

NCStar Quick Reference for School Improvement Teams

School Improvement Planning	<p>Review the North Carolina School Improvement Planning Implementation Guide found at https://ncstar.weebly.com/docs.html to learn more about the policies in North Carolina regarding school improvement planning.</p> <p>NCStar is a web-based school improvement management tool that is used by schools in North Carolina. NCStar guides school teams through a process of charting improvement and managing their continuous improvement process.</p>
Accessing NCStar	Login Accounts & Available Views
NCStar Access	<p>Website to login to NCStar: www.indistar.org</p> <p>5 ways of accessing the NCStar portal via different NCStar accounts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal & Process Manager (shared access) • District (allows for coaching comments) • Leadership (School Improvement Team members) • Guest (Staff, Parents, Board Members, etc.) • NCDPI <p>For specifics on what each access point is able to view in the system please refer to the Access Levels document found at https://ncstar.weebly.com/docs.html</p>
Home Page	Main Menu - Home
Overview of all Sections	<p>The home page provides a quick overview and access to all the options under the Main Menu including: Our Direction, Our Meetings, Success Cycle, & Our Progress. The tabs at the bottom of the home page are Complete Forms, Submissions, & Snapshot and allow users to do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Forms – Complete the optional Needs Assessment • Submissions - Submit your Comprehensive plan to keep Fall and Spring archived copies of your school improvement plan. Also allows the school to archive their needs assessment yearly • Snapshot – Review a quick overview of planning activity.
Complete Forms (Needs Assessment)	<p>An optional needs assessment form is found on the NCStar Home page in the Complete Forms section. This needs assessment is broken down by the Dimensions found in NCStar. Additionally, the first page is a deep data dive into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Achievement/Growth Data • Student Attendance, Discipline, Demographic, & Retention Data • Teacher Recruitment, Retention, & Attendance Data • Perception Data <p>When doing any type of Data Collection & Analysis please remember to look at more than one year of data. The school wants to complete the assessment by looking at data trends.</p>

<p>Submissions (Archiving Plans and/or Needs Assessment)</p>	<p>NCStar is about following a true continuous improvement cycle and constantly growing/adjusting the Comprehensive Plan. The only way to keep a date-stamped permanent copy of a plan is by pressing the 'submit' buttons found in the Submissions section at the bottom of the Home page. We highly recommend you archive plans twice a year (Fall & Spring).</p> <p>In addition, if the school completes the needs assessment in the Forms section then they can archive it yearly under Submissions.</p>
<p>Resources - Indicators, WiseWays, & Rubrics</p>	<p>In this section you can find the WiseWays documents for each indicator that provides background research and support questions. Videos are also available to view for a few indicators.</p>
<p>Resources - Docs & Links</p>	<p>Under the "Docs & Links" tab in Resources, find the different blank Assess or Create or Monitor worksheets as 'word docs' which you can send to your team members to complete prior to meetings.</p> <p>In addition, you'll find a link to the Weebly and a document to help with aligning the school indicators to district goals</p>
<p>Setting Up NCStar</p>	<p>Our Direction – View/Update Profile & Set Direction</p>
<p>School Improvement Team Membership under "Update Profile"</p>	<p>Team members can be added/deleted under the Update Profile section. Please remember to keep this contact information updated since emails are sent to the members listed. Team members are also visible to the public through the Summary Report under "guest" access (contact information is not visible). Make sure you have parent representation on the school improvement team.</p> <p>As a best practice for the school team profile, all members should be clarified with exact position role/title by using "Other" option when adding the member. (ex. 3rd grade teacher, biology teacher, media specialist, curriculum facilitator)</p>
<p>"Set Direction" #1 Mission & Goals</p>	<p>Information in this section will go to the top of the Comprehensive Plan Report (School Improvement Plan).</p> <p>Schools write their traditional SMART Goals in this location and they are also able to keep track of their long-term ESSA Accountability goals through the performance measures option.</p>
<p>"Set Direction" #2 Data Review</p>	<p>This section is completely optional for schools/districts in North Carolina. The reason is that in North Carolina we have a Needs Assessment form that allows schools to review their data and look at data trends. This Needs Assessment can be found on the NCStar Home page in the Complete Forms section.</p>

<p>“Set Direction” #3 Indicator Selection</p>	<p>This section is for selecting the indicators that you will be including in your plan. All schools in North Carolina start by assessing the 12 Key Indicators (key icon). Once a school has assessed those indicators, then they are free to choose from the remaining list of 125 indicators other indicators they wish to work on. School improvement is such a unique process for each school, so NCStar allows schools flexibility to personalize their plans to meet their distinct needs.</p> <p>The Indicators are practices that will lead a school to achieving their Goals. For this reason, some schools will write their SMART Goals in Set Direction #1 and right after in parenthesis they specify which indicators will lead them to achieving the goal. For example: <i>By June 2018, as measured by our performance composite scores, ABC School will increase our school performance grade score by 5% from 40 to 42. (A1.07; A2.05; A2.07; A4.01)</i></p> <p>A best practice is for a school improvement team to read and “unpack” the WiseWays document for each indicator before assessing. It is important that every individual in the school improvement team has a good understanding of the research on the effective practice so that the team has a common vision for what is expected.</p>
<p>Setting Up NCStar</p>	<p>Our Meetings – Manage Meetings</p>
<p>Team Agendas & Minutes</p>	<p>NCStar keeps track of your meetings. The minimum requirement for NCStar users is to record 2 meetings a month in the system. The first meeting is the School Improvement Team meeting required by law. Each principal decides how they would like to structure the second meeting. A meeting will not be counted by NCStar unless minutes are taken and saved.</p> <p>If you have a preferred template to use for your agendas or minutes, please feel free to simply link to that particular document in any of the text boxes. Please ensure that linked documents have a shareable link that allows coaches/reviewers to view material.</p>
<p>NCStar Continuous Improvement Process</p>	<p>Success Cycle: Access, Create, Monitor</p>
<p>Mapping your School Improvement Plan</p>	<p>It continues to be our strong recommendation that schools assess the 12 Key Indicators when they start using NCStar. Not only are they based on NCDPI’s success of turning around schools in North Carolina, but they also take care of any Title I Components if a school ever gets a federal monitoring visit.</p> <p>Once the school has assessed the 12 Key Indicators, then the school creates a plan for any indicator that is assessed as not at “full implementation” since the school is basically admitting that the assessed practice is either at “limited” or “no development”. As mentioned above a plan is developed when a school creates an action step.</p> <p>In order to lift morale in the building, it is recommended that the school look for more indicators that can be “quick wins” (accomplished in a couple of months) or “stepping stones” to the big 12.</p> <p>We recommend schools to spread their “target dates” for each indicator so that you do not have too many for one particular year. A yearly focus on anywhere between 3 to 8 indicators is a good start. However, that doesn’t mean the plan only has those indicators – the school might have 6 indicators that are the focus of 2019, 3 more for 2020, 7 more for 2021. Those that are 2021 indicators would mean that the school is writing action steps that are spread throughout the 3-year timeline.</p>

Success Cycle	Assess Stage
<p>ASSESS</p> <p>“Describe current level of development”</p>	<p>This description should provide the reader with a clear picture of what the school is doing now. A best practice is to type the year since your plan in NCStar will be an ongoing living document and the “assess” stage is simply the beginning of this map you are creating to reach full implementation. For example, “As of July 2017 our school.....”</p>
<p>Key Indicator B101</p>	<p>The LEA is required to provide the information to the school for this indicator so that the school can mark the indicator as “fully implemented”. Examples of evidence could include: documents that have the names and titles of district representatives on the district support and improvement team, document with meeting dates, meeting agendas, etc.</p>
<p>Evidence Location for B103</p>	<p>When it comes to this indicator, the evidence will not be found in the Document Uploads section since NCStar has the “Our Meetings” section for all Team Agendas & Minutes. The reason for this is space since Document Upload currently has a 175 file capacity. Remember that anytime you link to a Google Doc, Google Form, or Google Sheet – it does not go against this 175 file capacity in Document Upload.</p>
<p>LEA/School Indicators (Example C201 & C304)</p>	<p>The purpose of these indicators is for both LEA/School to work together and determine the best possible course of action for that specific school.</p>
<p>Any indicator at Full Implementation</p>	<p>As soon as you inform NCStar that an indicator/objective is at “full implementation”, it will ask you for evidence. The evidence will typically be in the form of documents/spreadsheets/pdfs and you may upload them in the “Document Upload” which is the folder icon on the top right corner of the Home screen.</p> <p>A best practice is to create folders for each of the indicators you are working on. For example, folder A204 will contain evidences regarding the creation of Instructional Units that at least guide the instruction of math, reading, science, & social studies. Users of Google Drive like to create the same folders in NCStar and Google and then they link them. Please ensure that coaches/reviewers have access to linked folders/documents.</p> <p>**IMPORTANT** - Once an indicator has been marked as “full implementation” or “completed”, then a 2-year timer begins in NCStar. Exactly 2-years after the indicator was marked as finished, the school will automatically need to re-assess the indicator and start over if they mark the indicator now at “limited development”.</p>
Success Cycle	Create Stage
<p>CREATE</p> <p>“How it will look when fully met”</p>	<p>This is where schools should be including what the school is trying to achieve with this objective (indicator). This is where the school improvement team is “thinking with the end in mind”. With regards to the “time” component – there is no reason why you cannot choose 2019, 2020, 2021, or even 2022 as the completion date for a particular indicator/objective (see monitoring below).</p>

<p>Developing Actions (Action Steps)</p>	<p>Every objective (indicator in the plan that has been assessed as limited or no development) should contain at least one action. However, one action is the minimum and will typically not lead to full implementation of the objective.</p> <p>When it comes to school improvement planning in NCStar, the more actions the easier it will be to manage and monitor the work that must happen to reach full implementation. In addition, the clearer the steps are to that specific objective – the higher the chances to sustain a practice even when a school has a leadership change or a high turnover rate in staff.</p> <p>Actions such as - “Monthly newsletters will be sent by grade level teams to inform parents/guardians of strategies/practices to assist their children at home” - might be broken down by grade level into multiple actions. This will add a level of accountability and allows the school improvement team to truly monitor the work of each grade level team individually.</p> <p>Ongoing/Recurring Actions - A recurring action (such as the one mentioned above) should have the date set for the end of the year, the SIT should be monitoring the action until it is an embedded process or structure at the school. In other words, recurring actions should not be marked as “completed” until the school improvement team feels comfortable that it is now a systemic practice that will continue to occur successfully without the need for supervision.</p> <p>A best practice is to attempt to write actions as action/impact. For example, “Math department will meet weekly to analyze student and aggregated classroom data in order to adapt instruction to meet the learning needs of every child”</p> <p>When thinking about action steps, try to create action steps that follow these areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop - What do you need to create to help you achieve this practice? This could be a document, a survey, a form, PD, etc. • Communicate - How will you communicate what you have developed to your staff? Will you hold a staff meeting, send an email or newsletter, meet in small groups, etc.? • Support Implementation - What will you do to support the implementation of the practice? • Monitor Impact - How will you monitor the practice? • Sustain Practice - How will you sustain the practice after you reach “full implementation”?
<p>Success Cycle</p>	<p>Monitor Stage</p>
<p>MONITOR Achieving Full Implementation</p>	<p>Every school is different, and it is not expected that all schools reach full implementation with the same number of indicators at the end of each year. In fact, some schools might take 1, 2, 3, or even 4 years to achieve ‘full implementation’ status with an indicator. Our recommendation is that schools aim at taking 3-8 indicators per year from ‘limited development’ to ‘full implementation’. Ultimately, districts set the expectations for their schools based on the specific needs found within each district.</p> <p>Your Comprehensive Plan is a living document, also known as a dynamic document, that is continually edited and updated. Thus, plans can be edited/adjusted constantly following a true continuous improvement process. For example, dates may need to be adjust and action steps may need to be revised or replaced.</p>