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School Improvement: Data-driven and Vision-centered

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Chapter 2

School Improvement: Data Driven and Vision Centered

Samuel J. Smith

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower.
Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it?
For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you,
saying, "This person began to build and wasn't able to finish."
—Jesus Christ (Luke 14:28–30, New International Version)—

OVERVIEW

Building upon the previous chapter's discussion of the importance of a shared vision, this chapter will address the fleshing out of that vision through a cycle of school improvement. It will explain how the school's vision statement—if current, relevant, and understood by stakeholders—is central to all school-improvement initiatives. This chapter will present theories and practical models for data-driven decision making and will outline recommended steps for setting realistic goals, implementing those goals, and assessing the degree to which they have been met.

Objectives

By the end of this chapter, the reader should be able to do the following:

1. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning (ISLLC 1.B).
2. Create and implement plans to achieve goals (ISLLC 1.C).
3. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement (ISLLC 1.D).
4. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans (ISLLC 1.E).

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INTRODUCTION

Whether to meet the terms of adequate yearly progress (AYP), to satisfy accreditation standards, or to improve community perceptions of a particular academic institution, administrators often find themselves entangled in the process of school improvement. The stakes can be high. For public schools, punitive accountability measures as part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (P.L. 107–110) may result in the loss of federal funds if requirements remain unmet. For private schools, poor performance can turn into a public relations nightmare when word among tuition-paying parents spreads to the community that graduates of College Prep Academy are not as prepared for college as the school had advertised they would be. Stakes can be so high in poorly performing public schools that failure to bring about satisfactory school improvement may result in a turnaround, restart, closure, or transformation—all of which require the replacement of the principal.

Not all school improvements carry such weight. Many are simple incremental changes involving unilateral decisions. These occur frequently and become part of a principal's decision-making routine. More complex changes require the involvement of a leadership team and possibly faculty members and parents in a more systematic shared decision-making model. The higher the stakes and the closer the decision gets to mission-specific issues, the more important it is for administrators to follow a systematic model for school improvement.

BACKGROUND

Historical Background

As long as there have been differing ideas about the purposes and outcomes of education, there have been efforts to change the way in which education has been delivered and the impact it has had on individual students and on society. Until the rise and spread of the American common school movement of the 19th century, however, discussions of school improvement were primarily philosophical arguments by the likes of Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece, Augustine and Aquinas in the Middle Ages, and Locke and Rousseau during the Enlightenment. Reformation leader Martin Luther proposed a specific plan for common schools in Germany, introducing radical innovations for his day, such as educating the poor, instructing girls, and teaching in the vernacular language instead of in Latin. Luther's ideas, like those of Rousseau and others, found their way into educational practice and policy.

Individual experiments also spawned various types of schools throughout history, many as religious training institutions and others as new models for teaching children—each with its own perspective on how best to educate. One example of an early school reformer was the Swiss educator Johann Pestalozzi, who is credited with improving teacher training and introducing a systematic instructional method implementing the object lesson. Unfortunately, Pestalozzi's poor administrative skills led to the eventual closing of every school he established. Although considered a failure by many of his contemporaries, his proposals impacted schools throughout Europe and the United States through the teachers he had trained and international visitors to his schools (Smith, 2010).

Although various types of reform efforts in the United States brought about tax-funded public schools, multitudinous private schools, and curricular changes within these schools, systematic improvement efforts did not become widely practiced until after the 1957 launch of Soviet satellite *Sputnik*. The concern became not only that the United States might be losing the space race, but also that it might be losing the "brain race" (Urban & Wagoner, 2004). A major reaction to this concern was for President Eisenhower to sign into law the 1958 National Defense Education Act, which provided unprecedented amounts of federal funds for math and science instruction. In the early 1980s, the nation found itself once again concerned about its academic standing among other nations when Japan, Germany, South Korea, and other nations began to surpass the United States in technological advances, automobile production, and academic achievement tests. These circumstances led to what Hoy and Miskel (2013) referred to as four waves of educational reform.

The first wave began when President Reagan appointed the 1983 National Commission on Excellence in Education, whose report *A Nation at Risk* called for states to make drastic reforms in areas such as graduation requirements and length of instructional time. The second wave occurred in the late 1980s when the White House, under President George H. W. Bush's administration, collaborated for the first time ever with

the National Governors Association to agree on a set of performance goals. These were later signed into law as the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994) by President Clinton, who as governor of Arkansas had been one of the prominent members of the National Governors Association to develop the following eight goals to be accomplished by the year 2000:

GOAL 1: All children in America will start school ready to learn.

GOAL 2: The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90%.

GOAL 3: All students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, the arts, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our nation's modern economy.

GOAL 4: The United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement.

GOAL 5: Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

GOAL 6: Every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

GOAL 7: The nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.

GOAL 8: Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

Although incorporating elements of previous reform efforts, the third wave of the 1990s was the most systemic. It focused heavily on comprehensive change throughout school systems and on integration of policy around clear outcomes. The fourth wave is represented by the 2001 No Child Left Behind's emphasis on accountability, excellence, and continuous improvement and the 2009 Race to the Top's focus on competition among the states and rewards for progress and innovation. These waves of reform have required school administrators to implement various types of change, heightening the awareness of the need to acquire effective skills to lead the change process.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: LEADERSHIP AND CHANGE

Leading Change Through Relational Trust

John Maxwell (2007) is known for popularizing the notion that leadership is influence—nothing more, nothing less. If this can be assumed to be true, what, then, causes one to have sufficient influence on others to lead them through personal or organizational change? Relational trust is a critical component. Christophersen, Elstad, and Turmo (2012) found that "the potential for quality improvement in schools can best be realized by focusing on strengthening human relationships" (p. 12). Change can be intimidating, especially for veteran teachers whose paradigms and practices have been solidified through years of experience. Others—especially novice teachers or those lacking self-efficacy in their own performance—may question the motives of an administrator who introduces an instructional initiative requiring significant change. Their sense of inadequacy may cause them to feel threatened, possibly to the point of fearing that their employment may be in jeopardy.

In order for meaningful change to occur and to be sustained, relational trust is vital. Hoy and Miskel (2013) define relational trust as "a general sense of confidence and dependence among students, teachers, and parents based on social respect, personal regard, role competence, and personal integrity" (p. 314). If a campus climate is devoid of relational trust or if that trust has recently been violated, it will not easily or

quickly be cultivated again. The administrator's reputation for productive longevity, professional leadership, organizational management, and personal relationships will serve as brick and mortar to rebuild a climate of trust. It is only in such a climate that genuine change can flourish.

When educational change fails, it is usually because of ineffective leadership. There certainly may be other reasons for the failure, such as incorrect assumptions on which an initiative is based, a misinterpretation of best-practices research, or a flawed implementation plan. Overwhelmingly, however, failure can be attributed to lack of leadership. Gorton and Alston (2009) provide the following list of roles that building-level principals assume who have successfully led their schools through change:

- Believer: is committed to the project.
- Advocate: promotes and defends the project.
- Linker: connects project to other parts of the system.
- Resource Acquirer: allocates tangible and intangible resources.
- Employer: hires and assigns project staff appropriately.
- Leader: supplies initiative, energy, and direction.
- Manager: provides problem-solving assistance and support.
- Delegator: lets others lead as appropriate.
- Supporter: encourages others through the change process.
- Information Source: provides frequent feedback regarding the progress of the change.

When administrators assume these roles, they increase the probability that change will be embraced, implemented, and sustained by stakeholders.

Resistance to Change.

Despite a leader's best efforts to cultivate an environment that fosters change, there will always be some degree of resistance. The more significant the instructional change, the more disequilibrium faculty members may experience, which could be complicated by a sense of inadequacy to implement the change or a negative attitude about the new program itself (Green, 2005). Other factors that may potentially bring resistance to change include the following (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004):

- Interference with faculty's economic, social, or esteem needs
- Fear of the unknown
- Threat to existing power or influence
- Knowledge or skill obsolescence
- Limited resources

Gorton and Alston (2009) identify seven types of resisters that administrators may face as they attempt to implement change:

- Positive Resisters: convey verbal agreement with the change but take no action to implement it.
- Unique Resisters: believe that the change will be good for others but is unnecessary for themselves.
- Let-Me-Be-Last Resisters: hope the pilot will fail or that the idea will die out before it reaches them.
- Need-More-Time Resisters: verbally support the change but insist that the timing is premature.
- States' Rights Resisters: claim that their resistance is only because local programs would be better than federal ones.

- Cost-Justifying Resisters: stand on the grounds of fiscal responsibility.
- Incremental Change Resisters: insist that the new must not differ much from the existing program and are the most difficult to win over.

Granted, resistance can be healthy, serving as a guard against misdirected change or groupthink. It can also provide accountability to renegade administrators who may lack the experience, training, or maturity to navigate change and to do so at the appropriate time. With this in mind, leaders would be wise to seek counsel before dismissing all types of resistance.

If after prayerful deliberation an administrative team decides that reducing resistance to change is in the school's best interest, there are several approaches to consider. Strategies not recommended involve punitive measures, the ostracizing of resisters, and demeaning those who object. Bullying—commonly observed on the elementary playground—has unfortunately been all too often the method of choice by many a zealous administrator intent on changing the minds of those who would obstruct progress. Less manipulative and much more dignifying strategies are recommended by Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004): participation, communication, support, and rewards. Encouraging resisters to participate in the planning, design, and implementation of the proposed change may offer them a sense of ownership and empowerment. Instead of feeling that the change is something being done to them, they may become invested to the point that they seek to help bring the project to fruition. Communication, both listening to constituents and providing them with data, has shown to be an extremely effective tool in the reduction of resistance. In order to maximize the value of communication, it is important that it be distributed over time and via a variety of media. To expect that information will be communicated one day and that resistance will end the next is exceedingly naïve. It may take not only time but also repeated iterations of the message through research reports, student and faculty testimonials, and best-practice demonstrations before resistance is reduced. Ironically, the very information intended to provide support may be perceived by faculty as just another directive or as administrative propaganda. Faculty will feel sincerely supported to implement change only after they are trained in the required skills, provided the necessary materials, and positively encouraged throughout the process. Rewards, as well, assist in reducing resistance. When possible, rewards should be tangible, such as salary increases, bonuses, and paid time off. Nontangible rewards, such as recognition and praise, can also be effective.

There are instances when resistance exists but for none of the aforementioned reasons. It may simply be that the timing is not right. All other factors may seem to be ideal, and the initiative may appear to be the perfect solution for the perceived need. Stakeholders may overwhelmingly support administration in the effort, and an abundance of resources may exist to fund the project. Nevertheless, the project could fail because of inopportune timing. Leadership teams must be aware of stressors or other unusual circumstances that could divert attention, efforts, or resources needed for the proposed change. Some examples of stressors may be other special events that are being promoted at the same time, deadlines due at the time of the proposed kickoff event, or emotional strain from tragic events, such as the death of a student or teacher.

Waiting for perfect timing, however, can itself become a detractor to implementing change. To avoid this, Guthrie and Schuermann (2010) recommend the adoption of a cycle of strategic planning. Change then becomes so routine in the campus culture that less effort is exhausted on navigating resistance. Staff will attain a comfort level with the familiar cycle of collecting and evaluating data, identifying needs, developing implementation plans, and revising those plans as they are assessed. Traditional planning cycles have involved setting goals for 3 to 5 years in the future, each year revising the plan and adding another year. That cycle has become less common in recent years because of volatility in the economy, rapid technological advances, and anticipated legislative changes regarding standards and accountability. Nevertheless, a cycle of planning—even if only on an annual basis—can reduce the "bad timing" factor and can embed improvement into the culture.

Shared Decision Making.

Teachers understand that for efficiency's sake, unilateral decisions are necessary. Because they make these types of decisions in their classrooms on a regular basis, they accept that administrators will periodically make routine unilateral decisions as well. Such decisions are manifested as instructions, purposes, and

parameters for conducting routine duties. Green (2005) distinguishes these types of decisions as "autocratic" and acknowledges that any healthy organization will be led by an individual who is trusted to make autocratic decisions—either because the decisions are routine or because they are so urgent that time does not permit for the participation of others in the decision-making process. The more significant and lasting the impact of a decision is anticipated to be, the more vital it is that others participate in its development.

Although systemic change requires a highly motivated and goal-oriented leader, that leader cannot continue to make singlehanded decisions and expect meaningful change. Alternatives to the autocratic model include site-based management, participatory governance, and shared decision making. Implementing one of these participatory models of decision making increases teacher morale, enthusiasm, and ownership of proposed changes (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Therefore, administrators should consider organizational structures to ensure that shared decision making is not left to chance but is intentional. One such structure might be a school improvement committee, as recommended by Gorton and Alston (2009) and Guthrie and Schuermann (2010). Membership on the committee should include all top-level policymakers, leaders, and managers and a representative sample of faculty, parents, and other stakeholders. For nonleaders, membership should be voluntary to ensure that only those who sincerely desire to participate are involved.

It is important for the committee to be supported by the rest of the school and not to be perceived as an out-of-touch, behind-the-scenes, exclusive group. To avoid this, meetings should be open to observers and frequent communication should be made available via newsletters, announcements, websites, and emails. Also, stakeholders who are not members of the committee should be surveyed periodically for their input through questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. They need to be assured that they are supplying meaningful information that the committee will seriously consider in the planning process.

One caution about school improvement committees—especially if the same members remain for a period of time and they develop a high degree of cohesiveness—is that they can become tools for groupthink, rubber-stamp committees, or groups of "yes" people for charismatic leaders. If a committee is allowed to develop into this type of group, it becomes highly probable that the group will begin to make frequent defective decisions. In order to appear efficient to outsiders or to please the leader, members may become less critical of data and may even become careless about evaluating information sources (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). Ironically, a structure intended to create a culture of open-mindedness may result in closed-mindedness and uniformity of thought.

Classifications of Change.

Green (2005) classifies change into two categories: first-order change and second-order change. First-order change is continuous, requiring only small modifications that leave the system stable and undisrupted. It improves the efficiency and effectiveness of programs without drastically transforming the behavior of teachers or students. These first-order changes may not require the involvement of a school improvement committee. Conversely, second-order change is discontinuous. Because second-order changes disrupt the system's equilibrium, requiring individuals to perform in fundamentally different ways, a shared decision-making process should be employed. Leaders must determine whether a change is of the first or second order before taking action. Doing so assists leaders in knowing the degree to which stakeholders might be prepared for the change and what groundwork is essential before implementing the change.

Biblical Perspectives

Moses, Joshua, David, Paul, and Jesus all serve as biblical examples of leading others through change. Perhaps the most prominent example, however, is that of Nehemiah, whose account of rebuilding Jerusalem can be found in the first six chapters of the book bearing his name. He prayerfully sought the Lord for a vision and then shared the vision with the king and other influential leaders. Before approaching the Jewish people with it, however, he strategically analyzed the situation in order to have specific details to communicate. He also collaborated with others to acquire necessary resources so that when he finally approached the Jewish people, he did not simply present a problem but also presented a vision for what the future of Jerusalem would be and a preliminary plan

for making it happen. Nehemiah and the Jewish remnant developed a detailed plan of action, delegating each task to a specific group of workers. As always occurs when a major enterprise is under way, opposition and distractions ensued. The project itself was questioned by those outside the effort, and those within were distracted by cultural issues. Nehemiah's motives were questioned, but he refused to enter the fray as his personal character was attacked. Throughout, he displayed openness in his approach with others and a commitment to godly principles.

As previously stated, relational trust is a key component in leading others through the change experience. Nehemiah had gained that type of trust with both kings and commoners. The ultimate leadership model for relational trust, however, is that of God the Father leading His children through life transformation. Proverbs 3:5–6 (New International Version) directs the reader to "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Whatever approach leaders may take to school improvement, they will find more success as they trust the Lord and as they build trust between themselves and the school's stakeholders.

The book of Proverbs is replete with admonitions to consider the counsel of others:

- "Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise. Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails" (Proverbs 19:20–21).
- "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22).

The process of receiving advice and counsel should not be confused with majority rule or leadership by democracy. Leaders are cautioned to tread carefully when moving in a direction that is upstream from the majority, but sometimes standing for what is right and true requires it. A clear biblical example can be found in Numbers 13 and 14. Ten of Moses's 12 spies returned from a data-collecting expedition to Canaan with negative reports: "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are" (Numbers 13:31b). Later that night, "all the members of the community raised their voices and . . . grumbled against Moses and Aaron" (Numbers14:1–2). The majority was patently against Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Caleb, yet these leaders were moving in the direction God intended. As harsh as God's decision may have seemed that "not one of them will ever see the land" that He had promised them (Numbers 14:23), it may have been a necessary measure for His purposes to be fulfilled. Today, many educators decry what they perceive as punitive measures when schools are slated for a turnaround, restart, or closure process in which the majority, if not all, of the staff will be dismissed. Might it be that success at that particular school would be impossible if the same personnel were retained?

Above all, wisdom is paramount in decision making and strategic planning. The epistle of James offers the reminder that "if any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you" (1:5). Later, James distinguishes between the wisdom of heaven and that of earth. The wisdom of heaven is manifested by a good life and deeds done in humility. It is "pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere" (3:17). On the contrary, earthly wisdom is characterized by envy, selfish ambition, boasting, disorder, and a denial of the truth (3:14–16). James specifically addressed those who would assume to make plans for the future, reminding them that they "do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that'" (4:14–15).

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT IN ACTION

Standards Relating to School Improvement

All of the standards delineated by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) as indicators of proficient administrator performance relate to school improvement. When schools are being led by proficient administrators, improvement will indeed occur. There are certain standards, however, that relate more

directly to the knowledge, skills, and dispositions critical to the specific process of school improvement. These standards are as follows:

Standard 1.B: Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning.

Standard 1.C: Create and implement plans to achieve goals.

Standard 1.D: Promote continuous and sustainable improvement.

Standard 1.E. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans.

Current Issues and Trends in School Improvement

Accreditation Agencies and Government Influence.

In private schools, there are few government regulations requiring improvement plans beyond the adherence to building and health codes. Therefore, plans for improvement are typically motivated by internal needs as identified by school boards or leadership teams or as part of the accreditation process. As private schools approach their initial accreditation process, explicit areas for improvement will emerge through the data-collection and analysis process. Goals will be set with deadlines satisfactory for meeting the approval of the outside accreditation team.

The process for accreditation renewal is similar to the initial process. The same types of data are collected and reviewed to ensure an acceptable level of performance has been maintained for renewal to be granted. It is common, however, for accrediting agencies to introduce new standards or to reinterpret existing ones. In those cases, schools may need to improve procedures or programs to meet the new expectations. Some private school accrediting agencies offer a renewal option that focuses strictly on school improvement. Based on identified areas for improvement from the previous accreditation report, schools are required to show how they have addressed the issues since the most recent accreditation cycle.

Like private schools, public school improvement may also be motivated by internal recognition of needs, but often the impetus for improvement plans is sourced in state or federal mandates. In recent years, No Child Left Behind mandates have served as the stimulus behind most improvement plans, with the focus being on meeting the requirements of adequately yearly progress. The federal government offers School Improvement Grants for states to distribute to local districts "that demonstrate the greatest need for the funds and the strongest commitment to use the funds to provide adequate resources in order to raise substantially the achievement of students in their lowest-performing schools" (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). By 2013, however, a majority of states had been approved for waivers to portions of No Child Left Behind. States were approved based on their proposals to implement alternative accountability systems or teacher evaluation programs, which themselves become different types of improvement plans (Klein, 2012).

One trend resulting from these waivers is that dozens of states have begun setting varying achievement targets based upon race and ethnicity. This has caused a firestorm among those who valued No Child Left Behind's goal that all students would become proficient in basic skills, despite their race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Critics argue that a lower achievement bar for minorities will result in generally lower minority outcomes, whereas supporters see the trend as the only realistic means to school-wide improvement in academic achievement (Richmond, 2012).

Economic Challenges.

A challenge common to both private and public schools has been the strain of figuratively having to make more bricks with less straw. While demands from governing entities rise, resources to meet these demands diminish (Odden & Picus, 2011). Administrators find themselves needing to be more creative in acquiring resources to fund initiatives and may need to hire personnel devoted strictly to the task of resource procurement. In an era when society is expecting the primary role of administrators to be that of instructional leader, they are feeling more pressure than ever to do what is expected of many university presidents and to "bring home the bacon."

The Kansas City, Missouri, School District was featured in an issue of *Phi Delta Kappan* (Esselman, Lee-Gwin, & Rounds, 2012) as an example of a district with plummeting available funds but with severe improvements needed. Student achievement levels were low and getting lower, with less than a third of elementary students reading on grade level and a majority of schools posting lower than 25% of students proficient on the state assessment. Billions of dollars had been expended on magnet schools, themed schools, and a career-focused high school—none of which accomplished what had been hoped. Radical cuts in programs were necessary, so the new superintendent eliminated all programs deemed inefficient in order to free resources for the targeted purpose of teaching and learning. This ongoing process of "rightsizing" the Kansas City schools has already shown progress in student achievement and continues to look promising.

According to Odden and Picus (2011), "schools can improve learning and teaching using research-based and best practices-based strategies that in many cases don't require more money and in others where more money will help if it's spent strategically" (p. 42). They found the following strategies to be effective in dire situations where improvements were desperately needed but budget restrictions were limited:

- Resist common cost pressures on schools. Avoid small class sizes (except in primary grades, where they are shown to have a positive effect), unnecessary electives, automatic pay increases, and growing benefits packages.
- Develop a more powerful school vision. Use data-based decision making, set ambitious goals regardless of demographics, and adopt new curriculum and textbook materials.
- Identify necessary resources to meet the new school vision.
- Reallocate resources to meet the new vision.

School Improvement in the News

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—commonly known as the "Stimulus Package"—Congress approved $3.5 billion for School Improvement Grants. This being the largest federal investment in history to improve failing schools, it became a target for the media to track what the results would be. Unfortunately, 3years after the investment, more than a third of schools scored worse in reading and math than before receiving the funds (Layton, 2012). What are the implications of these results and of the Kansas City example mentioned earlier? Although funding is certainly required for most improvement initiatives, it most likely is not the most significant factor in the improvement of student achievement.

One recipient of the School Improvement Grant funds was Shawnee High School in Louisville, Kentucky, where Mr. Keith Look assumed the principal role in 2008. He knew stepping into the position that the school was labeled as one of Kentucky's worst because of declining student achievement over a span of decades (Maxwell, 2010). When *Education Week* first featured his situation, it was the summer of 2010 and—as part of the turnaround procedure required by the federal grant—he was in the process of replacing half of his staff. Typically, in the turnaround model of reform, the principal would also have been removed, but Mr. Look was permitted to stay on with the stipulation that he produce "considerable progress" after 1 year of having received the grant. With so much scrutiny on his school, the Kentucky Department of Education deployed three turnaround specialists to assist Mr. Look. In the summer of 2011, *Education Week* published a follow-up article reporting that attendance was up, suspensions were down, nearly all the teachers were returning the next year, and Mr. Look's contract was being renewed even though it would be months before achievement test results would be available (Klein, 2012). After the second year of the 3-year turnaround process, over half of the students continue to score in the lowest category of math, called "novice" in Kentucky (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012). Because of the media attention given to Shawnee High School, Mr. Look and his staff will continue to undergo the nation's scrutiny as they receive federal School Improvement Grant funds for their 3rd year in the program. Unless significant gains are reported, critics will continue to claim that the resources spent on the program may not be justified.

Federal school reform initiatives have had little, if any, direct impact on private schools. On the state level, however, several states' private schools have been granted an option to participate in voucher programs whereby

students in public schools deemed as "failing" may use state funds to attend private schools. Each state administers its programs differently and holds distinct criteria for students and schools to participate. Therefore, state courts have handed down varying rulings on whether these programs pass muster regarding constitutionality. States experimenting with such voucher programs remain unsure of the permanency of their programs as they inevitably are tried through the judicial system. For example, a Louisiana judge ruled in November 2012 that its state's voucher program was unconstitutional because it diverted public tax dollars to religiously affiliated private schools (Plasse, 2012). Florida, on the other hand, has had a voucher program since 2001 that in 2012 provided scholarships for over 40,000 students to attend religious schools (Weber, 2012). It is funded by corporations that are permitted by law to contribute a portion of their state taxes to organizations approved to distribute the Florida Tax Credit Scholarships. Although the organizations distributing the scholarships are private, the chief criticism of the program is that it allows corporations to divert tax dollars that would otherwise go into the state's coffers, reducing available funds for public schools and other state services.

Best Practices in School Improvement

School improvement initiatives are being driven increasingly by centralized governments and less by local entities. State departments of education—often in response to federal mandates—collect data, analyze them, and set time frames for specific improvements to be implemented and results to be realized. As Gorton and Alston (2009) traced the history of school change efforts in the United States, they suggested that "significant and lasting improvement can seldom be prescribed, mandated, or directed by agencies or individuals outside the school" (p. 134). Therefore, leadership for bringing about meaningful change must come from the same level where the change is needed. In most cases, that would be at the school-site level. Building-level administrators can choose a passive approach by simply responding to mandates or become proactive by developing a site-based routine of evaluation and improvement. If properly implemented, a proactive approach will promote a culture of improvement.

Data Collection and Analysis.

A common mistake for building-level administrators is to base their decisions on a variety of unreliable sources: intuition, tradition, anecdotes, prejudices, and single-shot observations. This type of decision making results in a concentration on operational issues and on putting out proverbial fires. A more preferred approach is to make data-based decisions. Guthrie and Schuermann (2010) define data-based decision making as "the reliance for analyses and decisions upon systematically and reliably collected information regarding multiple performance and status characteristics of school operation" (p. 264). Administrators have, however, become so inundated with data that expressions such as "information overload" and "drowning in data" have commonly been used to communicate their frustration. Because there is such an influx of data, administrators should work to filter, categorize, and sift through information until it is simplified.

Although student achievement data will by far be the most important and mission-specific information collected and analyzed, there are many other types of data also important to developing goals. These can be categorized as data about students, parents, personnel, and fiscal matters. Following is a list of the types of data that should be collected for each category:

- Students: academic achievement, attendance, extracurricular participation, socioeconomic status, gender, race, ethnicity, college and career success
- Parents: participation, attendance at functions, values, perception of school satisfaction
- Personnel: teacher characteristics, attendance, professional development, performance evaluations
- Fiscal Matters: personnel salaries, textbooks, supplies, instructional materials, library holdings, supplemental programs, technology

External and internal environments. Two additional categories of supporting data may be necessary depending on the type of decision being made. Guthrie and Schuermann (2010) identify these categories as external and internal environments. The purpose of collecting data from external environments is to make decisions relating to parent and community perceptions, communication with stakeholders, and public relations.

Means of collecting data from external environments might be questionnaires, surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The questions asked would relate to stakeholders' perceptions about the school's services, organizational structure, student success, and—for private schools—tuition costs. Analyzing information from external environments will assist in deciding strategically how to change public perception about the school, usually by disseminating previously unavailable information or by disseminating it in a different manner. It may be that perception can only be changed by actual revisions in procedures, programs, services, or personnel. For instance, it is possible that an individual in a highly visible support staff position is poorly representing the organization but that it has not come to the attention of administration how seriously it is damaging the school's reputation until the analysis of the data from external environments. The second category of supporting data, internal environments, is helpful when decisions are significant and require a substantial monetary commitment. Examples of such decisions might involve a change in salary, benefits, facilities, technology, and any number of other costly improvements.

Comparisons. Data from internal environments are used for comparative purposes. Historical, horizontal, and similar comparisons are made to the present conditions.

Historical comparison. The first comparison is a historical comparison of present conditions to past conditions in the same school. Recent data from the school targeted for improvement are collected and compared historically to past data. For example, if the improvement in question is regarding salary, it would be reasonable to ask the following: What has been the percentage of salary increase each year? Have increases been consistent over the years? How do salary increases for faculty compare to those for support staff?

Horizontal comparison. Second, a horizontal comparison is conducted by comparing recent data from the target school to data from other schools. It is helpful to collect information from other schools that are comparable to the target school in location, size, demographics, and socioeconomic status of the community. As helpful, if not more so, is information from benchmark institutions. These are institutions viewed as models that have already achieved a measure of success to which the targeted school aspires to reach at some point. In the example of salary decisions, an awareness of similar schools assists in knowing how competitive present salaries are with those paid in schools in the same type of market and helps to set salaries for the upcoming budget year. An awareness of benchmark schools assists in setting long-range goals of what salaries should be in future years.

Similar comparison. The third comparison is a similar comparison. In this step, information is collected from organizations or businesses that are similar in some aspects to the target school but are not providing the same services. For example, a school might compare the wages of its office staff, custodians, and cafeteria workers to those of comparable positions at a nearby hospital. A Christian school might compare what it pays its chief administrator to what another Christian ministry of a similar size and budget might pay its chief administrator. Analyzing the results of historical, horizontal, and similar comparisons will assist in making more informed decisions about crucial matters, such as the revision of a salary scale.

Assessment team. So much data must be collected and analyzed in order to prepare an accreditation report or a school improvement plan that the task should not be left to one individual alone. Even if it is part of the job description of a curriculum director or assessment coordinator, there should be a team that assists in the task. Not only will the team ease the workload of filtering through the data, but it will also bring a much-needed measure of accountability so that the decisions and goals set are more reliable and valid. A team of no more than four or five members meeting monthly will minimize the likelihood of individual bias. An individual charged with collecting and evaluating data and then setting organizational goals may be tempted to interpret the data in ways that support the individual's pet projects or personal agenda. A team, however, might ensure that sufficient amounts of data are collected and that they are compared and analyzed thoroughly enough to make valid decisions.

Developing Goals to Carry Out the Mission.

If the vision or mission statement of a school is current, relevant, and embraced by its stakeholders, it may serve as an instrument to drive school improvement. The data collected and analyzed should answer the question

"To what degree is the mission being accomplished?" Then the goals set should align with the mission statement. Following are some sample mission statements:

- *The mission of ABC School is to provide an appropriate educational program and learning environment that will effectively meet the educational needs of its students and citizens and help its students accomplish educational goals that are significant and transferable.*
- *The mission of City School District is to provide the teaching and learning environments that will ensure, with the support of the students, parents, and community, that all students, upon graduation, will have the academic and social skills and strategies to be successful lifelong learners.*
- *County School is a diverse community of learners that strives for excellence; values individuality; fosters a passion for learning; promotes the balanced development of mind, body, and character; encourages service; and instills a respect for others.*
- *The purpose of Belief Academy is to be a school where Jesus is Lord and students are led to develop spiritually, academically, socially, physically, and in service to others.*

To illustrate how a mission statement should drive a school's goals, it could be argued that there are eight elements of Belief Academy's mission statement that should be evaluated regularly. The first is:

The purpose of Belief Academy is to be a school . . .

It may seem obvious that the institution is a school, and some may believe that this aspect of the mission need not be addressed at all. This element, however, is vital and must be questioned periodically because there are indeed specific functions that distinguish schools from other types of institutions. Is the school's primary focus to that end, or are resources expended unnecessarily for purposes that another institution can and should be doing more effectively? For instance, some Christian schools may be more like a church than a school. They may pride themselves so much in being like a family that their focus is to that end. Although they may be like a church or like a family and may even perform some of the same functions, schools cannot replace these other institutions. Periodically, school leaders—both public and private—must evaluate the degree to which resources are being used for nonschool purposes. Is it possible that the school is offering a service that is better provided by another institution to which families may be referred?

The second element is:

. . . where Jesus is Lord . . .

Often school mission statements include ambiguous terms that need to be defined. For example, the public school mission statements listed previously use terms such as "successful lifelong learners," "passion for learning," and "balanced development." It is important for stakeholders, especially faculty members, to know what is meant by these terms; otherwise, they lose all meaning. In the case of the Christian school, constituents need an explanation of what it means to be a school "where Jesus is Lord." Without clarity, every member of the school community may have a slightly different understanding and may not be carrying out the mission statement as intended. Evaluating and improving upon an undefined element of a school vision is impossible and, over time, that element of the mission statement may become simply a slogan that is paid lip service only.

The third element is:

. . . and students are led . . .

A particular high school that had this phrase in its mission statement began to assess the degree to which students were intentionally "led." After observation and contemplation, the leadership team decided that the process of leadership and mentoring of students to become leaders themselves was left far too much to chance and needed to be more systematically intentional throughout the school. Student leaders were identified in

various programs. They were paired with adults and older students who became their mentors. Even parents leaders were identified and were assigned as mentors to individual students. When the school evaluated this aspect of the mission statement, identified areas for improvement, and set intentional goals to address how students were led, the culture of the school began to reflect what was intended in the mission.

The fourth through eighth elements are:

. . .to develop spiritually,

academically,

socially,

physically,

and in service to others.

In this example, the school assessed the degree to which students were achieving in each of the five aspects of student development. An improvement plan was then developed to address weaknesses in each area. In addition, survey questions on the annual parent and faculty questionnaires were aligned to all eight elements of the mission statement to help ensure that the school would remain true to its stated purpose.

Goal theory and decision-making models. The following subsections address two decision-making models commonly used in goal theory: the classical decision-making model and the satisficing decision-making model.

Classical decision-making model. Although many goal theorists consider it to be an outmoded framework, the classical model for decision making is still commonly taught in principal preparation programs. Assumptions of the classical model are that decision making is rational and sequential and that the best possible option may be selected from among all possible alternatives (Hoy & Miskel, 2013). The sequential steps in the classical model include the following:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Establish goals to address the problem.
3. List all possible alternatives to achieve the goals.
4. Evaluate the consequences of each alternative.
5. Select the best possible alternative that will optimize results.
6. Implement the decision.
7. Evaluate the decision.

Lunenburg and Ornstein (2004) present a summary of criticisms of the classical model. They indicate that the model's primary weakness is its naïve assumption that decision makers have access to comprehensive information and can always select the optimal course of action. Decision makers rarely, if ever, have access to complete and perfect data relating to any given problem. Unknowns will always exist; therefore, it is impossible to generate a truly comprehensive list of alternatives. Even if it were possible, limitations and other complexities inhibit leaders from always selecting the optimal alternative. Frequently, time and cost constraints cause leaders to select the most practical or most feasible option rather than the ideal.

Another weakness of the classical model is that complex decisions—rather than being made in a sequential step-by-step fashion—are virtually always made recursively. The door of collecting information never shuts in the process, and the list of alternatives may multiply at any given moment. What may seem optimal when one set of factors is accentuated may be far from it through the lens of a different set. Because of these limitations, educational leaders usually choose the satisficing decision-making model, described next.

Satisficing decision-making model. Contrary to the classical model, satisficing is based on the assumption that decision making is an ongoing, complex process in which there are no final solutions to problems that continually emerge and evolve. The term *satisficing* is used for this model because of the acknowledgment that it is a satisfactory solution being sought and that it is based on a reasonable range of options. This model recognizes that leaders must narrow their attention to the most relevant factors and that the filter for deciding what is most relevant is value laden. The administrator's personal values will influence which options are perceived as most relevant, as will the institution's core values (Hoy & Miskel, 2013).

Types of goals: elimination, preservation, avoidance, and achievement goals. After evaluating mounds of data, administrators must answer a variety of questions before beginning to set and work toward specific goals. One of those questions is "What activity, program, or time-consuming task might be eliminated to make room for the new goal?" Reeves (2009) refers to this weed-pulling practice as setting elimination goals and conveys the story of a principal who received a standing ovation in a faculty meeting after asking this question. As noted earlier, educators are often asked to do more with less, just as the Egyptian pharaoh stopped providing straw for the Hebrew slaves but yet required them to make the same number of bricks (Exodus 5). There comes a point of diminishing returns when administrators ignore the fatigue their faculties experience from the never-ending introduction of new programs. It may consequently garner a great deal of favor toward the administrator and of motivation for the new cause if at least one or two time-consumers are eliminated. If found to be too difficult, the task of setting elimination goals might be made easier if preservation goals are set first. Answering "What do we already have that we want to preserve?" will narrow what remains so that it becomes easier to answer "What do we have that we want to eliminate?"

In addition to preservation and elimination goals, Gorton and Alston (2009) recognize two others: avoidance goals and achievement goals. Avoidance goals are decided by asking "What don't we have that we want to ensure that we don't get?" whereas achievement goals ask "What do we want that we don't have?" Most goals, by the nature of school improvement itself, are achievement oriented. However, it is important to remember that improvement and change do not occur only by adding new procedures. More is not always better; it is oftentimes simply more.

Setting effective goals. Because focusing on too many goals at once can be overly taxing and can diminish results, school improvement plans should include no more than three to five goals. If carefully crafted, these goals can be effective at targeting change. One popular model for writing meaningful goals is to make them SMART. A SMART goal is one that includes the following characteristics(Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010):

- Specific: focused and clearly stated, not vague or general
- Measurable: tangible and quantifiable outcomes
- Achievable: realistic, attainable
- Research based: directly linked to patterns in data
- Time sensitive: a definite date for the goal to be completed

Some administrators, if permitted to do so, may dismiss the goal-setting route altogether because of how cumbersome and tedious it appears. Seeing the process as unnecessary altogether, they elect a route that is less formal in hopes that everyone will jump on board with their agenda. This mistake ironically may make their desired changes all the more challenging to implement. Hoy and Miskel (2013) point out that well-developed goals make school change much easier because they increase attention and effort on the targeted change and strengthen persistence so that faculty are less likely to abandon the project. Of course, this is based on the assumption that the faculty will embrace the said goal. If they indeed embrace it, goals that are challenging and specific will result in much higher levels of performance than those that are too easily attained or vague.

Implementation Plans.

In the business arena, over 70% of strategic plans are never implemented (Reeves, 2009)—hours upon hours of time wasted to develop goals just to see them sit on a shelf! The biblical principle of stewardship demands that

leaders not waste their own or others' time in such a reckless manner. One effort to avoid such recklessness is to develop plans and accountability procedures for implementation. To outline one specific pattern for every implementation plan is impossible because individual plans depend on the goals to be implemented. Appendix A of this chapter, however, provides an Improvement Plan Template that includes standard elements. A successful plan will address each of the following areas on the template in sufficient detail: (a) carefully crafted SMART goal; (b) actions, strategies, and interventions; (c) timeline; (d) estimated costs, funding sources, and resources; (e) person(s) responsible; (f) procedures for monitoring evaluation; and (g) evidence that the goal was met.

Most accrediting agencies, school boards, state departments of education, and federal grant programs require a great measure of detail in strategic plans. Schools in Freeport, Illinois, however, experimented with a much more abbreviated Plan-on-a-Page, which resulted in significant improvement during the 5 years the district used this model (Reeves, 2009). The one-page plans were easily distributed to all district personnel, who were encouraged to keep them readily available for quick reference. The elements of the Plan-on-a-Page included four key areas: (a) student performance, (b) human resources, (c) partnerships, and (d) equity. See Appendix B for a sample.

Formative Feedback and Summative Evaluation.

Whether lengthy or brief, a plan is useless unless it leaps from the page into action. A plan for both formative feedback throughout implementation and summative evaluation at the end will increase the likelihood of successful attainment. Formative feedback is imperative early in the implementation phase. It provides an opportunity to diagnose specific strategies and to make corrections along the way. It also should be an opportunity to celebrate victories at various junctures. Finding something to celebrate early in the cycle of implementation will motivate faculty and encourage them to persevere. Celebrations are also occasions to reinforce specific strategies that are determined to be effective along the way.

Summative evaluation is the moment of truth. It is the official comparison of the data collected before goal setting and the data collected after implementation. If the plan was to change student behavior, how does student behavior compare before and after implementation? If the plan was to improve teacher morale, how does teacher morale compare before and after? Summative evaluation is the time to judge whether or not the plan worked and what to do next. If the plan is deemed effective, it most likely will continue as needed. As exasperating as it may be to decide the plan did not work, such a decision is a moment to reflect, reevaluate, and take the opportunity to attempt a different approach that might make the intended impact. For an example of a systematic model for data collection, analysis, goal setting, implementation, and evaluation, see Appendix C.

CONCLUSION

Countless factors will affect the path school improvement takes in the future: the economy, the renewal of federal education acts, state and local reform efforts, and others. This fluctuation makes it all the more important for educators to view school improvement not as an event but as a cycle, an integral component of campus culture. Educators must own the process and not view it as a dreaded mandate from above. Yes, governing bodies will continue to do what is in their nature—to mandate what is politically expedient. Educators in the trenches, however, must persist in doing what they are called to do, to "serve wholeheartedly, as if [they] were serving the Lord, not people" (Ephesians 6:7), setting goals not because they are mandated to do so but because it is in the best interest of the students God has placed in their care. As educators work to advocate for change in their schools and in regulatory legislation, they must appeal to what Abraham Lincoln called the "better angels of our nature"—improving schools out of a moral imperative rather than an out of an obligatory duty to an external authority.

Discussion Questions

1. How do current trends in U.S. educational reform compare to previous reform movements regarding the impetus behind the movements, the expected outcomes, and the measures of accountability applied?

2. To what degree is it possible to bring about effective change without a high degree of relational trust? What limitations in change efforts might be anticipated when relational trust is lacking?

3. What types of resistance to change have you experienced in schools where you have taught? How was the resistance managed, and do you believe it was handled correctly?

4. For what types of decisions might shared decision making be most effective? For what types of decisions might shared decision making be inappropriate?

5. Do you prefer the classical decision-making model or the satisficing model? Why?

Activities for Enrichment

1. For each of the roles Gorton and Alston (2009) list for principals as they guide the process of change, rate your present principal on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the weakest and 5 being the strongest. Consider what the principal might do to increase the weakest ratings. Either rate yourself on the same roles or ask a colleague you trust to rate you. Discuss with that colleague what you might do to improve in the weak areas.
2. Provide examples for each of the following types of goals and justify how each would improve the school: preservation, elimination, avoidance, and achievement.
3. Evaluate the goals in a school improvement plan from the school where you presently teach or from one that you find online. To what degree do the goals follow Guthrie and Schuermann's (2010) SMART guidelines?

APPENDIX A

Implementation Template

Goal:					
Actions, Strategies, and Interventions	Timeline	Estimated Costs, Funding Sources, and Resources	Person(s) Responsible	*Means of Evaluation*	
				Procedures for Monitoring	Evidence of Successful Completion
What will serve as this evidence?					

APPENDIX B

FREEPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT PLAN ON A PAGE 2007-2008

In partnership with students, family and community, we prepare every student for the world of today and tomorrow through excellence in education.

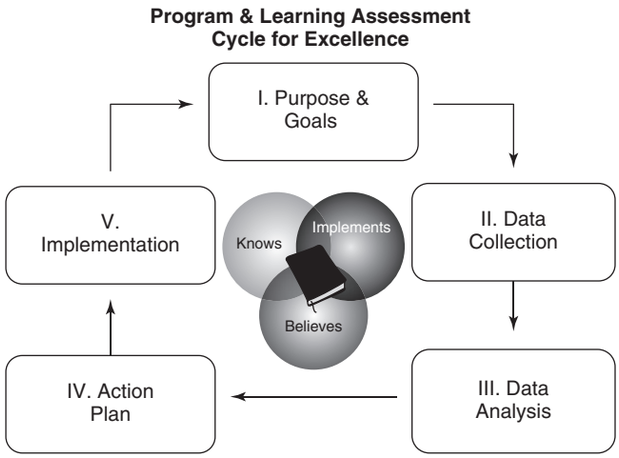
VISION	GOALS AND MEASURES	ACTION PLANS
STUDENT PERFORMANCE Every student is performing at or above grade level, engaged in his or her learning, and contributing positively to the community.	• By 2010, all students in grades 3-8 will meet or exceed the ILS as measured by ISAT; by June 2008, 87% of the students will meet or exceed the Reading ILS and 92% will meet or exceed the Math ILS on ISAT. • By June 2014, all students in grade 11 will meet or exceed the ILS as measured by PSAE; by June 2008, 78% students will meet or exceed the Reading ILS and 63% students will meet or exceed the Math ILS. • For each of the next 4 years, FSD will move at least 10% of students from "meets" to "exceeds" on the State exams. • By June 2010, all grade 8 students will successfully complete Algebra I or a higher level math course. By June 2008, 80% of grade 7 students will be prepared to successfully complete Algebra I or a higher level math course during the 2008-2009 school year.	▪ By Aug. 31, 2007, each school will identify students, below grade level on State exams and/or local assessments, to receive additional support to move students to grade level. ▪ By June 2007, administration will review and improve its process for academic acceleration in student learning, using data/feedback/strategies process, at the District, building, and student levels. The data will be reviewed on a monthly basis, using Literacy First reading assessments (K-6), local reading assessments (K-12), and local math assessment (K-12) to develop student level strategies for improvement in both reading and math. This process will be implemented at the start of the 2007-2008 school year.
EQUITY Every person is treated fairly, promoting dignity and mutual respect. The diverse talents of all staff and students are fully appreciated and developed.	• By June 2010, close the achievement gap in grades 3-8, with a greater %age of all groups in the "meets" and " exceeds" categories each year. By June 2008, 81% of African American students in grades 3-8 will meet or exceed reading ILS and 85% "meet" or "exceed" math ILS. • By June 2014, close the achievement gap for grades 9-12. By June 2008, 63% of African American high school students will meet or exceed reading and math ILS. • By Sept. 2010, enrollment in high academic courses will mirror the District's ethnic make-up, while low income student group will increase annually 5%age points. • By June 2008, African American representation in extra-curricular activities will meet MOU compliance ranges at elementary through high school, and 70% of FJHS and FHS African American students will participate in at least one extra-curricular or "school connecting" activity. • By June 2010, provide a positive learning environment as measured by 100% of staff indicating that they believe schools are safe/secure and atmosphere is conducive for learning. By June 2008, decrease suspensions and conduct referrals by 10%.	• Communicate "it's okay to be smart" message through AVID, Efficacy, student groups, parent meetings, mentoring, etc. • Enroll all grade 6 students who meet/exceed math standards or pass the Orleans math test in Pre-algebra or Algebra I. • Provide staff development in area of cultural diversity. • Counselors and other stakeholders aggressively recruit minorities and low income students for higher level courses. • Aggressively recruit minorities for extra-curricular activities and develop recruitment plans for activities with limited to no diversity. • Continue faithful implementation of Second Step. • Implement PBIS and ICLE Intervention Pyramid as part of the FHS Freshman Plan.
PARTNERSHIPS Student, family and community partnerships contribute to the success of every student.	**Student Partnerships** • By June 2008, every student will have a set of personal academic goals that are regularly reviewed and updated at least 4 times/year by students, teachers and parents. • By June 2008, there will be an increase of 10 % of students reporting a safe/caring school environment as measured by survey data. **Parent-Family Partnerships** • By June, 2010, 90% of District families will have participated in a research-based parent partnership program focused on student success; by June 2008, at least 10% of District families will have participated in a research-based parent partnership program. • By June 2010, at least 90% of parents will express satisfaction with FSD 145 as measured by a District survey. **Community Partnerships:** • By June 2008, every school will have at least two community partnerships that demonstrate a positive contribution to the physical, social, emotional, and academic growth of students. **Overall:** • By June 2008, increase public awareness of FSD 145 performance beyond 2007 levels. • By June 2010, at least 90% of a valid community sample will be satisfied with FSD 145.	• Implement a plan at each school to set personal student goals by September 1, 2007. • Establish and maintain a student-focus group at each school to 'listen to' and 'learn from' students. • Implement programs to recognize student success. • Establish and implement an approach to engage each family in the review and support of their student's goals and plan. • Implement research-based programs to increase parent participation in support of student success. • Implement strategies to gather input from parents regarding their level of satisfaction. • Support each school's efforts to establish effective community partnerships to serve students. • Work with community partners to recruit, train and sustain an increased number of student mentors. • Establish and implement a comprehensive strategy to enhance school district communications. • Survey a cross-section of community members regarding satisfaction with district programs and services.
HUMAN RESOURCES Our diverse faculty and staff enthusiastically implement best practices and are recognized and valued for our results.	• By August 2010, teaching staff demographics will mirror the Illinois teaching demographics as identified by the State Report Card. • By 2010, the level of African American administrators in the District will have been maintained or increased. • By June 2010, 100% of staff will indicate that they are recognized and valued for district results in student performance, as measured by the annual staff survey. • By June 2010, at least 90% of a valid staff sample will indicate they are satisfied with their work	• Modify Retention and Recruitment Plan to aggressively increase the number of African American teachers and keep a motivated and highly qualified staff. • Support "Educators for Tomorrow" by providing incentives and encouragement for students, staff, and community members to pursue careers in education. • Evaluate, modify, and aggressively improve the impact of the Staff Recognition Program. • Each school and support service department will analyze its staff survey results and develop conclusions, recommendations, and changes to accelerate improvement. • Provide quality staff development activities for all staff.

Adopted: February 21, 2007

Plan on a Page, by Freeport School District, 2007, Freeport, IL: Author. Copyright 2007 by the Freeport School District. Reprinted with Permission.

APPENDIX C

Program and Learning Assessment Cycle for Excellence



The above framework is a model of systematic program improvement adopted by Liberty University's School of Education in 2007. PLACE involves specific events, such as an annual Assessment Day and a faculty retreat for data analysis. The five cyclical elements of PLACE are scheduled into the academic calendar. The cycle of improvement revolves around the conceptual framework, which identifies specific proficiencies all students should know, implement, and believe. Used by permission.

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