



**Indicator:** The district examines existing school improvement strategies being implemented across the district and determines their value, expanding, modifying, and culling as evidence suggests. (5634)

**Explanation:** District-wide improvement strategies are often useful in ensuring systematic practice across multiple school settings. But they may also vary in effectiveness from school to school and conflict with more productive practices preferred by individual schools. The district should periodically review its district-wide improvement strategies and determine their level of implementation and effectiveness in each school and for the district as a whole.

**Questions:** What are your district's school improvement strategies? Are they described in written form and disseminated across the district? Is each tied to performance measures to determine its effectiveness. How does your district review these strategies and amend them as necessary?

Preparing for change requires the district to a) determine what is already working, b) discern strengths and weaknesses, c) decide on governance, and d) develop a plan. If a school has been in improvement, then it is quite likely that it has already attempted change efforts with varying levels of success. However, when a school has vested its time, money, and effort into learning a new program, process, or curriculum, it is often reluctant to give up those efforts even when they seem to be producing little to no effect. The district can then, from an outside perspective, help the school see what efforts are not working and what should be either modified or abandoned.

The district collects data to determine what is working and what is not. Aside from using state assessment results, strengths and weaknesses can be determined by exploring all other formative and summative assessments given to students. Additional information should be reviewed including attendance and graduation (or drop out) rates. An examination of subgroups of students who are not making AYP should also be included. If available, several years of information should be reviewed to determine or establish trends (Perlman, 2007).

Schmoker (2004) would agree that having the right people on a school improvement team is critical, "most vital, high-leverage thinking is done primarily by 'planners' before the school year begins, rather than by teaching practitioners *throughout* the school year...Teams of teachers implement, assess, and adjust instruction in short-term cycles of improvement—not annually, but continuously...Our plans, our 'systemic reform' should focus primarily on establishing and sustaining the structure for just such norms of continuous improvement" (p. 427).

### References and Resources

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