

Improving School Performance for All Children

Preparing for the Journey

**Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)
Office of School Improvement (OSI)
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OSI Differentiated Technical Assistance Team

Virginia Department of Education

Purpose

- Assist individual schools in preparing for the journey of school improvement
- Identify important components of an effective improvement process
- Provide strategies to help maintain sustainability with improvement efforts



The Journey

Successful school improvement teams...

- Begin with the end-in-mind while visualizing the “big picture”
- Implement and evaluate proven research-based processes and strategies for the purpose of creating an ongoing cycle of continuous school improvement



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The Big Picture

Successful school improvement teams...

- Unpack the “big picture” by identifying, teaching, and cultivating a series of “main things”
- Believe keeping a compass on the “main things” is paramount to the success of the school improvement journey



Main Thing #1

Students FIRST

Successful school improvement teams...

- Believe that the journey begins and ends with a laser-like focus on student growth
- Believe all decisions are made based on student need



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Main Thing #2

Classroom Instruction that Works

Successful school improvement teams...

- Maximize the use of VDOE resources
- Require the use of research-based instructional practices that positively effect student learning
- Require the use of effective research-based formative assessment strategies
- Require instruction that is tiered and student-specific
- Require the use of multiple data points to inform instruction



Main Thing #3

Teamwork

Successful school improvement teams...

- Push for high-quality communication
 - “Communication breathes the first spark of life into teamwork, and communication keeps teamwork alive. No other factor plays such a precious role in building and preserving trust among teammates. Communication is the make-or-break issue.”



The Team Member Handbook for Teamwork by Price Pritchett



Main Thing #3

Teamwork (Cont.)

Successful school improvement teams...

- Develop and nurture a “culture of candor and support”
- Teach and practice the art of teamwork
- Celebrate learning
- Work “smart” and approach every day as an “event”



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Main Thing #4

Process Driven

Successful school improvement teams...

- Guide a process driven by a series of purposeful, end-in-mind actions that when executed properly will create intended results for all students



Main Thing #5

Fearless Leadership

Successful school improvement journeys...

- Demand school and division leadership teams practice fearless leadership with the “courage to disrupt”
- Demand school specific assistance and support from the division leadership team
- Require leadership at the division and school level that commits to building team capacity through ongoing communication, collaboration, and empowerment



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Main Thing #6

Division Support

Successful school improvement journeys...

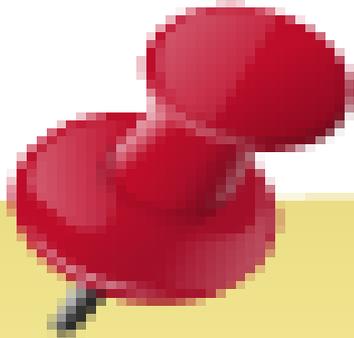
- Require the division leadership team to exercise the “will” to do the right thing for the benefit of the children
- Require division support to be aligned with the needs identified in each school’s school improvement plan
- Require a division leadership team member serve and actively participant on the school improvement team
- Require monthly meetings of the division leadership team and the school principal to review and discuss progress on improvement plans and areas of continued need
- Require division leadership team to perform monthly school visits--performing classroom walkthroughs and providing follow-up feedback to the school leadership team



Main Thing #7:

The Improvement Plan





**“Keep it simple. When
you get too complex you
forget the obvious.”**

Al Maguire



Successful school improvement teams...

- Share the belief that
 - “The ultimate goal in school improvement is for the people attached to the school to drive its continuous improvement for the sake of their own children and students.”

Dr. Sam Redding, 2009



Successful school improvement teams...

- Believe the following groups are “attached” to the school and are vital to its improvement efforts
 - School staff
 - Division staff
 - Parents
 - Other community stakeholders
 - Outside experts



Successful school improvement teams...

- Ask the right questions
 - Where are we now?
 - Where do we want to go?
 - How will we get there?
 - How will we know we are (getting) there?
 - How can we keep it going?

Asking the Right Questions, Third Edition, 2009, Edie L. Holcomb



Successful school improvement teams...

- Assess the needs of the school by asking
 - What data will be collected?
 - How will the data be collected?
 - How will it be presented?
 - What do data show about the needs of the students in the school now?
 - What data will be used to monitor the effectiveness of the school improvement plan?



Successful school improvement teams...

- Practice goal setting by
 - ❑ Identifying research-based or evidence-based practices that address the needs of students and what these practices look like when fully implemented
 - ❑ Developing SMART goals – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound – that will lead to change
 - ❑ Developing tasks that are written to include how the goal will be accomplished, who will do what, and when it will occur
 - ❑ Identifying what data will be used to monitor the effectiveness of the school improvement plan



Successful school improvement teams...

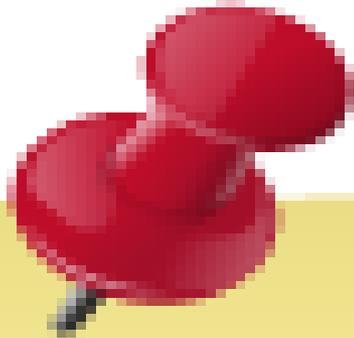
- Provide clear, specific information about
 - ❑ The identification process for all students at risk of failing or in need of academic interventions;
 - ❑ The tiered, differentiated intervention process to assign research-based interventions aligned with individual student needs (frequency and duration of Tier 2 and 3 students)
 - ❑ The monitoring process for targeted intervention students



Successful school improvement teams...

- Schedule opportunities to monitor the progress of the improvement plan by
 - ❑ Meeting monthly to record progress, analyze data
 - ❑ Recording team meeting minutes and agenda with the plan
 - ❑ Including detailed notes on status of tasks and objectives
 - ❑ Sharing information about the plan with stakeholders





“I have a plan of action,
but the game is a game
of adjustments.”

Mike Krzyzewski
Duke Basketball



Successful school improvement teams...

- Anticipate modifications to the plan (in real time) by asking and documenting
 - How will the team know if a student intervention is not successful?
 - How will the team* know if a task is not successful? What data will be tracked?
 - How often will data be analyzed at the school and division level?
 - Who makes decisions about revisions to the plan?



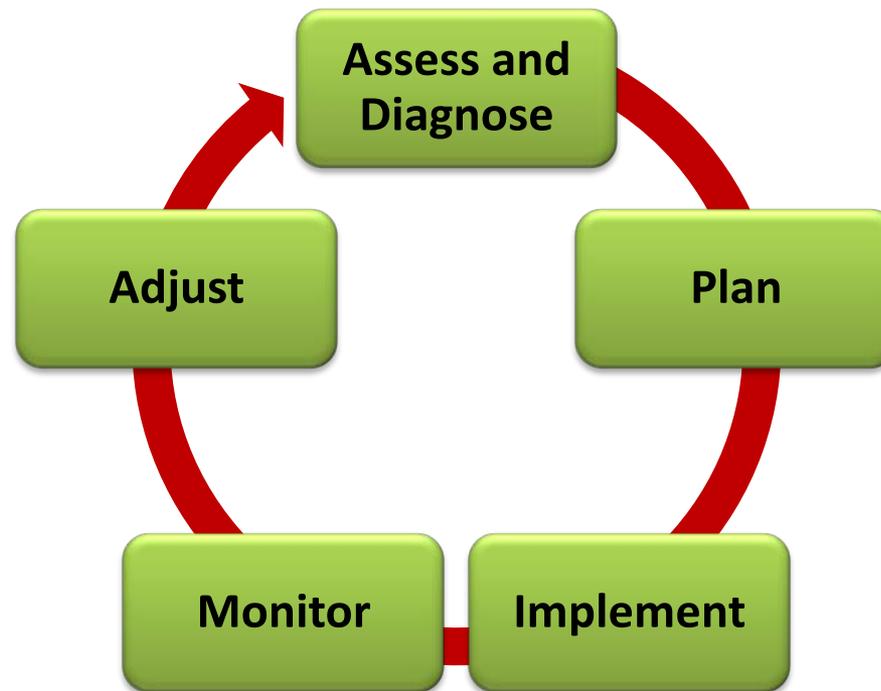
Successful school improvement teams...

- Make adjustments to the improvement plan based on
 - ❑ Data = Evidence of Practice + Student Outcomes
 - ❑ Data + Discussions + Decisions = Continuous Improvement



Successful school improvement teams...

- Apply a continuous improvement cycle



Main Thing #8

Practice the Involvement of Everyone, Everywhere, and Everyday

Successful school improvement teams...

- Practice everyone, everywhere, and everyday by
 - Taking ownership of all children
 - Committing to teamwork and collaboration
 - Embrace an environment where respect for each other and high performance expectations for staff and students are the norm
 - Building personal relationships with all children
 - Emptying our pockets of research-based, differentiated instructional strategies for all children



Available Resource

In order to provide further assistance to a successful school improvement journey, the OSI will make available the following resources to all interested divisions and schools

- *Asking the Right Questions, Tools for Collaboration and School Change*, Third Edition, Edie L. Holcomb, 2009. CD-ROM is included.



- **Topics included in this powerful resource guide:**
 - Asking the Right Questions**
 - Answering the “Where Are We Now?” Question**
 - Answering the “Where do we want to go?” Question**
 - Answering the “How Will We Get There?” Question**
 - Answering the “How will We Know We Are (Getting) There?” Question**
 - Answering the “How Will We Sustain the Focus and Momentum?” Question**
 - Powerful Questions that Shape Practice**
 - CD-ROM that follows the topics in the book with templates of useful tools**



For more information on the school improvement process or to obtain a complimentary copy of *Asking the Right Questions*, Third Edition, please contact...

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with your request in care of Michael Hill

