

SAGE School Improvement Guidebook

2007

*Nevada school improvement for Student
Achievement Gap Elimination*



Nevada Department of Education

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Road Map	i
Introduction	ii
PLANNING PHASE	
Planning Process Guide	1
Attachment 1P – Six Essential Foundations	9
Attachment 2P – Facilitator Information	31
Attachment 3P – Continuous Improvement Cycles	45
Attachment 4P – Five Dimensions of School Success-Data Analysis Guide	49
Attachment 5P – School Improvement Template	61
Attachment 6P – Data Types, Sources, and Tools	79
IMPLEMENTATION/MONITORING PHASE	
Implementation & Monitoring Guide	101
Implementation Systems and Strategies	102
Monitoring Systems and Strategies	105
Midcourse Corrections	108
EVALUATION PHASE	
Evaluation Process Guide	111
Attachment 1E – Student Achievement Outcomes-Data Analysis Guide ...	115
Attachment 2E – SIP Evaluation Phase Recommendation Summary	119
APPENDICES	
Appendix A – Legal References: State Law, AYP & School Support Teams ...	A1
Appendix B – Northwest Accreditation and SAGE	B1
Appendix C – Glossary	C1
Appendix D – References	D1

SAGE Guidebook Road Map

Where are you in the Continuous Improvement Cycle?		
→ If CREATING a new plan or REVISING a current plan:		Page #
	• Consider Site and External Planning Teams	
	◦ School Improvement Plan Team (All schools)	11
	◦ School Support Team (In Need of Improvement Schools–Year 3 & beyond)	A7
	• Follow process guide for the Planning Phase	1
	• Consider Essential Foundations of School Improvement	9
	• Review Facilitator Information	31
	• Check requirements of Nevada law regarding school improvement	A1
	• If a high school, review the Northwest Accreditation and SAGE crosswalk	B1
→ If CARRYING OUT the actions in the plan:		
	• Consider continuation of Essential Foundations of School Improvement	9
	• Follow guide for Implementation/Monitoring Phase	101
→ If DETERMINING the EFFECTIVENESS of the plan:		
	• Follow process guide for Evaluation Phase	111
	• Record recommendations for Planning Phase	119

Introduction

The culture behind Nevada’s school improvement process embraces **high expectations for every student** and is built upon the foundation of the following beliefs:

- The work of schools is student learning;
- All children benefit from challenging and relevant curriculum;
- Curriculum, instruction, and assessments must be closely aligned to State Standards;
- Every teacher can be an expert when provided collaborative and sustained professional development focused on improved instruction;
- School culture and the learning environment can promote continuous improvement.
- Parental support and involvement are critical to improved student performance;
- Effective use of data is vital to continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

Comprehensive improvement plans take several years to implement and demonstrate improvement in the targeted areas. A continuous improvement cycle provides the opportunity for ongoing identification of effective practices and/or actions that should be continued and ineffective practices and/or actions that should be revised or eliminated.

There have been many successful school improvement efforts. The education research literature includes hundreds of examples of school improvement that have resulted in increased student learning, improved parent involvement, decreased dropout rates, and an increased percentage of students who enroll in college. The SAGE (Student Achievement Gap Elimination) school improvement process provides schools with a framework for problem solving to target the school improvement efforts best suited for them.

SAGE is the required school improvement process for Title I schools in Nevada that are designated as in need of improvement. In addition, SAGE is a useful resource for all schools needing or wishing to complete a significant self-examination to improve status quo.

The purpose of SAGE is to help external facilitators, administrators, teachers, parents, and community members to participate in a continuous improvement cycle that identifies potential barriers and develops a way to move the school from where it is now to an environment in which all students can achieve to their highest potential. Many Nevada school districts and schools have used the improvement process outlined in this guidebook to improve student learning. SAGE presents school improvement as a three-phase cycle, as listed below.

1. The **planning phase** includes an inquiry process and master plan design;
2. The **implementation/monitoring phase** includes ongoing monitoring of implementation and of the impact on student learning and achievement;
3. The **evaluation phase** examines the effectiveness of the school improvement plan.

Once the plan has been developed, implemented, monitored, and evaluated, the phases are repeated, becoming a continuous improvement cycle in which the school regularly monitors and reviews the school improvement plan as needed.

There are numerous obstacles to effective school improvement. Chief among these obstacles is that even though school improvement efforts target schools, a school is a collection of individuals. To the extent that the needed changes involve the behavior of the members of the organizations, change must ultimately occur at the individual level. That is, individual teachers, administrators, and parents must in some way change what they are doing with the belief that this will change what students do (independently and in interaction with teachers) to improve student learning.

To optimize the impact of school improvement efforts, other elements of support need to be set in place. SAGE presents six essential foundations to support school improvement. Attending to these foundations helps the school leadership, the school improvement planning teams, and the school community as a whole lay the groundwork for successful improvement of student learning. The six essential foundations necessary to support school improvement include: (a) Governance Structure; (b) Decision-making Process; (c) Teacher Collaboration; (d) Team Building; (e) Communication; and (f) Managing Change (See Attachment 1P, p. 9 for descriptions of each essential foundation).

The SAGE school improvement process provides schools with the means to meet the accountability requirements that were established both by the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) and Senate Bill 1 (SB 1). The Nevada Legislature in 2003 passed legislation that, regardless of AYP performance, improvement plans be developed/revised and implemented annually by all schools, school districts, and the state through its State Board of Education. Additional requirements exist for schools identified as in need of improvement. Each school identified for school improvement must, within three months after being identified, develop or revise a school plan in consultation with school staff, the local educational agency serving the school, and outside experts (See Appendix A, for state laws regarding school improvement plans).

You are about to embark on a difficult and time-consuming but extremely rewarding journey of school improvement. The purpose of having a school improvement plan is so that you know your students will be better prepared academically because of what the staff and students at your school do. It may be that the academic achievement of students in your school is growing as you implement your school improvement plan, but this growth may not be significant or sufficient to meet achievement targets and close achievement gaps. For this reason, the improvement process incorporates a planning/revision phase each year to ensure that the school improvement plan is on the right track. School improvement takes time. Lasting change happens slowly but it does happen.

" The SAGE School Improvement Guidebook is available online at the Nevada
" Department of Education website. The online version provides several formats for ease
" of downloading and copying purposes.
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