

Designing the Comprehensive School Plan

Valerie Maholmes

The central task of the School Planning and Management Team (SPMT) is creating, supporting, and reassessing the Comprehensive School Plan (CSP). The CSP addresses every aspect of school life, and in clear, well-organized steps, this chapter addresses every aspect of designing the CSP. A case study and training activities are included as models, along with a comprehensive checklist to assure that all tasks are accomplished.

This chapter describes how to develop a Comprehensive School Plan (CSP). It also helps School Planning and Management Team (SPMT) members understand their role in creating and updating the CSP, and it discusses how to begin applying the six developmental pathways to the CSP process.

OVERVIEW OF THE THREE OPERATIONS

The SPMT designs and implements the CSP, periodically assesses how well the goals in the plan are being met, modifies the plan accordingly, and ensures that the appropriate staff development activities are aligned with the goals in the plan.

NOTE: Copyright © 2004 by The Yale School Development Program, Yale Child Study Center. All rights reserved. Reproduction authorized only for the local school site that has purchased this book. Reprinted from *Transforming School Leadership and Management to Support Student Learning and Development*. For information, contact Corwin Press, 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, California 91360; www.corwinpress.com.

Designing the Comprehensive School Plan

The CSP is central to a school's improvement process because it sets the direction and focus for the school. Its position on the "schoolhouse" graphic of the Comer Process illustrates how central it is in helping the school community to achieve its desired outcomes (see Figure 2.2 in Chapter 2). The CSP involves more than charting progress in discrete areas of academic achievement. It promotes a thorough examination of the school as a whole. Focusing on curriculum, instruction and assessment, on academic and psychosocial goals, and on public relations and communications strategies, the CSP enables the school to target with greater accuracy the factors that underlie school performance and achievement. Thus, through establishing and updating the CSP, the school sets goals and objectives that place child development at the center of the planning process. And because these goals and objectives are supported by routinely gathered data about the whole school, they are timely, measurable, and achievable.

It is important that the CSP serve as a means for the school to communicate its priorities to the broader school community: parents, the central office, university partners, service providers, and other stakeholders. Since the SPMT completes the plan using the collaborative decision-making process, the content reflects the values of the school community as well as academic theories and assumptions about school change. Stakeholders and well-wishers need to be aware of the direction the school is taking so that they can provide necessary resources as well as cooperation and encouragement. It is very important for the members of the SPMT to distribute the CSP to their constituent groups to ensure that everyone knows and supports the focus, direction, and actions the school is taking.

Periodic Assessment and Modification

Periodic assessment and modification of the plan allows the SPMT to systematically answer the questions: "What are we doing?" "Why are we doing it?" "Which processes and strategies are working well?" "Which are not?" "What needs to be changed?" Assessing the plan involves taking an extensive look at student data on such issues as achievement, attendance, behavior, and socio-economic background.

The SPMT must also systematically collect and examine data on how the curriculum is being implemented, as well as data on how the SDP process is functioning and the impact it is having on the school. These data include perceptions of (1) school climate and academic focus, (2) implementation of the aligned and balanced curriculum, and (3) how well the nine elements of the Comer Process are being implemented. The SPMT should conduct a monthly "process check" to ensure that the activities are being carried out according to the specifications in the plan. This allows the team to keep on track and to prevent important activities from falling through the cracks. The process check also enables the team to observe and monitor targeted initiatives and activities to help determine whether they will result in the desired outcomes. Every three months, the SPMT should determine whether to continue with certain initiatives or activities, make changes, or discontinue them altogether. Of course, this assessment should be based on data. This process can begin at the subcommittee level and then be brought to the SPMT for review.

Staff Development

To provide the skills and knowledge needed to carry out the activities in the plan, staff development must be linked to the specific action steps to ensure that all parties involved have the skills and knowledge they need. The various staff development activities should involve every staff member in the school. These activities can range from sessions that teach educators how to help parents learn to support reading initiatives at home, to sessions for cafeteria staff on the connection between nutrition and learning, to specific training in teaching a particular content area. By doing this, schools create a culture of ongoing reflection and renewal. Also, schools build capacity to sustain the practices that support student learning and development.

GETTING STARTED: PREPARING TO PLAN

In getting started, the first steps are to (1) assemble the team, (2) formally schedule time in the school calendar, and (3) compile and prepare the data for review. These preparatory activities help to get the CSP process off to a positive start. By taking care to do advance planning and preparation, the SPMT can lead the school in a fruitful and productive planning process.

Assemble the Team

The most important first step in preparing for the planning process is to ensure that the SPMT has been established and that there is adequate representation from all the constituencies in the school. This is important because the goals, objectives, and strategies of the plan should reflect the collective input and wisdom of the entire school community. This is sometimes a challenge—particularly if in the past the plan was completed by the principal or by a small committee. To overcome this challenge, the SPMT chair may want to outline the tasks of the planning process and then poll the members of the team to determine their interests, skills, and the time they have available to take on these tasks. For example, there is always someone on the team who has a penchant for details and who enjoys managing the finer points of pulling the plan together. There is usually a person who enjoys working with data and who will be willing to lead the process of preparing the elements of data that will be discussed during the planning period. Of critical importance is the person who can be relied upon to complete the clerical tasks of the process and who may be willing to manage the final production of the plan itself.

In addition to these roles and responsibilities, all team members should be prepared to discuss the priorities, concerns, and suggestions raised by the group they represent and to keep their group informed of decisions and progress made.

To make sure that the process covers all these bases, use Figure 6.1, Comprehensive School Plan checklist.

Schedule Time in the School Calendar

From the outset, it is critically important that time be scheduled for the planning process. An SPMT usually meets before or after school for its regularly scheduled

Figure 6.1 Comprehensive School Plan checklist

Item	Comment
1. <u>Representation</u>: Does the plan reflect the collective input of all stakeholders?	
Teachers by grade level/specialization	<input type="checkbox"/>
Administration	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student and Staff Support Team (SSST) members	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent Team (PT) members	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other school-based support staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community representative(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Before-school program staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
After-school program staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relevant other(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. <u>Focus (content)</u>: Does the plan put forth priorities that lead to positive student achievement and development outcomes?	
State-mandated priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>
School-based priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Classroom-based priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>
3a. <u>Data sources, Part I</u>: Is the plan informed by multiple sources of data?	
Student achievement and performance	<input type="checkbox"/>
SSST global patterns and trends	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent observations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community observations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student and staff perceptions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student and staff attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>
School readiness including health and nutrition	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family needs assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community needs assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>
3b. <u>Data sources, Part II</u>: Are these data used to pinpoint priorities and desired outcomes?	
Student achievement and performance	<input type="checkbox"/>
SSST global patterns and trends	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent observations	<input type="checkbox"/>

Community observations	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student and staff perceptions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student and staff attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>
School readiness including health and nutrition	<input type="checkbox"/>
Family needs assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community needs assessment	<input type="checkbox"/>
Program evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/>	
4. <u>Format:</u> Is the plan user friendly, an effective communications tool, and action oriented?	
Has glossary of terms	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explains data sources	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lists specific action steps and persons responsible for them	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is easily understood by partners and lay persons	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/>	
5a. <u>Alignment, Part I:</u> Is each objective relevantly linked to the goal(s)?	
Objective 1:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Objective 2:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Objective 3:	<input type="checkbox"/>
<hr/>	
5b. <u>Alignment, Part II:</u> Is each action step linked to the relevant objective(s)?	
Action Step 1:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action Step 2:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Action Step 3:	<input type="checkbox"/>

SOURCE: Copyright © 2004 by The Yale School Development Program, Yale Child Study Center. All rights reserved. Reprinted from *Transforming School Leadership and Management to Support Student Learning and Development: The Field Guide to Comer Schools in Action*, by Edward T. Joyner, Michael Ben-Avie, and James P. Comer. Reproduction authorized only for the local school site that has purchased this book. www.corwinpress.com.

meetings. However, during the planning period, much more time will be needed than is usually allocated for meetings. If the plan has been assessed and modified during the course of the year, then time needs to be dedicated to reviewing the outcomes of the modifications and determining which direction to take for the next academic year. On the average, most schools schedule three SPMT meetings to

- set the tone and agenda and assign roles and tasks for the planning process
- review the data and hear subcommittee, grade level, and community reports
- reach final consensus on the desired goals, objectives, and strategies

Since most of the work of achieving initial consensus and identifying priorities is done at the committee level, time also needs to be set aside to ensure that these meetings take place and that staff members have sufficient time to work through the issues.

Compile and Prepare the Data for Review

The CSP process is cyclical in nature in that it begins and ends with a thorough analysis of the data. To get started, the SPMT needs to compile all the data that will inform the decision-making process. This includes data on achievement, attendance, suspensions, mobility, referrals and social service, school climate, and anything else that is relevant. Since data often are not available to the school in the most useful form, before discussions commence the SPMT needs to take time to sort out the most important data and to prepare it so that it can facilitate discussions. If too much information is provided at once, team members may become overwhelmed rather than informed by the data.

To assist in the data collection process, use Figure 6.2, data collection and management grid.

Figure 6.2 Data collection and management grid (sample worksheet)

<i>Discuss the current status of your school: (A) What issues and concerns are most important to address? (B) What data do you have to substantiate and challenge your concerns? (C) What additional data do you need? (D) From what source can you obtain the data?</i>				
	Issues and Concerns	Data We Have	Data We Need	Data Source
Academic				
Behavioral				
Child Development				
School or Classroom Climate				
Other				

SOURCE: Copyright © 2004 by The Yale School Development Program, Yale Child Study Center. All rights reserved. Reprinted from *Transforming School Leadership and Management to Support Student Learning and Development: The Field Guide to Comer Schools in Action*, by Edward T. Joyner, Michael Ben-Avie, and James P. Comer. Reproduction authorized only for the local school site that has purchased this book. www.corwinpress.com.

INITIATING THE PLANNING PROCESS: SIX ESSENTIAL STEPS

The six essential steps in the CSP process are (1) establish or revisit the vision, (2) introduce child development into the planning process, (3) identify goals and priorities, (4) establish an action plan, (5) review and finalize the plan with the team, and (6) distribute the plan to all stakeholders. Then it is time to celebrate the work that was accomplished and honor the journey ahead.

Establish or Revisit the Vision

An essential step in initiating the planning process is either establishing or revisiting the school's vision. Remember that the CSP communicates what you value as a school community—it reflects the philosophy that guides your approach to school improvement. The plan is not only a document that lists a series of goals and activities, but in many ways it is a narrative describing the school's evolution—where you've been and where you see yourselves heading. Thus the vision statement should reflect the essence and intent of the planned experiences and how these experiences will promote students' learning and development. Revisiting the vision statement helps bring the school together around the important ideals and principles of the broader school community. This is important, particularly if there have been major staff or administrative changes or if the demographics of the population typically served by the school have changed in any significant way. Finally, the process of visioning helps the staff, parents, students, and community achieve consensus on new directions and helps define the scope of change they wish to take on. The following examples of vision statements reflect these ideas:

We will work as a team in a trusting environment where every student will be treated with dignity, experience success, and have access to caring and supportive adults.

The faculty and staff at Emma Francis Grayson Merritt Elementary Extended School are committed to individual and collective responsibility for lifelong learning and see children as critical to the community and the city's success. All our daily interactions are influenced by the belief that equitable opportunities should exist for all.

The community of Emma E. Booker Elementary School recognizes that students enter school with different backgrounds and experiences. It is our belief that all children can be successful when accepted at their level of development. By holding high expectations for parents, students, teachers, and administrators and by using a no-fault approach, we believe we can lead every child toward becoming a productive and successful member of society.

In the space provided below, write your school's current vision statement.

Our School's Vision

What does the statement say about your school in terms of its basic ideals and the philosophy that guides the work of the school? In what ways can you broaden the scope of the vision? What are the implications for your school plan? Will the goals in your plan help your school move toward its vision? How will you communicate this vision to the broader school community?

Introduce Child Development Into the Planning Process

Once the school has achieved consensus on its vision, it is important to examine the extent to which the activities and programs address the six developmental pathways in a balanced way. School plans typically focus on the school's instructional goals, and consequently the balance of programs is often tipped toward the cognitive pathway. A purpose of the Comer Process CSP is to ensure that there is adequate programming to address students' needs along each of the pathways. By doing so, the school creates a child development-centered educational agenda so that students have the best possible chance of being successful.

To get started with this phase of the planning process, the SPMT subcommittees take an inventory of the school's current programs and activities and examine whether the offerings are developmentally balanced and serve the needs of all the students. Before any goals, objectives, or new programs are established, the SPMT conducts this analysis using the format shown in Figure 6.3.

First list all the programs that support the curriculum. These include programs and activities that are offered before, during, and after school such as supplemental curriculum initiatives, after-school tutorial programs, behavioral intervention programs, and the like. Next, determine which students are being served by the programs and any special characteristics the programs are designed to address (e.g., low math achievement, self-esteem for girls). Finally, indicate which pathways are being addressed. The pathways are interactive—not discrete—so you may find that a particular program or activity addresses more than one pathway. However, be careful to check no more than two primary pathways targeted by the activity. In doing this analysis be sure to focus on the primary aims of the program.

Once the inventory for introducing child development is complete, the subcommittees should bring their work back to the SPMT and prepare the data for analysis, using the following questions as a guide:

Figure 6.3 Inventory for introducing child development (sample worksheet)

Programs	Students Served			Developmental Pathways					
	Grade	Gender (M/F)	Target Population	Physical	Cognitive	Psychological	Language	Social	Ethical
Mastery test preparation	7th	Males	Students who fall below basic achievement levels in math and science	✓	✓		✓		
Read Alouds	7th and 8th	Males/females	Students reading below grade level		✓		✓		
Raisin'-up Club	7th	Males/females	All students			✓		✓	✓

SOURCE: Copyright © 2004 by The Yale School Development Program, Yale Child Study Center. All rights reserved. Reprinted from *Transforming School Leadership and Management to Support Student Learning and Development: The Field Guide to Comer Schools in Action*, by Edward T. Joyner, Michael Ben-Avie, and James P. Comer. Reproduction authorized only for the local school site that has purchased this book. www.corwinpress.com.

- To what extent are our programs balanced developmentally?
- On which pathways do we focus most?
- On which pathways do we focus least?
- Which students are being served by our programs and activities?
- Are there programs for high-achieving as well as low-achieving students?
- Do the programs primarily target boys or girls?
- Are any of the programs and activities redundant?

Answers to these questions should help the SPMT identify developmental and programmatic priorities and get a clearer picture of goals and objectives that need to be established.

Identify Goals and Priorities

Once all the analyses have been completed and data collected and prioritized, the SPMT can begin formulating the goals for the CSP. Most often the district sets targeted goal areas, but the schools can establish subordinate goals that reflect the needs of the specific building. For example, if the district goal is to improve mathematics achievement, then the SPMT should review the mathematics data at their school and identify specific skill and content areas that need to be addressed. Based on findings from the inventory and other data sources, the SPMT may also choose to craft goals that target a specific group of students (e.g., third-grade boys). Each goal should reflect a broad statement of intent that relates to a particular area of need and articulates the desired trend or outcome.

CSPs should also look beyond the specially targeted problem areas to include other goals, so that both ongoing programs and innovative ideas that the school may want to pilot are managed by the SPMT. Use the questions below as a guide to formulate problem solving, maintenance, or innovative goals.

1. Problem solving:
 - In which area(s) is performance not up to standard?
 - How much measurable improvement is realistic at this time?
2. Maintenance:
 - What have been the benefits of our current approach?
 - What will it take in terms of time and resources to continue these efforts?
 - How will we monitor our activities?
3. Innovative:
 - What new ideas do we want to implement?
 - What will be the measurable, added benefits?
 - What will it cost to generate these benefits?

Establish an Action Plan

The action plan helps keep the CSP a living document. So, in addition to the goals, objectives, and activities, the SPMT must also specify how the activities will be accomplished, who will be responsible, and how the activities will be funded, publicized, and evaluated. To organize this information, use Figure 6.4, the comprehensive school plan matrix.

Review and Finalize the Plan With the Team

Before the SPMT gives the CSP its seal of approval, an important step in the planning process is to give the plan a final review to ensure that there is consensus on its direction and focus. This review should be done by the entire SPMT so that parents, teachers, administrators, staff, and students have the opportunity to make adjustments, clarify roles and responsibilities, or express final concerns. The CSP checklist (Figure 6.1) can be used as a guide to facilitate this review.

Distribute the Plan to All Stakeholders and Celebrate the Journey

After the plan has been completed and the SPMT has achieved consensus on its direction and focus, the final document should be distributed to the broader school community so that everyone can have the opportunity to see the outcome of their work. Remember: The CSP represents the collective values, hopes, and dreams of the school community, so it's really important to find an opportunity to celebrate the journey! Think of creative ways to acknowledge the work of the members of the team who have shared their time and talent to design the plan. Most important, celebrate the students as they accomplish significant developmental milestones and make significant academic strides. Success breeds success—every movement toward the goal, no matter how small, is worthy of celebration!

Figure 6.4 Comprehensive school plan matrix (sample worksheet)

Goal:
Objective:
Developmental Pathways Addressed:

Action Step	Budget Funding Source	Person or Team Responsible	Timeline		Staff and Adult Development Needed	Resources Needed	Indicators and Benchmarks	Communications and Public Relations Strategy
			Start	Finish				

SOURCE: Copyright © 2004 by The Yale School Development Program, Yale Child Study Center. All rights reserved. Reprinted from *Transforming School Leadership and Management to Support Student Learning and Development: The Field Guide to Comer Schools in Action*, by Edward T. Joyner, Michael Ben-Avie, and James P. Comer. Reproduction authorized only for the local school site that has purchased this book. www.corwinpress.com.

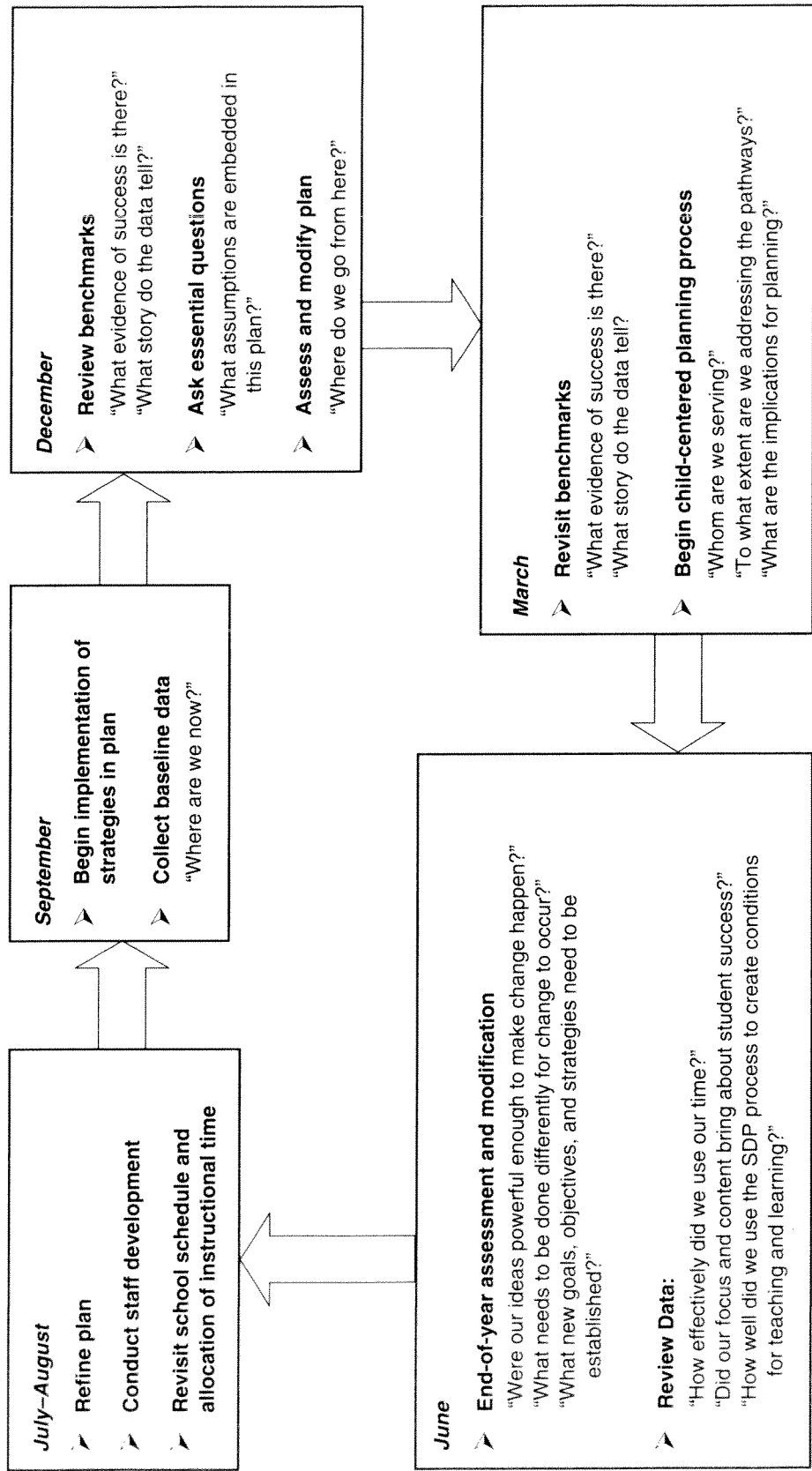
STARTING THE ASSESSMENT AND MODIFICATION PROCESS

The comprehensive school planning process requires a lot of time and attention to detail, which can be overwhelming if the planning and preparation steps listed in this chapter haven't been taken into account. Because this is a time-intensive process, it is also important to break the activities down into doable steps that can be carried out during the school year. Figure 6.5, the comprehensive school plan implementation timeline, is a guide to help SPMTs focus their efforts to get the most out of their time together. Also included in the timeline are critical questions that need to be addressed every three months as part of the CSP assessment and modification process.

PLANNING PRACTICE USING THE FISK MIDDLE SCHOOL CASE STUDY

The ideas presented in this chapter will help your SPMT design a CSP that will enable the school to accomplish its goals and achieve desired outcomes. To get

Figure 6.5 Comprehensive school plan implementation timeline



SOURCE: Copyright © 2004 by The Yale School Development Program, Yale Child Study Center. All rights reserved. Reprinted from *Transforming School Leadership and Management to Support Student Learning and Development: The Field Guide to Comer Schools in Action*, by Edward T. Joyner, Michael Ben-Avie, and James P. Comer. Reproduction authorized only for the local school site that has purchased this book. www.corwinpress.com.

your SPMT on the right track in this process, use the Fisk Middle School case study (pseudonymous composite) presented below as part of staff development activities. This will give the team the opportunity to practice some of the planning activities before they undertake the actual planning process. Good luck!

The Case Study

Background

Fisk Middle School is a Grade 5–Grade 8 school located in Fisk Community, an inner city in the Midwest. The school’s student body is comprised of African Americans (30 percent), Latinos (35 percent), Native Americans (15 percent), European Americans (15 percent), and Asian Americans (5 percent). Most of the students live in the community; however, a small percentage (20 percent) are children of industrial workers who commute from the outskirts of town.

The faculty and staff are predominantly European American (55 percent) and African American (30 percent); Latinos and Native Americans account for 10 percent and 5 percent, respectively.

Until recently, Fisk Community was a thriving industrial center that employed residents of ethnically diverse communities from within a 25-mile radius. Many of the industry’s employees are speakers of other languages and rarely find it necessary to socialize with fellow employees from different ethnic backgrounds. Fisk Community is a working-class city with residents sometimes having two jobs; the commuters work long hours, making it difficult for them to attend functions at their children’s school. Only a small percentage of the Fisk Community residents are upper middle class. Their children usually attend private schools.

Due to a downward trend in the economy, cutbacks in working hours and benefits were made at the industrial center seven years ago. Many of the jobs were “upgraded” and moved to suburban communities. Some employees, especially the commuters, had to find other ways to supplement their income. Others enrolled in job training programs in the hope that they would be considered for a job upgrade. Those whose proficiency in English was limited found it necessary to work at becoming proficient in English.

The Problem

Over the past three decades, the mission of Fisk Middle School has been to prepare students to be contributing members of Fisk Community. Basic skills in all subjects were taught, as well as foreign languages, home economics, and vocational technical studies. It was generally expected that most students, after graduation from high school, would work in one of the industrial shops. The school began implementing SDP a year prior to the economic downshift. As a result of SDP implementation, most faculty and staff felt that there was a relatively good climate in the school. Commuting students were bused in at 7:35 a.m. and bused out at 3:45 p.m.; students tended to socialize at recess with other students from their own ethnic group. Only a few classrooms initiated activities that would require students to interact with students from other groups. For the most part, students seemed to be well-behaved, no racial problems were evident, and everyone seemed to get along well with each other.

With the economic downshift, the administration began to observe changes in the overall climate at Fisk Middle School. The SPMT asked the Assessment and Modification Subcommittee to use action research strategies to clarify the situation. They decided to administer SDP's school climate surveys, observe classrooms, and collect student data. Upon completion of the investigation, the subcommittee submitted a report to the SPMT. About one month later, the SPMT called an emergency meeting to review the data and address the issues at hand. What follows is the executive summary of the subcommittee's report.

Executive Summary: Submitted by the Fisk Middle School Assessment and Modification Subcommittee

Child Development Findings for the Month of April

The monthly statistics for this school year show that student enrollment and attendance and participation declined. There seems to be a higher incidence of dropouts, particularly males, at Grade 8. Students who commuted to the school appeared to be absent and tardy more frequently than other students were. At the lower grade levels, there also appeared to be increasingly more competition among students for teachers' attention and less cooperative classroom behavior. In class, students tended to tease and make jokes about students from other ethnic groups because of their speech patterns or appearance. During focus group interviews, teachers complained of having difficulty affirming and addressing the needs of such a diverse student population. It was also noted that teachers were having to make more referrals than usual to the Student and Staff Support Team (SSST) for inappropriate behavior. For example, some of the teachers reported that students, especially the commuters, began eating their lunches during class time and that some students were falling asleep in class, while others seemed distracted, especially toward the end of the school day. (Some data that support these findings appear in Table 6.1.)

Adult and Student Relationship Findings

During focus group interviews with randomly selected students from each grade level, it was noted that students reported difficulties their families were facing at work and at home. The commuting students felt that neither their teachers nor their parents understood what they were going through and as a result found it difficult to concentrate on their studies. Some teachers indicated that they have attempted to involve parents, but to no avail (see Table 6.2). As a result, there seemed to be low morale among the teaching staff and a diminished sense of job satisfaction.

Table 6.1 Fisk Middle School performance data

Grade Level	Number of Days Absent		Number of Times Tardy		Number of Special Education Referrals		Number of Behavioral Referrals	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Fifth Grade	20	6	39	20	15	5	27	12
Sixth Grade	36	17	45	15	11	7	35	8
Seventh Grade	30	15	40	19	9	5	48	9
Eighth Grade	51	27	49	33	00	2	35	15

Total number of school days: 180

Total number of students: 245

Grade Level	Total Number of Retentions		Total Number of Dropouts	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Fifth Grade	0	0	0	0
Sixth Grade	1	0	0	0
Seventh Grade	3	1	2	0
Eighth Grade	0	1	17	5

Table 6.2 Fisk Middle School parent involvement data

<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Number of PTO/PTA Members</i>		<i>Number of Parent Volunteers in School</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Fifth Grade	2	10	5	12
Sixth Grade	0	16	3	7
Seventh Grade	0	7	0	3
Eighth Grade	3	6	0	0

The students also reported that teachers were asking them to learn things in school that didn't seem to be relevant to what they would need once they left school. Finally, all the students agreed that they would like to know more about students from other backgrounds, especially since their parents were being exposed to other cultures through their interactions at work. However, teachers complained about having to integrate multicultural activities into their lessons, indicating that "the students have always gotten along well with each other; these problems will pass when the economy gets better."

Curriculum and Instruction Findings

With regard to the curriculum, more students were enrolled in the vocational technical programs than in the academic programs. Standardized tests revealed that the female fifth-grade students were at or above grade level for language arts, math, and reading. However, the male students were only at grade level for language arts. Eighth-grade students were above grade level in language arts but below grade level in reading. In terms of math achievement, the male students were at grade level but the female students were slightly below. (The data that support these findings appear in Table 6.3.)

Faithful Replication Issues

The SDP Process Documentation Inventory (PDI) was completed by constituent groups at the school. Findings showed that most of the groups strongly disagreed that "the SSST develops preventive strategies that create optimum conditions for teaching and learning." Groups also disagreed with the statement that parents were viewed as partners in developing programs and interventions for students. In addition, the findings revealed that the SPMT does not monitor the Comprehensive School Plan, nor does the group send home a copy of the plan to parents. Most constituent groups also felt that people were not taking risks because of the concern that they would be blamed if something went wrong.

Table 6.3 Fisk Middle School achievement outcomes

Grade Level	Grade Equivalent Scores					
	Language		Math		Reading	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Fifth Grade	5.5	6.0	4.7	5.0	4.3	5.1
Sixth Grade	6.3	6.7	5.8	5.5	5.0	4.7
Seventh Grade	7.0	7.5	6.7	7.1	6.8	7.0
Eighth Grade	8.5	8.5	8.0	7.5	7.0	7.5

Staff Development Activity 6.1: Analyzing the Data Collection Process

The Fisk SPMT called an emergency meeting to review the Assessment and Modification Subcommittee's report, but they had difficulty making sense of all the data and initiating the planning process. The role of the SPMT in the planning process is to bring members of the team to consensus on the issues of data gathering. The kinds of data the school collects, the sources from which data are obtained, and the methods used to collect the data should support the question or problem the school wishes to address.

Take a few minutes to familiarize yourselves with the data in Tables 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3. Review the Fisk Middle School case again and answer the following questions:

1. What kinds of data were collected?

2. What counted as data? What were the data sources?

3. What methods were used to collect the data?

4. Which developmental pathway(s) did the data address?

Staff Development Activity 6.2: Defining the Issues and Making Meaning

Let's see if we can make meaning out of the Fisk Middle School data. Making meaning out of data is a challenging yet critical aspect of the planning process. Disaggregating (breaking down) the data to highlight specific group characteristics allows you to clearly define the pertinent issues and pinpoint the groups with whom interventions need to be made. Select a data table and answer the following questions:

1. What questions come to mind as you review the table?

2. What issues or concerns does the data table raise?

3. What additional information is needed?

Reflect:

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of breaking down or disaggregating the data?
- On what other group characteristics could you disaggregate these data?
- Do the observations and interviews support the numerical data?

Staff Development Activity 6.3: Choosing the Essential Questions for Designing the Comprehensive School Plan

For this staff development activity, act as if you were the Fisk SPMT. Review the data and answer the following questions:

1. Clarify process and outcomes.
 - What did the staff, students, and parents at Fisk do? (process)
 - What seemed to happen as a result? (outcomes)
2. Define the critical issues revealed in the data.
 - What is the big picture?
 - What story do the data tell?
3. Determine priorities.
 - What issues seem to require immediate attention?
 - What issues seem to require additional planning, clarification, etc.?

Now that you have reviewed the Fisk Middle School data, brainstorm possible goals the Fisk SPMT should consider putting in its comprehensive plan for problem solving, maintenance, and innovation.

4. List suggestions for problem-solving goals.

5. List suggestions for maintenance goals.

6. List suggestions for innovative goals.

READ MORE ABOUT . . .

To read more about SDP's approach to assessment, see "Assessing Systemic Reform," Chapter 17 in *Dynamic Instructional Leadership to Support Student Learning and Development: The Field Guide to Corner Schools in Action* in this series.