

Fact Sheet #3 - Performance Standard 3: Planning and Assessment

PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT

The leader effectively gathers, analyzes, and uses a variety of data to inform planning and decision-making consistent with established guidelines, policies, and procedures.

What do *planning and assessment* mean?

In general terms, planning is the “act or process of making or carrying out plans.”¹ Assessment is “the act of making a judgment about something.”² Careful planning and thoughtful assessment make realizing the school's vision and goals attainable.

Effective school leaders realize the important role planning plays in successful daily operations. Likewise, planning is essential if long range goals that reflect the school's vision are to be met. Leaders make time for both daily planning and long-range planning. When adequate planning occurs, and the outcomes of the planning are disseminated to and supported by appropriate stakeholders, the school runs like a well-oiled machine—both functionally and academically.

What does research say about planning and assessment?

Planning Affects other Key Areas of Responsibility. In a meta-analysis of 70 studies, Waters, Marzano and McNulty found that effective leadership is comprised of 21 key areas of responsibility.³ Each of these areas is positively correlated to higher levels of student achievement. Many of these 21 areas require planning for fruition. For instance, one of the key areas of responsibility is *order*. To help maintain order, effective leaders establish a set of standard operating procedures and routines. These procedures do not materialize on their own. They are the result of planning.

The importance of planning in both daily operations and long-range goal attainment cannot be underestimated. Likewise, consider the key area of responsibility that is *discipline*.

To maintain discipline, effective leaders establish procedures that protect teachers “from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus.”⁴ Without planning, creating and implementing these procedures would be impossible. As evidenced, efficient and comprehensive planning is an essential skill of effective leaders.

Using Data in Planning. Making use of student data to improve student outcomes is an important organizational management responsibility of a school leader. Successful schools use assessment data to measure student progress in meeting instructional goals and to drive improvement.⁵ Cawelti and Protheroe studied six school districts serving at-risk school populations. They found that students increased performance on state tests after districts started disaggregating data and developing lessons to address learning deficits.⁶

Successful schools, which have increased student achievement, use multiple sources of data and track the progress of individual students over time.⁷ This gives them a more complete picture of students as learners, their areas of strength and their areas for growth. Monitoring data on a frequent basis can have a positive impact on student achievement.⁸ Reeves asserts that asking these questions about the data is relevant in moving toward vision attainment:

- What percentage of a group of students is proficient now, compared to a year ago?
- What percentage of our students has gained one or more grade levels in reading when we compare their scores today to their scores a year ago?

Georgia Department of Education Leader Keys Effectiveness System

- Of those students who were not proficient a year ago, what percentage are now proficient?
- Of those students who were proficient a year ago, what percentage are now advanced?⁹

School Improvement Planning and Assessment. Effective leaders realize the value of long-range planning.¹⁰ In most school systems, this planning is formalized into a process. Often called school improvement planning, it is a collaborative effort of the school improvement team. The use of data to inform instructional planning and collaboration is essential to this planning process.

Once data is analyzed, the school improvement team develops the plan, oversees its implementation, and monitors the implementation. This cycle of continuous improvement is identified as characteristic of successful school leaders.¹¹ Marzano and colleagues identified a correlation between monitoring the effectiveness of school programs and their impact on student learning with student academic achievement. Monitoring student progress, sharing findings, and using those findings for program improvement are also key findings from Cotton's research on effective leaders.¹² Additionally, Cotton further elaborated on different ways effective principals use the achievement data. These include:

- Effective principals ensure their teachers track student progress and improvement.
- Effective principals of culturally or socioeconomically diverse schools disaggregate achievement data to determine both academic performance and instructional needs of particular groups.
- Effective principals establish procedures for disseminating the results to parents and community members.

Sample Performance Indicators for the Professional Knowledge of Leaders

- Leads the collaborative development of a shared vision for educational improvement and of a plan to attain that vision.
- Implements strategies for the inclusion of staff and stakeholders in various planning processes.
- Supports the district's mission by identifying, articulating, and planning to meet the educational needs of students, staff, and other stakeholders.
- Works collaboratively to develop and monitor progress toward achieving long- and short-range goals and objectives consistent with the school district's strategic plan.
- Collaboratively develops, implements, and monitors a school improvement plan that results in increased student learning.
- Collaboratively plans, implements, supports, and assesses instructional programs that enhance teaching and student achievement, and lead to school improvement.
- Uses research-based techniques for gathering and analyzing data from multiple sources to use in making decisions related to the curriculum and school improvement.
- Monitors and evaluates the use of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to provide timely and accurate feedback to students and parents, and to inform instructional practices.
- Uses assessment information in making recommendations or decisions that are in the best interest of the learner/school/district.
- Assesses, plans for, responds to, and interacts with the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context that affects schooling based on relevant evidence.

¹ Merriam Webster Learning Dictionary, (ND). Retrieved from <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/search/assessment>

² Merriam-Webster's Learning Dictionary, ND.

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³ Waters, J. T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. (2003). *Balanced leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement: A working paper*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL).

⁴ Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004, p. 49.

⁵ Cotton, K. (2003). *Principals and student achievement: What the research says*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

⁶ Cawelti, G. & Protheroe, N. (2003). *Supporting school improvement: Lessons from districts successfully meeting the challenge*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Service.

⁷ Reeves, D. (2004). *Accountability for learning: How teachers and school leaders can take charge*. Seattle, WA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

⁸ Reeves, D. (2006). *The learning leader*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

⁹ Reeves, 2004, p. 70.

¹⁰ Stronge, J. H., Richard, H. B., & Catano, N. (2008). *Qualities of Effective Principals*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

¹¹ Boris-Schacter, S. & Merrifield, S. (2000). Why particularly good principals don't quit. *Journal of School Leadership, 10*, 84–98.

¹² Cotton, 2003.

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**Leader Self-Assessment Checklist
Performance Standard 3: Planning and Assessment**

Quality		Level IV	Level III	Level II	Level I
Planning for Instruction	Establishes and implements standard operating procedures and routines.				
	Demonstrates efficient daily planning resulting in smooth school operations.				
	Develops comprehensive long-range plans focused on goal attainment.				
	Monitors effectiveness of school programs.				
Planning for Learning	Ensures data is disaggregated so that lessons are planned to address learning deficits.				
	Uses data to inform collaboration efforts to maximize learning.				
	Uses multiple sources of data to track the progress of individual students over time.				
	Uses multiple sources of student data to maximize student outcomes.				
Assessing for Learning	Uses assessment data to measure student progress in meeting instructional goals.				
	Uses assessment data to determine instructional needs of particular groups within the school.				
	Uses assessment data to drive school improvement.				
	Establishes procedures for disseminating student results to parents and community members.				