CONSTRUCTING AN EFFECTIVE ACTION PLAN

Purpose and Objectives

Now that the school has identified the various components of its improvement plan, the task is to bring everything together into a coherent program of practices that will address its identified needs and facilitate the improvement process. The plan must also include all necessary implementation information (e.g., who is responsible, timeline). Some districts or states have a required format for schools' action plan. For those that don't, this activity helps participants reflect on the most appropriate format to support their change effort.

There is no "best" layout for an action plan. Depending on the nature and needs of different schools and depending on any state or local requirements by which they must abide, the way in which their action plans are laid out will differ. The primary purpose of the action plan is to be a useful tool for guiding school staff in implementing agreed-upon effective practices and support activities. Having a clear and comprehensive action plan helps ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of a school's improvement efforts.

In this activity, participants

* become familiar with different templates for recording an action plan,

* learn how to create a complete script for their school's improvement efforts, and

* create a template specific to their school.

Background for Facilitators

Rationale

Developing and implementing a school improvement plan is an iterative process; if a plan is to be effective, improvement efforts must be ongoing and continuous, their effect reviewed and documented in the course of implementation. Having all improvement-related information in one complete document provides a clear picture of the entire improvement endeavor, its goals, and how all practices and support activities are intended to fit together in moving the school toward those goals. This helps prevent fragmentation of effort and, over time, makes it easier to identify areas of weakness or inconsistency. Having one comprehensive document also makes updating information and keeping track of implementation activities much easier. Using an electronic template can be especially helpful for easily updating the plan.

Sources

This activity was developed by WestEd facilitators.

Uses

This activity is intended for whomever will be writing up the action plan, whether the principal, members of the leadership or data team, or some combination. If the district or state requires that a particular format be used, a school need not do this activity unless they want to contrast the samples provided with required format and have a discussion about the relative merits of each.

Activity Directions

Materials

- Overhead 4.7-1: Key Points: A Clear and Comprehensive Action Plan
- Handout 4.7-1: Constructing an Effective Action Plan (2 pages)
- Handout 4.7-2: Action Plan Template, Example #1
- Handout 4.7-3: Action Plan Template, Example #2 (2 pages)

Time Required

Approximately 1 hour, depending on length of discussion

Directions for Facilitators

✱ (10 minutes) Using Overhead 4.7-1 (Key Points: A Clear and Comprehensive Action Plan), review the key points for why a coherent and comprehensive action plan is important to successful implementation and improved student achievement.

✱ (20 minutes) Pass out Handout 4.7-1 (Constructing an Effective Action Plan) and Handouts 4.7-2 and 4.7-3, the two Template Examples.

Ask participants to take 15 minutes to review the two Template Examples. Explain that they should contrast the two templates by looking at what information is included, how that information is organized, and the order in which the information appears. Ask participants to consider which format would be most helpful to them if they were new to the school and were charged with implementing the action plan. Remind participants that they don't have to choose one or the other but could, instead, create a modified template with elements from each example or something completely different. Tell them to take notes on Handout 4.7-1 (Constructing an Effective Action Plan).

✱ (15 minutes) Facilitate a discussion of the differences, similarities, and the relative merits of each template. Ask participants to discuss different aspects of a template (e.g., organization, type of information included) and identify what they think would be most helpful in implementing an action plan.

✱ (10 minutes) Have participants decide what layout or format they will use for their action plan and implementation steps. Tell participants that they can create their own action plan format that includes elements of each of the samples or, perhaps, something that was not included in either.

✱ (2 minutes) **Closure:** Tell participants that in the next activity they will work on how to write implementation or action steps with sufficient detail to make the steps comprehensible for those who must carry them out.

KEY POINTS: A CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLAN

A clear approach allows for:

- a plan that is easier to follow;

- better understanding of each person's role and responsibility; and

- consideration of and accounting for potential problems.

A comprehensive approach allows for:

- better use of materials and equipment;

- more resources available for materials and services;

- improved scheduling;

- greater flexibility in staffing;

- better coordination of family and community involvement; and

- shared decision-making and team building.

CONSTRUCTING AN EFFECTIVE ACTION PLAN

Purpose: To review action plan templates and choose (or modify) one to suit your school's needs.

Materials: This worksheet, sample action plan templates

Directions:
- Review the action plan templates.
- Identify the differences.
- Discuss the merits of each template.
- Determine the "best" one for you (this may include a modified sample template).

Differences:

Merits of each template:

Describe your template:

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ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE – EXAMPLE #1

Goal

Program Objective

Implementation Steps *What Will Be Done?*	Responsibilities *Who Will Do It?*	Resources *(Funding/Time/People/Materials)*	Timeline *By When?* *(Day/Month)*

Implications For Professional Development

Implications For Family Involvement

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE – EXAMPLE #2

Schoolwide Goal: _____

Short-Term Academic Objective(s): _____

Barrier(s): _____

Program Objective: _____

Implementation Steps	Individuals Responsible

Resources (People, Time, and Materials)	Timeline	Budget