for teachers to share their students' work with colleagues, reflect on their own practice, ask questions, and give and receive feedback. The protocol structure helps keep teachers focused for a significant period on what's actually in the student work -- the most important evidence of teaching and learning.

> "A protocol creates a structure that makes it safe to ask challenging questions of each other; it also ensures that there is some equity and parity in terms of how each person's issues are attended to. The presenter has the opportunity not only to reflect on and describe an issue or a dilemma, but also to have interesting questions asked of him or her, AND to gain differing perspectives and new

insights. Protocols build in a space for listening, and often give people a license to listen, without having to continuously respond."

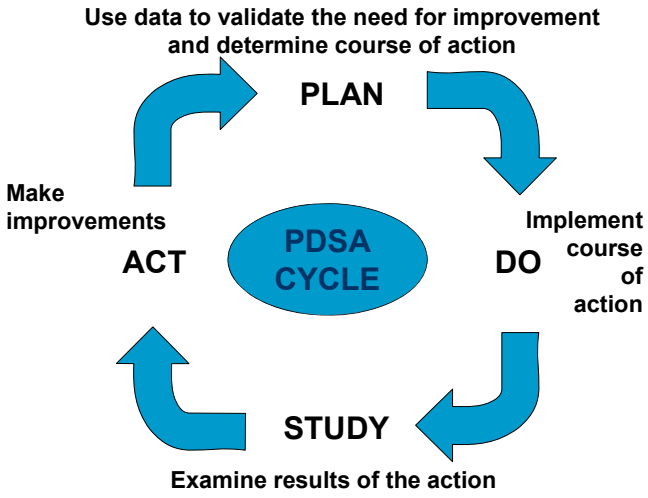
All protocols are built around the continuous improvement process, often referred to as Plan-Do-Study-Act or PDSA. Figures B and C depict the various components of the PDSA cycle.

Figure B – Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle

PLAN	Validate the need for improvement. *How are we doing?* *How do we know?*
	Clarify purpose, goals, and measures. *Why are we here?* *What do we need to do well together?* *How will we know how we're doing?*
DO	Adopt and deploy an approach to continual improvement. *How will we work together to get better?*
	Translate the approach into aligned action. *What will we do differently?*
STUDY	Analyze the results. *What happened?*
ACT	Make improvements. *What did we do with what we learned?*

Repeat the cycle. Do it all again!

Figure C – Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle



The process (and all protocols) for looking collaboratively at student work involves asking focus, clarifying and probing questions. The process is guided by a focusing question and moved forward by a series of clarifying and probing questions as illustrated in the following example.

Focus Questions -

- What evidence is there in the student's work of mathematical problem solving?
- What evidence is there that this assignment provided an opportunity for the students to demonstrate they could draw inferences?

Clarifying questions usually ask for additional information so that the questioner can better understand the process.

- How was the assignment introduced to the students?
- Did students know the scoring rubric when they wrote their responses?

Probing questions usually ask for more reflective responses from the presenter. They are intended to provide the presenter with the opportunity to reflect more deeply about the topic.

- What did you hope the students would be able to demonstrate with your assignment?
- What were you assuming the student already knew how to do when you gave this assignment?
- In what areas did your students' performance surprise you?

Participants might need to be reminded that when they ask a question with an answer in mind, they are not asking a probing question. The probing question is used to solicit the responder's thinking.

Taking a Closer Look at PDSA

In this section each step of the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle is examined in more detail. Questions and/or statements for reflection to clarify and guide participants through each phase of the improvement cycle have been provided.

PLAN

The Plan step of the PDSA cycle is a problem clarification process in which the need for improvement is validated and desired results are identified. The Affinity Diagram is a useful problem solving tool for identifying key processes and/or components of a problem as well as giving participants the opportunity to reflect

on those connections that might exist among the processes and/or components. When trying to identify a problem, it is important to have the input of the major constituents (teachers, administrators, parents, and students), since perceptions and attitudes among groups may be very different. After identifying possible contributing factors, additional data may need to be collected to validate the hypotheses. Only after the problem clarification process is completed will it be possible to identify strategies to address the problem. The more accurate your identification of the problem, the more likely you will choose strategies that result in improved performance.

Some questions that will assist in the completion of the PLAN step include:

- What data was examined or collected to determine that this was a problem? If not, what data could be collected to determine if this was a problem?
- Are the identified root causes in the group's (school's) control? Can staff do something to change that cause?
- Are the root causes stated in specific enough terms so that you know how to address them?
- Are the root causes really high impact? Are they likely to result in improved performance if you try to address them?
- Are there root causes that might be more likely to have greater impact on improved performance in the area identified?

Once a few root causes or contributing factors that have a high impact on the data results and are in your control have been identified, make sure there is some evidence that these are indeed a problem at your school. Once this is established it is time to proceed to the next step.

DO

The DO step of PDSA asks each participant to reflect on the process of looking at student work and respond to the question, "Are there things you would like to try in your classroom as a result of looking at the student's assessment results and work?"

This process requires teachers and administrators to come together collaboratively and collegially to identify what will be done differently to get better. The process of examining the results of student learning, whether it takes the form of looking at formative or summative assessment results, written student work, portfolios, or projects means looking for evidence of students' thinking. As teachers and administrators work together it will be helpful for them to:

- Stay focused on the evidence that is present in the work.
- Look openly and broadly; without letting expectations cloud their vision.
- Look for patterns in the evidence that provide clues to how and what the student was thinking.

Likewise when listening to colleagues' thinking, it will be beneficial to the process for participants to:

- Listen without judging.
- Tune in to differences in perspective.
- Use controversy as an opportunity to explore and understand each other's perspectives.
- Focus on understanding where different interpretations come from.
- Make their own thinking clear to others.
- Be patient and persistent.

Finally when each participant reflects on their own thinking it might be helpful for each to ask, "Why do I see this student work in this way? What does this tell me about what is important to me?" Additional suggestions for reflection include each participant:

- Looking for patterns in their own thinking.
- Tuning in to the questions that the student work and colleagues' comments raise.
- Comparing what is seen and said about the student work with what happens in the participant's classroom.

STUDY

Once an improvement action has been decided upon and carried out, the next step, STUDY, involves analyzing the results to find out what happened.

Inquiry into student work might focus on answering the following questions:

- *What should students know and be able to do?* Select one standard that is most directly related to the activity from which the student work was created. Please write out the entire standard.
- *What were students asked to do?* Clearly outline the activity or performance that students were asked to conduct. Use concrete examples.

- *What story does the work tell?* Take some time and look deeply at the student work. For your own use, record your observations, comments, and questions. Look specifically for evidence that your selected standard has been addressed. Analyze the student work using your standard to assess student learning. Using your observations as evidence, discuss how one can tell that the student has understood and synthesized the knowledge, skills, and concepts addressed in the standard.
- *How good is good enough?* Use your scoring rubric or other assessment tools to assess your sample of student work. Describe how the student has exceeded, met, or failed to meet the expectations set forth by the scoring rubric. Include a copy of the rubric if possible.
- *How can your inquiry guide further instruction?* Discuss what your inquiry into the sample of student work tells you about student learning, classroom instruction, and the assignment given. How might you do things differently in the future?

ACT

The next step in the cycle is ACT, or responding to the question, "What did we do with what we learned?" Making improvements based upon data that has been collected and analyzed in the culminating outcome of the PDSA cycle. Each person must decide what can and should be done to "make things better." But of course, this also brings us back to the beginning of the circle, because once an improvement action occurs, new data must be collected to ascertain the action is having the desired results and to decide on other improvement actions that need to be taken. As the old saying goes,

Good, better, best;

Never rest,

'Til good becomes better

And better becomes best!

Appendices

A Research-based Instructional Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement

B Best Practices from the 90-90-90 Schools Research

C Best Practices for Improving Student Attendance, Reducing Truancy and Increasing the Graduation Rate

D Facilitation Tips

E Using Consensus for Collaborative Decision Making

F Quality Tools

- **Affinity Diagram**
- **Brainstorming**
- **Flowchart**
- **Force Field Analysis**
- **Nominal Group Technique**
- **Plus/Delta Chart**
- **Scatter Diagram**

G Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards

H School Improvement Plan Rubric

Appendix A

Research-based Instructional Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement

1. Identifying Similarities and Differences

- Comparing – the process of identifying similarities and differences between or among things or ideas
- Classifying – the process of grouping things that are alike into categories on the basis of their characteristics
- Creating metaphors – the process of identifying a general or basic pattern in a specific topic and then finding another topic that appears to be quite different but that has the same general pattern
- Creating analogies – the process of identifying relationships between pairs of concepts (in other words, identifying relationships between relationships)

Technology Integration: Use Kidspiration or Inspiration software to create graphic representations to:

- Compare ideas or pictures
- Classify objects or ideas
- Visually present ideas to create metaphors or analogies

2. Summarizing and Note Taking

- Summarizing – the process of deleting trivial material that is unnecessary to understanding, deleting redundant material, substituting superordinate terms for lists (e.g., “flowers” for “daisies, tulips, and roses), selecting a topic sentence (or inventing one if it is missing)
- Reciprocal Teaching – a strategy which utilizes the components of summarizing, questioning, clarifying and predicting to provide for a deeper level of reading comprehension
- Note Taking

Technology Integration: Use word processing software to:

- Create summaries
- Organize notes

3. Nonlinguistic Representations

- Using Graphic Organizers
- Making Physical Models
- Generating Mental Pictures
- Drawing Pictures and Pictographs

Technology Integration: Use Kidspiration or Inspiration software to:

- Create and complete graphic organizers and concept maps

Technology Integration: Use TimeLiner, Mapmaker's Toolkit or graphing software to:

- Create timelines of historical events, story sequence, etc.
- Construct historical or current maps or map out routes of various historical importance
- Graph data

Technology Integration: Use KidPix, Kidspiration or Inspiration software to:

- Generate mental representations or pictures

4. Cooperative Learning

Technology Integration: Use various software applications to facilitate cooperative learning activities:

- Create or utilize readily available internet WebQuests
- Conduct cooperative research activities using the Internet as a resource
- Create Internet worksheets using PowerPoint or Word to be completed cooperatively
- Create products in cooperative groups
- PowerPoint – Slideshow providing information about researched or learned material, digital storytelling, story sequence
- Word - Brochures, posters, invitations, etc.
- Excel – Spreadsheets, graphs, etc.
- Kidspiration or Inspiration – Concept maps, instructional templates
- Other Software: TimeLiner, Mapmaker's Toolkit, Graph Club, Graph Master, Print Shop, KidPix, MPower, Image Blender, Math and Reading Software, Internet

5. Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback

- Setting and communicating targets for student learning
- Providing Feedback – Linked to Rubrics
  - Simply telling students that their answer on a test is right or wrong has a negative effect on achievement.
  - Providing students with the correct answer has a moderate positive effect.
  - The best feedback provides an explanation as to what is accurate or inaccurate in terms of student responses. In addition, asking students to keep working on a task until they succeed appears to enhance student achievement.
  - Feedback given immediately after work is completed is best to increase student achievement. The more delay that occurs in giving feedback the less effective.
  - Feedback should be specific to the criterion.
  - Students can effectively provide some of their own feedback.

Technology Integration: Use Internet sources to search for and/or create rubrics

6. Displays of exemplary academic work including student writing, projects, and papers in the content areas

Technology Integration: Technology activities displayed for students and parents through slide shows: KidPix, PowerPoint

7. Displays of data showing continuous improvement made by students on a weekly, monthly basis – not just year-to-year

Technology Integration: Data folders displaying data using Excel or other graphing software

8. Consistently applied focused intervention

Technology Integration: Creating intervention activities using technology to reinforce concepts

9. **Weekly assessments (aligned with content standards) of student progress**

10. **Multiple opportunities to improve performance**

11. **Multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of content standards**

12. **Teacher comments on student work provides specific recommendations for improvement**

13. **Incorporating written responses on all assessments (full sentences, emphasis on correct language usage)**

14. **Emphasis on informative writing**

15. **Use of single scoring guide (rubric) to evaluate student writing**

16. **Scoring guide applied to all student writing**

17. **Teachers using student writing diagnostically to identify obstacles to student learning**

18. **Regular exchanges of student papers among teachers for scoring**

19. **Regular discussions about student writing among teachers to identify obstacles to student learning**

20. **Continual refinement of the scoring guides applied to student work**

21. **Use of the continuous improvement (PDSA) model**

Appendix B

Best Practices from the 90-90-90 Schools Research

Research from the 90-90-90 Schools (those schools where 90% of the students are economically disadvantaged and 90% of the students represent minority populations yet have 90% of their students meeting rigorous academic indicators) has identified five characteristics these schools employ for success. The five characteristics include: a focus on academic achievement, appropriate curriculum choices, frequent assessment of student progress with multiple opportunities for improvement, written responses in performance assessments, and the use of external scoring.

1. What would a "focus on academic achievement" look like?

- Displays of charts, graphs and tables showing student achievement
- Displays of data showing continuous improvement made by students on a weekly, monthly basis – not just year-to-year
- Displays of exemplary academic work including student writing, projects, and papers in the content areas
- Consistently applied focused intervention

2. What would "appropriate curriculum choices" look like?

- Spending more time on the core subjects of reading, writing and mathematics and less time on other subjects
- Consistent focus on students attaining proficiency on content standards

3. What would "frequent assessment of student progress with multiple opportunities for improvement" look like?

- Weekly assessments (aligned with content standards) of student progress
- Multiple opportunities to improve performance
- Multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery of content standards
- Teacher comments on student work provides specific recommendations for improvement

4. What would "written responses in performance assessments" look like?

- Incorporating written responses on all assessments (full sentences, emphasis on correct language usage)
- Teacher comments on student work provides specific recommendations for improvement
- Emphasis on informative writing
- Use of single scoring guide (rubric) to evaluate student writing
- Scoring guide applied to all student writing
- Teachers using student writing diagnostically to identify obstacles to student learning

5. What would "external scoring" look like?

- Regular exchanges of student papers among teachers for scoring
- Regular discussions about student writing among teachers to identify obstacles to student learning
- Continual refinement of the scoring guides applied to student work

Appendix C

Best Practices for Improving Student Attendance, Reducing Truancy and Increasing the Graduation Rate

The Division of Student Services provides the following suggestions to improve student attendance, reduce truancy, and increase graduation rate:

1. **Establish attendance goals for individual students, grade levels, and the school! Make excellent attendance a priority.**

2. **Monitor daily student attendance and ensure accurate attendance data collection.**

3. **When appropriate consider attendance incentives.**

4. **Ensure that all parents/guardians are notified following unexcused absences.**

5. **Utilize automated attendance calling if available or have a staff member call parents/guardians to notify and/or inquire about a student's absence(s).**

6. **Schedule conferences with students to discuss attendance issues. Include administrators and counselors as appropriate.**

7. **Schedule conferences with parents/guardians to discuss attendance issues. Include administrators, counselors and teachers as appropriate.**

8. **Send attendance notification letters after 5 and 9 days of unexcused absences. Notify your Pupil Personnel Worker of these letters.**

9. **Communicate and collaborate with staff/parents/students regarding attendance initiatives and procedures.**

10. Involve classroom teachers as the first proactive attendance intervention.

a. Assist students in understanding the relationship between good attendance and academic achievement.

b. Keep accurate daily attendance records.

c. Display and support the school's attendance policy and procedures.

d. Communicate with parents as well as students regarding absences.

e. Note changes in student behaviors.

f. Be aware of early dismissals, late arrivals and suspensions.

g. Participate when needed on school attendance review teams.

h. Work with administrators and guidance counselors in transitioning students back into the school environment after extended absences.

11. Identify attendance and behavior issues early. Intervene early and often. Be willing to address underlying concerns and issues when necessary and make appropriate services available or referrals to outside agencies when necessary. These may include referrals to:

a. Conflict Resolution

b. Peer Mediation

c. Tutoring

d. Career counseling

e. Dropout Prevention Coordinator

f. Referral to School Psychologist

g. Referral for special education testing

h. Referral to the Maryland Student Assistance Program (MSAP)

i. Referral to a Pupil Personnel Worker

j. Referral to outside agencies that deal with behavioral and mental health issues, medical issues or any other service that might be required and available.

k. Referral for home and hospital services when needed.

l. Referral to the New Day Youth Development Center

12. Utilize the Home-School Liaison to contact the home.

13. When all other school-based efforts have failed, utilize the Pilot Truancy Reduction Program that has been established through the Circuit Court.

14. **Make adjustments to student schedules when appropriate to assist in transitioning the student back into a successful school setting. This may include tutoring or other assistance necessary to help the student make up work and or salvage some credits for the year. Summer school may be an option in this process.**

15. **The Principal and Instructional Leadership Team should review (and revise as indicated) the school attendance improvement steps in their School Improvement Plan annually. The plan should facilitate the development of a school-centered approach to implement and monitor effective intervention strategies, activities, and procedures designed to improve school attendance and academic performance.**

16. **Increase awareness of the 40 Developmental Assets identified by the Search Institute that make young people more likely to grow up healthy, caring and responsible.** (For more information go to http://www.search-institute.org and click on the link for "40 Developmental Assets.")

17. **Establish a School Attendance Review Team* to be used as an additional resource for dealing with poor attendance and truancy after other strategies have been tried with little or no success. The team will develop an intervention plan for an individual student after considering steps that have already been taken to address the poor attendance of the student. They will monitor the implementation of that plan.**

18. **Establish a Transition Team* to be used for students returning to the regular school setting from DJS facilities, WALC or long term absenteeism, including truancy. The team will develop a transition plan for an individual student after considering his/her needs and will monitor implementation of that plan.**

* Note: The roles of the School Attendance Review Team and the Transition Team may be served through the school-based **Student Service Teams** that are mandated by MSDE. Membership on the Student Service Team is fluid and may change as determined by the needs of the student being considered; however, the basic structure of the team (allowing for substitutions due to the lack of one or more particular positions) should include: Administrator, Teacher(s), Guidance Counselor, Conflict Resolution Teacher, Home-School Liaison, ISS Teacher, Nurse, Dean of Students, Pupil Personnel Worker and Psychologist. The team may also bring in professionals from other agencies such as the Department of Social Services and the Department of Juvenile Services as deemed necessary. The specific make up of the team may change according to the needs of the student. For example: The administrator should be one who works with the child. The teacher should be very familiar with the particular child and other agencies should only be represented if the school feels they are needed to deal with specific issues.

Appendix D

FACILITATION TIPS

The following facilitation tips were developed for use by the National School Reform Faculty (http://www.nsrfharmony.org).

1. **Take some time to clarify terminology.** For example, what is a clarifying question? How is it different from a probing question (both in terms of structure and purpose)? **Clarifying questions are for the person asking them.** They ask the presenter "who, what, where, when, and how." These are NOT "why" questions. They can be answered quickly and succinctly, often with a phrase or two. **Probing questions are for the person answering them.** They ask the presenter "why" (among other things), and are open-ended. They take longer to answer, and often require deep thought on the part of the presenter before she speaks. The person asking the probing question doesn't know (or even assume) an answer to the question being asked, and doesn't have an investment in how the question is answered.

2. **Alert people to the likely places/points in the process which will feel awkward** such as when the group gives feedback. Remind the group that it is their job to give feedback, and to offer an analysis of the issue or questions presented. It is not necessary to solve a problem or to offer a definitive answer. Remind participants to listen in a non-defensive manner. They might listen for: new ideas, perspectives, and approaches; the group's analysis of their question and related issues; and/or the assumptions implicit in the conversation. Remind participants that this is not supposed to be about them personally, but about a question they have raised.

3. **Remind people that they can never know everything, but that they can know enough to be helpful.** There may be much that the group says that won't be useful because they don't know enough about the context, but there will be things said and questions raised that ONLY outsiders who don't know every nuance of the context can say or ask.

4. **Remember to debrief each session as a whole group.** Debriefing the process is key. Most groups find a few minutes completing a Plus/Delta chart (What went well? / What could be changed in the future to improve the process?) of the meeting is time well-spent. Don't short-change this step.

Appendix E

USING CONSENSUS FOR COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING

What Is Consensus?

A consensus *is*	finding a proposal acceptable enough that all members can support it. Probably no one will be completely satisfied with the decision, but everyone can live with it.
A consensus *is not*	a unanimous vote - a consensus may not represent everyone's first priorities.
A consensus *is not*	a majority vote - in a majority vote, only the majority gets something they are happy with; people in the minority may get something they don't want at all, which is not what consensus is all about.
A consensus *is not*	every team member totally satisfied.

Consensus requires

- Time
- Active participation of all group members
- Skills in communication: listening, conflict resolution, discussion facilitation
- Creative thinking and open-mindedness

The Essence of Consensus*

I believe that I understand your position.

I believe that you understand my position.

I will support the position of the group, whether I agree or not,

because it was reached fairly and openly.

*Adapted from Team Management: Leadership by Consensus by Richard Wynn and Charles Guditus. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1984, p. 43

Rules for Consensus

- To the extent possible, everyone who will be significantly affected by a decision should take part in the decision-making process.
- Everyone should try hard to be open-minded and to understand the views of others.
- Everyone with something relevant to say should be heard.
- The group should strive to reach decisions that accommodate the expectations of as many as possible. Decisions are often shaped by the discussion.
- When sufficient discussion has taken place, group members in a minority position should support the decision shaped by the group.
- When the group is unable to reach consensus, or sufficient time is not available, the group should permit the leader or a smaller group to make the decision. It may be helpful to decide on the procedure to be used to make decisions in such circumstances before they arise.

*Consensus Guidelines**

- A topic or idea is placed before the team for discussion.
- The topic is discussed; questions and concerns are raised; data and solution options are presented.
- Differences and disagreements, as well as similarities, are explored and encouraged.
- Suggestions and modifications to the original topic are made.
- The team creates a new idea, based on the discussion.
- The facilitator checks for consensus.
- If there is no consensus, the facilitator asks for a variation of the idea and tests for consensus again.
- If there are still members who are struggling, the facilitator asks the team for stand-aside proposals (i.e., trial time period, modified plan).
- If members indicate support for a 90-day trial period, the facilitator tests for consensus again; the entire group supports the modified solution.

*Harrington-Macklin, D. (1994). *The team building tool kit: Tips, tactics, and rules for effective workplace teams.* New York: AMACOM.

Gauging Consensus

A simple way to gauge consensus in which everyone present participates is to use the "Fist to Five" technique. Team members display either one or more fingers to signal consensus or a fist to indicate opposition. Some teams use the following signals to indicate degree of consensus:

Five Fingers: "It's a great idea, and I'll be one of the leaders in implementing it."

Four Fingers: "It's a good idea, and I'll work on it."

Three Fingers: **"**I'm neutral."

Two Fingers: "It's not my first choice, but I'll try."

One Finger: "I don't agree, but I promise not to block it."

Fist: "I'm completely opposed to the idea. I'm going to block you if you try to implement it." Any participant showing the "fist" signal must offer an alternative solution option to the team for discussion.

Appendix F

Quality Tools

Introduction

Just as important to making a commitment to continuous improvement is having knowledge of, and using, various "quality tools" to assist with planning for that improvement, the analysis of data, and the interpretation of results. The table below lists selected quality tools that are discussed in more detail in this section of the Handbook along with their most useful applications for educators.

Quality Tools Application Matrix

TOOL \ USE	Planning	Analysis	Interpretation	Team	Individual
Affinity Diagram	X	X		X	
Brainstorming	X	X		X	
Flowchart	X	X		X	X
Force Field Analysis		X		X	
Nominal Group Technique	X			X	
Plus/Delta Chart	X	X		X	X
Scatter Diagram			X		X

Quality Tool: Affinity Diagram

Affinity Diagrams are used for gathering and grouping ideas by allowing a team to creatively generate a large number of ideas/issues and then organize and summarize natural groupings among them to understand the essence of a problem and breakthrough solutions.

What does it do?

- Encourages creativity by everyone on the team at all phases of the process
- Breaks down longstanding communication barriers
- Encourages non-traditional connections among ideas/issues
- Allows breakthroughs to emerge naturally, even on long-standing issues
- Encourages "ownership" of results that emerge because the team creates both the detailed input and general results
- Overcomes "team paralysis," which is brought on by an overwhelming array of options and lack of consensus

How do I do it?

1. State the issue or problem to be worked on.

   Tip – From the start, reach consensus on the choice of words you will use. Neutral statements work well, but positive, negative, and solution-oriented questions also work.

2. Generate ideas for the issue in question. Brainstorm at least 20 ideas.
   a. Follow guidelines for brainstorming.
   b. Record each idea on a Post-it™ note in bold, large print to make it visible 4-6 feet away. Use at minimum, a noun and a verb. Avoid using single words. Four to seven words work well.

   Tip – A "typical" Affinity Diagram has 40-60 items; it is not unusual to have 100-200 ideas.

3. Without talking, sort ideas simultaneously into 5-10 related groupings.
   a. Move Post-it™ notes where they fit best for you; don't ask, simply move any notes that you think belong in another grouping.
   b. Sorting will slow down or stop when each person feels sufficiently comfortable with the groupings.

   Tip – Sort in silence to focus on the meaning behind and connections among all ideas, instead of emotions and "history" that often arise in discussions.

Tip – As an idea is moved back and forth, try to see the logical connection that the other person is making. If this movement continues beyond a reasonable point, agree to create a duplicate Post-it™.

Tip – It is okay for some notes to stand alone. These "loners" can be as important as others that fit into groupings naturally.

4. For each grouping, create summary or header cards using consensus.
    a. Gain a quick team consensus on a word or phrase that captures the central idea/theme of each grouping; record it on a Post-it™ note and place it at the top of each grouping. These are draft header cards.
    b. For each grouping, agree on a concise sentence that combines the grouping's central idea and what all of the specific Post-it™ notes add to that idea; record it and replace the draft version. This is a final header card.
    c. Divide large groupings into subgroups as needed and create appropriate subheaders.
    d. Draw the final Affinity Diagram connecting all finalized header cards with their groupings.

Tip – Spend the extra time needed to do solid header cards. Strive to capture the essence of all of the ideas in each grouping. Shortcuts here can greatly reduce the effectiveness of the final Affinity Diagram.

Tip – It is possible that a note within a grouping could become a header card. However, don't choose the "closest one" because it's convenient. The hard work of creating new header cards often leads to breakthrough ideas.

Example:

A team was charged with coming up with ideas of how businesses can help students prepare for life after graduation. After asking all those present to introduce themselves, the team leader summarized the goal for the meeting. She then handed each participant a stack of sticky notes and asked them to write their thoughts about what local businesses can do to help schools in the district. She reminded them to write only one idea on each sticky note. The team had some trouble getting started, but after a couple of minutes, all were busily writing. She gave them about 15 minutes to write their ideas.

The team leader called "time" and collected the ideas from the members. She mixed them up before sticking them to the wall to ensure the ideas would remain anonymous. After sticking them on the wall, she then asked the team to arrange the ideas into related groups. She asked that this task be done in silence, so no one would be

influenced by any other team member. As the participants began moving sticky notes around, it looked as though the ideas were being separated into four major groups.

After discussing the idea groupings, it became obvious to the participants that four distinct categories of *"how businesses can assist schools"* had emerged. The remaining one sticky note was placed in a "miscellaneous" category.

Internships	**After-School Jobs**	**Guest Instructors**	**Career Fairs**	**Miscellaneous**
Idea	*Idea*	*Idea*	*Idea*	*Idea*
Idea	*Idea*	*Idea*	*Idea*	
Idea		*Idea*	*Idea*	

Quality Tool: Brainstorming

Brainstorming is used to create "bigger and better" ideas. Brainstorming is used to establish a common method for a team to creatively and efficiently generate a high volume of ideas on any topic by creating a process that is free of criticism and judgment.

What does it do?

- Encourages open thinking when a team is stuck in "same old way" thinking
- Gets all team members involved and enthusiastic so that a few people don't dominate the whole group
- Allows team members to build on each other's creativity while staying focused on their joint mission

How do I do it?

There are two major methods for brainstorming.

- *Structured* – A process in which each team member gives ideas in turn.
- *Unstructured* – A process in which team members give ideas as they come to mind.

Either method can be done silently or aloud.

Structured Brainstorming

1. The central brainstorming question is stated, agreed on, and written down for everyone to see.

   Be sure that everyone understands the question, issue, or problem. Check this by asking one or two members to paraphrase it before recording it on a flipchart or board.

2. Each team member, in turn, gives an idea. No idea is criticized. Ever!

   With each rotation around the team, any member can pass at any time. While this rotation process encourages full participation, it may also heighten anxiety for inexperienced or shy team members.

3. As ideas are generated, write each one in large, visible letters on a flipchart or other writing surface.

Make sure every idea is recorded with the same words of the speaker, don't interpret or abbreviate. To ensure this, the person writing should always ask the speaker if the idea has been worded accurately.

4. Ideas are generated in turn until each person passes, indicating that the ideas (or members) are exhausted.

   Keep the process moving and relatively short – 5 to 20 minutes works well, depending on how complex the topic is.

5. Review the written list of ideas for clarity and to discard any duplicates.

   Discard only ideas that are virtually identical. It is often important to preserve subtle differences that are revealed in slightly different wordings.

Unstructured Brainstorming

The process is the same as in the structured method except that ideas are given by everyone at any time. There is no need to "pass" since ideas are not solicited in rotation.

Quality Tool: Flowchart

Flowcharts are used to help depict processes. Flowcharts allow teams or individuals to identify the actual flow or sequence of events in a process that any product or service follows. Flowcharts can be applied to anything from the travels of an invoice or the flow of materials, to the steps in making a sale or servicing a product.

What does it do?

- Shows unexpected complexity, problem areas, redundancy, unnecessary loops, and where simplification and standardization may be possible
- Compares and contrasts the actual versus the ideal flow of a process to identify improvement opportunities
- Allows a team to come to agreement on the steps of the process and to examine which activities may impact the process performance
- Identifies locations where additional data can be collected and investigated
- Serves as a training aid to understand the complete process

How do I do it?

1. Determine the boundaries of the process
    - Clearly define where the process under study starts and ends.
    - Team members should agree to the level of detail they must show on the Flowchart to clearly understand the process and identify problem areas.
    - The Flowchart can be a simple one showing only sufficient information to understand the general process flow or it might contain enough detail to show every finite action and decision point. The team might start out with a general flow chart and then add in detail later or only where it is needed.

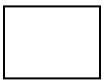
2. Determine the steps in the process
    - Brainstorm a list of all major activities decisions on a flipchart sheet from the beginning of the process to the end.

3. Sequence the steps
    - Arrange the steps in the order they are carried out. Use sticky notes so you can move them around. Don't draw in the arrows yet.

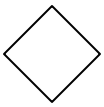
    Tip – Unless you are charting a new process, sequence what *is*, not what *should be* or the ideal. This may be difficult at first but is necessary to see where the probable causes of the problems are in the process.

4. Draw the Flowchart using the appropriate symbols

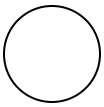
An oval is used to show the materials, information or action to start the process or to show the results at the end of the process.



A box or rectangle is used to show a task or activity performed in the process. Although multiple arrows may come into each box, usually only one arrow leaves each activity box.



A diamond shows those points in the process where a yes/no question is being asked or a decision is required.



A circle with either a letter or a number identifies a break in the Flow Chart and is continued elsewhere on the same page or another page.

Arrows show the direction or flow of the process.

- Be consistent in the level of detail shown.
  - A general process level flow chart will show key action steps but no decision boxes.
  - An intermediate-level flow chart will show action and decision points.
  - A specific level flow chart will show minute detail.
- Label each process step using words that are understandable to everyone.
- Add arrows to show the direction of the flow of steps in the process. Although not a rule, if you show all “yes” choices branching down and “no” choices branching to the left, it is easier to follow the process. Preferences and space will later dictate direction.
- Don’t forget to identify your work. Include the title of your process, the date the diagram was made, and the names of the members.

5. Test the Flowchart for completeness
   - Are the symbols used correctly?
   - Are the process steps (inputs, outputs, actions, decisions, waits / delays) identified clearly?

- Make sure every feedback loop is closed, i.e., every path takes you either back to or ahead to another step.

- Check that every continuation point has a corresponding point elsewhere in the Flowchart or on another page of the Flowchart.

- There is usually only one arrow out of an activity box. If there is more than one arrow, you may need a decision diamond.

- Validate the Flowchart with people who are not on the team and who carry out the process actions. Highlight additions or deletions they recommend. Bring these back to the team to discuss and incorporate into the final Flowchart.

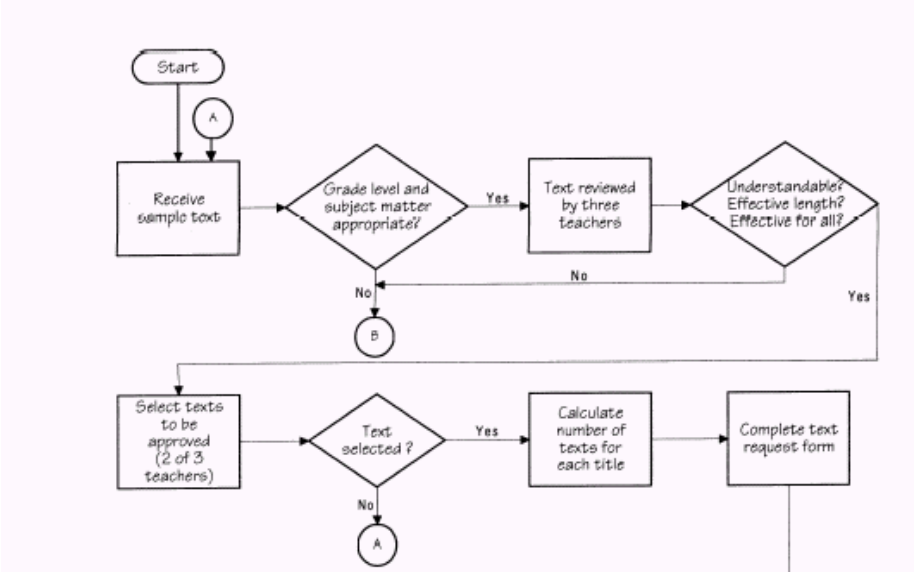
6. Finalize the Flowchart
   - Is this process being run the way it should be?

   - Are people following the process as charted?

   - Are there obvious complexities or redundancies that can be reduced or eliminated?

   - How different is the current process from an ideal one? Draw an ideal Flowchart. Compare the two (current versus ideal) to identify discrepancies and opportunities for improvements.

Example:
A portion of a flowchart is shown below.



Quality Tool: Force Field Analysis

Force Field Analysis is used to identify the forces and factors in place that support or work against the solution of an issue or problem so that the positives can be reinforced and/or the negatives eliminated or reduced.

What does it do?

- Presents the "positives" and "negatives" of a situation so they are easily compared
- Forces people to think together about all the aspects of making the desired change a permanent one
- Encourages people to agree about the relative priority of factors on each side of the "balance sheet"
- Encourages honest reflection on the real underlying roots of a problem and its solution

How do I do it?

1. Draw a large letter "T" on a flipchart
    - At the top of the T, write the issue or problem that you plan to analyze.
    - To the far right of the top of the T, write a description of the ideal situation you would like to achieve.
    - Brainstorm the forces that are driving you towards the ideal situation. These forces may be internal or external. List them on the left side.
    - Brainstorm the forces that are restraining movement toward the ideal state. List them on the right side.

2. Prioritize the driving forces that can be strengthened or identify restraining forces that would allow the most movement toward the ideal state if they were removed.
    - Achieve consensus through discussion or by using ranking methods such as Nominal Group Technique and Multivoting.

    Tip – When choosing a target for change, remember that simply pushing the positive factors for a change can have the opposite effect. It is often more helpful to remove barriers. This tends to break the "change bottleneck" rather than just pushing on all the good reasons to change.

Example:
Lee, the Assistant Superintendent, was working with a team from the district office. They were given the task of identifying obstacles that stood in the way of the district's

decision to hold year-round school. Year-round school was to be implemented by the next term.

Lee called the team together and explained how and why to use Force Field Analysis. The team understood that the district had decided to move to year-round school. However, the question remained, "How can we make the transition smoothly?" After some discussion and information sharing, they decided that the current situation could be described as a transitional one – moving from traditional to year-round school.

With the situation defined, the team decided that a realistic goal would be to implement year-round school in 30 percent of the district by the next term. As the team members started to call out the driving and restraining forces, the recorder captured the ideas on the flip chart. Things were starting to get a little wild, so Lee asked everyone to slow down and offer one idea at a time. The team members were excited because they were actually identifying potential obstacles or restraining forces to reaching their goal.

After 20 minutes, the team came up with several driving and restraining forces. Lee knew they may have missed some, but felt confident that they covered the major points. The team agreed the next step was to try to "dig deeper" for the causes of the restraining forces by asking why each one was happening. The team assigned action items to several members, asking them to gather data verifying ideas on the major restraining forces.

A portion of the team's Force Field Analysis is depicted below.

Current Situation: Transitional – moving from traditional to year-round school

Goal: Implement year-round school in 30% of the district by next term

Driving Forces			***Restraining Forces***
Support from the school board	→	←	Many parents still prefer traditional school
Students will retain more and remediation time will be reduced	→	←	Students are resistant
Facilities usage will be enhanced	→	←	Sophisticated administration coordination is required
Fewer latch-key kids	→	←	Teachers' union opposition

Quality Tool: Nominal Group Technique

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) allows a team to quickly come to a consensus on the relative importance of issues, problems, or solutions by completing individual importance rankings that can be combined into a team's final priorities.

What does it do?

- Builds commitment to the team's choice through equal participation in the process
- Allows every team member to rank issues without being pressured by others
- Puts quiet team members on an equal footing with more dominant members
- Makes a team's consensus (or lack of it) visible; the major causes of disagreement can be discussed

How do I do it?

1. Generate the list of issues, problems, or solutions to be prioritized.
    - In a new team with members who are not accustomed to team participation, it may feel safer to do written, silent brainstorming, especially when dealing with sensitive topics.

2. Write statements on a flipchart or board.

3. Eliminate duplicates and/or clarify meanings of any of the statements.
    - As a leader, always ask for the team's permission and guidance when changing statements.

4. Record the final list of statements on a flipchart or board.
    - Use letters rather than numbers to identify each statement so that team members do not get confused by the ranking process that follows.

5. Each team member records the corresponding letters on a piece of paper and rank orders the statements.

6. Combine the rankings of all team members.

Example

A departmental team brainstormed the following possible answers to the question, "Why does the department have inconsistent quality in their work?"

A. Lack of training
B. No documented process
C. Unclear quality standards
D. Lack of cooperation with other departments
E. High turnover

Next the team leader asked each person to rank each answer using a scale of 5 to 1 with "5" as the most important and "1" as the least important. (Since individual rankings will later be combined, this "reverse order" minimizes the effect of team members leaving some statements blank. Therefore, a blank (value = 0) would not, in effect, increase its importance.)

Larry's sheet of paper looks like this:

A. 4
B. 5
C. 3
D. 1
E. 2

Next everyone's rankings are compiled and totaled.

	Larry	Nina	Norm	Paige	Si		Total
A	4	5	2	2	1	=	14
B	5	4	5	3	5	=	22
C	3	1	3	4	4	=	15
D	1	2	1	5	2	=	11
E	2	3	4	1	3	=	13

The results show that the team would work on idea "B" first and then move through the rest of the list as needed.

Variation

One Half Plus One

When dealing with a large number of choices it may be necessary to limit the number of items ranked. The "one half plus one" approach would rank only a portion of the total. For example, if 20 ideas were generated, then team members would rank only the top 11 choices. If needed, this process could be repeated with the remaining 9 items, ranking the top 5 or 6 items, (half of 9 = 4.5 + 1 = 5.5), until a manageable number are identified.

Quality Tool: Plus/Delta Chart

Plus/Delta Chart may be used to analyze processes to determine what factors led to the success of the process and what factors might be changed to improve the process in the future.

What does it do?

- Provides a method to identify factors leading to the success of a process and opportunities to improve the process
- Useful for planning future improvement actions

How do I do it?

1. On a sheet of paper draw a large two column chart. Label the left side of the chart "Plus" and the right side of the chart "Delta".

2. Ask participants to brainstorm those aspects of the process that led to a successful outcome. Write each citation under the "Plus" heading.

3. Ask participants to brainstorm those aspects of the process that could be changed to make the process more successful. Write each citation under the "Delta" heading. (Note: Delta is a Greek letter used to represent the concept of change. Hence, the items listed on the chart under "Delta" represent those items that could be changed to improve the process the next time. "Deltas" are often called "opportunities for improvement.")

4. Utilize the results of the Plus/Delta Chart when engaged in future planning sessions – maintaining the "pluses" and working to improve the "deltas."

Example

The following Plus/Delta Chart was generated at the end of a meeting for third grade teachers during which student responses to BCRs were discussed.

Plus	Delta
Everyone brought samples of BCR responses to share.	Need to make enough copies of work samples for everyone to have a copy.
Everyone participated freely and offered suggestions for improvement.	Some people did not have an opportunity to present their work samples
Professional Development Coach offered excellent resources for us to use.	
Everyone committed to an improvement action to try before the next meeting.	

Quality Tool: Scatter Diagram

Scatter Diagrams are used to study and identify the possible relationship between the changes observed in two different sets of variables.

What does it do?

- Supplies the data to confirm a hypotheses that two variables are related
- Provides both a visual and statistical means to test the strength of a potential relationship
- Provides a good follow-up to a Cause & Effect Diagram to find out if there is more than just a consensus connection between causes and the effect

How do I do it?

1. Collect 50-100 paired samples of data that you think may be related and construct a data sheet.

Course	Average Session Rating (on a 1-5 scale)	Average Experience of Training Team (days)
1	4.2	220
2	3.7	270
3	4.3	270
•	•	•
•	•	•
•	•	•
40	3.9	625

   Theory: There is a possible relationship between the number of days of experience the training team has received and the ratings of course sessions.

2. Draw the horizontal (x axis) lines of the diagram.
   - The measurement scales generally increase as you move up the vertical axis and to the right on the horizontal axis.

3. Plot the data on the diagram.
   - If values are repeated, circle that point as many times as appropriate.

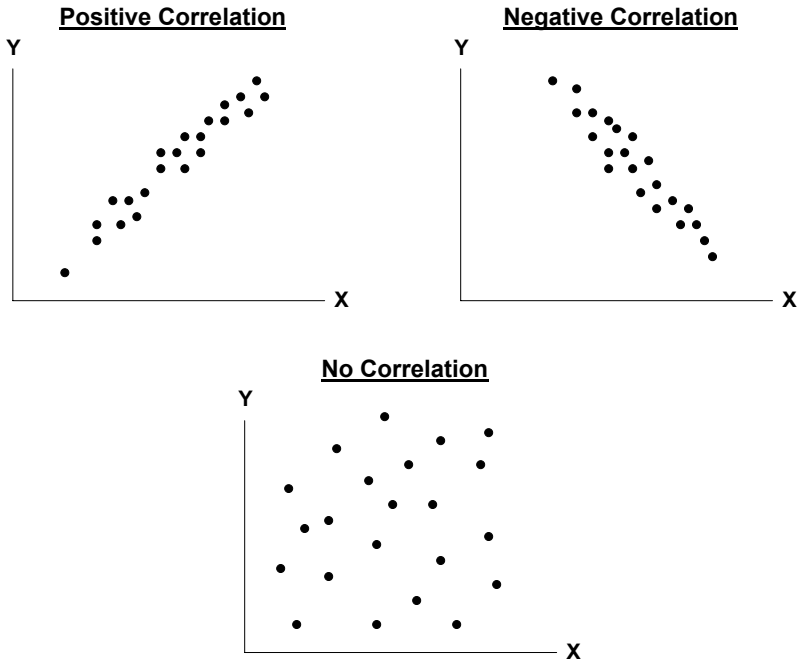
4. Interpret the data.
   - There are many levels of analysis that can be applied to Scatter Diagram data. Any basic statistical process control text, like Kaoru Ishikawa's Guide to Quality Control, describes additional correlation tests. It is important to note that this example is based on a straight-line correlation.

There are a number of non-linear patterns that can be routinely encountered, (e.g., y = ex, y = x2). These types of analyses are beyond the scope of this summary.

Tip – The Scatter Diagram *does not predict* cause and effect relationships. It only shows the strength of the relationship between two variables. The stronger the relationship, the greater the likelihood that change in one variable will affect change in another variable.

Examples

Scatter Diagrams showing possible correlations between two variables are shown below.



Appendix G

Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards

Introduction

Research, insights from practice, and common sense converge around the understanding that skilled teachers have a significant impact on student learning. Helping teachers develop the knowledge and skills they need begins with rigorous teacher training programs. Subsequently, effective professional development helps teachers continue enhancing their knowledge and skills throughout their careers.

Maryland's Teacher Professional Development Standards are intended to guide efforts to improve professional development for all teachers. These standards call on teachers, principals and other school leaders, district leaders and staff, the Maryland State Department of Education, institutions of higher education, and cultural institutions and organizations[1] across the state to work together to ensure that professional development is of the highest quality and readily accessible to all teachers. These standards also acknowledge that teacher professional development encompasses a wide variety of learning activities. The list includes, but is certainly not limited to, teacher study groups, coaching and mentoring relationships, teacher networks, participation on school improvement teams and committees that develop curricula and assessments, workshops, and college and university courses.

When fully implemented, these standards and the related indicators can help improve the quality of professional development by:

- Providing a clear vision of high-quality professional development that recognizes local needs, priorities, and resources;
- Guiding planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating high quality professional development, including both professional development programs and an entire professional development agenda;
- Supporting alignment of professional development with goals for improving student learning and state, district, and school policies and priorities;
- Informing allocation of resources for professional development; and,
- Defining accountability for ensuring that professional development is of the highest quality and readily accessible to all teachers.

Context for High-Quality Teacher Professional Development in Maryland

The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards are derived from the National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) Standards for Staff Development.[2] Like the NSDC standards, the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards rest

on several fundamental assumptions about contextual factors that are critical to ensuring that professional development is effective.

- **Professional development is most effective when it takes place in vibrant professional learning communities**. These learning communities take various forms, but they all value ongoing learning by teachers and students. They encourage individual and collaborative experimentation, practice, and reflection. They foster collegiality and problem solving, and they emphasize continuous improvement in classrooms and schools.

- **Professional development is most effective when there are strong leaders.** These leaders recognize the value of high-quality professional development, encourage and facilitate teacher participation, and communicate about the benefits of professional development to key stakeholders (e.g., parents, school boards, county commissioners). Ideally, leadership for professional development is distributed among teachers, principals and other administrators, district staff, MSDE, institutions of higher education, and various cultural organizations. At the same time, no single formula defines the appropriate distribution of leadership.

- **Professional development is most effective when there are adequate resources.** Resources include money, people, and time. Just as leadership should be distributed, resources (people and money) can come from a variety of sources, with no single organization or stakeholder group expected to shoulder the whole burden. Careful analysis of how time is used in school schedules, district calendars, negotiated agreements, and other policy documents can lead to more time for teacher learning. All of these resources will be used most effectively when allocations are coordinated and when there is careful assessment of the returns on investments in professional development. As with leadership, no single formula defines the adequacy of resources. Instead, resources are adequate when they ensure that all teachers can study, practice, and implement the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective with their students.

The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards rest on a fourth assumption which is consistent with the NSDC definition of effective professional development.

- **Professional development is most effective when there is consensus around clear expectations for what teachers should know and be able to do to help all students learn.** These expectations are shared among all stakeholders and district and school leaders work to build understanding and consensus around them. The expectations are reflected in negotiated agreements, job descriptions and assignments, performance appraisal systems, systems of rewards and incentives for teachers, and in the design and content of teacher professional development. In the end, the formula for effectiveness is simple: When these four elements are in place, professional development can be highly effective. When they are missing or underdeveloped, professional development will not be effective and will have limited impact on teaching and learning.

Standards and Indicators Define High-Quality Professional Development

Content Standards

I. Content knowledge and quality teaching - Effective professional development deepens all teachers' content knowledge and the knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective instruction and assess student progress.

Indicators:

1a. Professional development includes learning experiences and resources to

ensure that teachers understand how the subject(s) they teach addresses the Maryland content standards and the relationships between the subjects they teach and other subjects in the curriculum.

1b. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to examine, observe, practice, and receive feedback on their use of research-based instructional strategies to help all of their students master Maryland content standards.

1c. Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to examine a variety of classroom assessments, practice using them in their classrooms, and analyze the results to (1) understand and report on student mastery of Maryland content standards, (2) identify gaps in student learning, and (3) adjust instruction.

II. Research-based - Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to apply research to decision making.

Indicators:

2a. Professional development includes ongoing opportunities for teachers to read and reflect on current research on topics of interest to them and consistent with state and local school improvement priorities.

2b. Professional development may involve two-way interactions with researchers to discuss research design, data collection, analysis, and reporting to assist teachers in understanding what works, particularly in areas where there may be competing perspectives and conclusions.

2c. Professional development involves individual teachers or teams of teachers, often in collaboration with researchers, in action research to test their own hypotheses and to report results about professional development program impact or the effectiveness of particular instructional strategies and programs for teachers and students.

III. Collaboration - Effective professional development ensures that teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to collaborate with others to improve instruction.

Indicators:

3a. Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to practice working with colleagues, including other teachers, principals, counselors, social workers, and others, and emphasizes that collaboration is a means and not an end in addressing issues related to school improvement and improved student learning.

3b. Professional development emphasizes constructive management of conflict and fosters understanding that disagreement and conflict are potentially beneficial elements of professional discourse.

3c. Professional development relies on communication technologies to broaden the scope of collaboration.

IV. Diverse learning needs - Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to meet the diverse learning needs of all of their students.

Indicators:

4a. Professional development focuses on developing teachers' understanding of and disposition to acknowledge the diversity of student learning styles and needs.

4b. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to develop and demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to design and implement instructional and assessment strategies that meet diverse student learning needs and help all students master Maryland content standards.

4c. Professional development fosters teachers' respect for all students and guides teachers in setting and maintaining high expectations for all students to demonstrate proficiency on Maryland content standards.

V. Student learning environments - Effective professional development ensures that all teachers are able to create safe, secure, and supportive learning environments for all students.

Indicators:

5a. Professional development fosters a safe, inclusive, equitable learning community where teachers, administrators, and students participate in maintaining a climate of caring and respect.

5b. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to develop and practice student ownership of management routines and practice creative solutions to conflicts.

5c. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to use data on student behavior, such as discipline referrals, suspension information and school climate surveys to analyze and refine practices that promote optimal learning environments.

VI. Family involvement - Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to involve families and other community members as active partners in their children's education.

Indicators:

6a. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to develop and demonstrate oral and written communication skills to build partnerships with parents and community members and to communicate expectations for student mastery of Maryland content standards and success on approved national, state, and local assessments.

6b. Professional development fosters teachers' understanding and respect for varying cultural backgrounds of students, families, and the community and how the diversity and richness of these cultural backgrounds can serve as foundations for student learning.

6c. Professional development includes opportunities for teachers to master the use of technology to strengthen partnerships with families and the community.

Process Standards

VII. Data-driven - Effective teacher professional development relies on rigorous analysis of data.

Indicators:

7a. Individuals who plan professional development have ready access to high-quality student data from various sources that are organized in user-friendly formats.

7b. Individuals who plan professional development have the knowledge and skills necessary to use disaggregated student data (by race, gender, English language learners, special education, and eligibility for free or reduced price meals) for planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional development and instructional programs.

7c. School and district schedules set aside time for teachers and others to examine student data as the starting point for planning professional development.

7d. Individuals who plan professional development carefully analyze a variety of disaggregated student data to identify gaps between student learning and standards for proficiency to inform the choice of the content of professional development.

7e. As appropriate to school and district needs, data analysis focuses on results from approved national, state, and local assessments, student work samples and portfolios, and behavioral indicators, such as attendance and disciplinary referrals.

VIII. Evaluation - Rigorous evaluations assess the impact of professional development on teaching and student learning.

Indicators:

8a. Individuals who plan professional development ensure that plans include adequate resources for an objective evaluation and for reporting and disseminating the results.

8b. Individuals who plan professional development (1) identify the kinds of evidence about teaching and student learning that will be collected and used as indicators of the success of professional development, and (2) consistent with progress benchmarks and goals, determine how and when the data will be collected and reported.

8c. Evaluation should also assess the impact of professional development on school culture and organization to support school improvement efforts.

8d. Sponsors of professional development communicate the results of evaluations to key stakeholder groups, including teachers, school and district leaders, central office staff, providers, policymakers, and parents, in a timely fashion.

IX. Design and teacher learning - Effective professional development content and process reflect best practices in workplace learning and in-depth understanding of how and why adults learn.

Indicators:

9a. Professional development matches learning experiences, including the intensity and duration, with individual teacher needs, current knowledge and skills, and learning goals.

9b. Professional development combines a variety of learning experiences, including, but not limited to, individual study, demonstrations, observation, practice, feedback, and reflection as well as opportunities for collaboration and problem solving among colleagues.

9c. Professional development provides extensive follow-up, including, but not limited to, classroom demonstrations, feedback on mastery of new knowledge, feedback on demonstration of new skills, peer coaching and mentoring, and opportunities for additional study.

9d. Professional development relies on information technologies to provide more extensive and diverse content, and it also relies on communication technologies to expand access and participation and to create virtual professional learning communities.

9e. Professional development recognizes and draws on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of successful teachers by including them as leaders, facilitators, and resources in professional learning opportunities.

[1] Cultural institutions include libraries, museums, and similar kinds of organizations.

[2] The NSDC standards were developed in 1995 and revised in 2001. The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards are derived from the 2001 version of the NSDC standards.

Appendix H

School: _____ **Year:** _____

WICOMICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN RUBRIC

Beliefs and Mission Statement			
REQUIRED COMPONENTS	*EVIDENCE FOUND*		**Modifications Required**
	Yes	**No**	
1. Does the School Improvement Plan include the school's Belief Statements?			
2. Does the School Improvement Plan include the school's Mission Statement?			

Priority A – Accelerating Student Learning in Reading and Math			
REQUIRED COMPONENTS	*EVIDENCE FOUND*		**Modifications Required**
	Yes	**No**	
1. Do the action steps in Priority A have the potential to improve student learning in reading and math?			
2. Is sufficient detail provided for each action step so as to ensure the person(s) responsible will be able to implement the action step?			

Priority B – Improving Student Attendance and Graduation Rate			
REQUIRED COMPONENTS	*EVIDENCE FOUND*		**Modifications Required**
	Yes	**No**	
1. Do the action steps in Priority B have the potential to improve student attendance and/or graduation rate?			
2. Is sufficient detail provided for each action step so as to ensure the person(s) responsible will be able to implement the action step?			

Priority C – Improving School Climate to Ensure a Safe, Drug-Free Environment Conducive to Learning			
REQUIRED COMPONENTS	*EVIDENCE FOUND*		**Modifications Required**
	Yes	**No**	
1. Do the action steps in Priority C have the potential to improve school climate to ensure a safe, drug-free environment conducive to learning?			
2. Is sufficient detail provided for each action step so as to ensure the person(s) responsible will be able to implement the action step?			

Title I Requirements (Schoolwide Programs only)			
REQUIRED COMPONENTS	*EVIDENCE FOUND*		**Modifications Required**
	Yes	**No**	
1. Is there a comprehensive needs assessment of the entire school that describes the achievement of students in relation to State academic content standards?			
2. Is the schoolwide reform program referenced?			
3. Are the Title I program services referenced, including additional services to students who are below the proficient level?			
4. Are strategies to increase parental involvement included?			
5. Is there a plan to assist preschool children transition from early childhood programs to the elementary program?			
6. Is there an action step that indicates how the school will provide individual student academic assessment results in a language parents can understand, including interpretation of those results?			
7. Is there evidence parents and other community members were involved in the development of the plan?			

Reviewed and Approved By:

Beliefs and Mission and AYP Graphs _____
Coordinator(s) of School Improvement

Priority A _____
Director of Elementary Schools and/or Director of Secondary Schools

Priority B _____
Director of Student Services

Priority C _____
Director of Student Services

Title I (Schoolwide Programs only) _____
Supervisor of Title I

Professional Development Components _____
Director of Curriculum & Professional Development

Budget Alignment _____
Coordinator(s) of School Improvement

Final Approval _____
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction and Curriculum