

# GUIDANCE FOR THE PRINCIPAL OR SCHOOL/DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR ACTION PLAN COMPONENT

## I. Requirements and Rationale

- A. The Nebraska Model Evaluation Project Leadership Committee recommended that the principal evaluation model should include an assessment of the principal's impact on student learning and an assessment of the principal's contribution to school performance based on one or more goals established by the principal in collaboration with his/her evaluator. Among the measures of school performance that could be considered are measures of student learning, graduation rates, measures of school climate or culture, measures of the principal's relationships with students and other stakeholders, measures of the principal's influence on instructional quality, and measures of stakeholder perception.
- B. As the evaluation model for principals and other school/district administrators evolved in the design phase, it became apparent that an Action Plan process could be used as a means both to assess the impact of principals and other administrators on student achievement and school or district performance and to improve student achievement and other outcomes. Accordingly, the model policy requires that on an annual basis, principals or school/district administrators shall develop and implement Action Plans designed to improve student achievement or school or program performance.
- C. For the 2013-14 school year, each principal or school/district administrator participating in the pilot project must develop and implement **one** Action Plan during the second semester. In subsequent years, each principal or school/district administrator will develop at least **two** Action Plans during the school year. As appropriate, some Action Plans may focus on student achievement while others might focus on other school or program performance outcomes.
- D. Typically, Action Plans should be developed at the beginning of the administrator's work year. The most current data available should be used as part of the planning process.
- E. The development of Action Plans should be a collaborative process involving extensive discussion between the principal or school/district administrator and

his/her Superintendent or assigned evaluator. Collaboration should continue throughout the year as the Action Plan is implemented and revised.

- F. Action Plans should include the use of a variety of data sources to assess student achievement and school or district performance outcomes. Relying exclusively on state assessments to measure student achievement, for example, would limit the improvement potential of the Action Plan process.
- G. Like Student Learning Objectives, the use of Action Plans in the model evaluation process is designed to assess the outcomes of the principal or school/district administrator's actual work. Action Plans hold these administrators accountable for student or program performance that they can actually impact.

## II. Key Features of Action Plans

- A. The following are key features of Action Plans as contemplated in the Nebraska evaluation model.
  - The identification of real barriers to student/school performance based on data analysis.
  - A clear problem statement supported by data.
  - One or more performance targets written in specific, measurable terms.
  - A specific interval of time in which to address the problem.
  - Planned actions or strategies to reduce or eliminate the problem.
  - The use of a variety of data sources which may include stakeholder perception, to assess results.
- B. Basic questions for a principal or school/district administrator to consider, include:
  - What barriers or problems are preventing improved student achievement or school or district performance?
  - What data supports the identification of the barriers or problems?
  - What achievement or performance targets can we attain?
  - What actions or strategies would get us closer to these targets?
  - How can we measure success?
- C. In some schools it may be appropriate for the principal and assistant principals to develop Action Plans jointly. However, it is important that each administrator be held accountable for only those Plan elements for which they are actually responsible.
- D. A key to successful creation and implementation of effective Action Plans is collaboration between the principal or school/district administrator and his/her Superintendent or evaluating administrator. The collaboration should include joint review of baseline data, collaborative development of problem

statements and performance targets, discussion of improvement strategies, and agreement on appropriate measurement of results.

### III. Steps in Developing Action Plans

Step 1: Identify a problem or barrier that stands in the way of higher student achievement, staff effectiveness, or school or district performance.

- A. Action Plans must be based on authentic school or district problems so this step requires extensive analysis of factors that affect achievement or performance. Such factors may include the student population, staff performance, community variables, etc.
- B. It is important to focus only on problems on which the principal or school/district administrator can have a genuine impact. Some home or community problems that impact the school may be beyond the reach of school or district administrators to affect and should not be considered.
- C. Example problem statement: *Too few of our students see themselves as bound for post-secondary education.*

Step 2: Use baseline data to analyze and define the problem statement.

- A. This step involves gathering and analyzing data from a variety of sources to determine if the problem as stated is genuine and correctly defined. The key to this effort is gathering data from a variety of sources and analyzing it effectively. Data from a single source, such as a single set of test scores, may not be enough to effectively determine the dimensions of the problem.
- B. Example set of data: *From the Class of 2012, only 61% of graduating seniors enrolled in some form of post-secondary education.*

Step 3: Write a performance target statement, in specific and measurable terms, designed to overcome the problem.

- A. The performance target statement must be in specific and measurable terms that allow it to be appropriately assessed as part of the evaluation process. One way to do this is to use a SMART Goal format. This acronym means:
  - Specific—the performance target is focused by student and/or school/district needs.
  - Measurable—the performance target can be assessed with an appropriate instrument
  - Appropriate—the performance target is clearly related to the role and responsibilities of the principal or school/district administrator.

- Realistic—the performance target is challenging yet attainable.
  - Time-bound—The performance target can be met in a reasonable interval such as a quarter, semester, or year.
- B. For some problems, a time interval greater than one year may be required. If so, annual or more frequent benchmarks can be included in the target statement.
- C. For some problems, differentiated or tiered target statements may be necessary. For instance, student achievement targets might be differentiated for students beginning at different performance levels.
- D. Example of a performance target statement: *The percentage of graduating seniors who enter some form of post-secondary education will increase annually until we reach our goal of 90% post-secondary enrollment by 2016.*

Step 4: Identify data points or other sources of measurement that will be used to measure progress.

- A. Action Plans should be assessed using a variety of data sources. These might include student achievement data, student and other stakeholder perceptions, school and district performance statistics, staff data such as retention rates, and many other types of information.
- B. Statewide assessments, such as NeSA tests, can be appropriate assessments for some Action Plans, but they are not the only assessments to be considered and may in fact be inappropriate in many instances. For example, NeSA assessments are broad and may not measure student performance at the same depth of knowledge as other commercial or locally-developed assessments.
- C. Standardized assessments such as NWEA MAPS, which are taken multiple times during the year, may be particularly useful to determine student achievement.
- D. As with Student Learning Objectives, some of the Four “P’s” may be useful assessments. They include: projects, performances, products, and portfolios.
- E. In some cases, it may be necessary to locally develop specific measures or assessments. If so, it is important to determine that local measures are valid for the purpose for which they are being used.
- F. Example Action Plan measurement. *Each graduating senior will participate in an exit interview in which post-graduation plans will be identified.*

Step 5: Identify the action steps or strategies that will be taken to attain the performance target.

- A. In this step, principals or school/district administrators need to identify strategies that are appropriate, realistic, and likely to be effective. However, as strategies are implemented it may be necessary to revise or eliminate strategies that prove to be ineffective. The Action Plan should be a practical document so revising strategies during the implementation process should be encouraged.
- B. Particular attention should be paid to feedback from stakeholders on the effectiveness and impact of various strategies. Stakeholder perception surveys that can be designed for specific initiatives, such as the McREL Balanced Leadership Profile, can be especially useful in Action Plan implementation.
- C. Example strategies:
  - Analyze course-taking patterns in middle school to increase college prep course-taking.
  - Develop a Ninth Grade transition plan.

Step 6: Identify persons or groups responsible for implementing action steps or strategies.

- A. This step should also include identifying resources needed to carry out the Action Plan.

## IV. Procedures

- A. Action Plan approval process
  - Action Plans should be developed at the beginning of the principal or other administrator's work year. However, it is important to provide sufficient time for the administrator to collect and analyze data in order to develop appropriate problem statements and performance targets.
  - Approval by the Superintendent or assigned evaluator should be part of the collaborative process. More than one conference may be required to complete this process.
- B. Collaboration/conferences
  - Successful development and completion of Action Plans require close collaboration between the principal or school/district administrator and his/her Superintendent or evaluating administrator. Conferences might include:

- Beginning of the year conference(s) to consider the development of the problem statement and performance targets.
- Mid-year conference to review implementation of the action strategies.
- End-of-year conference to review assessment data and determine results based on the evaluation rubric.

#### C. Action Plan evaluation rubrics

- Two rubrics are used in the Nebraska model evaluation to assess performance on the Action Plans. The first is a three-part individual Action Plan rubric that is used to evaluate the performance on each of the principal or school/district administrator's Action Plans. It includes four performance levels for assessing these three elements:
  - i. Quality and rigor of the Action Plan.
  - ii. Effectiveness in implementing Action Plan strategies.
  - iii. Accomplishment of the Action Plan goals.
  - iv. The results of this rubric are used to review Action Plan performance with the principal or school/district administrator, but are not transmitted to the annual formative or summative evaluation document.
- The results of the second rubric are transmitted to the annual formative or summative evaluation document. This rubric evaluates combined performance on both of the principal or school/district administrator's Action Plans for the school year. The combined rubric reflects both the degree to which the performance targets were met and the degree to which the Action Plans reflected challenging Plans that were implemented effectively. The combined rubric summarizes criteria from the individual rubrics and the level of performance becomes the year's rating for the Action Plan component of the formative or summative evaluation.

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