

5A

Put Strategies into Practice and Evaluate Results

SUMMARY

Key Points

- A school district should establish a system to ensure that its strategies and priorities are being implemented. The system should monitor all processes associated with implementation and collect and evaluate interim performance results.
- The monitoring system should identify responsible parties to carry out and oversee the plan of action's implementation and to manage specific elements and initiatives within the plan, including milestone dates for necessary steps to put into practice, and a reporting process to inform district administrators and the board on the implementation of the strategy.
- Throughout the year, the district should evaluate student progress towards academic achievement goals. A district should schedule regular interim assessments to gather data to determine whether or not progress has been made.

Related Award Program Criteria

- **Criterion 5.A.1: Monitoring Implementation.** The applicant shows documented responsible parties, milestones, and system of reporting for monitoring strategy implementation in its supplementary materials.
- **Criterion 5.A.2: Continuous Improvement.** The applicant can document in its supplementary materials and budget document the difference between planned and actual results (both financial and student achievement results), the root causes of those differences, and plan for how the planning, budgeting, and/or implementation process will be adjusted accordingly.

Introduction

To ensure that the strategies and priorities are implemented with fidelity to the budget document, a school district needs to establish a system for evaluating results.

This best practice document covers:

- I. Monitor strategy implementation
- II. Evaluate interim results throughout the year

I. Monitor Strategy Implementation

Background. A well-developed budget outlines the dollars and resources for implementing a plan of action (see Best Practice in School Budgeting, 4B — Develop a Plan of Action) to align student outcomes with resources for the upcoming fiscal year. However, there are numerous examples where excellent plans are improperly or incompletely put into practice. In some cases, the plan may never even get off the ground.

Recommendation. A district should start by assigning responsibility to a senior staff member (e.g., the chief academic officer) for carrying out and overseeing the implementation of the plan of action. It should also assign responsibility to other managers for specific elements and initiatives within the plan. Next, it should identify the steps needed to successfully implement the plan (a new program or activity may require many steps). When the district is building upon existing activities, however, the implementation may be more straightforward. Regardless, an appropriate timeline and set of milestones should be developed. Finally, the district should establish a reporting process to inform district administrators and the board about implementation of the strategy. The district should also evaluate progress towards milestones within its plan of action that will ultimately lead to improved student learning. For example, have teacher collaborative groups been formed, are they meeting regularly, and are the meetings productive? Have instructional coaches been deployed? Are they working with teachers to the full extent originally envisioned, and has instruction in the classroom changed as a result?

II. Evaluate Interim Results throughout the Year

Background. Ideally, a district will monitor whether or not students are making progress towards academic achievement goals using the data from assessments aligned to grade levels and standards throughout the year. Summative assessments are typically administered near the end of the school year, so a district will need to identify interim measures of performance. Regularly scheduled benchmark assessments (e.g., sometimes given in mid-fall, January, and May) or shorter-cycle “formative” assessments can serve this purpose.

Recommendation. When available, data from interim assessments, not just standardized test scores, should be collected and used to measure learning improvement to determine if progress is being made. Monitoring interim results makes it possible to identify potential problem areas early on and to determine whether any adjustments to the original strategy are needed.

The experiences of implementing the budget and plan of action as well as the actual results achieved should be “fed back” into the budget process for the following year in order to help the district make decisions on whether to continue, expand, or cut spending on a given program. (See Best Practice in School Budgeting, 3B — Evaluate and Prioritize Use of Resources to Enact the Instructional Priorities for how to incorporate performance data into budget decision making.)

Updates on both the implementation process and performance should be reported to the board and district administrators, and made available as part of a broader communication strategy.