NYKids: Tools for Building School Teams’ Capacity for Data-Guided Decision Making

Nancy Andress
Janet Angelis
Know Your Schools~for NY Kids
University at Albany School of Education
www.albany.edu/nykids
“The problem-solving work of innovation requires access to ‘sticky’ information regarding user needs and the context of use . . . we need design which explicitly aims to function in the hands of diverse individuals working in highly varied circumstances.”

Bryk et al, 2011

“A system’s context might not determine what needs to be done, but it does determine how it is done.”

Mourshed et al., 2010
NY Kids

Welcome to a resource to support school improvement in New York State.

The mission of Just For The Kids® NY Kids is to:

1. **Inform** schools about best practices. See our...
   - "Find Your School" and Survey Tools to help you look at your own school's practices
   - Collections on specific issues related to school improvement: (Response to Intervention RTI)
     - English Language Learners
     - Special Education Students
     - Parent/Community Involvement
     - Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
     - Role of the Board of Education

2. **Inspire** schools by reporting best practices from the field. See our...
   - Elementary, Middle School, and High School case studies of the higher-performing schools whose practices are featured
   - Reports about best practices at the elementary, middle, and high school levels

3. **Improve** schools through localized, targeted programs of professional development. See our...
   - COMPASS Professional Development tools
   - Framework of best practices at each level, with evidence to support them

New & Related Research!
Interactive displays of data to inform
Critical Needs Elementary Self-Survey

Dear Visitors,

Based on the findings of our elementary school critical needs study, we developed this survey as a tool for school- and district-based educators to take the pulse of their own organizations in terms of the four key elements of what works for critical needs students in elementary school.

For more about each element, see the full report (available as a PDF) on the NY Kids Website. To access it, please copy and paste the following URL into your Web browser:


and we invite you to use this survey with colleagues in your own setting.

Note that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. As you will see in this brief survey, no questions ask for your name or other identifiable personal information is required.

Thank you for your responses.

Sincerely,
The NY Kids Team

Please indicate how well you think your school or district is addressing the following:

[Not at all well; somewhat well; well; very well]

1. Close Engagement with and Understanding of the Population . . . What is your school like?

Consider how well you think your school or district is addressing each of the following:

| (1) We are a "family" that takes care of and takes responsibility for children's emotional and social growth AND academic achievement. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| not at all well | somewhat well | well | very well | N/A |
| (2) We consistently and actively forge parent/legal guardian relationships, and our efforts are supported by school-level activities that recognize and celebrate our community's diversity. |
| (3) Teachers, teacher-leaders or coaches, principals, and district administrators consistently analyze student performance data and use these insights to inform and improve instruction and teaching. |
Inspire with findings about higher-than-predicted performance

- Select “beating the odds” schools based on 3 years of NYS data
- Find similar, average-performing schools
- Oversample high-poverty schools
- Conduct two-day site visits
- Analyze data looking for differences in practice
- Produce individual and cross-case reports

Details about methodology, all studies, and findings: www.albany.edu/nykids
6 Studies to Date (2005-2014)

- Elementary schools, 2005 (math, ELA)
- Middle schools, 2007 (math, ELA)
- High schools, 2008 (5 required Regents)
- Middle school science, 2009 (science)
- Critical needs, elementary level, 2011 (math, ELA)
- High school graduation, 2013 (4-yr grad rate, AR stu)
- (English Learners, 2016)
High schools that “beat the odds” to graduating their at-risk populations in 4 years:

- **Align** goals, curriculum, program, instruction
- **Bridge** divides within school and between school and community
- **Craft** engaging instruction that is differentiated and flexible, with experiential options
- **Drive** a “whole-child” intervention loop that addresses social/emotional and academic needs with evidence-based interventions
Best Practices Case Study: Meeting Critical Needs at the Elementary Level

Columbus Elementary School
New Rochelle City School District

Best Practices Case Study: Supporting High School Completion

Eastridge High School
East Irondequoit Central School District

School Context

The East Irondequoit Central School District, in Monroe County (NY), serves approximately 3600 students in two primary schools, two intermediate schools, one middle school, and one high school. At first glance, the district appears to encompass a suburban community of single family homes bordering two bodies of water and the north side of Rochester. A closer look, however, reveals many families struggling economically, with approximately 50% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The district has little in the way of an industrial base and not much land on which new industry might locate. It is very dependent on State aid, and as one administrator explained, when it comes to finances, "We try to be as creative as we can be...creative and careful about how grant money is used."

At Eastridge High School, with nearly 1,000 students in grades 9 through 12, the faculty and student body embrace the school’s socio-economic, racial, and ethnic diversity. As one teacher said, "Diversity creates a very tolerant climate where there’s a lot of understanding: faculty with..."
Improve

- COMPare practices to higher performers
- Assess priorities
- Select potential levers to improve
- Set SMART goals = COMPASS

Then AIM:

- Action planning,
- Implementation,
- Monitoring progress
COMPASS

- COMPare practices
- Assess priorities
- Select levers to improve

Set SMART Goals

refining solutions/repeating the cycle
framing and analyzing a problem
identifying/selecting solutions
applying solutions
assessing/evaluating outcomes

Kowalski et al. 2008
Agenda 2-day initial institute

**Day 1**
- Team building
- Compare own practices to BP; Assess priorities
- Overview all NY Kids research findings
- Begin to select potential solutions

**Day 2**
- Determine potential solutions
- Learn to set SMART goals
- Develop SMART goal
- Develop action plan

**Goal:** Action Plan in hand
Element 1: Aligning Goals and Curriculum... What is your school like?
For each row, read the two statements and choose the description that is more like your school; then go to B in the column you selected and circle 1, 2, 3 or 4 to indicate how much the description is like your school. Place your page total and average score at the bottom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A: My school is more like this</th>
<th>OR</th>
<th>My school is more like this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher collaboration is limited to a few colleagues in the same department or grade level and does not routinely extend across disciplinary boundaries or beyond the local community.</td>
<td>very similar</td>
<td>Faculty members continuously seek networking opportunities with not only local colleagues from multiple subject areas and grade levels but also with educators in other districts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: If my school is more like this, about how much? Circle #1 or #2</td>
<td>somewhat similar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: My school is more like this</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>My school is more like this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to support students to reach mastery is seen as limited by a lack of resources, family or student apathy.</td>
<td>very similar</td>
<td>Expectations of students reaching the mastery level and able to achieve a college degree are promoted through ambitious, student-centered goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: If my school is more like this, about how much? Circle #1 or #2</td>
<td>somewhat similar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: My school is more like this</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>My school is more like this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making at both school and district are hierarchical and not necessarily aligned around shared goals.</td>
<td>very similar</td>
<td>Shared leadership is consciously cultivated around aligned goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: If my school is more like this, about how much? Circle #1 or #2</td>
<td>somewhat similar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: My school is more like this</td>
<td>OR</td>
<td>My school is more like this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting of goals, analysis of data, and revision of curriculum occur infrequently and do not always involve classroom teachers.</td>
<td>very similar</td>
<td>Teachers and other school personnel are constantly engaged in systematic, evidence-informed goal setting, data analysis, and curriculum revision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: If my school is more like this, about how much? Circle #1 or #2</td>
<td>somewhat similar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add together the 4 numbers you circled and place that number here: Total: ________
Average (Total divided by 4): ________
### Step 2: Assess Priorities

For each of the elements, record your averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Your Average</th>
<th>Group Average</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>See Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aligning Goals and Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pp. 12-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging Divides</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pp. 14-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting Engaging Instruction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pp. 16-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driving a Whole-Child Intervention Loop</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>p. 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once you have identified your priority area, refer to the relevant pages to find suggested levers for improvement in Step 3.
Step 3: Select levers to improvement

Check those actions that might have impact in your context; consider these “levers” to prompt the next step – setting SMART Goals and crafting an action plan for continuous improvement.

Element 1: Aligning Goals and Curriculum
Case in Point: Otselic Valley Junior-Senior High School

For full case studies:
www.albany.edu/rykids/casestudies_higherperforming_hs_completion.php

1. Send a high expectations message — make this explicit, shared, and owned

We believe that there’s a higher education out there for everybody. — Amityville
Mastery is the school-wide goal. — Elmont

Best Practices Case Study: Supporting High School Completion

Susan Tangorra & Janet Angelis, February 2013

Otselic Valley Junior-Senior High School
Georgetown-South Otselic Central School District

Every kid counts is more than a slogan. I don’t think it’s the paperwork that makes us unique.
- principal

School Context

A visit to Otselic Valley Junior-Senior High School involves driving a scenic country road that curves one way then the other, many miles from any city, major grocery store, or mall of any kind. The school is nestled in a valley about an hour south of Syracuse and east of New York State’s Finger Lakes, where the hillsides are dotted by farms and fields. As one teacher explained,
Step 4: Set SMART Goals

The spreadsheet we use is a living document on every student junior to senior year. How many credits they need, the exam they still need, PSAT and SAT scores, that's definitely the lifeline. We have weekly meetings every week.

A SMART goal is:

- **Strategic and Specific** – Linked to district and school goals and strategic plan, focused on student learning, and targeted to what is likely to have the greatest impact on student performance. Answers the question - **What** exactly do we want to improve? (Underlying question – How do we know this is important?)

- **Measurable** – The success toward meeting the goal can be measured in student achievement. Answers the question - **What** will be the measures for effectiveness?

- **Attainable** – Can be achieved in a specific amount of time, with resources available. It should be a stretch from current performance. Answers the question - **When** will the actions be implemented and with what resources?

- **Results Oriented/Relevant/Rigorous** – Aligned with district and building goals and focused on increased student achievement in a defined area. Answers the question – **How** does this goal relate to our school/district mission?

- **Time Bound** – Has a clearly defined time frame including a target date. Answers the question – **When** will the goal be assessed?
### 4.2. Other Resources

#### A. Recommended References

| Aligning Goals and Curriculum | Most subject area professional associations offer a variety of opportunities to receive updated information electronically (e.g., www.nctm.org for mathematics; www.ncss.org for social studies; www.ncte.org for English language arts; www.nsta.org for science; www.iste.org for technology). |

#### B. Other NYKids Resources (www.albany.edu/nykids)

- Ask your school community to take a self-survey:
  
  www.surveymonkey.com/s/HSG_Self_Survey

- Download the cross-case report:
  
  www.albany.edu/nykids/files/high_school_graduation_full_report.pdf

- Explore the Best Practices Framework(s) and dig down to sample documents from the higher-performing schools. The five themes are
  
  - Curriculum and academic goals
  - Staff selection, leadership, and capacity building
  - Instructional programs, practices, and arrangements
  - Monitoring: Compilation, analysis, and use of data
  - Recognition, interventions, and adjustments.

  Click in any row to learn more, including key

http://www.albany.edu/nykids/frameworks_high_school_completion.php
**SMART Goal Template**

Align goals to district/school/department goals and strategic plans; identify who will be responsible for actions; identify a time frame for implementation and measuring impact. Consider “testing” your goals against SMART goal examples while you do this.

---

**4.4 SMART Goals Action Worksheet**

Record specific actions attached to each of the goals you have identified. Use levers to improvement, NYKids resources, and/or other resources.

| Specific Actions/Levers to Improvement Related to Goals (What will we do/use to reach this goal?) | Ensure goals and levers are connected to a strategic plan. |

---

**4.5 Action Plan Timeline: Who will be responsible for doing what by when?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal 1:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 2:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal 3:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Amsterdam High School’s Journey

2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic targeting of resources</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-based decision making</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent communication</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative programs and practices</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigorous curriculum and expectations</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“We didn’t know what we didn’t know.”

- D. Ziskin (2011)
Amsterdam High School’s Journey

“There are so many data, getting your arms around them is like wrestling with a mattress.”
- D. Ziskin (2011)
Amsterdam High School’s Journey
after 1 year of participation

Progress toward goal of *reducing achievement gaps* while *meeting overall performance targets*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>ELA</th>
<th>Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>✓ AYP</td>
<td>x 4 points shy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>✓ Safe Harbor</td>
<td>✓ Safe Harbor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ. Disadv.</td>
<td>✓ AYP</td>
<td>x Not met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sped.</td>
<td>x Not met</td>
<td>x Not met</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“We had to take a look in the mirror, dig in, and decide who we really are.”
- D Ziskin (2010)
Echo High School’s Journey
4 years after participation

Progress toward goal of reducing achievement gaps while meeting overall performance targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Students</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged Students</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keeping the Focus

Despite loss of 10.5 teachers in 2010-11 as well as busing for after school tutoring –

Teachers and administrators able to focus on their goals by concentrating on what they can do, not what is beyond their control. Have made strategic decisions on curriculum development, CCSS, and professional development to support DI and cooperative learning.

“Capacity-building distributed leadership and COMPASS process keeps us on task and faithful to our goals.”

- D. Ziskin (2011)
Where to find more information: www.albany.edu/nykids

- Data displays
- Case reports, all HP schools (55)
- Cross-case reports, each study (6)
- Best practice frameworks (most current 5)
- Documentary evidence (in BP framework)
- Key word collections
- Self-assessments
- COMPASS Institutes to support school teams to use these resources in data-guided decision making

jangelis@albany.edu  nandress@albany.edu