

**GUIDE TO EVALUATING  
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM**

***BOOKLET 6  
ACTION PLANNING FOR  
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM EVALUATION***

**SERVE**

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This manual is one of a series of publications developed by Evaluation Systems Design, Inc. of Tallahassee, Florida for SERVE to assist school districts in the southeast to plan and conduct evaluations of Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) efforts and federally funded Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR/D) projects. The work is based on a previous document developed by Evaluation Systems Design, Inc. for the State of Florida entitled Volume VI-A: Guide to Evaluating Exceptional Student Education Programs (1985). For additional copies of this manual, or for a complete listing of available publications, contact the SERVE office at:

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## BOOKLET SIX

### ACTION PLANNING FOR COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM EVALUATION

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this booklet, Action Planning for Comprehensive School Reform Evaluation is to assist local administrators of comprehensive school reform programs, and their staff to increase the use of evaluation information in planning for program improvement. Regardless of the quality of the evaluation procedures and the clarity of the evaluation report, if the information provided is not used for decision-making, desired CSR improvements will not occur.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE BOOKLET

Upon reading the booklet, the reader should be able to identify and discuss:

- ◆ Formal planning
- ◆ Participants in planning for CSR improvement
- ◆ Characteristics of productive planning
- ◆ Use of CSR evaluation reports in planning
- ◆ Development and use of action plans for CSR improvement

#### FORMAL PLANNING

Some recommendations resulting from CSR evaluations will require little formal planning. For example, if the recommendation is that a review of the school's written information provided to parents should be conducted to determine that the reading level is appropriate, this task may simply need to be assigned to a staff member with appropriate follow-up and decision making. It should be anticipated however, that many CSR evaluation recommendations will require extensive formal planning in order for the school and district to implement the recommendations. In this context, formal planning includes activities that are designed, scheduled, and conducted systematically to describe how improvements in programs will be accomplished.

#### PARTICIPANTS IN PLANNING

#### INVOLVE STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES OF AFFECTED GROUPS

Following the completion of the evaluation, the principal, CSR administrator, and other involved school and district level staff should conduct the initial planning for program improvement. Care should be taken to involve those staff who will ultimately be responsible for carrying out the plan. Other staff who may not be involved in the implementation of the plan but who have information that is crucial to the planning effort should also be identified and participate in the planning. Such staff may include teachers, support staff, and representatives of the district.

Once the school staff has developed a draft plan, individuals or representatives of groups who will influence the success of implementing the plan should be consulted. Representatives of parents or community groups, other departments in the district, or principals and teachers may need to be involved at this point. Involvement of the significant others will help to gain their support of the plan. Consultation with significant others also often results in suggestions for improvement of the plan, and thus its potential for success.

### **PRODUCTIVE PLANNING**

#### **SCHEDULE TIME FOR PLANNING**

Planning is a primary, but often neglected, function of administration and supervision. The typical response is “There just is never enough time to plan.” If extensive program improvement is to be accomplished, planning will be required. Time for planning should be scheduled and managed to result in as much productivity as possible. Suggestions to increase the productivity of planning are provided in *Figure 6-1*. *Figure 6-2* is an example of a notification to staff of a planning meeting that incorporates many of the suggestions for productive planning.

### **AGENDA FOR THE PLANNING MEETING**

*Figure 6-3* represents an example of an agenda for a planning meeting where the CSR evaluation report is the impetus for the session. Use an agenda such as the one provided in the example to provide planning participants with detailed information about the data on which the recommendations were based. Give ample opportunity for planning participants to provide information that will impact on the decision to implement, partially implement, or disregard a recommendation. A consensus activity is built in to bring closure to the planning session.

## **HINTS FOR PRODUCTIVE PLANNING**

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1. Schedule a planning session well in advance of when final decisions or actions are needed.
2. Notify staff, preferably in writing, of the planning meeting and the issues to be addressed.
3. Specify in the notice any tasks the staff should complete prior to the meeting and any materials that they should bring with them to the meeting.
4. Schedule enough time for the planning meeting so that participants can come to some closure on at least part of the process.
5. Select a location and room that facilitates the planning process. Consider the ability to be as free from interruptions as possible, the comfort of the workspace, the availability of any needed equipment, and arrangement of work space to encourage participation.
6. Have a specific agenda and strategies for guiding the planning effort.
7. Keep a detailed and accurate record of the proceedings of the planning session.
8. Summarize the results of the planning session and establish additional meetings and task assignments, as needed.

*Figure 6-1. Hints for productive planning.*

May 5, 2000

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: CSR EVALUATION TASK FORCE

FROM: CSR ADMINISTRATOR

SUBJECT: Planning for Implementation of CSR Evaluation Recommendations

On May 1<sup>st</sup> you received the CSR Evaluation Report. The report contains a lot of information on the instructional program and opportunities for students. It is very important that we analyze the information and the resulting recommendations. A planning meeting has been scheduled for this purpose. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Please clear your calendars on May 23<sup>rd</sup> from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. The meeting will be held in the Media Center at Quail Hollow High School. Lunch will be provided.

Prior to the meeting, please complete the following tasks:

- Read the Comprehensive School Reform Evaluation Report
- Note the specific issues relative to your program assignment
- Collect and bring with you any additional information that will assist in our discussion
- Bring your evaluation report with you.

The meeting should result in a tentative rationale for how we will handle each of the recommendations in the evaluation report. Some recommendations may need to be fully implemented by us, others may be partially our responsibility, and others may not be appropriate for implementation by the school or district at this time. The results of our planning meeting will be used in subsequent meetings and plans for CSR.

This is a first and very important step in our improvement of the CSR efforts in our school. I am looking forward to a very productive meeting on May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

*Figure 6-2. Example of a meeting notice.*

## PLANNING SESSION AGENDA

9:00 a.m.	Review of Evaluation Procedures and Findings	CSR Administrator or staff member who coordinated the evaluation effort
9:30 a.m.	Questions from Planning Participants	Responses from all primary participants in the evaluation
9:45 a.m.	Review of Recommendations from the Evaluation Report	CSR Administrator or staff member who coordinated the evaluation effort
10:15 a.m.	Input from Participants on Specific Implementation Issues	Participants
10:30 a.m.	Break	
10:45 a.m.	Brainstorming the Implementation of Each Recommendation	Participants
12:00 p.m.	Lunch	
12:45 p.m.	Consensus on the Need to Plan for the Implementation of Each Recommendation	Participants
2:30 p.m.	Summary of Planning Meetings and Next Steps	CSR Administrator
3:00 p.m.	Adjourn	

*Figure 6-3. Example of a planning session agenda.*

**STRATEGIES**

**BRAINSTORMING**

Productive planning results from the use of a variety of interaction strategies. For example, brainstorming is helpful when trying to identify all of the factors that may facilitate or constrain the implementation of a recommendation or the advantages and disadvantages of implementing a recommendation.

**RANKING  
TECHNIQUES**

Use ranking techniques to determine participants’ judgments on the relative position of recommendations. One or more factors can be used for ranking. For example, participants can rank order recommendations based on these factors:

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<u>Factor</u>	<u>Scale</u>		
	1		5
When recommendations should be implemented -----	Immediately	← to →	Never
Anticipated impact on student performance -----	High impact	← to →	No impact
Estimated cost-----	No direct cost increase	← to →	Cost is prohibitive

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Categorizing techniques are also often helpful when planning. Using one or more factors, participants can provide their perceptions of how recommendations should be grouped. Examples of factors that could be used to categorize an extensive list of program evaluation recommendations are:

- ◆ Must be implemented to be in compliance with the grant or school/district/state regulations
- ◆ Should be implemented to improve the effort
- ◆ Would be nice to implement but has questionable impact
- ◆ Should not be implemented

**DOCUMENTING THE PLANNING PROCESS**

Much useful information and time are lost when an accurate and detailed record of planning meetings is not maintained. A single planning effort such as one to deal with the recommendations in a CSR evaluation report is just one of many activities occurring for a school principal and faculty at any one point in time.

**KEEP A RECORD**

Keeping a good record of the proceedings of planning meetings will enable the participants to review easily the information provided through the planning activity and the resulting decisions. Access to such a record is particularly helpful when questions arise about the plan or the decisions after considerable time has passed.

**USE OF THE EVALUATION REPORT**

A good evaluation report will contain much information that can be used for planning improvement of CSR. Spend considerable time in review and analysis of the report. The recommendations contained within the evaluation report should serve as the framework for development of a plan to improve the CSR effort.

**DISCUSSION  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Discuss each recommendation contained in the evaluation report. The following questions can be used to guide the discussion of recommendations found in an evaluation report.

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**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSING EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. If this recommendation is implemented, what is the anticipated impact on students? On staff? On parents, community agencies, etc.?
2. If this recommendation is implemented, how much will it cost?
3. Are the resources currently available to implement this recommendation? If not, what is the potential for and sources of additional resources?
4. What general timeframe would be appropriate for implementation of this recommendation?
5. Which person or persons would be most appropriately assigned the responsibility of guiding the implementation of the recommendation.

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**DEVELOP A  
RATIONALE FOR  
ACTION**

A thorough discussion of the evaluation recommendations with involved staff should result in information that can then be used to assess the total set of recommendations. Develop a brief rationale that describes whether any action will occur on each of the recommendations and the reasons for the decision.

The development of a brief rationale statement for each decision will also assist the CSR administrator and staff in establishing the priority of individual recommendations. The recommendations that are of greatest priority can then be translated into improvement goals.

Through the use of productive planning techniques, a thorough analysis of the recommendations contained in the CSR evaluation report can be completed. Based on the decision from those initial processes, the CSR Administrator and staff can then begin to develop Action Plans for improvement of the program.

### **ACTION PLANS**

In this context, the term action plan is used to emphasize the need for a specific written guide to structure actions taken to improve programs. The action plan should state specifically the condition that is to be improved and the improvement objective. The activities that will be conducted to effect the improvement should also be briefly described in the action plan, as well as a statement of the resources required for accomplishing the activities.

The action plan should also indicate who will be responsible for conducting the activities and when the activities are to be accomplished. Include information on who is to be responsible and the projected beginning and ending dates for activities. The plan and this entire process should be integrated within the feedback and the action plan will serve as an accountability structure.

*Figure 6-4* is an example of a form that can be used for action planning. An explanation of each part of the form follows. *Figure 6-5* is an example of a completed action plan for one improvement goal.

### **IMPROVEMENT GOALS**

An improvement goal states clearly the intended accomplishment. The following are examples of improvement goals that could result from a comprehensive school reform evaluation.

<b>ACTION PLAN</b>				
<b>IMPROVEMENT GOAL</b>	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>ACTIVITIES/RESOURCES</b>	<b>PERSON RESPONSIBLE</b>	<b>TARGET DATE</b>
				<b>SCHEDULE BEGIN</b>

Figure 6-4. Action Plan Form.

## ACTION PLAN

ACTION PLAN			
IMPROVEMENT GOAL	CONDUCT RENEWAL INSERVICE ON CSR MODEL	TARGET DATE	
OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES/RESOURCES	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	SCHEDULE BEGIN END
Identify dates/locations for inservice training	Call school board office training center Call local hotels regarding space \$250 room rental	CSR Facilitator	May 99 June 99
Contract with model trainer to conduct renewal training	Call model trainer Generate contract Confirm dates/times/activities \$1,000 consultant fee	Principal	May 99 June 99
Notify teachers and other participants about training	Draft memo Disseminate memo	Principal	May 99 June 99
Organize notebooks and training materials	Order notebooks Duplicate materials \$3/notebook \$200 duplication	CSR Facilitator	June 99 July 99
Conduct training	Generate check-in list Arrange for inservice points	Model trainer	Aug 99 Aug 99
Summarize results of training evaluation	Organize forms Enter data Generate summary Share with staff at next faculty meeting	CSR Facilitator	Aug 99 Sept 99

Figure 6-5. Completed Action Plan.

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## **EXAMPLES OF IMPROVEMENT GOALS**

- I. The school parents in each classroom will participate in teacher-parent conferences. At least 80% of the students will have available and use one or more programs designed to provide alternatives to suspension.
  - II. Education designed to prevent and reduce drug abuse among students will be identified and provided to all students who would otherwise not receive such education, as appropriate.
  - III. Based upon the work evaluation assessment data obtained from all 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, appropriate career counseling and vocational education will be provided.
  - IV. The number of students achieving district and state student performance standards will be increased by 10 percent.
- 
- 

### **TARGET DATES**

Target dates are used to specify the date (month and year) upon which an improvement goal is to be accomplished. Target dates may be influenced by many factors. These factors include:

- ◆ Whether the improvement goal is directly related to a planned activity in an approved grant
- ◆ The complexity of the goal and thus the time required for accomplishment
- ◆ The need for obtaining additional resources for accomplishment of the goal
- ◆ District specific issues that will facilitate or constrain the accomplishment of the goal

Consider all of the factors in establishing target dates for accomplishment of improvement goals.

### **OBJECTIVES**

Objectives in this context are major interim steps that must be completed if the improvement goal is to be accomplished. Objectives should be brief and stated clearly. List objectives in the order in which they should be addressed.

### **ACTIVITIES**

For each objective, briefly state the activities that must be conducted to achieve the objective. State the activities in the order in which they should be conducted.

## **RESOURCES**

For each objective, identify those external resources that are critical to accomplishing the objective. Particular care should be taken to identify other people within the school or district who will need to be involved, as well as individuals, organizations, or groups external to the school or district.

## **PERSONS RESPONSIBLE**

Identify by title or name the person or persons who will coordinate the accomplishment of each objective. Use this information for making specific staff assignments and collecting accountability information.

## **SCHEDULE**

Develop the schedule for accomplishment of objectives and activities by establishing beginning and ending dates (month and year). Again, care should be taken in considering the factors that will influence these dates.

## **MONITORING PROGRESS TOWARD ACCOMPLISHMENT OF IMPROVEMENT GOALS**

Make periodic progress checks to ensure that progress toward accomplishment of improvement goals is occurring. The type of checks needed depends on the nature and complexity of the improvement goal. For example, if the improvement goal is to adopt and implement a new reading curriculum for the school, the first progress checks would focus on determining that the activities required to adopt and install the curriculum were being conducted. These progress checks would consist of management checks to determine that:

- ◆ Activities required to review and critique the curriculum documents are occurring
- ◆ All required decision-making has been completed for adoption of the curriculum
- ◆ Needed curriculum materials have been purchased
- ◆ Needed training for all involved staff has been planned and scheduled
- ◆ Involved staff are using the affective curriculum
- ◆ Needed technical assistance is being provided

## PROCEDURES

Procedures for conducting the management checks could consist of interview with staff, review of written plans and reports, and onsite observations. These initial progress checks will enable the CSR administrator to determine if the reading curriculum has been adopted by the school.

Additional activities would be needed to determine the effects of the program change. At this point, the CSR staff can plan to conduct a more formal evaluation of the use of the new reading curriculum. The CSR staff would then cycle back to the evaluation planning process. The procedures and skills would again be applied that were used initially in conducting the CSR evaluation that resulted in the improvement goal.

## **SUMMARY**

Formal planning will be required to make sure that the results of CSR evaluations are used for improving CSR efforts. Such planning should include not only the CSR staff but significant others as well. Involvement of those who must carry out the plans or who will be affected by the resulting actions will increase the potential for success.

Productive planning is both a science and an art. Use of the suggestions in this booklet should help to improve the frequency and outcomes of planning sessions.

Of primary concern is the use of a process that will ensure that the results of CSR evaluations are used to plan program improvements. To help this process, the booklet describes action planning and provides an example of how to document action plans. Action planning directly translates evaluation results into the “what, who, and when” of program improvement activities.