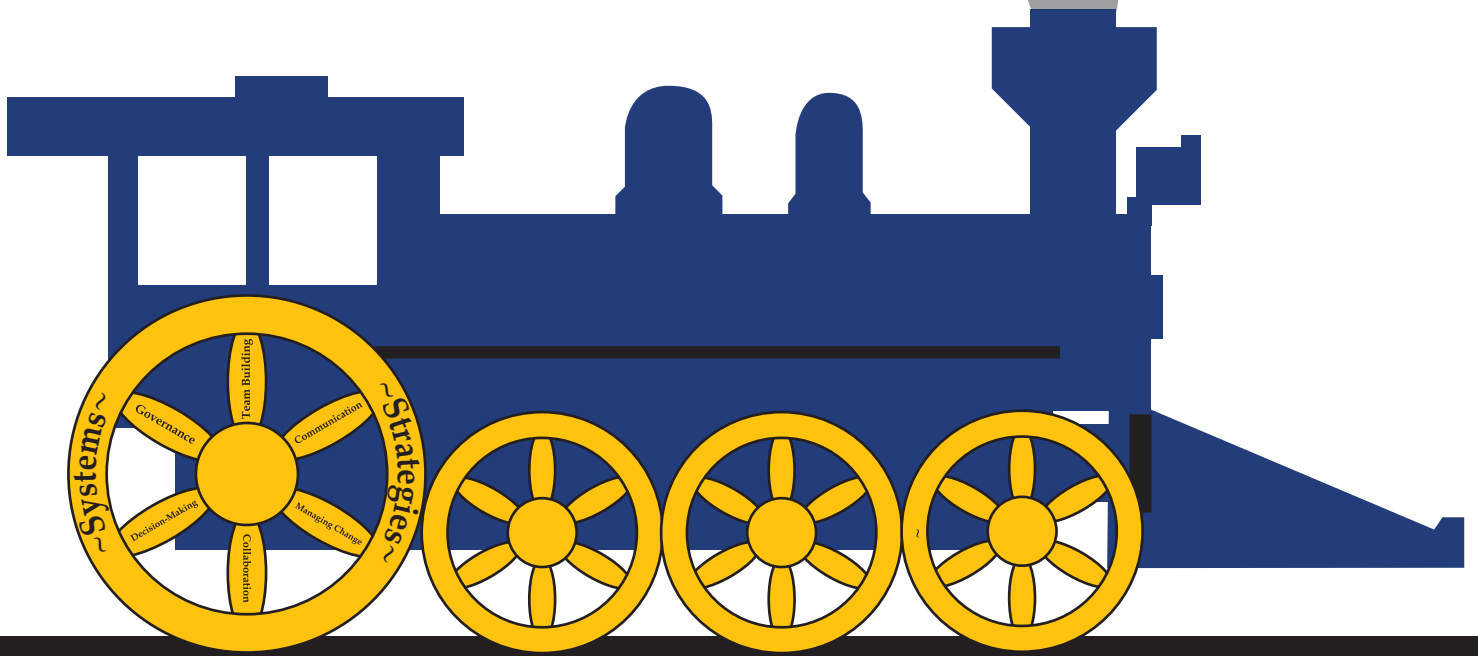


# SAGE

School Improvement Guidebook



## Implementation and Monitoring Guide

2007 SAGE (Student Achievement Gap Elimination) School Improvement Guidebook  
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## Implementation & Monitoring Guide

Implementation and monitoring are the actual “doing and checking” of the school improvement plan. A primary reason that school improvement plans fail to show success is that they are not kept in the forefront of the school’s daily life and work. A plan that is put on the shelf and forgotten or initially implemented but neglected will not contribute to the achievement of the students at the school. The plan needs to be a living document that evolves according to the successes and needs of the students and staff.

### TO BEGIN:

The Implementation & Monitoring Phase focuses on systems and strategies, rather than procedural steps. Therefore, this guide is structured differently than the Planning Process Guide and Evaluation Process Guide. The first two sections in this guide focus on research-based systems and strategies that will assist with effective implementation of the SIP and purposeful progress monitoring of the impact. The last section describes the process of the mid-course correction review.

- If you are **implementing** the action steps in the school improvement plan (SIP), go to the *Implementation Guide*, page 102.
- If you are **monitoring** the action steps, go to the *Monitoring Guide*, page 105.
- If you are ready to make **mid-course corrections**, go to the *Mid-course Corrections Guide*, page 108.

The Implementation & Monitoring Guide does not promote any specific program or model, rather it provides guiding questions to stimulate collaborative thinking about your school’s unique needs and characteristics.

### ONGOING REVIEW OF THE SIP:

The key assumption underlying the SAGE school improvement process is that the school has been engaged in a cycle of continuous improvement (see Attachment 3P, p. 45 for graphic representations of improvement cycles).

#### Primary Assumptions

1. The SIP is focused on a few powerful research-based strategies/solutions to improve instruction and increase student achievement based on an analysis of staff and student needs.
2. The school has collected and analyzed data and documentation throughout the year that shows the progress made toward improvement goals.
3. The school has met several times during the year to monitor the implementation and impact of the plan.

A plan has been developed. It is now time for the “doing and checking” work to begin. Each school has unique characteristics, therefore the systems and strategies that will work best for a school are those that fit the school.

To begin, the school forms a School Improvement Plan (SIP) implementation team. Typically, the SIP implementation team includes many members from the school improvement planning team (or it can simply be the continuation of that team). The SIP implementation team is an important leadership committee and should meet on a consistent basis to monitor the progress of the action steps of the SIP. Other teams can be formed as offshoots of this group to help distribute duties and involve all staff in the implementation and monitoring process. For example, progress-monitoring teams for grade levels or departments can be formed to assemble data and report to the SIP implementation team.

Effective implementation of the action steps in the SIP is contingent upon a clear understanding of what needs to be done and who needs to do it. The systems and strategies listed below in the Implementation Guide address key aspects of effective implementation.

### IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

The five systems and strategies that follow are key components in the five dimensions of school success. Each system or strategy includes a brief description and four to six questions. The questions are meant to provide the SIP team with the opportunity to begin (or continue) a discussion about the structures and practices that are in place that support effective implementation.

It is not necessary or advisable for a school to focus on all of these systems and strategies at once. It is recommended that the SIP team identify the system or strategy that best fits the need of the school, based on the action steps in the SIP, on the staff and student needs, and on the current structures and practices already in place at the school.

### **Implementation Systems and Strategies:**

#### **1. CULTURE OF IMPROVEMENT**

By its very definition a school is a place of improvement. The word “improvement” comes from the Middle English term that means “something profitable.” Ideally, every person who enters a school does profit from being there. A culture of improvement is internal, existing within the individuals at the school. The external structures and practices expand that internal mindset; the external is not able to dictate an internal attitude of improvement.

The questions below are a starting point for reflecting on the effective implementation of a culture of improvement.

- How does the school sustain a commitment to continuous improvement?
- Are school goals for student learning clearly defined and widely communicated?
- Do teachers hold high academic and behavioral expectations for all students, and how is this evident in their practice?

- Do school leaders and staff create experiences that demonstrate the belief that all children can learn at high levels, and in what ways is student success highly valued and publicly celebrated?
- Are support structures and programs in place to reduce barriers to learning for all students?
- Are learning opportunities for advanced, underperforming, and/or gifted students available and promoted?

## **2. SHARED DECISION-MAKING**

There are numerous organizational structures that promote shared decision-making. The working definition developed by the North Kansas City School District describes this concept in a concise yet thorough statement. “Shared Decision Making is an ongoing cooperative process in which members of the school community, where appropriate, define goals, shape direction, assume responsibility for implementation of decisions, and share accountability for outcomes” (NKCSO, 1992).

The questions below are a starting point for reflecting on the effective implementation of shared decision-making.

- How does the leadership at the school unite the school community in a common purpose?
- How are teaching staff and non-teaching staff involved in both formal and informal decision-making processes regarding teaching and learning?
- Is a collaborative process used to develop and communicate the school’s vision, mission, and goals, and guide decision-making for improvement?
- Does the school leadership collaborate to analyze student performance data and elicit input relative to the data to shape improvement decisions?
- How does the school foster the safe sharing of input from all members of the school community?
- Are families and the community active partners in the educational process and do they work with the school staff to promote programs and services for all students?

## **3. COLLABORATIVE TEACHER PLANNING TIME**

Teaching and learning are social events, yet much of a teacher’s time is spent separate from his or her colleagues. A systematic structure for collaborative teacher planning time provides the opportunity for teachers to work together. This structured planning time centers around continuous improvements in teaching and learning.

The questions below are a starting point for reflecting on the effective implementation of collaborative teacher planning time.

- How does the school provide time for teachers to collaborate on curriculum, instruction, interventions, and assessment?
- What system is in place to ensure that conversations during collaboration time are focused on curriculum, instruction, intervention, and assessment?
- How do procedures promote vertical and horizontal team planning that is focused on the goals, objectives, and strategies in the school improvement plan?
- How do staff members collaboratively develop annual growth goals that foster reflection and improved performance?
- How do teachers collaborate within content areas and grade levels to analyze student work to inform and revise curriculum, instruction, interventions, and assessment?

#### **4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

A professional development plan is designed to enhance the ability of the educator to improve student learning and should be consistent with the educational needs of the school. The plan is in alignment with the school/district improvement plans (see Attachment 2P, p. 31 for the Nevada Professional Development Standards). It outlines the staff needs relative to student performance gaps. It includes an implementation plan for application of new knowledge, skills and behaviors into the teaching process and evaluation steps (including formative data) to make changes in the design as needed along the way.

The questions below are a starting point for reflecting on the effective implementation of professional development.

- Does the school develop and implement a formal process (needs assessment) to identify professional development needs for all staff members?
- Do all teachers participate in sustained, classroom-embedded professional development that updates their content knowledge and professional practices to challenge and motivate students to high levels of learning?
- Does the school/district provide research-based professional development opportunities for staff on performance evaluation procedures in order to improve teaching and learning?
- Is professional development monitored and evaluated for effectiveness?
- Have teachers received training and use of common processes for analyzing student work?

## **5. EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES (Human, Funding, Time, Etc.)**

School improvement efforts are directly tied to the efficient use of available resources. The efficient use of resources begins with a plan. The plan guides the allocation and monitoring of the resources, as well as the evaluation of the use. The resources are the “school inputs” that are intended to impact the “student outputs” of improved learning and increased achievement.

The questions below are a starting point for reflecting on the effective implementation of available resources.

- Does leadership allocate resources based on identified needs through an analysis of appropriate data and monitor the use of the resources?
- Are available fiscal resources maximized to provide support for professional growth and development?
- Are staff members assigned to maximize opportunities for all students to have access to the staff’s instructional strengths?
- Is the school organized to maximize the use of all available resources to support high student and staff performance?
- Does the staff makes efficient use of instructional time to maximize student learning?
- Does leadership ensure that time is protected and allocated to focus on curricular and instructional issues?

Effective implementation is guided by monitoring that is purposeful in checking the progress of the actions that are being taken and the impact that those actions are having, both intended and unintended impacts. Monitoring of the SIP action steps is carried out to check the degrees of implementation and the extent of the impact on student learning and achievement.

## **MONITORING GUIDE**

The three systems and strategies that follow are key components in the five dimensions of school success. Each system or strategy includes a brief description and four to six questions. The questions are meant to provide a SIP team with the opportunity to begin (or continue) a discussion about the structures and practices that are in place that support ongoing progress monitoring.

### **Monitoring Systems and Strategies:**

#### **1. COMPREHENSIVE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

A comprehensive data management system is made up of software programs that control the storage, organization, and retrieval of data in a database. The data management system provides the school with the ability to access the data on a regular basis, analyze the data and update it

when needed. The benefit of a comprehensive data management system is that information can be changed much more easily as the school's information requirements change. New categories of data can be added without the need for extensive revision or addition to the existing system.

The questions below are a starting point for reflecting on a comprehensive data management system as an essential component of progress monitoring.

- Does the school maintain an accurate, secure student record system that provides timely information pertinent to the student's academic and educational development?
- Does the school maintain accurate, up-to-date records of students' academic history and educational development, which are monitored?
- Are relevant, current, and accurate data from multiple sources included in cumulative student records?
- Are efficient data management practices utilized at the classroom and school levels?
- Is adequate technology for monitoring progress readily available and equitably accessible to all staff and are there sufficient technology resources to provide support for sustaining an accurate student record system?

## **2. SYSTEMATIC MONITORING STRUCTURES**

Systematic monitoring structures are used to monitor the progress being made in the implementation of the improvement efforts and the impact on student learning. These structures include adult performance activities, such as the self-reflection practices, the coaching practices, and the classroom observation practices of staff and administration. These structures also include student performance activities, such as formative assessments, self-assessment, and intervention systems. In addition, structures are in place to support collaborative planning time and ongoing reviews of student level assessment data in order to adjust instruction and identify student needs.

The questions below are a starting point for reflecting on the systematic monitoring structures that are essential to progress monitoring.

- Are instructional strategies, activities, and programs monitored to ensure that they are meeting the changing needs of a diverse student population?
- Does school leadership routinely monitor classroom instruction and provide on-going feedback to ensure that teachers plan and modify instruction to meet student needs?
- Do students have varied opportunities to demonstrate proficiency?
- Are samples of student work analyzed to obtain information on student learning, identify achievement and curricular gaps, to refine instruction, and to measure student growth over time?

- Does the school use a body of evidence to identify advanced, underperforming, and/or gifted students who could benefit from advanced learning opportunities?
- Is a clearly defined evaluation process (directly connected to the goals for improving student learning) implemented at the school for evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement plan?

### **5. PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK LOOPS**

Performance feedback loops are an integral part of an effective progress monitoring system. Administration provides feedback to staff, parents, and the community about the performance of the school. Staff provides feedback to the students, parents, and administration about the performance of the students. Parents provide feedback to students, staff, and administration about their children's performance.

The questions below are a starting point for reflecting on the performance feedback loops that are essential to progress monitoring.

- Are proficiency standards and performance level descriptions clearly communicated, evident in classrooms, and observable in student work?
- Do teachers routinely communicate learning targets (objectives) to students in ways that students understand, and students make connections between learning targets and the lesson?
- Do students have varied opportunities to receive meaningful feedback on their learning and are they encouraged to use the feedback to continuously strengthen future performance?
- Do teachers use proficiency standards and performance level descriptions to develop clearly defined rubrics that are reviewed with students prior to assignments and assessments.
- Are models of student performance and teacher-made examples consistently used to clarify tasks to the student and to show distinctions between levels of performance?
- Does school leadership regularly provide school improvement updates and reports? Are accomplishments formally recognized and celebrated?

Along the way, adjustments will need to be made to the action steps within the SIP. These minor revisions happen as they arise, instead of waiting until the next formal review of the SIP takes place. There may be a need to conduct a more formalized review of the SIP at some point within the school year. This "mid-course correction" allows the SIP team to make critical changes to the SIP in order to more effectively implement action steps and impact student learning and achievement.

## MID-COURSE CORRECTIONS GUIDE

After monitoring the progress of the action steps over a period of time, necessary adjustments may become apparent. A formalized review process provides the opportunity for the SIP team to make these adjustments, without having to wait until the next year's planning phase. Any changes that are being considered need to be intentional, for the purpose of greater degrees of implementation of the plan and more significant impacts on student learning and achievement.

A mid-course correction review is a special meeting of the SIP team and others on the staff to conduct a more formalized review of progress. It is different than the ongoing progress monitoring meetings in this respect. A productive mid-course review includes the following:

- **Communication Loop:** Implement a communication plan that specifically targets how the school community will be kept informed of the intended changes to the SIP.
- **Compilation of Data:** In order to best utilize the time available for the mid-course review, gather the most reliable and relevant data. There will need to be sufficient data to justify changes to the action steps.
- **Time and Resources:** Review how resources are being used. Review how time is being spent (schedules, meetings, instructional, etc.).
- **New Solutions:** New developments and opportunities may have arisen during the school year. Incorporating these into the action steps may be appropriate, depending on the review of data, resources, and time.
- **Degrees of Adjustment:** The mid-course corrections are *minor changes* that need to be made to the SIP. This is not the time to conduct a complete overhaul, unless significant changes have occurred at the school that warrants a fully revised plan.

### Mid-course Review Process

1. Go through the current SIP action plan. Evaluate each of the action steps according to the impact on achieving the measurable objectives and reaching the goals. Refer back to the data that the school has collected and analyzed during the monitoring process to answer the questions below.
  - Which actions were implemented?
    - How well were the actions implemented? Why?
    - If the actions were not implemented well, what was the reason?
    - What intended outcomes and unintended outcomes resulted from implementation?
    - What unplanned or unexpected factors affected the implementation of an action?
  - Which actions were not implemented?
    - Why were the actions not implemented?

- What new actions were implemented that were not in the plan? Why?
- Which actions were modified during implementation? Why?
- Which actions (programs, practices, etc.) improved the quality of instruction and impacted student learning and achievement?
- What other factors/variables affected the SIP process?

**2.** Identify the successes that resulted from the implementation of the SIP.

*Note: Remember to plan for celebration of these successes.*

**3.** Determine the status of each action step.

1. Which action steps have successfully impacted student learning and achievement and need to be sustained?
2. Which action steps are making progress and need more time to fully implement?
3. Which action steps require minor revisions to ensure a positive impact on student learning and achievement?
4. Which action steps require major revisions to ensure a positive impact on student learning and achievement?
5. Which action steps require elimination because the action has been completed and fully implemented. Which action steps require elimination due to the lack of effectiveness?

Use the answers to these questions to make minor adjustments to the SIP that will ensure greater degrees of implementation and will increase the impact on student learning and achievement.

Notes