

Coaching for School  
Improvement:  
A Guide for Coaches and  
Their Supervisors

by Karen Laba

Center on Innovation & Improvement

## **Center on Innovation & Improvement**

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Positive results for students will come from changes in the knowledge, skill, and behavior of their teachers and parents. State policies and programs must provide the opportunity, support, incentive, and expectation for adults close to the lives of children to make wise decisions.

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Karen Laba



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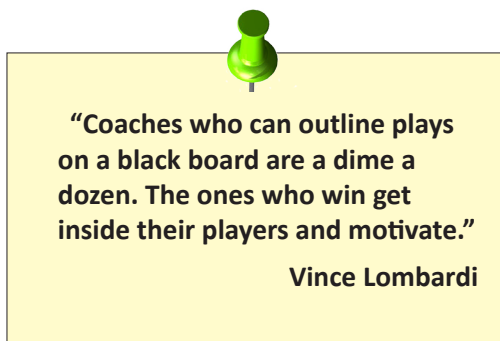




## Purpose of the Guide

*“An outside school coach, properly prepared and sensitive to individual and whole-school concerns, can provide a balance of pressure and support to initiate and sustain meaningful school improvement” (Kostin & Haeger, 2006).*

The drive for rapid and continuous school improvement places demands on school personnel that require support strategies to ensure their success. Using a school improvement coach is one of these strategies. The school improvement coach, external to the day-to-day responsibilities expected of school leaders and teachers, provides objective and expert guidance to carry out the process of school change.



A school improvement coach has similar constraints and opportunities as an athletic coach. Just as Vince Lombardi was not expected to be on the field tossing the football and tackling the quarterback, a school improvement coach will not be found teaching fractions or planning the next parent meeting. Instead, a school improvement coach serves as the “guide on the side” to the school’s improvement team, responsible for building the team’s capacity to engage in a long-term improvement process that is challenging, exhausting, and ultimately, professionally rewarding.

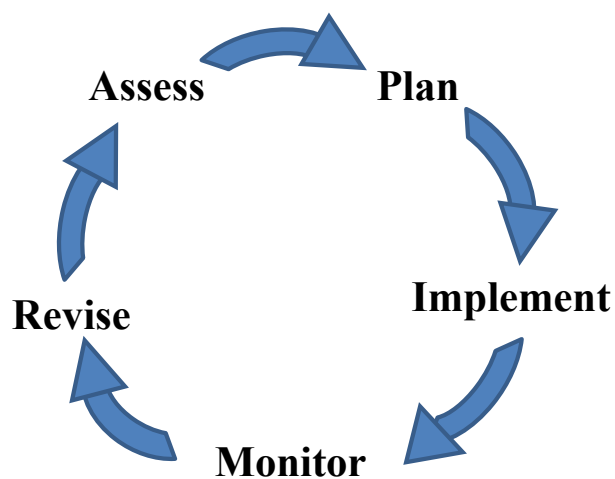
This guide offers tools, tips, and strategies—the “pressures and supports” mentioned in the Kostin and Haeger quote above—for coaches working with school improvement teams. Ideas in the guide can be used to inform the training and supervision provided by state agencies, districts, or other organizations responsible for recruiting, hiring, and assigning coaches to work with school teams. In addition to general guidance for school improvement coaches, the guide offers examples and recommendations for coaches working with teams who are using the online Indistar® tool created by the Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII) to structure their work. Coaching conducted at a distance presents particular challenges and opportunities; this guide provides exercises and examples to prepare the coach

to meet those challenges and seize the opportunities available through Indistar®. For information on Indistar®, visit [www.indistar.org](http://www.indistar.org).

Throughout the materials that follow, reference will be made to the school improvement process. While the actual process school teams undertake to plan and carry out strategies leading to the improvement of student achievement varies widely across schools and districts, most will follow this general sequence:

- Assess current status within a framework of evidence-based practices
- Plan to build on strengths and address gaps
- Implement the plan
- Monitor the impact of the strategies, track progress toward goals
- Revise the plan in light of current information

Mention of the school improvement process in this guide should be broadly understood to refer to this cycle of assess—plan—implement—monitor—revise throughout an organization’s lifetime. The guide is organized by the stages of the cycle, focusing on the coach’s changing role and responsibilities as the team moves through the improvement process.



In Section 2, coaches using the Indistar® online tool will find recommendations to help them address the particular challenges of blending face-to-face and on-line coaching. Section 2 includes best practices for using the research-based indicators which form the structure of Indistar®, criteria for assessing the team’s judgment of its level of implementation, and opportunities to practice providing formative feedback to school teams.

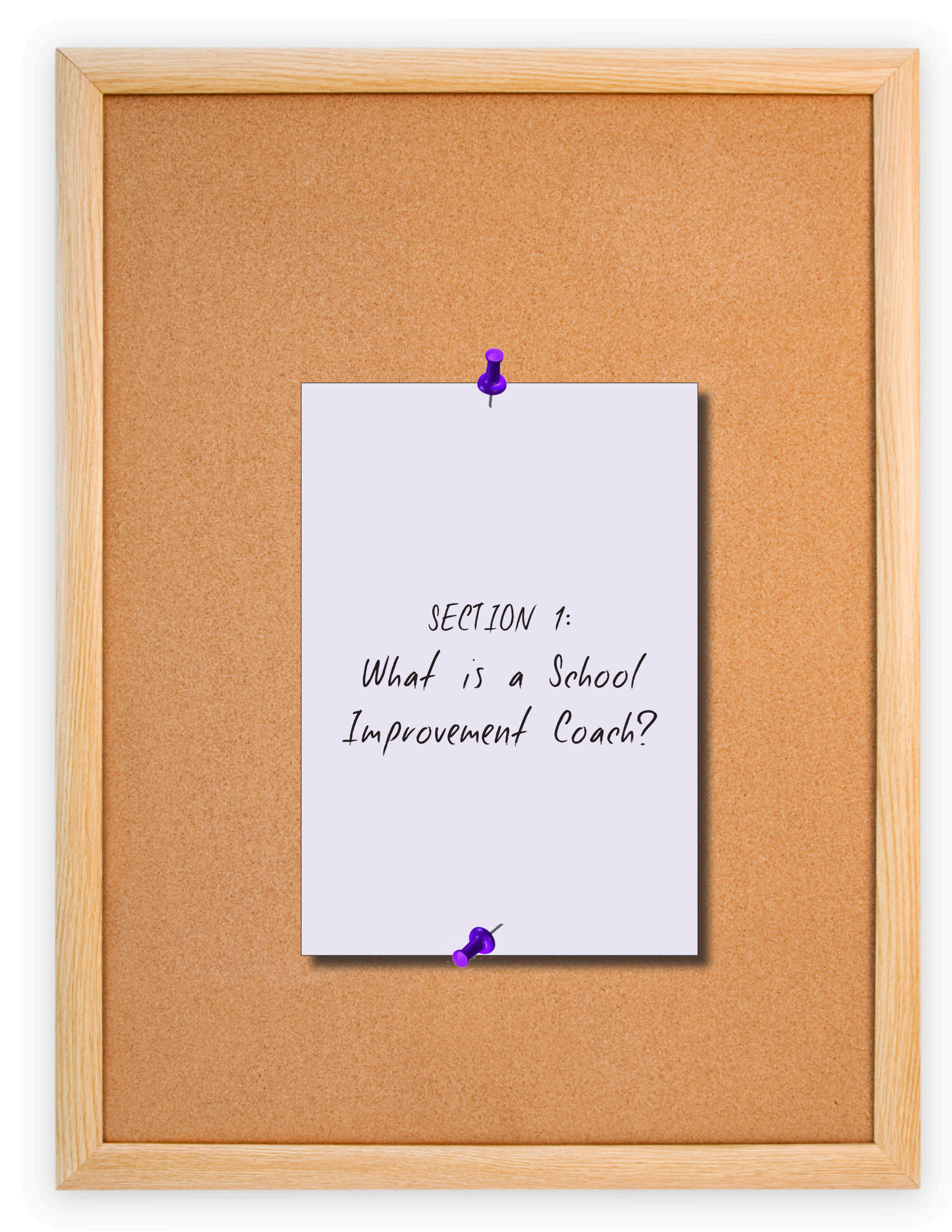
Those responsible for recruiting, hiring, training, and supervising school improvement coaches will find exercises and examples of lessons learned from early adopters of the Indistar® online process in Section 3.

Discussion of the approaches used by sponsors to monitor coaches for school improvement teams are presented in Section 4. As an emerging practice, coaching for school improvement inspires more questions than answers about its impact on school practices and, ultimately, on student achievement. Instead of a well-developed research base for coaching, Section 4 offers

a set of questions to guide the collection of evidence about the use of a coaching approach, that, when examined, can inform future decisions about the coaching practices that promote the most meaningful impact on schools and their students.

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A corkboard with a light-colored wooden frame. A white rectangular note is pinned to the center of the corkboard with two purple pushpins, one at the top and one at the bottom. The note contains handwritten text in black ink.

SECTION 1:  
What is a School  
Improvement Coach?






The term *coach* is applied across many life activities—football coach, drama coach, executive management coach. In education circles, we see references to an instructional coach, leadership coach, literacy/reading coach, cognitive coach, assessment and data coach, and school improvement coach, just to name a few.

As we use the term in each setting, we implicitly assign a set of expectations for who the coach is, who is being coached, what the coach might do, and, for certain audiences, how best to recruit, select, and evaluate the work of the coach.

In the current context of school accountability, we are using the term coach to mean a highly skilled individual who is charged with providing essential “pressures and supports” to a school improvement team to attain the ultimate goal of raising student achievement. In North Dakota and Idaho, they refer to the individuals hired to support school improvement teams as “capacity builders,” emphasizing the desired result of good coaching—namely growth in the ability of the school improvement team and team leader to guide and manage the systemic changes that will lead to the desired educational outcomes for students.



**“A good coach will make his players see what they can be rather than what they are.”**

**Ara Parseghian,  
Notre Dame football coach**

*Who is a school improvement coach?* Coaches are often contracted by state agencies, districts, or affiliated service centers, ideally in consultation with the school or district receiving support services. In many cases, they are experienced educators or education consultants, often external to the lines of authority and supervision within the school or local education agency. The array of competencies required of individuals contracted to support school improvement teams fall across at least three domains: technical/knowledge skills, interpersonal skills, and consulting/facilitation skills (Block, 1999). One critical base of knowledge for the school improvement coach is familiarity with the local and state policy environments and with community needs and interests. Political and cultural context knowledge complements the coach’s broad expertise

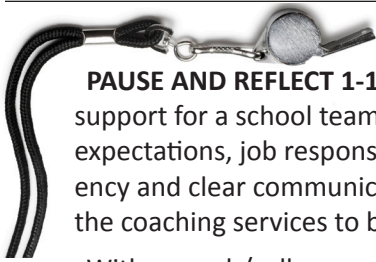
in effective educational practices and strategic planning approaches to lead to realistic change efforts.

A substantial proportion of the work of the school improvement coach takes advantage of the interpersonal skills the coach brings to the project. A coach must have the knowledge and skill to build positive relationships, guide critical self-reflection, identify research-based strategies suited to particular settings, communicate, organize, and, most importantly, energize team members to sustain their efforts through a demanding process of planning and implementing change. An extensive repertoire of facilitation strategies to structure the team’s work is crucial to efficient and purposeful progress.

*Who is being coached?* The beneficiary of coaching support is the school improvement team and the team leader in particular. If capacity building is the purpose of a coach’s work, a successful term of service will result in the coach putting himself/herself out of a job! Michael Fullan (2001) cites Peter Block’s recommendation to remind coaches of their background role in the process of school change: “Start measuring your work by the optimism and self-sufficiency you leave behind.”

Because the coach is often selected and hired by an external agency, the coach faces a challenge of meeting the expectations defined by the sponsor as well as fulfilling the needs of the school improvement team. It is reasonable for a school improvement coach to assume that the team members and, perhaps even the team leader, are novices at their roles in planning and guiding change. The temptation to take charge and fill in the gaps in team skill and knowledge will be a persistent challenge the coach will need to resist in order to build local capacity.

Occasionally, a coach must negotiate short-term conflicts between competing objectives but, in the long run, both stakeholders—the sponsoring agency and school/district personnel—in the school improvement process are headed toward the same long term-goal, to foster high achievement for all students. Effective coaches maintain focus on the ultimate target and help their teams recognize that short-term roadblocks often yield to persistent and sustained effort by a focused and committed group of individuals. The coach supports the team by helping them appreciate the impact of their collective effort.



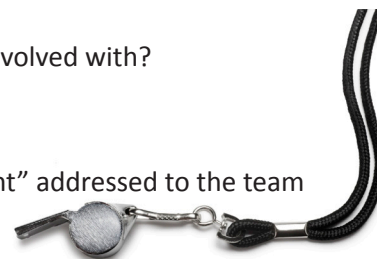
**PAUSE AND REFLECT 1-1:** When a school improvement coach contracts with an agency to provide support for a school team, there is typically a written agreement specifying qualifications, performance expectations, job responsibilities, and compensation. A coach can demonstrate the value of transparency and clear communication by working with the team to prepare a set of expectations they have for the coaching services to be provided.

With a coach/colleague, identify a set of questions you will need to answer, with the team leader separately or the team as a group, to identify the specific supports you will provide. Preview the improvement planning process by including questions asking how your services will be evaluated/measured.

Examples:

1. How will we know our work together has been successful?
2. What change initiatives have team members and the team leader been involved with?
3. What worked? What didn't work in previous change efforts?
4. Other questions. . .

Once support services have been identified, prepare a "letter of commitment" addressed to the team describing the agreements you've reached.



Not everyone is suited to be a coach. The knowledge, skills, beliefs, dispositions, and competencies required of an effective coach are wide-ranging and variable, depending on the knowledge, skills, beliefs, and dispositions of the team members whom the coach must support. Central to the coaching process is an attitude of inquiry, a focus on asking important questions, and helping others find answers that are meaningful to them. An experienced educator serving as a school improvement coach must be willing to set aside beliefs in solutions that worked well in their previous settings in favor of a search for options suited to the team's capacities, resources, beliefs, and values. Michael Fullan (2001) urges change leaders to offer "menus, not mandates,"—wise advice for the improvement coach.


In the long term, the coach who is successful at building the team's capacity receives little of the credit for successful school improvement. Add humility to the list of competencies required of a highly effective coach. A coach's reward will come as he/she stands in the wings while the team leader describes to the community how the team developed an effective plan and guided the school staff to implement the plan which led to improved student outcomes. No one will applaud more enthusiastically and with deeper understanding of the rigor of the challenges faced and overcome by the team than their coach.

### What Does a School Improvement Coach Do?

School improvement requires many hands, minds, and hearts to make a difference in students' education. But without structures defining the work of all the contributors, actions and strategies may or may not lead to the desired goal of improved learning. The coach of a school improvement team supports the development of individual and group skill and knowledge in the areas of

- team functions
- assessment of student learning
- assessment of school programs and practices
- effective instructional practices
- school policies and procedures that promote student achievement
- monitoring implementation
- monitoring impact of change strategies
- action planning

The coach takes on the responsibility of strengthening his/her own skills in these areas, as well as identifying



**"Good teams become great ones when the members trust each other enough to surrender the Me for the We."**

**Phil Jackson**

In the short term, the coach changes approach in response to the setting and the individuals, while maintaining precise focus on the long-range goal of improving student learning. A coach's repertoire of people skills is broad and deep, suited to congenial settings as well as controversial ones. Enthusiasm, respect, good judgment, and sincerity are essential competencies of a school improvement coach.

the needs of the team leader, who is the primary “change catalyst” (Reeves, 2009) for the school. The coach works in the background, ensuring that suitable supports are put in place for the leader as well as the team. At times, the coach may choose to take the team out of its school improvement mode and engage them in learning experiences that build their skills in communication, assessment, collaboration, and consensus building. School leaders and staff serving on the school improvement team are likely new to the role of “change catalyst” and will benefit when the coach supports their learning as well as their leading.

The coach builds the capacity of the team to do its work; therefore, the work of the coach aligns directly with the work of the school improvement team

throughout the continuous improvement cycle. As team tasks change, needs for coaching services change. Table 1 shows Team Tasks and Coaching Tasks across the stages of a continuous improvement cycle, including the foundational task of establishing a high-functioning collaborative team.

Caution: while the stages are presented in the table as a linear sequence, in practice the process of improvement includes multiple “sub-cycles” of assess—plan—implement—monitor—revise. The school improvement process (like many human endeavors!) rarely follows a straight line progression.

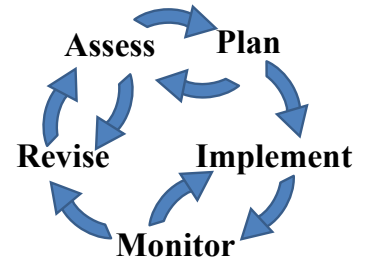


Table 1: Improvement Stages, Team Tasks, and Coaching Tasks

School Improvement Stage	Team Tasks	Coaching Tasks
Establish School Improvement Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarify the purposes and desired outcomes of the school improvement team</li> <li>Define roles and responsibilities, especially decision making and communication with stakeholders</li> <li>Establish team norms of interaction</li> <li>Reach consensus on protocols that guide team activities (meetings, agendas, work products)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide guidance on skills and competencies for effective team members</li> <li>Identify relevant stakeholder groups and ensure representation</li> <li>Define coach’s role in support of the team</li> <li>Build relationships</li> <li>Nurture positive interactions (establish team norms, protocols)</li> </ul>
Improvement Stage 1: Assess Current Status	Examine current data and evidence on student performance, school operations, climate/culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guide a thorough analysis of student achievement to the individual student level and curriculum standard if possible</li> <li>Examine available data on school policies and practices affecting student achievement (attendance, discipline, matriculation)</li> <li>Advise and guide the collection of missing data on practices, policies, and climate</li> </ul>
	Conduct comprehensive assessment of school leadership, curriculum alignment, instructional practices, professional development	Use research-based indicators to guide the comprehensive assessment process
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify gaps between current status and desired outcomes</li> <li>Research change strategies to improve student outcomes</li> </ul>	Assist team members in evaluating possible change activities for impact and “fit” to the school’s context
	Prioritize needs for greatest impact on student learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lead team members through priority-setting activities</li> <li>Ensure regular and meaningful communication with stakeholder groups</li> </ul>
		Monitor team function and foster positive interactions

School Improvement Stage	Team Tasks	Coaching Tasks
Improvement Stage 2: Develop a Plan for Change	Define strategies to address priority needs	Build team skill in using SMART goals to structure sound action plans
	Identify resource needs and assign responsibility	Offer training in project management techniques for teachers and leaders responsible for plan implementation
	Establish process for collecting evidence of implementation and impact	Provide examples of types of evidence of impact and implementation
		Monitor team function and foster positive interactions
Improvement Stage 3: Implement the Plan	Obtain buy-in from school community for the improvement plan	Recommend strategies for gathering input and reaching consensus
	Identify training needs for staff charged with implementing the plan Provide or arrange for training from peers, local experts, or other high-quality providers	Offer guidance on evaluating staff skills and identifying needs Offer guidance on evaluating the quality of professional development providers
	Communicate regularly with stakeholders about plan activities and anticipated impact	Support the use of various media to communicate the school's efforts to the wider community
		Monitor team function and foster positive interactions
Improvement Stage 4: Monitor Implementation of the Plan	Meet regularly to document plan implementation	Encourage sustained attention to team norms and protocols As appropriate, provide technical support in use of technology tools to allow efficient management of plan activities
	Carry out regular monitoring activities as defined in the plan to track progress toward benchmarks	Build team skill in providing formative feedback to their peers Build the knowledge of team members in the design of feedback surveys to monitor culture and climate
		Monitor team function and foster positive interactions
Improvement Stage 5: Monitor the Impact of the Plan	Conduct periodic assessments of student achievement and professional practice as defined in the improvement plan	Provide examples and training in the use of instructional observation methods
		Monitor team function and foster positive interactions
Improvement Stage 6: Review New Data	Meet regularly to review new data and assess plan activities	Continue to provide training in data analysis to assess plan effectiveness
		Monitor team function and foster positive interactions

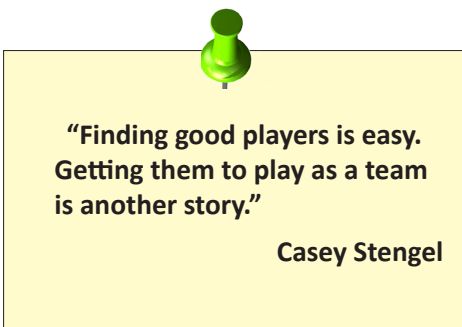


School Improvement Stage	Team Tasks	Coaching Tasks
Improvement Stage 7: Revise, Refine the Plan	Based on analysis of new data, adjust the plan to address needed changes in either strategies or implementation processes	Provide team members resources including recent research on strategies to address improvement needs  Review (and modify as needed) protocols for evaluating possible strategies  Oversee team assessment and revision of the improvement plan
		Monitor team function and foster positive interactions
Implement Revised Plan		
Monitor Implementation		
Monitor Impact		
Review and Revise		

## Foundational Work

### Establish the School Improvement Team

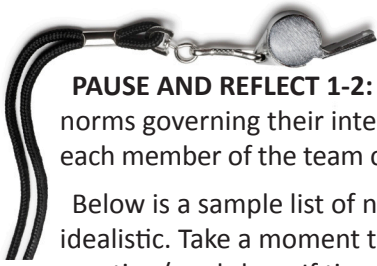
School improvement coaches, like athletic coaches, improve the probability of success in their work if they can focus their initial efforts on developing a team from a collection of individuals. However, the manner in which the team is recruited, selected, and oriented to the work of school improvement differs significantly from the way a soccer or baseball team is put together. More significantly, the power of the football coach over team members varies dramatically from the influence of a school improvement coach. For school improvement coaches, the only power is that of persuasion.



In situations where a school improvement team has not yet been established, the coach collaborates with the school leader to identify the individuals who will commit to serve as members of the team. As Casey Stengel points out, the challenge for the coach and the team leader is to create the conditions that allow these individuals to form a mutually beneficial collaborative relationship. Specialists with expertise in psychology, organizational development, school leadership, and change have proposed a wealth of guidance on bringing individuals together in support of a common goal or set

of goals. Some have described the stages of group development as sequential, as in Bruce Tuchman’s (1965) view “forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.” Others describe the group as moving through a recurring series of concerns, at some points focusing on tasks and at other times focusing on relationships (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). An experienced educator serving as a coach can build the technical knowledge to help a team leader form a team from a collection of willing individuals by learning from the expertise of writers in organizational development, project management, and adult learning and development. At the end of this guide are resources to build the coach’s repertoire of team building strategies.

Groups that are already in place when coaching begins have established patterns of interacting and methods of operating that the coach will need to understand in order to contribute in meaningful ways to the team’s success. The initial meeting to define expectations and commitments (described in **Pause and Reflect 1-1**) becomes a critical part of the coaching enterprise.



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 1-2:** A strong starting point in establishing any team is agreement on a set of norms governing their interaction. Agreement on group norms is a powerful opening exercise because each member of the team can express his or her preferences for the way the group conducts its business.

Below is a sample list of norms. Notice some are practical and mundane, while others are lofty and idealistic. Take a moment to add norms that express how you would like to conduct the work of this meeting/workshop. If time allows, share your ideas with your table mates and create a master set of norms for your work together.

Caution: too many norms are hard to monitor; aim for elegance and simplicity.

Sample group norms: “ We commit to . . .

- start and end on time
- listen carefully to each other
- presume everyone is acting with the best of intentions
- speak clearly, honestly, and respectfully
- judge ideas, not people
- 
- 
- 
- 



Whether the school improvement team is already in place or newly formed, its effectiveness can be judged by its ability to manage three core activities: accomplishing its goals, maintaining relationships among its members, and adapting to changing conditions to improve its effectiveness (Johnson & Johnson, p. 24). A sample of resources a coach might find helpful to nurture development of the school improvement team are included in the *Appendix, References, and Other Resources* section of this guide.

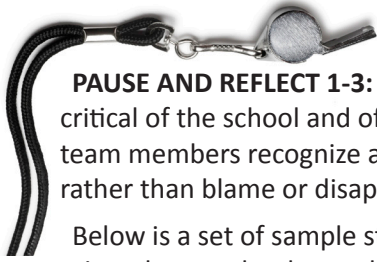
## Improvement Work

### Improvement Stage 1: Assess Current Status

Launching a school improvement process begins with asking the question, “Where are we now?” Before a plan can be developed to move the school toward excellence, the team must examine what the school is doing compared against research-based standards of excellence. Student achievement scores represent the *outcome* of a complex series of interactions that take place both inside and outside the school—between

students and teachers, students and families, families and community, community and school. A comprehensive assessment of the practices and policies the school enacts, particularly when measured against practices that highly effective schools employ, focuses attention on the changes that are most likely to result in gains in student learning.

The use of research-based indicators, such as those included in the Indistar® system, can be the framework of a comprehensive self-assessment of school-based practices. See Section 2 for more discussion of coaching a school improvement team using Indistar®.



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 1-3:** A thoughtful assessment of current practice will sometimes be perceived as critical of the school and of individuals. How can a school improvement coach help the team leader and team members recognize accurate judgments about the school's current status as useful information rather than blame or disapproval?

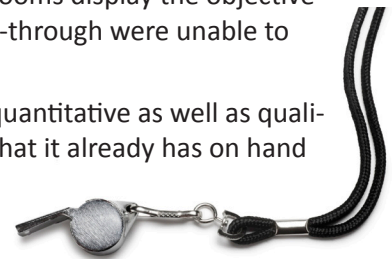
Below is a set of sample statements describing current practices which are typical of those that might arise when a school team looks at its programs and practices.

How would you advise the team leader to engage the team in a discussion of each finding? Outline a sample "script" a team leader might use to lead discussion and analysis of the evidence that will help the team see its areas of strength and opportunities for improvement?

Sample data:

1. Fourth grade students in Mrs. K's class lag behind their peers in the other two fourth grade classrooms on state reading assessments.
2. Mr. D sends twice as many students to the office for discipline reasons as the other eighth grade teachers on his team.
3. In their recent climate survey, teachers do not find the principal's recommendations helpful because she doesn't know their subject matter.
4. A summary of principal walk-through data shows that 18 of 28 classrooms display the objective of the lesson. In addition, three students questioned during the walk-through were unable to explain what was expected of them during the lesson.

Notice that the data in each sample comes from different sources and in quantitative as well as qualitative forms. A coach can encourage teams to look at sources of evidence that it already has on hand using a broad conception of "data" to include evidence in varied forms.



### Improvement Stage 2: Develop a Plan for Change

A plan for change links two critical questions in an improvement process: (1) "Where are we now?" and (2) "Where do we want to go?" Developing a plan to reach the short- and long-term targets for student achievement is a complex, demanding process that builds on honest, clear answers from the assessment of current status. Without a clear description of differences between existing practices and evidence-based exemplars, teams have little guidance on which changes in policy or behavior are most likely to address critical needs.

Yogi Berra is wise beyond his words! Developing a plan for change includes several layers of decision. To organize the many factors to be considered, many organizations use a variation on the "logic model" such as that developed by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (2001). The logic model approach asks planners to identify goals and objectives, inputs/resources, strategies, outputs, and outcomes. Outcomes can be distinguished as short term or long term and are most useful when stated as observable (and measurable) results of the strategies. Here's an example of a logic model used to plan a coaching workshop:



**"If you don't know where you're going, you might wind up someplace else."**

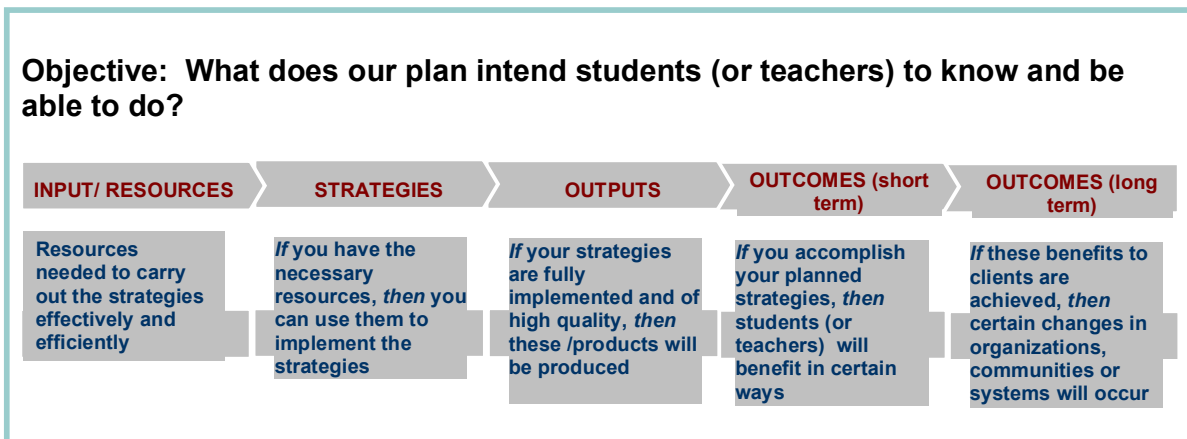
**Yogi Berra**

Sample Logic Model: Plan for a Coaching Workshop

Objective: Participants will build their skills in coaching school improvement teams.				
Inputs/Resources	Strategies	Outputs	Outcomes Short term	Outcomes Long Term
1. Coaching Guide 2. Seminar facilities, presenters	1. Present an overview of the coach’s role in the school improvement planning process. 2. Participants will practice using tools and strategies recommended in the guide. 3. Participants will add to their knowledge by sharing personal experiences and expertise during the session.	Completed activity products Written and oral feedback on usefulness of activities	Participants expand their knowledge of coaching strategies. A majority of participants report intent to apply strategies to future work with school improvement teams.	School improvement teams rate that the strategies used by their coach made a positive contribution to the team’s effectiveness and efficiency.

To construct a plan using a logic model, such as the workshop plan shown in the example above, a coach guides the team to imagine what the school will be like if the long-term outcomes are realized. Continuing to complete the template, best worked from right to left, team members ask themselves:

- what short-term outcomes will be evident?
- what products will be developed during the work?
- what strategies will best serve to reach the short- and long-term outcomes?, and
- what resources are needed to carry out the research-based strategies leading to the plan’s objective?



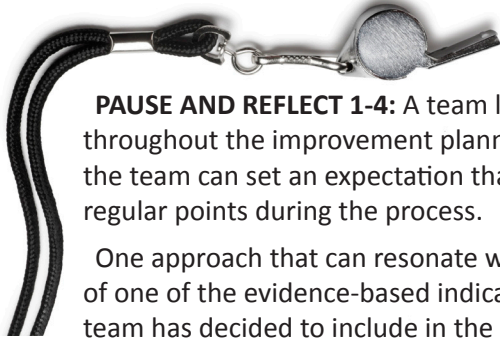
A logic model is just one of many structures for school improvement planning. Sponsors often define a particular structure to be used by schools and districts, so coaches should be alert to the preferred model required by the state, district, or other sponsoring agency overseeing the improvement planning process.

Teams and coaches using the Indistar® system to structure the development of their plan benefit from the planning tools, resources, and report templates built into the system. Section 2 of this guide shows some of the ways these features can be used as the team develops its plan for change.

Those implementing the plan will be better able to implement the plan's strategies if they are encouraged to picture themselves in their "new and improved" methods of operating. The task of a coach is to build the team leaders' skills in helping team members and

school stakeholders make the invisible (or more likely, overlooked!) visible. Engaging team members and staff in activities to visualize can mobilize mental energy to supplement the physical energy demanded of those responsible for implementing significant change.

Well before reaching the implementation stage of the cycle, the coach serves the team best by reminding them that they will be asking their colleagues to adopt different (maybe new, maybe not) approaches to their work—changes in instructional practice, student grouping, parent interaction, and so on. The coach can build the capacity of team members to communicate the team's analysis, research, and decision-making with their peers by modeling effective communication practices and by offering guided practice in engaging others in "seeing" the vision emerging from the school improvement process.



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 1-4:** A team leader, guided by the coach, can practice communication exercises throughout the improvement planning process during team meetings. Then, with group agreement, the team can set an expectation that each member communicate key decisions with their peers at regular points during the process.

One approach that can resonate with teachers is a guided visualization of the "full implementation" of one of the evidence-based indicators of effective practice. For this exercise, select an indicator the team has decided to include in the plan. Here's an example:

**Indicator (Objective):** Instructional teams meet for blocks of time sufficient to develop and refine units of instruction and review student learning data.

**Directions:** Write (or tell about) a scenario describing what you will see when you have fully implemented this objective.

1. What will you see in the classroom/in the school?
2. What will teachers and other staff members be doing?
3. What materials will be there?
4. What kinds of interactions between people will be typical?
5. What emotions are detectable in the room?
6. What will teachers remember about the new team practices?

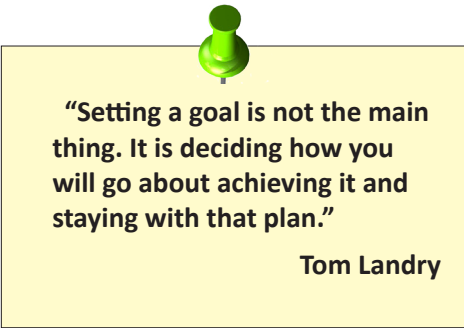
Team members can do this for each indicator they include as part of the plan development process. They can also take this exercise and use it with their grade-level peers to build a common vision of where the school will be when the plan is fully and effectively implemented. Discussion around the scenario provides an opportunity to examine existing beliefs, values, desires, fears, and expectations—rich "data" to keep in mind throughout a continual improvement process.



### Improvement Stage 3: Implement the Plan

“Whew! That’s over. Now we can get back to work teaching our students!”

Sadly, in too many school improvement planning processes, that’s the reaction once the plan for change is typed up and sent to the state, district, or other requesting agency. A distinctive feature of highly effective schools and districts is a different attitude about improvement—a continual habit of questioning, “How are we doing now?” and “How can we do better?” From a continual improvement perspective, the implementation of the plan is the opportunity to create new knowledge about teaching and learning—what worked? Why (or why not)? How can everyone get the same results for their students? Continuous reflection and ongoing review of the impact of new strategies are essential in creating an environment that sustains improvement.

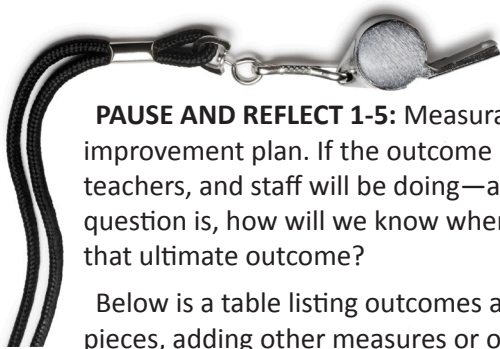


**“Setting a goal is not the main thing. It is deciding how you will go about achieving it and staying with that plan.”**

**Tom Landry**

The mindset of inquiry is a feature of professional practice that increases the likelihood for positive change. The next three stages—implementing the plan, monitoring implementation, and monitoring impact—are best thought of as one continuous sub-cycle within the comprehensive planning process. Taken together, they represent the “meat” of the change process—the adoption of new practices and the observation of the impact of those practices on students.

To be a useful tool to guide action and to monitor progress toward longer term goals, a plan for change must include a clear description of the measurable outcomes that will result if the strategies effectively target the identified needs. Knowing what to look for to answer the “How are we doing?” question is one significant challenge at the implementation and monitoring stages. Teachers typically monitor student learning through tests, quizzes, and examination of their work products. What types of observable products will inform the team about changes in teaching practice or better curriculum alignment? The coach can serve the team well by guiding them to build into their plans the evidence that can be tracked to judge whether strategies are being implemented and what their impact on student achievement might be.



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 1-5:** Measurable outcomes are an essential component of a realistic and useful improvement plan. If the outcome represents the vision of where the school will be—what its students, teachers, and staff will be doing—as a result of implementing the plan’s strategies, the natural next question is, how will we know when we get there? How will we know we’re making progress toward that ultimate outcome?

Below is a table listing outcomes and possible measures. Take a minute to brainstorm the missing pieces, adding other measures or outcomes that might be useful in particular settings.

Outcome	Measure
90% average attendance for the month of October	Student attendance reports
?	Teacher attendance records
Less than 5 minutes “transition” time between classroom and “specials”	Teacher self-reports
?	Administrator walk-through summaries
Increased family response to homework requests	?
?	Instructional team meeting agendas and minutes.



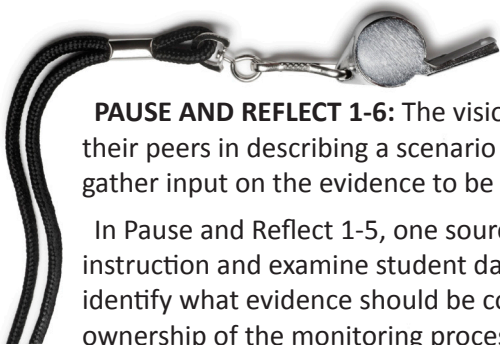


A plan for continuous or rapid improvement becomes a living, workable guide if it incorporates observable and measurable descriptions of desired outcomes into the plan and establishes procedures for collecting evidence of progress frequently and regularly. Of course, collecting the evidence is the easy part; what matters most is what the evidence tells the school and how the leader and team take action to refine the plan in response to the evidence.

#### **Improvement Stage 4: Monitor the Implementation of the Plan**

Measures of the implementation of the plan will be focused on instructional and leadership practices, the observable behaviors that reflect desired changes aligned with exemplary practices of high-achieving schools and districts. In the logic model, teacher and leader behaviors are the new *inputs* to the system designed to elicit student learning *outcomes*. Other change objectives might define new policies as *inputs* and improved climate as the *outcomes*.

Monitoring behaviors—and changes in behaviors—is tricky business. Essential conditions of trust must be in place before observers can be sure their presence doesn't create significant disturbance in the natural flow of classroom events to make the observation data unreliable. One option is to engage the staff charged with adopting instructional change in gathering the evidence of implementation. Teacher self-reports, peer observations, and collection of artifacts and student products can offer insight into the breadth and depth of adoption of new strategies. In some settings, the coach of the school improvement team may be in a position to model effective walk-through practices with the team leader.



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 1-6:** The visioning exercise described earlier, during which team members lead their peers in describing a scenario in which key objectives are fully implemented, is an opportunity to gather input on the evidence to be collected to monitor implementation of the plan's strategies.

In Pause and Reflect 1-5, one source of evidence that teams are meeting to develop aligned units of instruction and examine student data would be team meeting agendas and minutes. Asking staff to identify what evidence should be collected to monitor implementation of the plan's strategies fosters ownership of the monitoring process and of the plan itself.

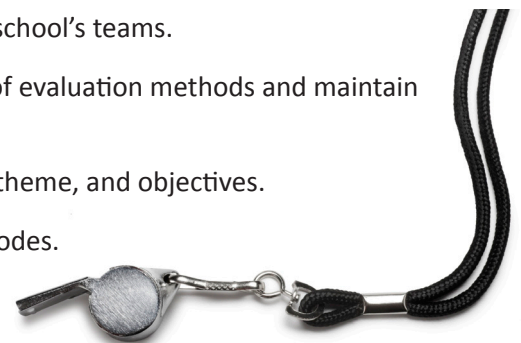
Here are some indicators/objectives which are likely to appear in a school's improvement plan. What types of evidence could be collected to assess implementation of the objective?

Indicator/objective A: The principal participates actively with the school's teams.

Indicator/objective B: All teachers test frequently using a variety of evaluation methods and maintain a record of the results.

Indicator/objective C: All teachers clearly state the lesson's topic, theme, and objectives.

Indicator/objective D: All teachers use a variety of instructional modes.



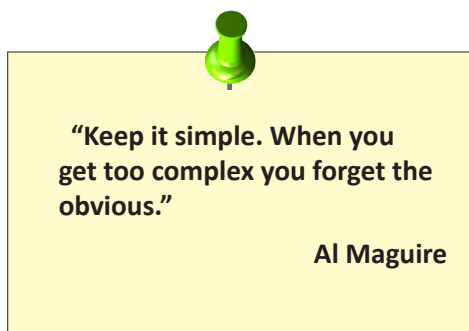
Discussions on the kind of evidence to gather to monitor implementation are similar to discussions within the team when developing the plan's strategies and defining measurable outcomes. The coach builds the school's capacity by guiding team members to engage with their peers to promote the habits of continual inquiry and fosters a mindset that encourages and sustains continuous school improvement.

### **Improvement Stage 5: Monitor the Impact of the Plan**

As mentioned above, the stages of implementing and monitoring will occur in close succession if not simultaneously. Monitoring the impact of the school improvement plan asks the questions, what evidence do we have that these strategies resulted in

- improved student learning?
- enhanced culture and climate?
- greater involvement by parents in their child's learning?

Multiple measures of impact offer a rich description of the changes in a school that contribute to changes in student learning. Victoria Bernhardt provides a wealth of tools to collect and connect data about school demographics, student learning, school processes, and perceptions of culture and climate (Bernhardt, 2004; 2002; 1999).

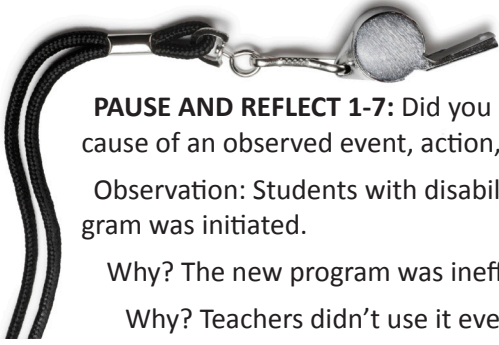


Evidence of the impact of the plan's strategies will be most informative when the data collected are clearly and directly linked to the changes in behavior adopted by the staff. Formative data—collected and reviewed in a timely way to allow teachers to recognize if new practices are having their desired impact—are superior to yearly state assessment results. Some commercial products promise formative feedback but may not measure impacts that directly link to the plan's strategies. The coach can bring samples of tools for teams to consider that show clear alignment to the individual school context and student needs. The coach might offer training in local assessments or serve as a broker

to bring expertise to the school to build knowledge of evaluation approaches. A school improvement coach exercises wisdom by recognizing that he/she cannot be the expert in all aspects of school operations. The knowledge the coach has of the capacity and resources of the school and its leader allows him/her to access pertinent expertise to enhance leader and staff skills and knowledge without overwhelming them.

### **Improvement Stage 6: Review New Data**

The coach of the school improvement team can nurture the habit of continual inquiry by guiding the team leader to develop skill in asking probing questions of team members as they consider emerging evidence about the impact or implementation of the strategies in the plan. In contrast to factual statements or yes-no questions, probing questions can encourage higher order thinking, even thinking about thinking (metacognition), a practice that can benefit teachers and leaders managing a change initiative.



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 1-7:** Did you ever use the “5 whys” exercise? To probe deeply toward the root cause of an observed event, action, or behavior, ask “why” at least five times. Here’s an example:

Observation: Students with disabilities continued to miss achievement targets even after a new program was initiated.

Why? The new program was ineffective.

Why? Teachers didn’t use it every day.

Why? They felt the old instructional program better fit their students’ abilities.

Why? They saw at least some progress in their daily observations of student work when using the old program.

Why? They rely on and value their personal observations to judge student achievement.

In this example, the respondent has accurately answered the 5 “whys?” and the process has elicited several possible root causes of the observed evidence. A team that pushes its analysis of new data using the “5 whys” learns more about underlying (“root”) causes and can better refine its plan’s strategies to tackle the foundational factors limiting student achievement. In the example above, the “5 whys” discourage the conclusion that the new program is the problem and instead reveals that underlying beliefs are a possible reason for the program’s lack of impact.

In your group, select one observation or event from the examples below—or one you are personally familiar with—and role play a “5 whys” exercise.

Examples:

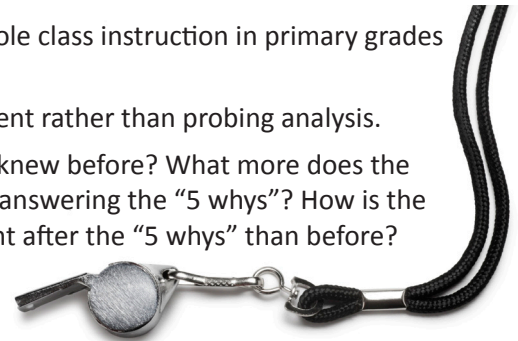
**Observation:** Discipline referrals for 7th and 8th grade students are increasing.

**Event:** Twice as many parents than usual attended open house.

**Observation:** Principal walk-through data shows more use of whole class instruction in primary grades than in grades 4 and 5.

**Observation:** Coaching comments emphasize logistics management rather than probing analysis.

*Consider:* What more do you know about the situation than you knew before? What more does the respondent know than he or she was aware of before answering the “5 whys”? How is the conclusion about the factors hindering change different after the “5 whys” than before?



Another guide for asking probing questions is Bloom’s taxonomy. Initially proposed in 1956 by Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues, the taxonomy describes a hierarchy of cognitive domains that may be familiar to many educators. Appendix B, adapted from the Idaho Capacity Builder resource (<http://csi.boisestate.edu/improvement/CBResourceBinder>), lists the elements of Bloom’s hierarchy and suggested question stems coaches or team leaders can use to structure discussions that “support” as well as “pressure” team thinking to the highest cognitive levels. If a school improvement coach’s primary goal is to build team capacity, expanding the thinking of team members beyond the level of compliance is a step in the right direction. Ways to use

the question stems, aligned with Bloom’s hierarchy, are addressed in greater detail in Section 2 of this guide, *Coaching with Indicators*.

### **Improvement Stage 7: Revise and Refine the Plan**

The continuous improvement cycle is just that—continuous. Once plan components are defined, put into practice, and monitored for implementation and impact, evidence emerges to suggest that the plan’s strategies need to be modified to achieve desired goals. Ongoing focus on the fundamental goal—high achievement for all students—and promoting actions that build habits of inquiry leads to growth in the team’s ability


to continue the improvement cycle with less and less direct involvement from the coach. The team begins to recognize its own strengths and its gaps. This is the time to renegotiate the commitments between the coach, the team leader, and the improvement team.

The school improvement coach monitors team functions throughout the process and fosters positive interactions within the team and across the school

community. Tools to assess team function can be found in resources listed after Section 4. Periodic and frequent surveys of team members' perceptions of team functions, the school improvement process, and coaching support are examples of effective practices the coach can model for the school team. See the sample feedback template in **Pause and Reflect 2-7**.

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Section 2:  
Coaching with  
Indicators

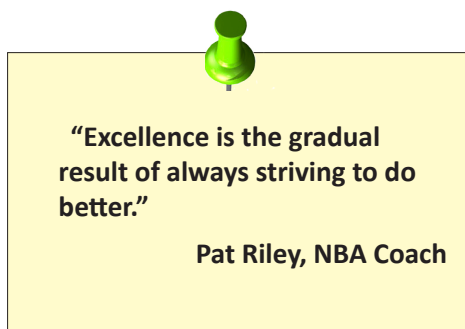




## What are Indicators?

In everyday use, the term indicator refers to an observable feature that can serve to let us know something we can't quite see easily (the thump of a ripe watermelon, the give of a ready to eat peach). We also commonly use indicators as a gauge of progress toward a destination or outcome (the toothpick inserted in a cake). We regularly hear reference to indicators of economic health [Gross Domestic Product (GDP)], physical fitness [body mass index (BMI), the unemployment rate]. Indicators do more than describe a trait or characteristic—they allow comparison with an exemplar of the trait.

As it applies to school improvement, an indicator serves as a benchmark or standard, a characteristic, action, or behavior that represents the best practices educators can employ to ensure their students achieve success. In the Indistar® system, the success indicators capture the essential factors within the complex educational process that have an impact on student learning. [A full discussion of the derivation of the success indicators used in the Indistar® system can be found in *The Mega System* (Redding, 2006) and the *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement* (Walberg, 2007).]



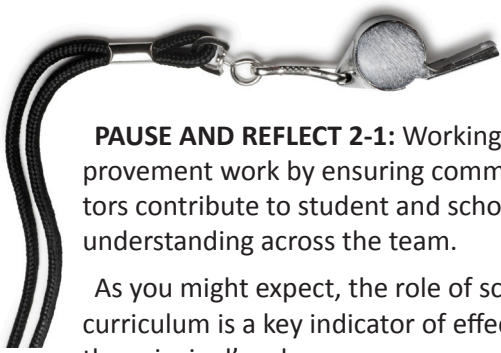
So how do indicators support the school improvement coaching process? Coaching with indicators, such as those in the Indistar® system, extends the perspectives of the coach, the team leader, and the school improvement team beyond student test scores. Rather than focusing attention on raising scores on the next round of state assessments, a team working to improve its performance across the broad spectrum of continuous improvement indicators must take a more expansive perspective across many dimensions of school practice that contribute to student learning. The coach uses the indicators as a touch point and supports the team leader in guiding the team through an honest assessment of its level of implementation of effective practices. The indicators help the school visualize what ideal

practice looks like, making it easier to examine current status, identify where change is needed, and monitor the impact as changes take place.

Without a clear vision of what good practice looks like, the plans developed by the school improvement team may or may not target the behaviors that contribute most directly to student learning. Using a set of research-based indicators as the descriptor of effective practice ensures that the team takes a comprehensive look at its own performance in critical areas.

But indicators are understood differently by individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. How does a coach help the team make best use of indicators, ensuring that agreements within the team and across the school address a similar vision of effective practice? In the Indistar® system, improvement teams have access to short briefs—Wise Ways®—detailing the research base for each indicator and elaborating how the indicator appears in practice. In addition, the Indicators in Action™ resource on the CII homepage ([www.indistar.org/action/](http://www.indistar.org/action/)) provides a combination of video and print materials that demonstrate the behaviors identified as exemplary by the indicators. They add to the coach's repertoire of resources to build team capacity for change.

A coach can serve the school by helping the team reach agreement on the meaning of each indicator, gather information necessary for an accurate assessment of current practice relative to the indicator, plan for change, implement change, monitor the results of change, and revise strategies to address gaps in implementation or improve the impact of new behaviors.

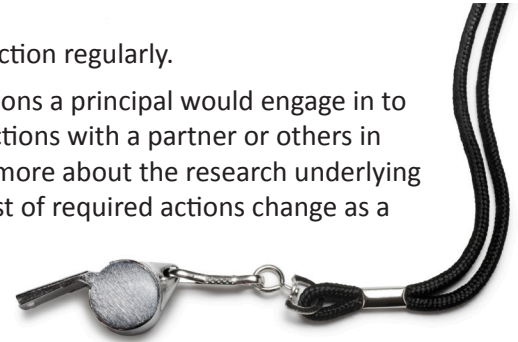


**PAUSE AND REFLECT 2-1:** Working through the team leader, the coach can support the team’s improvement work by ensuring common understanding of how the ideal practices described in the indicators contribute to student and school success. Here’s an example of an activity to encourage a common understanding across the team.

As you might expect, the role of school leaders in monitoring effective implementation of the school’s curriculum is a key indicator of effective schools. The indicator below from the Indistar® system states the principal’s role.

**Indicator:** The principal monitors curriculum and classroom instruction regularly.

Individually or as a group, take a moment to think about what actions a principal would engage in to be considered fully implementing this practice. Share your list of actions with a partner or others in your group. Does everyone have the same list of actions? To learn more about the research underlying this indicator, review the Wise Ways® in Appendix A. Would your list of required actions change as a result of the information in the Wise Ways®?



### Using Indicators Across the School Improvement Cycle

Indicators form the guideposts for the school improvement process, starting with assessing current status and moving through plan development, implementation, and monitoring. Throughout the school improvement cycle, the coach will be helping the team leader guide the team through the steps in the process.

A special feature of the Indistar® system is the ability for coaches to provide feedback online in the form of “coaching comments” on the work of the team. For the team to interpret the feedback as supportive, positive,

and useful, the coach must have established a trusting relationship with the team. Declaring and adhering to group norms (see Section 1), following through on commitments, and respecting the unique knowledge of school context among team members are ways coaches can build and sustain the trust that will allow them to exert the pressure needed to ensure a high-performing school.

The structure established in the Indistar® system parallels the stages of the school improvement cycle:

Improvement Cycle	Indistar® Step
Foundational Work: Establish a team	Step 3: Form Team
Stage 1: Assess Current Status	Step 4: Assess Indicators
Stage 2: Plan for Change	Step 5: Create Plan
Stage 3: Implement Plan	(included in Steps 5 and 6)
Stage 4: Monitor Implementation Stage 5: Monitor Impact	Step 6: Monitor Plan

The coach of a school improvement team using Indistar® can benefit from the general school improvement coach guidance presented in Section 1 of this document, as well as from the suggestions from Indistar® pioneers included in other sections of this guide.

## Providing Formative Feedback

A core responsibility of the coach is to provide feedback on the team's process and products. Research is accumulating confirming the powerful role of effective feedback in promoting change. In fact, the evidence is startling: in meta-analyses of studies on feedback in classrooms, the effect size of feedback was 0.79, twice the average of other influences on student achievement such as curricula, families, teachers, and school traits (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The researchers learned that not all feedback is equally powerful—feedback about how to do a task more effectively was stronger than praise, rewards, or punishment. Coaches can use the findings of research on feedback to students to guide their own feedback to the school improvement team.

Hattie and Timperley (2007) suggest four levels of feedback that coaches can keep in mind as they consider how to offer guidance to school improvement teams.

### Four Major Levels of Feedback

Task or product level—how well tasks are understood or performed

Process level—the main process needed to understand or perform the tasks

Self-regulation level—self-monitoring, directing, and regulating actions

Self level—personal evaluations and affect about the learner

(Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 87)

A coach can consider whether the intent of the feedback is to address the task (Did you recruit all your team members?); the process (Did you ask your parent liaison to suggest team members?); regulation of actions (Can you adjust your meeting schedule to accommodate more team time?); or a personal statement (How brave of you to tackle that challenge!). Keep in mind that the end goal—to develop and implement a plan for change sufficient to raise student achievement—is not likely to be reached if changes represent mere tinkering around the edges. As Kostin and Haeger point out in our opening quote, the function of a coach is to “pressure and support.” Coaching comments (feedback to teams) constitute the pressure and support that moves improvement toward desired goals.

Coaches supporting teams undertaking continuous improvement can establish a timeline and emphasize their “support” for the process that suits the resources and personnel involved. In contrast, coaches serving school teams required to adopt a rapid improvement trajectory will need to provide more “pressure” throughout the process cycle to meet rapid improvement targets.

Recognizing the different levels of feedback and varying the feedback to ensure attention to task, process, and interpersonal relationships will enable the coach to balance pressure and support in service of the team's goals of improved student learning.

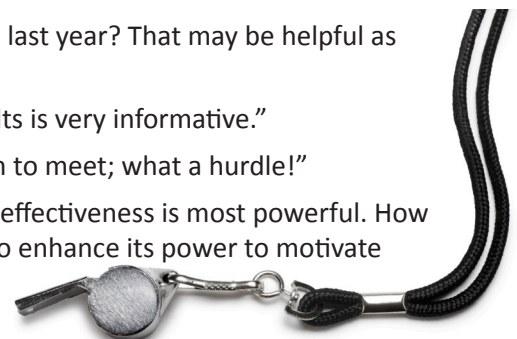
**PAUSE AND REFLECT 2-2:** Below are some examples of coaching comments.

1. Which of the comments are on the task level? The process level? The self-regulation level? The self level?
2. Which of these comments provide useful formative feedback?

### **Examples:**

- A) “Your honesty in analyzing that evidence is impressive; your team's self-awareness will be helpful as you move through this process.”
- B) “Do you remember the root cause training you went through last year? That may be helpful as you consider your rating of this indicator.”
- C) “Collecting faculty and staff interpretation of the survey results is very informative.”
- D) “I empathize with your challenge of finding time for the team to meet; what a hurdle!”

**Challenge:** Recall that feedback that informs how to improve task effectiveness is most powerful. How can you modify one or more of the coaching comments in the list to enhance its power to motivate change?



One thing to notice about the coaching comments in the list above: as written text, the recipient is without the benefit of tone of voice, gesture, facial expression, and context that comes along with in-person communication. The Indistar® system allows coaching comments to be provided remotely, but coaches are wise to recognize the difference in impact of feedback provided in text only from those same comments presented in person. The flip, clever quip that would elicit wry smiles when stated in real time can come across as harsh and critical when written as text. Self-monitoring of written feedback, or checking with trusted colleagues before posting a comment, are cautions worth heeding when crafting coaching comments for the team.

One suggestion is to ask the team for feedback on the usefulness of the coaching comments throughout the improvement process. The coach can invite the team to function as a “critical friend” to help the coach improve his/her feedback skills. What a good model of a continuous improvement mindset! See an example of a simple feedback form in **Pause and Reflect 2-7**.

### Coaching with Indistar® Indicators<sup>1</sup>

#### Improvement Cycle Foundational Work/Indistar®

##### Step 3: Establish the Team:

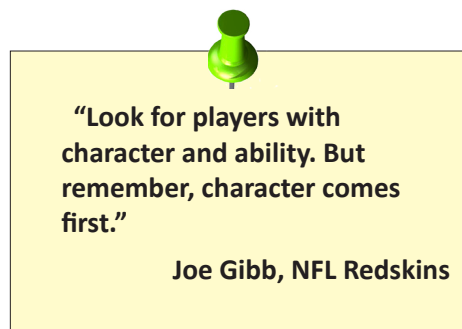
The guidance in Section 1 on establishing a strong relationship with a team leader and school improvement team are critical foundations to the start of a coaching project, including a process using the Indistar® indicators. Agreeing on commitments and responsibilities and establishing group norms are an effective starting point for an Indistar® coach.

An early critical role for the coach is guiding the team leader to identify and recruit willing and able team members to commit to the improvement process. In most schools, a leadership team or improvement team already exists, so creating a new team is not necessary.

<sup>1</sup> Note: This guide is not intended to be a comprehensive training on the use of the Indistar® system. Coaches contracted to provide support to school improvement teams using Indistar® can access technical training through their sponsor agency or through CII ([www.indistar.org](http://www.indistar.org)). This guide assumes coaches can access Indistar® and are familiar with the resources available through the system. This guide will offer suggestions on ways to make best use of the Indistar® framework to achieve the improvement goals established by the team and by the sponsoring agency.

Many thanks to the Indistar® pioneers—Virginia, North Dakota, and Idaho—for documenting their experiences with the system. Many of the suggestions included in this section of the guide are adapted or borrowed from their documents, and links to the original materials are included in the resource section. Specific references are cited as appropriate to help the coach link to the complete source.

Schools typically find that a team of six to eight members is an ideal size. Team members are often the lead teachers from grade-level teams or high school departments. Ensuring broad representation while maintaining a workable group size can be a challenge in a large school. Some schools have adopted a structure where the core team meets regularly (twice a month or more) to assess and plan, reporting its work quarterly to a larger group with broader representation and getting feedback. The coach can work with the leader of the improvement process to put together a team and organize it in a way that builds on existing structures and capacities to best achieve the desired outcomes.



#### Improvement Cycle Stage I: Assess current status/Indistar® Step 4: Assess indicators

Coaches supporting teams using the Indistar® system to assess current practices will notice that multiple steps are required for each indicator:

1. Using the Wise Ways® to guide the team on the *meaning* of the indicator.
2. Assessing the current level of implementation of the research-based practices described in the indicator by
  - agreeing on what evidence supports the ratings recommended by the team, and
  - deciding if the practice will be included in the school’s plan.
3. Rating the *priority* of the indicator in the context of the school’s improvement needs.
4. Assigning an *opportunity* score to the indicator assessing the effort needed to change the practice.

The Indistar® worksheet shown on the next page includes the process for the assessment of each indicator. The coach’s guidance, conveyed through the team leader, is critical at each point. A coach can use the visioning exercise in **Pause and Reflect 1-3** of this guide to help the team reach agreement on the meaning of

each indicator. The Wise Ways® and Indicators in Action™ are additional resources coaches and team leaders can draw on to conduct a workshop or study session for team members to examine the expert practices described by the indicator.

**Middleton Elementary School**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Category:** Curriculum, Assessment, and Instructional Planning

**Section:** Engaging teachers in differentiating and aligning learning activities

**IIC01 - Units of instruction include specific learning activities aligned to objectives. (96)**

1. Choose your level of development or implementation for this indicator

- No development or implementation (if you choose this, move on to 1 - A)
- Limited development or implementation (if you choose this, move on to 2)
- Full implementation (if you choose this, move on to 2 - C)

1 - A. IF "No development or implementation" is selected choose one

- Not a priority or interest (if you choose this, move on to 2 - C)
- Will include in plan (if you choose this, move on to 2)

2. Priority Score: (after selecting a Priority Score, move on to 3)

- 3 - highest priority
- 2 - medium priority
- 1 - lowest priority

3. Opportunity Score: (after selecting an Opportunity Score, move on to 4)

- 3 - relatively easy to address
- 2 - accomplished within current policy and budget conditions
- 1 - requires changes in current policy and budget conditions

2 - C. If "Not a priority or interest" - Please explain why this indicator is not a priority or interest.

2 - C. If "Full implementation" - Please provide evidence that this indicator has been fully and effectively implemented. Also, describe the continued work that will be necessary to sustain your efforts.

4. Please describe the current level of development or implementation.



1. Assessing level of implementation—

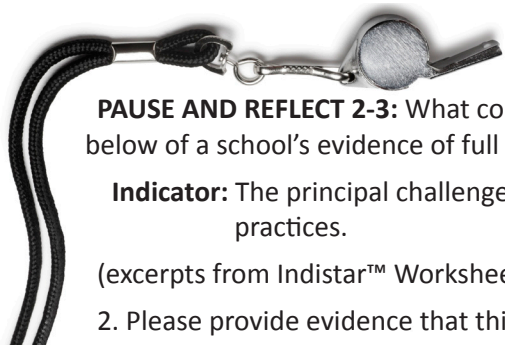
The coach’s guidance to the team in assessing the school’s current level of implementation can focus on answering the question, “What evidence will count as representative of our level of implementation?” That question leads to two additional questions: “What evidence do we have?” and, “What evidence might we need to collect?”

Schools have adopted instructional monitoring approaches that include systematic and regular collection of instructional practice data. The coach can take advantage of the school improvement process to broaden team member’s awareness of the value of trustworthy evidence of classroom practices when developing plans for improving student achievement.

If the school currently has little or no reliable evidence about classroom practice, the coach can recommend three sources of data: a) teacher self-assessment of indicators of effective practice; b) peer observation and assessment of indicators of effective practice; and

c) principal observations. With any of these data sources, the observations can be aggregated so that information does not include the names of specific teachers. The team may see, for example, that 85% of teachers were observed using the effective practice in their teaching. Now the job becomes helping the other 15% get there. The coach should confirm that the data being collected by the tool or survey is clearly linked to the Indistar® indicators being assessed, particularly since the Indistar® indicators are grounded in the most effective practices at high-achieving schools.

With practice data available, the coach can help the team leader conduct an exercise to judge what evidence is sufficient to justify the level of implementation rating the team assigns. The Pause and Reflect exercise below is one strategy for reaching agreement on the criteria for judging current practices.



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 2-3:** What counts as evidence of implementation? Examine the example shown below of a school’s evidence of full implementation of one of the Indistar® indicators.

**Indicator:** The principal challenges, supports, and monitors the correction of unsound teaching practices.

(excerpts from Indistar™ Worksheet)

2. Please provide evidence that this indicator has been fully and effectively implemented.

(School’s entry) *The building administrators have developed an evaluation schedule and are in the process of evaluating all teachers. Walkthroughs are being conducted on a regular basis. Teachers scoring below proficient in any category have goals set and may be on various levels of improvement plans.*

Is this evidence sufficient to merit a rating of “fully implemented” for this indicator?

As a coach, ask yourself these questions:

Is this evidence clearly described/explained?

Is this evidence clearly linked to the indicator?

Is this evidence sufficient to merit the level of implementation rating the school selected?

Is the evidence from multiple sources?

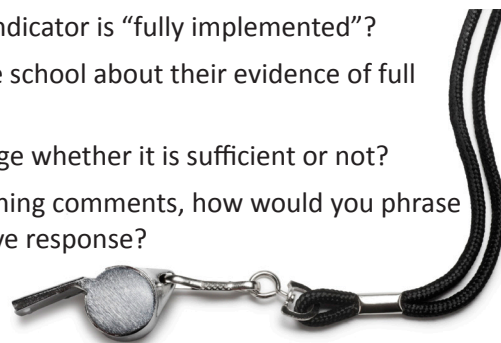
Does the evidence include objective and perceptual components?

Does the evidence persuade the reader that the indicator is “fully implemented”?

With colleagues, make a list of questions you would pose to the school about their evidence of full implementation of this indicator of effective practice.

What other questions would you ask about the evidence to judge whether it is sufficient or not?

If you are providing feedback online through the Indistar® coaching comments, how would you phrase your questions or comments to encourage a more comprehensive response?





2. Rating “Priority”—

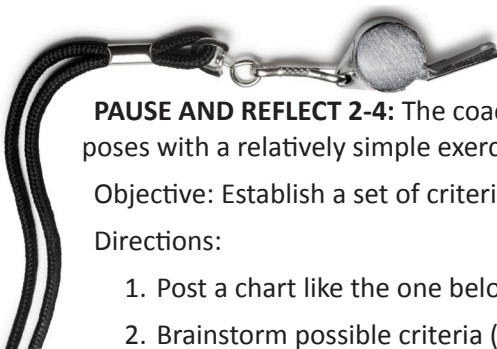
Agreement on the meaning of the indicator and consensus about level of implementation brings the team closer to a decision about how to plan for improvement. The coach then works with the team leader to lead the team to consider where the practice fits within the continuum of needs and capacities of the school in the context of the school culture.

How can a coach guide a team to reach consensus on the priority of the instructional or leadership practice described by the indicator? In some situations, the sponsoring agency identifies “key” indicators that must be addressed in the school improvement plan (North Dakota, e.g.) so the coach must be alert to those requirements.

The team can go through the “5 whys” exercise described in Section 1 for key indicators or use other root cause probes familiar to them to decide which priority best describes each indicator. The Wise Ways® in Indistar® can suggest the relative importance of specific instructional or leadership practices. Ultimately, the team’s thoughtful consideration of the factors needed to judge the priority of a practice will play an important role in the success of the plan’s strategies.

2. Priority Score: (after selecting a Priority Score, move on to 3)

- 3 - highest priority
- 2 - medium priority
- 1 - lowest priority



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 2-4:** The coach can build team skills in establishing criteria for a variety of purposes with a relatively simple exercise. Try it with your group.

Objective: Establish a set of criteria for rating the priority of each assessed indicator.

Directions:

1. Post a chart like the one below for the team.
2. Brainstorm possible criteria (two are given in the example) that are important to the rating of instructional or leadership practices. Aim for no more than 5 criteria; fewer if possible.
3. Distribute five to ten sticky dots to each team member.
4. Ask team members to place their dots along the continuum next to each criterion to indicate their recommended “value” of the criteria.

For example, one dot in the middle of the continuum would indicate moderate value. Three dots at the far right would indicate a high value for that criterion.

5. Use the values indicated by the dots to select the criteria to be applied when rating the priority for each indicator to be included in the team’s plan.

Criteria	Value				
	Low		Somewhat		Very high
Required by the (agency)					
Direct impact on student learning					



### 3. Rating “Opportunity”—

The team is even closer to completing its assessment of each indicator when it has agreed on a priority for that indicator—but not quite finished yet! In recognition of the unique aspects of each school’s regulatory and fiscal context, Indistar® invites teams to score each indicator on the “opportunity” to address the changes in practice described by the indicator.

#### 3. Opportunity Score: (after selecting an Opportunity Score, move on to 4)

- 3 - relatively easy to address
- 2 - accomplished within current policy and budget conditions
- 1 - requires changes in current policy and budget conditions

To guide the team through this section of Indistar® Step 4, the team will need to hold multiple thoughts in mind. Scoring “opportunity” requires consideration of

—what is “easy”?

Changing teachers’ and leaders’ practices is never “easy”, nor is changing beliefs, values, and expectations; on the other hand, posting lesson objectives and keeping meeting minutes might be “easy”

—what is “policy”?

How is policy different from practice? Is it policy when the school’s reading curriculum advises on the use of certain instructional strategies, or is that practice? If supervisors evaluate teachers on their adherence to curriculum guidelines, is that considered a “policy”?

—how will we know if current budgets are sufficient?


We may need to research possible strategies for addressing the change in practice before knowing whether current budgets can accommodate the needed training, materials, or technology to build and sustain skills and knowledge in the new approach.

Assessing Indistar® indicators can be thought of as a spiral endeavor, just as *Everyday Mathematics* is a spiral curriculum. Concepts are introduced and considered at one point, then other concepts are brought to the learner’s attention. Later, the initial concepts are re-considered with new information being added. The coach leading a team through the Indistar® process of assessing indicators of effective practice will guide the

team to consider gaps between current practice and research-based effective practices, assign a priority to the practice, and consider the opportunity for changing the practice. Indicators assessed later in the

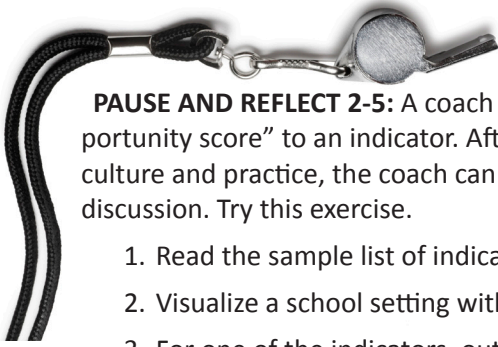
improvement planning process may result in agreement to revisit earlier assessments and lead to adjustment in priority or opportunity scores. New developments in the district or state fiscal or regulatory condition will trigger review and possible revision of assessed indicators and priorities for improvement. Indistar® allows teams to add new tasks and revise other plan elements—a high probability in a continuous improvement process!

This spiral pathway reflects the reality of continuous improvement—there is no end point of a linear sequence of steps, but rather an organic adaptation to continual changes in people, organizations, and resources. The coach can serve the team well by maintaining enthusiasm for the learning that comes from ongoing assessment of professional practice—through the Indistar® indicators or other research-based frameworks.



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

**Mike Krzyzewski,  
Duke basketball**



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 2-5:** A coach can prepare for the complex step of guiding a team to apply an “opportunity score” to an indicator. After building a relationship with the team and learning about school culture and practice, the coach can anticipate the issues that might be raised during the “opportunity” discussion. Try this exercise.

1. Read the sample list of indicators of effective practice below.
2. Visualize a school setting with which you are familiar.
3. For one of the indicators, outline the key points you would lead the team to consider when choosing the most appropriate “opportunity” score.
  3. relatively easy to address
  2. accomplished within current policy and budget conditions
  1. requires changes in current policy and budget conditions
4. As time allows, share your talking points with the others in your practice group. Invite your peers to point out alternative perspectives that might arise and suggest talking points or probing questions you might use with your team.

**Sample Indicators:**

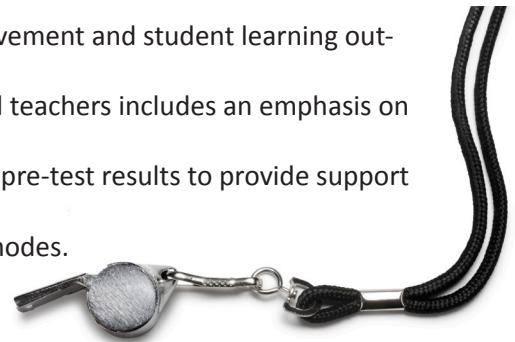
**Team Structure:** Instructional teams meet for blocks of time sufficient to develop and refine units of instruction and review student learning.

**Principal’s Role:** The principal keeps a focus on instructional improvement and student learning outcomes.

**Professional Development:** Professional development of individual teachers includes an emphasis on indicators of effective teaching.

**Classroom Instruction:** Teachers individualize instruction based on pre-test results to provide support for some students and enhances learning opportunities for others.

**Classroom Instruction:** All teachers use a variety of instructional modes.



Improvement Cycle Stage 2: Plan for Change/Indistar®  
Step 5: Create School Plan

Schools and districts have had ample opportunities to practice writing school improvement plans. In too many cases, a school can point to three or four different plans for improvement sitting on the principal’s bookshelf. A Title I (or II or III) plan, a technology plan, a professional development plan, a district improvement plan, and a school improvement plan with NCLB elements for corrective action or restructuring are parts of a typical collection. What makes a plan for change a purposeful guide versus just another piece of bookshelf art?

A coach with experience working with planning teams recognizes that the words in the plan aren’t likely to be sufficiently motivating to make the plan a functional tool for school change. Rather, it’s the intentions and actions of team members as advocates for the plan’s activities that will sustain attention, interest, and commitment in pursuing meaningful improvement.

The coach can use his/her knowledge of the team and the timeline for preparing and implementing the school’s plan to devise a strategy to guide the transition from Step 4 (assess) to Step 5 (plan). For many, it makes sense to assess a select cluster of indicators and to sketch out a plan to address the most critical or most do-able—the indicators with the highest “index” score—seeking quick wins. In some cases, the sponsoring agency identifies “key” indicators to be assessed and addressed as part of the improvement planning process, taking part of the decision out of the team’s hands. Further, the coach of a team on a continuous improvement pathway may have more flexibility in completing Steps 4 and 5 than one on a more urgent rapid improvement timeline. Indistar® is designed to accommodate multiple approaches to the management of steps 4, 5, and 6 (monitor), leaving the coach and team leader, who have intimate knowledge of the team’s capacity and culture, to make the best judgment for the group.

Examine the Indistar® worksheet for Step 5: Create School Plan, below, paying particular attention to “Plan” item 2.

**Middleton Elementary School**

Date:

**Category** School Leadership and Decision Making

**Section:** Aligning classroom observations with evaluation criteria and professional development

**IF08 - Professional development for the whole faculty includes assessment of strengths and areas in need of improvement from classroom observations of indicators of effective teaching. (72)**

**Plan**

- 1. Assign a team member to manage and monitor your work toward this objective. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Describe how it will look when this objective is being fully met.

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- 3. Establish a date by which your description above will be a reality. \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

**Tasks**

T-1. Create task(s) for this objective.

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T-1a. Assign a person to be responsible for this task. \_\_\_\_\_

T-1b. Establish a date this task will be completed. \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

T-1c. Record notes from your discussion that will be helpful to the person responsible for this task.

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The Indistar® worksheet asks the team to begin planning with the long-term outcome in mind, namely what the school will look like when the objective is fully realized. The question is phrased with few specifications, allowing teams wide latitude in their description. The coach's skills will be needed to encourage the team to create a description that includes enough detail to make the outcome visible to the staff responsible for implementing it, but not so much detail that it stifles individual variation and creativity. The coach can think of this as the Goldilocks rule—not too hard, not too soft, just right!

School Improvement Coaches working with the Indistar® system should become familiar with the variety of reports available for review.

- Login to Indistar® for one of your schools.
- On the School Process Main menu, click in the yellow Resources and Reports box in the upper right.
- Select Reports.

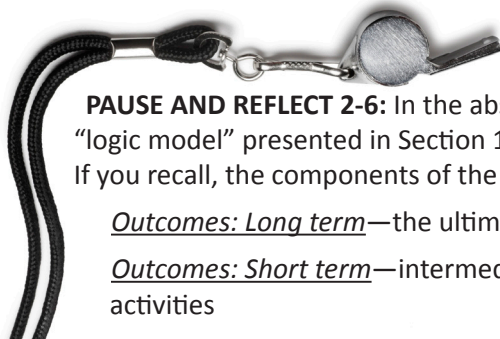
Take the time to examine each of the reports.

These can serve multiple purposes for monitoring and reporting team progress.

A school improvement coach may be familiar with the concept of “backwards mapping” and may choose to use backwards mapping exercises to guide the team through question 2 (Describe how it will look when this objective is being fully met.). The coach can draw on the results of the visioning activity, described in Section 1, asking team members to invite their colleagues to describe a scenario in which the indicator is fully implemented. In addition, the “logic model” can be a helpful tool to structure the team's thinking about the specific tasks (strategies) it will need to carry out in order to reach the objectives in their plans.

Whichever process the coach and team leader select, the team will be well positioned to move ahead with implementing the plan if the response to question 2 explicitly states expectations for:

- (a) what is to be done (leadership and instructional practices);
- (b) who is to do it (all staff, grade-level leaders, subject-area coordinators); and
- (c) what observable and measurable changes will be evident as a result.



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 2-6:** In the absence of another preferred approach, the coach can opt to use the “logic model” presented in Section 1 as the framework for preparing a plan for an important indicator. If you recall, the components of the “logic model” include, in reverse order,

Outcomes: Long term—the ultimate impact of the strategy, the broad objective/goal of the work

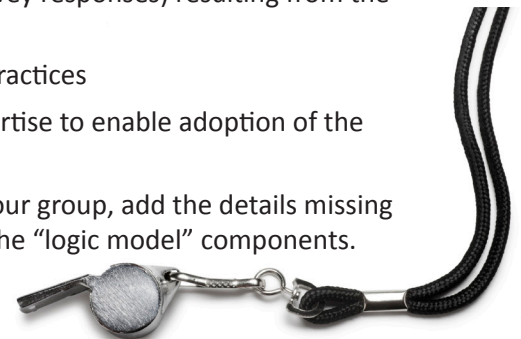
Outcomes: Short term—intermediate observable changes in the intended beneficiary of the activities

Outputs—the physical products (lesson plans, student work, survey responses) resulting from the strategies

Strategies—the activities (tasks) required to adopt the desired practices

Inputs/Resources Needed—the knowledge, skills, time, and expertise to enable adoption of the strategy

Below is an actual example of a completed Step 5 Worksheet. In your group, add the details missing from this team's response to question 2. Check your work against the “logic model” components.





**Indistar® Worksheet: Step 5: Create the Plan**

<b>School Leadership and Decision Making</b>			
<b>Aligning classroom observations with evaluation criteria and professional development</b>			
<b>IF04 -</b>	<b>Professional development for teachers includes observations by peers related to indicators of effective teaching and classroom management. (68)</b>		
	Index:	6	(Priority Score x Opportunity Score)
<b>Plan:</b>	Assigned to:	Lead Teacher	
	Target Date:	06/07/2010	
	How it will look when fully met:	When this objective is fully met, the school will have a process in place where staff members will cover for each other so others can observe a peer teaching. Teachers/Teacher Assistants fill out a BRS rubric about what they saw and how this information can be incorporated in their classroom. Also, information from the rubric will be distributed to the observed teacher as feedback to improve the teaching process. The observations will allow all staff to improve teaching techniques to benefit our children.	
<b>Tasks:</b>			
	1. 1. A format will be developed and a schedule of when peer observations can occur. The format will include a place for both parties to reflect on the visit.		
	Assigned to:	Grade Level Teams	
	Target Completion Date:	05/28/2010	
	Comments:	Collegial Coaching a. Strengthen an environment of trust by understanding ourselves and each other. b. Increase interdependency c. recognize and learn to practice coaching qualities d. Develop communication guidelines/shared expectations e. Identify a time for reflection and discussion of observations	
<b>Implement:</b>	Percent Task Complete:	0%	

Translated into the logic model framework, the plan shown above, developed for a professional development indicator, would include:

- Outcomes (long term and short term)—
  - teachers will align their professional practice with indicators of effective teaching and classroom management
- Outputs—
  - rubrics of observations
  - schedules of teachers available to provide coverage for others
  - list of procedures for teachers to invite others to observe
- Strategies—
  - process for teachers to cover for each other to free up others for peer observation,
  - complete a rubric about their observations
  - rubric information returned to the teacher as feedback

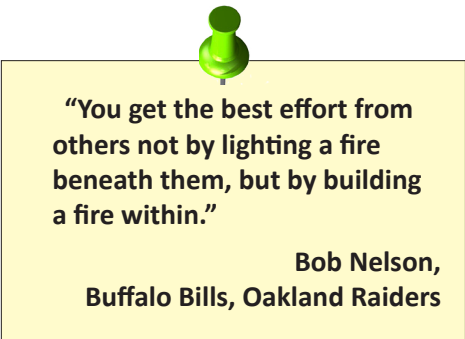
Inputs and resources, though not specified on the Step 5 Indistar® worksheet, can be noted in the “comments” section to capture team discussions for future reference. In the case shown here, the team chose to use the Comments section to elaborate on their rationale for choosing the strategy, a requirement specified by their sponsoring agency.

Developing a plan for the Indistar® indicators the school chooses to include can follow a logic model outline or other planning approach familiar to the team or prescribed by the agency. The Indistar® planning worksheet allows wide flexibility in the thinking tools the team uses to develop its plan for change.

[Improvement Cycle Stage 3: Implement the Plan/ Indistar® Step 5: Create School Plan and Step 6: Monitor School Plan](#)

As mentioned previously, Indistar® Steps 4, 5, and 6 can occur as concurrent events. Assessing an indicator (Step 4) and developing a plan to implement change (Step 5) informs and is informed by considerations of how to monitor whether the strategies in the plan are

having their desired impact (Step 6). Creating a plan that includes measurable, observable outcomes clear enough for those responsible for implementing the change to see for themselves how their work is likely to result in positive gains is an essential task for the school improvement team.



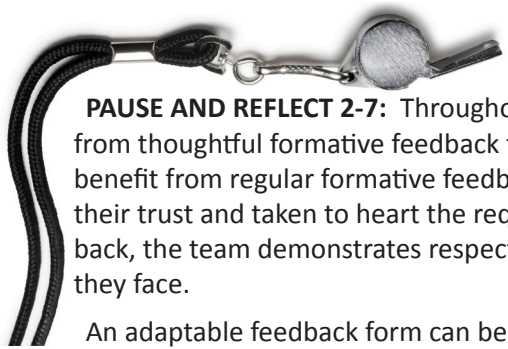
**“You get the best effort from others not by lighting a fire beneath them, but by building a fire within.”**

**Bob Nelson,  
Buffalo Bills, Oakland Raiders**

impact on student learning is dramatically improved if the staff commits to the change by investing time, interest, and energy in becoming integrally involved in the change.

Even before the ink dries on the plan’s tasks, the improvement team begins the real work of implementing the plan. Ideally, the coach and team leader have served the team well throughout the planning process by setting expectations for frequent and regular communication between the team and all the school’s stakeholders. The coach continues service to the team by modeling ways to advocate for implementation of the plan’s strategies while maintaining the positive collegial relationships so critical to the school’s improvement.

Implementation of the plan for change requires the involvement of the entire school community. The likelihood that the plan’s strategies will result in the desired

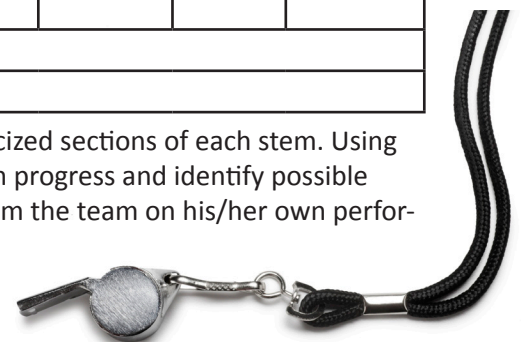


**PAUSE AND REFLECT 2-7:** Throughout the continuous improvement cycle, the team has benefited from thoughtful formative feedback from their coach. In the implementation phase, the team can also benefit from regular formative feedback from their peers. The school staff have honored the team with their trust and taken to heart the request to adopt new professional practices. By inviting honest feedback, the team demonstrates respect for the critical role of the staff and recognition of the challenges they face.

An adaptable feedback form can be created to gather input from staff as implementation proceeds. A mix of restricted response and open response items allows the team to collect data that can be easily summarized without losing its rich variation. Here’s an example using the strategy of peer observation included in the sample plan from the preceding section.

Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My use of [ <i>strategy, e.g., peer observation</i> ] has been beneficial.				
2. [ <i>Strategy, e.g. peer coaching</i> ] is having a positive impact on [ <i>select appropriate: my teaching practice; my students</i> ].				
3. The resources available to help me implement [ <i>strategy, e.g. peer observation</i> ] have been satisfactory				
4. The most helpful part of this initiative is. . .				
5. What I need next to move this work forward, is . . .				

This simple feedback form can be customized by changing the italicized sections of each stem. Using the same format over time allows the team to track implementation progress and identify possible impediments. A coach can use a similar form to collect feedback from the team on his/her own performance throughout the relationship.



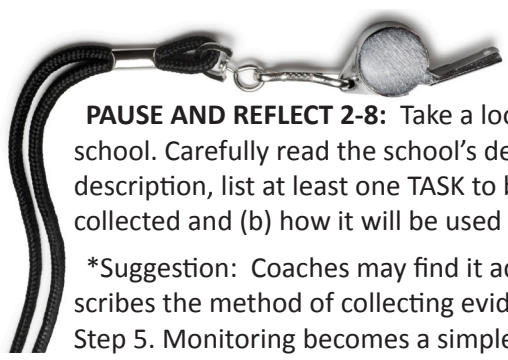
Improvement Cycle Stages 4 and 5: Monitor Plan Implementation and Impact/Indistar® Step 6: Monitor School Plan

The school improvement team reaches an intermediate milestone when it begins the process of monitoring its plan. Those teams using a “spiral” approach will assess—plan—monitor sets of indicators in repetitive cycles. The coach can support the team by modeling project management techniques, including use of technology where available. Excel spreadsheets and databases are some basic, easy-to-learn tools that can be used to (a) capture student achievement results on local formative or benchmark assessments; (b) summarize observation rubrics to monitor progress toward improved instructional practices; (c) track climate and culture survey responses from parents, students, and staff.

Coaches of teams using Indistar® have built-in tools for tracking plan progress across objectives and tasks. Because Indistar® is available online, principals and process managers can update task completion, post new data, and communicate feedback as their individual schedules allow. Reports provided by Indistar® can be produced and disseminated to various school constituencies as needed with a few keystrokes.

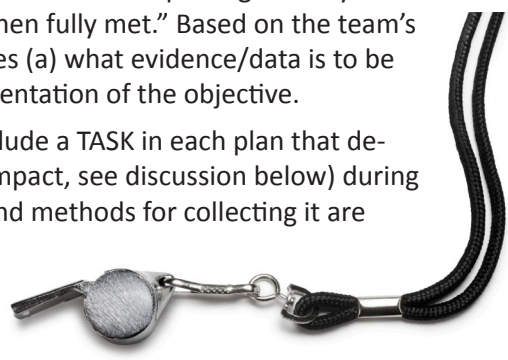
The coach will want to encourage the team to monitor at least two aspects of the plan: (1) the level of implementation and (2) the impact of practices on the intended beneficiaries. The sample feedback form presented in the previous **Pause and Reflect** exercise can be used to monitor these two aspects of plan implementation.

The process of monitoring implementation cycles back to the products (“output”) of previous phases of the improvement cycle: assessing the current level of implementation and describing what full implementation will look like when the objective is fully met. If the team has carefully documented its work to date, records of previous discussions of what full implementation looks like will be invaluable when defining what evidence to collect to monitor progress toward the objective. The coach can assist the team leader by helping focus the group’s conversation around observable, measurable outcomes and how to collect and interpret that data. Previous exercises presented in this guide may be helpful, but the coach’s skill in leading the team to think in measurable terms is a key gauge of the likelihood the process will lead to the desired targets.



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 2-8:** Take a look at Step 5 plans for two Indistar® indicators put together by one school. Carefully read the school’s description of “how it will look when fully met.” Based on the team’s description, list at least one TASK to be added to the plan that defines (a) what evidence/data is to be collected and (b) how it will be used to measure the level of implementation of the objective.

\*Suggestion: Coaches may find it advisable to require teams to include a TASK in each plan that describes the method of collecting evidence of implementation (and impact, see discussion below) during Step 5. Monitoring becomes a simpler task if the type of evidence and methods for collecting it are defined at the earliest stages of the planning process.



**Example 1: Indistar® Worksheet Step 5: Create the Plan**

<b>ID10 -</b>	<b>The school's Leadership Team regularly looks at school performance data and aggregated classroom observation data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs. (45)</b>	
	Index:	3 (Priority Score x Opportunity Score)
<b>Plan:</b>	Assigned to:	Lead Teacher
	Target Date:	06/30/2011
	How it will look when fully met:	We will have a fully implemented leadership team. Members will meet bi-monthly to review data, student achievement, and PBIS information to determine any necessary revisions to the organization of the school both academically and socially. Professional development, site visits, and curriculum reviews will be determined by the leadership team with input from the staff.

**Discussion of Example Plan 1:**

1. What tasks might this team define to move toward its vision of full implementation of the objective?
2. If you were the coach of this team, what feedback could you offer to encourage them to select strategies and assign tasks that will be clear and realistic for teachers to implement?

**Example 2: Indistar® Worksheet Step 6: Monitor the Plan**

<b>Classroom Instruction</b>		
<b>Indicator</b>	<b>IIIA13 - All teachers explain directly and thoroughly. (122)</b>	
	Index:	6 (Priority Score x Opportunity Score)
<b>Plan</b>	Assigned to:	School Principal
	How it will look when fully met:	Teacher lessons will include the following phases during each lesson: 1. Introduces new lesson connecting it to the previous lesson and prior learning by clearly delineating what will be learned and what is expected of them. 2. The teacher develops interest in the new topic by using interest stimulators such as illustrations, demonstration, modeling and cues. 3. The teacher directly teaches the new lesson with clarity, enthusiasm, using both verbal explanations and physical demonstrations.
	Target Date:	04/08/2010
	<b>Tasks:</b>	
	1. 1. At team meetings have a discussion about how we can work on meeting this goal.	
	Assigned to:	School Principal
	Target Completion Date:	04/08/2010
	Comments:	The introduction of new lessons is connected to the previous lesson by doing math boxes. The reading program also has built in ways for topics to be related back to previously taught skills. Students are made aware of goals and what is expected of them. The staff develops interest in new topic by using interest stimulators such as our interactive white boards, illustrations, and demonstrations. The teacher teaches lessons with clarity, using both verbal explanations and physical demonstrations.
	<b>Task Completed:</b>	04/12/2010
<b>Implement</b>	Percent Task Complete:	100%
	Objective Met:	11/22/2010 1/1/0001
	Experience:	11/22/2010 The staff worked together at finding ways to implement this objective into their daily lessons
	Sustain:	11/22/2010 Staff will continue to put this objective into their daily lessons.

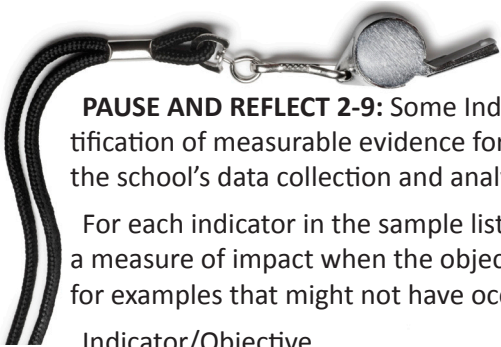
**Discussion of Sample Plan 2:**

1. How could this team monitor whether what they believe they have accomplished has, in fact, been put into place?
2. Is their conception of “full implementation” sufficient to reflect this indicator?
3. What feedback would you offer to encourage the team to deepen its attention to this important instructional practice?

Monitoring the impact of improvement strategies can be a trickier task. The team’s coach can pose the question: who is the intended beneficiary of the change in professional practice, for example? Certainly in the long term, the goal of school change is to improve student learning. But what changes in learning will be impacted by the practices being adopted as part of the improvement plan, the exemplary practices found in Indistar® that are evident in high-achieving schools? For indicators of professional practice that are designed to address climate and culture changes, what measures

of impact will be monitored to assess whether the long-term student achievement outcomes are likely to be realized? For a long time, school improvement has been intently focused on student achievement measures only; teams consisting of members new to leading school change (and their leaders) will benefit from exploring diverse measures of change beyond the typical academic tests.

As when identifying evidence to monitor implementation, previous discussions among the team members—starting with assessing current levels of implementation and continuing with describing what the objective will look like when met during Step 5: Create the Plan—can provide ideas for the type of evidence to be collected to monitor the impact of the plan’s strategies.



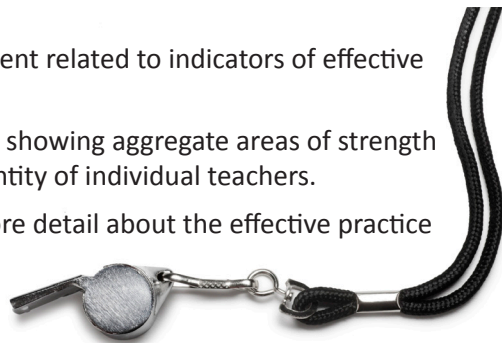
**PAUSE AND REFLECT 2-9:** Some Indistar® indicators of effective practice lend themselves to easy identification of measurable evidence for monitoring impact. Others, depending on the maturity level of the school’s data collection and analysis systems, will require more intense development.

For each indicator in the sample list below, identify at least one source of evidence that could serve as a measure of impact when the objective is fully met. Share your examples with other coaches. Listen for examples that might not have occurred to you to expand your repertoire.

Indicator/Objective

1. All teachers use a variety of instructional modes.
2. All teachers reinforce classroom rules and procedures by positively teaching them.
3. All teachers encourage students to check their own comprehension.
4. All teachers clearly state the lesson’s topic, theme, and objectives.
5. All teachers differentiate assignments in response to individual student performance on pre-tests and other methods of assessment.
6. Instructional teams use student learning data to plan instruction.
7. Instructional teams develop standards-aligned units of instruction for each subject and grade level.
8. Professional development for teachers includes self-assessment related to indicators of effective teaching and classroom management.
9. The principal compiles reports from classroom observations, showing aggregate areas of strength and areas that need improvement without revealing the identity of individual teachers.

*Reminder:* For many indicators, the Wise Ways® brief provides more detail about the effective practice and the research on its impact on school improvement.





The actual school example 2 above offers an opportunity to raise a few more questions for coaches and the agencies sponsoring the Indistar® process such as:

- What counts as sufficient evidence that the plan has been implemented fully? In the example above, the team claims 100% completion of the objective. Is their evidence sufficient to allow that claim?
- Are there agreed-upon standards for declaring an objective “completed”?

These and other questions directly related to the coach’s role are the subject of Section 3 of this guide: *Selecting and Supporting School Improvement Coaches*. Examples of role definitions, responsibilities, expectations, and standards for coaching practice are provided from state agencies who have served as Indistar® pioneers.

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SECTION 3:  
Selecting and  
Supporting School  
Improvement Coaches





The primary question for state education agencies and other sponsors of school improvement coaching initiatives is, how do we select the “right” people to serve as school improvement coaches, and how can we support their success? Those who are just launching initiatives for selecting, training, and monitoring school improvement coaches owe a debt of gratitude to a number of early adopters of Indistar® who documented their strategies for engaging school improvement coaches as part of their state system of support.

Included in this section of the coaching guide are excerpts and adaptations of the materials developed by the Virginia Department of Education, the Idaho State Department of Education, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, the New Hampshire Department of Education, and the Oklahoma Department of Education. Complementary tools and protocols from other sources are included in the *Appendix, References, and Other Resources* section following to provide a robust library for new sponsors taking on the challenge of selecting and supporting school improvement coaches.

Section 3 is organized under three topics:

- selecting school improvement coaches,
- training school improvement coaches, and
- supporting school improvement coaches.

## Selecting School Improvement Coaches

As discussed in preceding sections of this guide, the relationship between the coach and the improvement team is key to reaching positive outcomes of the coaching process. The recent emergence of coaching as a strategy for school improvement reflects an interest in migrating from the traditional compliance monitoring role of state agencies and other sponsors toward a function of support and assistance in the effort to assure the best outcomes for all students. The selection of school improvement coaches is a means to serve agency interests in support of school (and student) improvement.

Doug Reeves (2009) offers a wise caution in selecting coaches to support school improvement:

*Effective coaching focuses on changing performance. Therefore, the first requirement of any coaching relationship is that the person receiving the coaching must agree that a change in performance will be useful. Throwing coaches at teachers and principals who have not first agreed that improved student performance is essential will be a waste of time and money. (p. 75)*

Agencies responsible for selecting and assigning coaches must consider not only the qualifications and competencies of the coach but also the willingness of the school to accept their need for assistance. Just as coaches are advised to establish agreement with the team on the scope and content of their services (Section 1 of this guide), entities selecting and assigning coaches are advised to take explicit steps to establish agreement with the intended recipients on the need for coaching support. Without adequate groundwork by the sponsoring agency, the coach’s ability to gain the trust of the school team becomes more challenging.

Recruiting personnel to serve as coaches for local school improvement teams generally falls within three options: re-assigning existing staff to this new role; contracting with external consultants; and, rarely, hiring new agency staff specialized to serve as coaches. Regulatory rules or contractual agreements may restrict the pool of applicants eligible to serve as coaches or may generate a pool of individuals without the requisite skills and knowledge of the field. Budgetary constraints are a factor when considering the pool of interested and available candidates, an experience not unfamiliar to sponsors of school improvement initiatives. Finding the resources to fund coaching support to schools is beyond the scope of this guide, but the reader is advised to seek the advice of state agency staff and other successful sponsors of coaching services to learn how they have creatively managed limited funds to accommodate expanding needs for support.

In general, the responsibilities of a coach for a school improvement team are such that current staff in a school or district would be challenged to carry them out effectively in addition to their existing responsibilities. Existing state agency staff will need to reprioritize their assignments in order to accommodate the additional work of serving as a school improvement team coach as well as tackling existing perceptions of the state’s role in school operations. It is not uncommon for schools and districts to see the state’s compliance functions as conflicting with the coach’s support role. Sponsors assigning individuals to carry out both a compliance and a coaching/support function should prepare for the possible confusion of functions.

The challenge for the sponsoring agency is to select individuals with sufficient knowledge and skills and compatible beliefs and values, with the understanding that ongoing collaboration will bring a coherent vision of desired outcomes across the corps of coaches and the schools they serve.

Fitting the right individual to the coaching role begins with clearly defining the responsibilities of the coach



and the competencies and dispositions suited to the role. Examine this list of requirements developed by Virginia:

### Requirements for Virginia Coaches

Listed below are the requirements in selecting a PASS Coach to work in a PASS priority school. Among other skills, these individuals must be able to:

- Work in low performing schools;
- Assist building level principals in focusing on crucial aspects of instruction throughout the year;
- Assist with identifying strategies for maximizing use of instructional time;
- Assist with implementation and monitoring the school improvement plan;
- Analyze assessment data for the purpose of modifying instruction and developing remediation plans;
- Assist in planning staff development strategies based on needs identified in the school improvement plan;
- Provide job embedded professional development for principals consistent with the division's professional development plan;
- Meet at least twice per month with the building level principal;
- Complete a monthly PASS report to the Office of School Improvement; and
- Attend bi-monthly PASS meetings with the PASS Coordinator.

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/resources/pass/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/resources/pass/index.shtml)

The final three requirements in the Virginia list address the “job” expectations such as meeting frequency and reporting. The first seven requirements in the Virginia list speak broadly to the required knowledge and skill the coach must bring to the role. Note that several of the requirements reference the need for the coach to align his/her work with existing school improvement plans and the state professional development plan. Two requirements make explicit the desired outcome/impact of coaching support on school practices, namely, the principal's focus on instruction, and maximum use of instructional time. Establishing coach requirements that specify not only the tasks to be completed but

the outcomes to be achieved creates a framework for monitoring the work of coaches which will be discussed further in Section 4.

In similar fashion, New Hampshire defines the responsibilities for the coach to include reporting responsibilities as well as expectations for the alignment of the school improvement plan with existing school, district, and state initiatives.

### Responsibilities of New Hampshire State Coaches

- check in on school progress on the SSI system at least once per week
- continue to build relationships with the school teams
- monitor for team progress
- add coaching comments where and when appropriate (discussion of inserting at least a greeting comment each time the coach examines the school's materials)
- be well informed of the school's challenges and strengths by reviewing other school initiatives and plans, and student performance data (i.e., SINI, DINI, PD Plans, Title I plan, Title II plan, etc.);
- collaborate with other coaches to brainstorm on available resources, share ideas, and discuss issues
- attend at least one face-to-face meeting with the school team; ask to be invited

[http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/integrated/title\\_i\\_a\\_docs2009-10.htm](http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/integrated/title_i_a_docs2009-10.htm)

Identifying an effective coach is much more than finding an individual who can carry out a set of tasks in a timely manner. A consideration for selecting coaches is the disposition the individual brings to the work with the team. In the *Instructional Leadership Training Module Session 3* (available from CII at [www.centerii.org](http://www.centerii.org)), CII has identified five key qualities of an effective coach:

The five key qualities of an effective coach are:

**Competency**—The coach has information, ideas, and skills that are helpful to the learner, and helps to build on the learner's current knowledge and skills. The competent coach promotes self-discovery, and shares his own knowledge and skills as needed.

**Objectivity**—An effective coach leaves his own expectations and strong personal feelings outside, while focusing on the learner’s perspective and intent. Supporting a colleague-as-learner encourages an examination of an idea or purpose for its own sake.

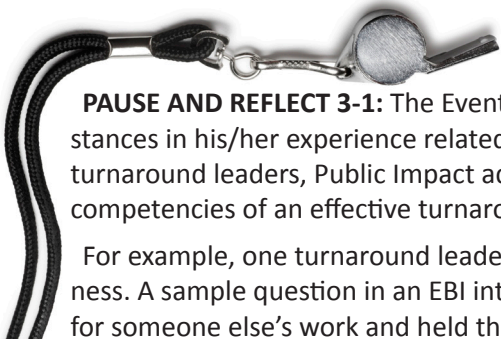
**Adaptability** —Sometimes the best coaching (like teaching) is through spontaneous learning situations even while addressing the goals.

**Caring**—Genuine interest shown through encouragement, empathizing with challenges, and celebrating achievements creates the environment where all learning feels safe and professional growth is the outcome.

**Honesty**—Constructive and complimentary feedback that assists in success is respectful and collegial.

*Virginia Instructional Leadership Training, Session 3, p. 38, www.centerii.org.*

Many times it’s difficult to know from interviews and casual exchanges whether a candidate has the competencies and disposition suited to the coaching role. The recruiting and hiring process is particularly challenging when the agency chooses to use external providers who may not be well known to the sponsors. In early years when only a few coaches were needed to serve a modest number of schools, retired educators were a rich source of recruits to coaching who often had the required knowledge, interpersonal skills, and disposition. With the expanding number of schools in need of coaching support, sponsors will find benefit in using a structured interview protocol to probe candidate’s competencies for the critical coaching role. One option is an adaptation of the “Event Based Interview” recommended by Public Impact for use in selecting turnaround leaders for intensive school change interventions ([http://www.publicimpact.com/images/stories/publicimpact/documents/Turnaround\\_Leader\\_Competencies.pdf](http://www.publicimpact.com/images/stories/publicimpact/documents/Turnaround_Leader_Competencies.pdf)).



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 3-1:** The Event Based Interview (EBI) asks a candidate to tell stories about instances in his/her experience related to the core competencies sought for the position being filled. For turnaround leaders, Public Impact adapted the EBI protocol to elicit responses related to the five core competencies of an effective turnaround leader.

For example, one turnaround leader competency defined by Public Impact is monitoring and directiveness. A sample question in an EBI interview might be, “Think about a time when you set a standard for someone else’s work and held that person accountable for adhering to that standard. Tell me the story.” The story the candidate tells in response to this question reveals how the candidate acts on his/her beliefs, and how he/she employs his/her knowledge and skills in actual settings and real situations. Sponsors charged with selecting coaches can adapt the EBI for its own interview process.

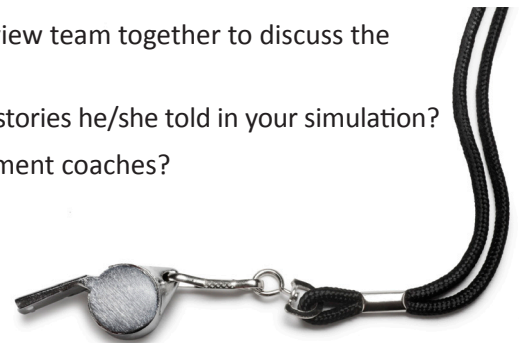
Choose one of CII’s five key coaching qualities—competency, objectivity, adaptability, caring, and honesty—and role play an interview with a coaching candidate. Devise a question in the EBI format —“think about . . .tell me the story” to elicit responses reflecting one of the key qualities. Select one of your group to be the candidate. Take notes of the responses.

A well developed EBI protocol would bring members of the interview team together to discuss the competencies/qualities they heard in the candidate’s stories.

Were you able to discern any of the candidates’ qualities from the stories he/she told in your simulation?

Could a variation of the EBI be useful in selecting school improvement coaches?

What challenges are there to using an EBI protocol?



When agencies sponsoring school improvement coaches have the time, regulatory flexibility, and resources to undertake a comprehensive recruitment and selection process, they can assemble a pool of high-quality providers to deploy to their schools and districts. Agencies with fewer resources and greater constraints may need to focus more intently on providing meaningful and worthwhile training for the personnel they have on hand in order to ensure the quality of the coaching needed to move schools toward their highest levels of attainment.

### Training School Improvement Coaches

A discussion of best practices for training school improvement coaches includes discussion of the content of the training—what coaches need to know and be able to do, when training is provided, and how coaches can be trained in light of tight budgets and limited time.

Each of the states who were early users of Indistar® and its research-based indicators have developed tools and procedures on the process of school improvement as well as the tasks required of teams and their coaches. Each state’s materials reflect its unique perspective on the role of the coach and the desired outcomes

for the school improvement process. New sponsors of coaching support can build their own knowledge about their role by exploring the materials on Indistar® and the training materials produced by the pioneer states, in particular Virginia, Idaho, and North Dakota. State websites where materials are posted are included in the *Appendix, References, and Other Resources* section of this guide.

The content of coaches’ training varies by state, just as each agency is unique in its requirements for coaches. Idaho provides guidance to its coaches for the earliest stages of the coaching process. The importance of establishing a productive relationship with the school team cannot be overstated, a point made in Section 1 of this guide, and Idaho prepares its “capacity builders” (coaches) with a list of activities to remind them of the importance of first impressions. The list shown below reveals as much about the culture and values of the sponsoring agency as it does about the goals of school improvement coaching.

#### Idaho Capacity Building Project Capacity Builder List of Entry Activities

- Meet with the building principal—refer to the Initial Conversation handout.
- Take time to visit with each teacher to gain an understanding of the perceptions each has of his/her school, his/her role, students, parents, celebrations, and concerns.
- Strive to build a trusting relationship.
- Visit and get to know each support staff member, including certificated and classified—counselors, specialists, secretarial staff, attendance person, janitor, cafeteria staff, etc. Focus is on establishing a trusting relationship; gain insights on the perception each has on how the school functions, its students, families, strengths and concerns. Also know that these are individuals who have tremendous insights and can help you to do the work you do.
- Spend time being in the halls when students and teachers are there. Observe how they interact with each other, including students’ conversations with adults.
- Attend some of the student activities, including assemblies, special projects, etc.
- Spend time in classes—teacher may introduce you to the students and ask you to explain your role and how long you will be working with their school. Focus on observing the dynamics of the learning environment. Please remember, you are not evaluating the teacher, and it is helpful to let him/her know what your focus/purpose is.
- Make an effort to be identified with this school community - if they have a lanyard with the school name, get one and use it, or a t-shirt, etc. This demonstrates your sincere intent and purpose to understand this school.
- Spend time with staff in such informal settings as the teacher’s lounge during lunch. Observe the dynamics of the conversations. Who are the “informal power brokers” Are specialists a part of these conversations (counselors, ELL, Special ed., G/T, etc.) How do they talk about students and parents during these conversations?

- It is tremendously helpful to the building of your understanding of the school organization and community if you are invited to sit in on meetings the principal has with students, teachers, parents, community members as he/she addresses issues and concerns. Your role is only as an observer, and you want to enhance your understanding of the issues and processes used to create solutions to problems.
- Define what you observe in terms of how decisions are made—formally and informally when appropriate. Do students have a voice? Do parents have a voice? What drives decisions—space? transportation? cafeteria, janitor, etc.? To what degree are decisions made with the needs of students being kept foremost in mind? Are specialists, such as counselors, ELL teachers, special ed. staff, health services staff included? Is there a formal decision making process, and does every staff member know what it is?
- If you are not familiar with the community, take some time to stroll the streets, have lunch in a local restaurant, stop by the local grocery store, etc. What do community members think of their schools? What drives the community to exist? What is important in its identity and its history? Do staff members live in the community or commute from other towns?
- Please keep in mind, your role is not as the building or district administrator—you are to figure out ways to “build the capacity” of the school and/or district to improve the learning for all of its students. A subtle, but important indicator of how others may perceive your role is in the way you dress. Generally, be casual in your appearance. Your presence should be “low profile” as you are the “sage behind the stage.” You facilitate the success to occur, but you do not want to create a dependency relationship. To this end, it is helpful to keep in mind the need to create a learning environment in which learning will continue to improve when you are no longer involved as a Capacity Builder. Will the strategies for improvement be sustained?
- Basically, your effectiveness as a Capacity Builder is dependent upon the trusting relationships you establish with the building/district administrator, staff, students, parent, and community members. Obviously, some relationships are more critical to your effectiveness than others.

### The “Big Ideas” Which Support the Entry Activities

- Build an understanding of the school as a system—what is working, and what is making it work? What are the resources available to do the work? In looking at this system, develop depth to your understanding. How is the school a reflection of the community? Are there any inconsistencies?
- Enhance the school staff, students, and parents in taking ownership of school improvement efforts. If this is not achieved, sustainability will not be maintained and the effectiveness of Capacity Building in that school/district will have gone the way of so many innovations in education.
- From the beginning, be thinking and start to introduce the idea of sustainability into conversations which focus on changes and related strategies and methodologies.

Idaho Building Capacity Project provides a guidance protocol for entry activities that have been used successfully in schools: <http://csi.boisestate.edu/improvement/files/CBListofEntryActivities.pdf>


Idaho sets a high bar for the knowledge and skills coaches bring to the work. The expectations are comprehensive, including topics to be addressed early in the enterprise as well as reminder of points to be made as the relationship develops. The reader can infer the “theory of change” Idaho is conveying in its focus on the role of collaborative inquiry as the means by which coaches and their teams will engage in school improvement. The principles underlying Idaho’s system of support for its struggling schools comes through clearly in this list of reminders.

Two master documents capture Idaho’s tools for school improvement teams and their coaches:

- <http://csi.boisestate.edu/improvement/CBResourceBinder>
- <http://csi.boisestate.edu/improvement/files/IBC-PlanningProcessGuide>

North Dakota put together a collection of guidance materials for its NDMILE process (North Dakota Moving to Improve Learning for Everyone) built on the Indistar® framework (<http://www.dpi.state.nd.us/resource/NDMILE.shtm>). North Dakota and Idaho merit high praise from school teams and coaches for merging a range of required forms and plans into a common web-based platform, reducing the number of often repetitive documents to be submitted by schools receiving federal funds.

Figure 1. North Dakota's Training Agenda



**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**  
**Dr. Wayne G. Sanstead, State Superintendent**  
**600 East Boulevard Avenue Dept 201, Bismarck, ND 58505-0440**

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**NDMILE**  
*North Dakota Moving to Improve Learning for Everyone*

**Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) and Capacity Builders (CBs)**  
**July 12, 13 and 14, 2010**  
**Brynhild Haugland Room**

**AGENDA**

**Day One: Monday, July 12, 2010**  
**Content**

1. Activities to ensure that NDMILE TAPs and CBs are grounded in their understanding of the NDMILE indicators and the direct relationship the indicators have to the Standards-Based Teaching and Learning Cycle and the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners.
2. Skills that NDMILE TAPs and CBs need for leading the change process, and information and discussion on why schools and educators need to change to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners.

**Day Two: Tuesday, July 13, 2010**  
**Content**

1. Background information for NDMILE TAPs and CBs in the Standards-Based Teaching and Learning Cycle
  - a. What do we teach?
  - b. How do we teach it?
  - c. How do we know if students learned it?
  - d. What do we do if students know it already and what do we do if students do not get it?

**Day Three: Wednesday, July 14, 2010**  
**Content**

1. "Bringing It All Together"
  - a. NDMILE TAPs and CBs will examine real case scenarios from districts using the NDMILE process. Indicators will be reviewed, indicator themes will be identified and participants will be coached on how to assist schools as they use the NDMILE indicators to address the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners.



The question of when to conduct training for coaches is controlled by available resources and compatible calendars. Illinois, North Dakota, and Oklahoma convene coaches for an initial training in the summer before the school term begins. Idaho brings coaches together at the start of the school year. States with restricted resources who use coaches for schools and districts in greatest need are constrained by the timing of the release of student achievement results and accountability determinations. For the most part, states using a coaching with indicators approach find it advantageous to convene coaches and other support providers involved as early and as frequently as resources allow.

North Dakota's training agenda offers an example of the knowledge and skills that they choose to feature in their summer training retreat (see Figure 1). The training agenda focuses not only on the core framework of the ND MILE process—the research-based Indistar® indicators—but also allocates substantial time to the process skills coaches will use in their interactions with team leaders, team members, and the school community.

Note also that North Dakota chose to spend an entire day of the retreat to ensure deep and comprehensive understanding of a core state initiative, the Standards-Based Teaching and Learning Cycle. Recall that Virginia, New Hampshire, and Idaho listed a requirement for coaches that they be informed of existing plans and initiatives. North Dakota reinforces that expectation by allocating substantial time on the training retreat agenda to ensuring broad understanding of this major state effort.

As mentioned previously, state agencies and other sponsors of school improvement coaching allocate resources for training according to their means. Conditions where resources are limited have inspired creative approaches to providing the training needed to ensure at least parallel and consistent services to schools from a varied collection of individuals in the role of coaches. Face-to-face is the preferred setting for initial training to enable the sponsoring agency to develop its relationship with the coaches. Just as schools and coaches build trust and respect from regular interactions, the sponsoring agency and coach begin to earn each others' trust and respect in their face-to-face meetings. Adhering to agreed-upon norms, following through on commitments, and clear and regular communication all contribute to the emergence of a productive working relationship between the sponsor and the coach.

Where face-to-face training is not feasible, online training strategies are available. Indicators in Action™,

developed by CII, provides text and video demonstrations of the research-based practices described in the Indistar® indicators in actual classrooms and team meetings. Indicators in Action™ is designed to be used in conjunction with a comprehensive approach to school improvement, including rapid improvement for schools not meeting achievement targets. Expanding on the activities suggested in Sections 1 and 2 of this guide, in which team members are asked to imagine what the indicator will look like when fully implemented, the Indicators in Action™ show real teachers in actual classrooms employing the practices to improve student outcomes.

States have made effective use of online training when geography, finances, or calendars have made it difficult to bring people together. Virginia conducts monthly web-based meetings to provide ongoing support to coaches in a variety of state and federal initiatives including school improvement. Virginia has documented the success of its coaching with the Indistar® indicators process, and attributes frequent, regular, sustained attention to the continual improvement needs of the school improvement coaches themselves as a critical factor in that success.

## Supporting School Improvement Coaches

Most of us would agree that the limiting factor in accomplishing many of our best-laid plans is TIME. Time to research, time to plan, time to execute, time to think—all are precious resources in the dynamic environment of school improvement. For sponsors of school improvement initiatives, time to provide targeted, sustained support to school improvement coaches is often in short supply, requiring careful discrimination to determine where to allocate time for support in order to derive the greatest benefit.

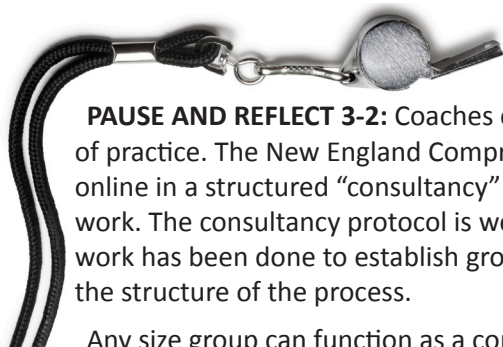
Virginia offers us a model for effective support and ongoing training for coaches via monthly web-based meetings. Coaches can rely on monthly sessions to learn from one another, to problem solve together, and to be informed and alert to adjustments in the needs and priorities of the state sponsors. State agencies gain from their commitment to regular monthly meetings by learning how changing conditions in the field might indicate a need for changes in state policies or practices to reduce demand and improve outcomes. Two features improve the effectiveness of Virginia's approach: (1) advance planning—schedules of web meetings set a year in advance and (2) reliable commitment to convene the sessions. As golfers, tennis players, and highly effective leaders recognize, it's all in the follow-through!

Missed commitments diminish trust, and poorly executed commitments diminish respect. Virginia's commitment to high quality, meaningful, worthwhile, regular meetings improves the quality of coaching and the success of schools.

Even the most skilled and experienced school improvement coaches will appreciate the support provided by opportunities to engage with their peers in collaborative problem solving. In fact, it is often *the most* skilled and experienced providers who request these kinds of opportunities! Sponsors of coaching services can use protocols such as the consultancy protocol described in **Pause and Reflect 3-2** to structure collaborative prob-

lem-solving experiences in either online or face-to-face settings. The protocol focuses attention on the problem or dilemma faced by the presenter and minimizes the focus on the individual, raising the likelihood that the topics raised will be difficult issues rather than trivial ones.

"Checklists are our friends." In addition to regular and ongoing meetings of coaches, agencies responsible for providing coaches can improve their effectiveness through frequent and regular communication in other formats. Organizations of all types have made wise use of "shorthand" guides in the form of checklists to manage essential but straightforward tasks and to provide reminders of critical principles. By relying on checklists



**PAUSE AND REFLECT 3-2:** Coaches can engage face-to-face or remotely to address common issues of practice. The New England Comprehensive Center has successfully convened state representatives online in a structured "consultancy" protocol to share challenges and opportunities in conducting their work. The consultancy protocol is well suited to either face-to-face or online meetings *if* preliminary work has been done to establish ground rules, develop trust among the participants, and respect for the structure of the process.

Any size group can function as a consultancy. One member volunteers to present a dilemma, a situation, event, or concern about which there is no one right answer. Ideally, the presenter would have considered the elements of the dilemma and prepared one or more focus questions to ask the others, who become the consultancy group.

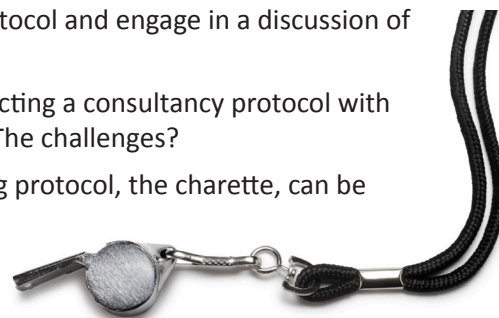
The session follows this outline:

- presenter provides an overview of the dilemma and the focus questions ( 5- 10 mins);
- the consultancy group asks clarifying questions (5 mins);
- the consultancy group asks probing questions (10 mins);
- the consultancy group discusses the dilemma while the presenter listens in silence (taking notes is ok) (15 mins);
- the presenter reflects on what he or she heard, and shares what resonates (5 mins); and
- the facilitator debriefs the process with all (5 mins).

If time allows, invite a volunteer from your group to present a dilemma. Another volunteer can serve as facilitator to monitor the time of each segment of the protocol. The others should play out their roles as members of the consultancy group as described in the protocol and engage in a discussion of the presenter's dilemma.

During the debrief, consider the benefits and challenges of conducting a consultancy protocol with your school improvement coaches. What would be the benefits? The challenges?

Details of the consultancy protocol, and a parallel problem-solving protocol, the charette, can be found at <http://www.nsrfharmony.org/protocol/search.html>



and calendars as reminders of coaching responsibilities, school improvement sponsors can devote scarce support time to more critical needs, such as problem solving and conflict resolution.

Checklists and calendars cut down on agency time responding to the same questions from multiple coaches

and encourage good habits of advance planning by school teams.

Here’s a basic checklist from Idaho that reminds coaches and their teams of the required components of a completed plan (note: WISE is the Idaho acronym for the online Indistar® tool):

## WISE Tool School Improvement Plan

### Compliance Checklist

Important Note: The following is a list of the minimum requirements to be completed prior to official submission of a school improvement plan in the WISE Tool, due April 1, 2010. It is our strong recommendation that this NOT be used as a list to guide your planning process, but rather a final check off sheet prior to submission. We believe that if the WISE Tool process is followed (assess, plan, and continuously monitor the plan) and driven by your individual school needs and action plan, that you will complete the compliance requirements and go far beyond in creating and implementing a meaningful school improvement plan designed to impact student learning and achievement.

- Complete the School Improvement Supplemental Plan, on the WISE Tool Dashboard.

#### Requirements by Indicator Clusters

##### Establishing a Team Structure with Specific Duties and Time for Instructional Planning

- Assess all indicators
- Plan for a minimum of 3 indicators

##### Focusing the Principal’s Role on Building Leadership Capacity, Achieving Learning Goals, and Improving Instruction

- Assess all indicators
- Plan for a minimum of 2 indicators

##### Aligning Classroom Observations with Evaluation Criteria and Professional Development

- Assess all indicators
- Plan for a minimum of 3 indicators

#### Indicators Related To:

**Assessment** (several indicator clusters in the WISE Tool are related to various aspects of Assessment)

- Assess and Plan for a minimum of 5 indicators
- Make sure that you have established specific objectives for progress for each student subgroup that has not yet met AYP

**Instruction** (several indicator clusters in the WISE Tool are related to various aspects of Instruction)

- Assess and Plan for a minimum of 7 indicators
- Make sure that developed tasks describe any policies and practices that are in place to help all students meet AYP in core academic subjects
- Utilize Scientifically Based Research strategies to strengthen academic subjects and address areas where AYP has not yet been achieved

**Note: A maximum of 5 indicators marked as “fully implemented” can count towards the 20 total school indicators required for the WISE Tool plan.** We anticipate that many schools and districts will have more than 5 indicators marked as “fully implemented,” however a minimum of 15 school indicators must have plans/tasks developed within WISE Tool.

- Submit the plan to the district for review upon completion.
- After district approval of the plan, click the “Submit” button on the WISE Tool Dashboard.
- District will Submit Copies of Assurance Pages by April 1, 2010

<http://csi.boisestate.edu/improvement/files/School%20Improvement%20Planning%20Guide%20-%202009-2010%20-%20Updated%202-26-10.pdf>

The Idaho checklist gives a clear frame of reference for the important deadlines coaches and their teams must meet to comply with state and federal regulations. It is important to recognize, however, that the checklist is merely a shorthand summary of a deeper, richer, more complex process leading to improvement in school programs, practices, and outcomes. Coaches who rely only on the checklist will shortchange their schools and limit their impact. Sponsors who provide checklists to improve efficiency should ensure sufficient attention by coaches and school improvement teams to the processes underlying the checked box. Too many failed efforts to improve student outcomes can display page after page of completed check-boxed lists of required actions.

To ensure clear communication of expectations and the timeline for their completion, the *New Hampshire Handbook for Restructuring Schools* outlines a calendar showing required actions by the agency as well as by the schools involved in the improvement planning process. [http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/integrated/title\\_i\\_a\\_docs2009-10.htm](http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/integrated/title_i_a_docs2009-10.htm)

Of course, year-to-year variations in reporting formats and due dates are to be expected, so state agencies and other sponsors of processes like school improvement must commit to updating checklists, calendars, and timelines to enable coaches and their teams sufficient notice to plan their work accordingly.

Table 2. Planning Phase—Brief Overview

Approximate Date	New Hampshire DOE Actions	School & District Actions
April	AYP results released; Title I schools notified of status	Schools not making AYP for a fifth year receive notice of restructuring status
May/June (prior to the end of the school year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convene a meeting with all restructuring schools</li> <li>Confirm current resources available to each restructuring school</li> <li>Identify NH DOE Coach for each restructuring school</li> <li>Plan and conduct orientation to CII Rapid Improvement process for restructuring schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School notifies teachers of the school’s restructuring status</li> <li>Recruit and identify members for the restructuring team</li> <li>Participate in orientation meeting</li> <li>District notifies community of restructuring status</li> <li>School and district attend orientation to CII Rapid Improvement process</li> </ul>
Summer/Fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain communication with restructuring team leader</li> <li>NH DOE Coaches participate in training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School conducts a comprehensive needs assessment</li> <li>District provides personnel and data for needs assessment</li> </ul>
Fall	NH DOE Coaches and staff provide technical assistance to restructuring school teams	School participates in applicable technical assistance events, including additional training in use of the online Rapid Improvement tool
Fall/Winter	Convene NH DOE Coaches regularly to clarify standards of evidence and quality feedback	School team continues the Rapid Improvement Indicators Self Assessment
Winter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan and conduct progress meeting for restructuring teams</li> <li>Provide guidance on components of the restructuring plan and sample formats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School and District attend progress meeting</li> <li>School completes self assessment, drafts restructuring plan</li> </ul>
Spring	NH DOE Coaches and NH DOE Contacts review restructuring plan drafts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School submits restructuring plan by agreed upon date</li> <li>School revises restructuring plan if indicated by NH DOE feedback</li> </ul>
April	Release AYP Results	School and District continue planning implementation actions, esp. summer
May/June	NH DOE coaches provide information and guidance for restructuring implementation	District and School plan data collection around implementation action effects

The continuous improvement of schools is a meaningful endeavor that benefits from the knowledge created by the successful improvement efforts of others. School improvement guided by a comprehensive set of research-based indicators, such as Indistar<sup>®</sup>, and supported by high-quality coaches has been shown to result in improvements, not just in the planning process, but in student outcomes as well. However, just like leadership, instructional practice, and multiple other

human endeavors, coaching quality varies and can be enhanced with thoughtful, targeted guidance and meaningful, sustained support. The information in this guide is intended to give coaches and their supervisors a starting point for putting in place the most effective services possible to lead schools to achieve the goals they value for all their students.

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A corkboard with a light-colored wooden frame. A purple pushpin is pinned to the top center of a white rectangular note. The note contains the text "SECTION 4: Monitoring Coaching" written in a cursive font.

SECTION 4:  
*Monitoring Coaching*





Organizations undertaking an initiative to provide school improvement coaching services are committing valuable resources in the belief that coaching will improve the ability of schools to help all students achieve academic success. How can sponsors of school improvement coaching initiatives determine whether their beliefs are well founded? This section of the guide will survey the strategies used by agencies leading the way in establishing a structured program of coaching. Because most coaching for school improvement initiatives are in their early stages, much of the discussion in this section will address questions waiting to be answered, a research agenda of sorts, that can guide new adopters of an indicator-based improvement process to plan for, collect, and assess evidence of both implementation and impact of a coaching program.

The continuous improvement cycle discussed in Section 1 for coaches and their school teams offers a structure for supervisors to think about their work in the coaching project. As coaching tasks evolve across the stages of the improvement cycle, so too will supervision tasks change as the cycle continues.

Prerequisite tasks include selecting and hiring qualified providers to serve as coaches, offering training for coaches in the improvement process structured around research-based indicators, and establishing norms and protocols for the work moving forward. Just as the coach is advised to begin his/her engagement with the team by setting explicit expectations and commitments (see Pause and Reflect 1-1), supervisors are advised to be clear in defining requirements for coaches. Just as attention to the foundational tasks will serve coaches well as the improvement process advances, agencies sponsoring a coaching program will be well served in monitoring coaching implementation and impact if expectations are clearly defined at the outset.

#### Layers of Participation in the Indistar® System

Division/District/LEA					
Coach 1		Coach 2		Coach 3	
School Team A	School Team B	School Team C	School Team D	School Team E	School Team F

Sponsoring Organization/SEA											
District/Division/LEA 1				District/Division/LEA 2				District/Division/LEA 3			
Coach A		Coach B		Coach C		Coach D		Coach E		Coach F	
School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4	School 5	School 6	School 7	School 8	School 9	School 10	School 11	School 12

As coaches move through the cycle with their teams assessing current status and planning for change, supervisors of the process will be monitoring implementation of the strategies and protocols that are central to the initiative. For those using Indistar®, strategies and tools for monitoring the coaching process are embedded in the online system. Supplemented with reports submitted to address unique needs, the system allows convenient access to the products of the team's assessment and planning work, as well as the formative feedback from the coach to the team by way of coaching comments.

The Indistar® system allows for multiple layers to monitor the coaching process. State agencies or districts (also referred to as divisions, LEAs) can be responsible for overseeing coaching. In jurisdictions in which the state has responsibility for monitoring the coaching process, the state log-in password allows the agency or other responsible group to examine the work of districts and schools and the exchanges between coaches and their teams. Districts may access all the information for schools within their district as well as the work of the coaches for the schools in their district. (Descriptions of the roles and access permissions available in Indistar® can be found in Appendix D.)

The charts below represent the multiple layers of Indistar® participation. Each sponsoring agency will differ in the number of schools assigned per coach, in the number of schools and coaches per district, and in the number of schools, coaches, and districts under the supervision of the sponsoring organization. Indistar® allows different levels of access aligned to the areas of responsibility for each participant, offering significant efficiency advantages to managers responsible for monitoring implementation of the coaching initiative across each of the layers.

## Monitoring Implementation

Checking on the completion of coaching tasks defined when assigning coaches to their school is the most basic level of monitoring for supervisors. A snippet of the requirements of coaches from Virginia and New Hampshire was presented in Section 3 of the guide. Here’s a graphic North Dakota uses to represent the tasks and timeline for their “capacity builders.”



In addition to periodically examining the work of school teams and their coaches by accessing Indistar® remotely, both North Dakota and Virginia require coaches to submit monthly reports detailing their activities and the progress of their teams toward planning and implementation benchmarks. The checklist from the WISE system used by the Idaho state education agency was shown in Section 3. It is relatively straightforward for coaches and their supervisors to monitor completion of tasks and timelines on the WISE checklist.

In addition to task reminders in the form of checklists, sponsors of school improvement planning processes will expect regular communication about team progress. Efficient systems for providing regular updates from coaches can be established using any number of technology tools—wikis, blogs, collaborative workspaces such as Moodle and SharePoint. Ideally, the choice of tool will suit the capabilities of the users. Regular, meaningful communication about the work underway in the field will enable state agency staff, district supervisors or other agency sponsors to monitor coaching performance and document school progress.

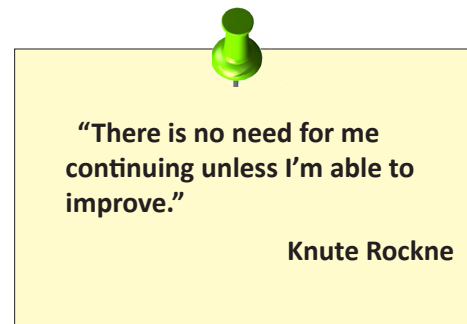
If state agencies can “automate” compliance tasks and communication systems, more time will be available to engage coaches in exercises to enhance their problem-solving skills, strengthen their ability to deal with team conflicts, and improve the quality and impact of coaching feedback. These are the essential reasons for committing time and resources to provide coaches to schools engaged in an improvement process. Support for these critical coaching skills conveys to schools the

commitment of state agencies to school success.

In general, using Indistar® and supplemental reports, supervisors have a relatively easy task of tracking frequency of contact between coaches and teams, the number of indicators assessed, and the content of meetings recorded in the agendas and minutes. More complex is the task of monitoring the quality of interactions and the impact of coaching on schools and their students.

### Monitoring impact

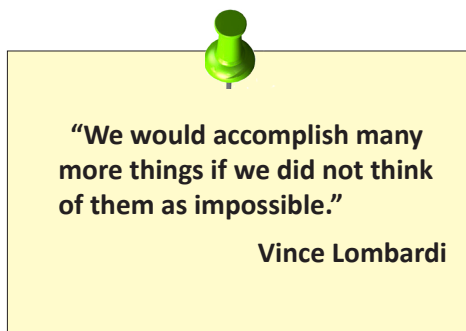
Improvement initiatives can be framed by the questions “Where are we now?”; “Where do we want to go?”; and “How will we get there?” As noted in the opening of this guide, sponsors of school improvement coaching initiatives recognize that the challenge of rapid and continuous school improvement places demands on school personnel that require support to ensure their success. The school improvement coach is one support system that serves as a response to the “How will we get there?” question. But, just as school teams are expected to monitor whether their improvement strategies are leading to the desired outcomes, sponsors of coaching services are expected to monitor





whether their choice of coaching as a strategy is, in fact, leading to school improvement.

What is the impact a coach is expected to have on the recipients of their services? Recall that Idaho and North Dakota refer to their school improvement coaches as “capacity builders.” This title for coaches reflects the primary goal of coaching, namely, the enhanced ability of school improvement teams to execute an effective process that leads to continuous improvement. One impact to be assessed, then, is whether coaching is raising the capacity of school teams to lead positive change. Taken a step further, the long-term goal of high-capacity school improvement is stronger student achievement. Even more challenging than measuring changes in capacity is the effort to assess the impact of coaching on how (and whether) school improvement activities lead to changes in student achievement.



At this stage of the development and implementation of coaching for school improvement, there are few examples of common measures of school capacity that are suitable across the broad spectrum of schools with varied capacities and resources. New sponsors of school improvement coaching projects can contribute to knowledge in the field by sharing examples of trustworthy measures of changing school capacity.

Some of the measures of change suggested for school teams monitoring implementation and impact described in previous sections of this guide could be adapted by supervisors to monitor change in school capacity. For example, visualizing the desired impact on team capacity if coaching is fully and effectively implemented (as in **Pause and Reflect 1-4**) requires the sponsors to be explicit in their depictions of observable changes in school team knowledge, skills, and behavior. When observable changes are identified, self-assessment surveys can be developed to solicit perception data before and at multiple points during the coaching program. (The Bernhardt sources listed in the *Appendix, References, and Other Resources* section offer templates for self-report surveys adaptable for this

purpose.) Team members, other stakeholders involved with coaches, and coaches themselves can report their knowledge at various stages of the improvement process. Using surveys, sponsors can have personnel rate their skill in core functions such as communication and reaching consensus, planning and documentation, collecting and identifying reliable evidence of instructional practices, and other skills central to effective improvement process management. When capacity is defined, observable indicators of capacity identified, and evidence of current status collected over time, agencies overseeing coaching services will have more data on which to determine whether and which coaching practices promote the ability of school teams to conduct an effective improvement process.

A second goal of school improvement coaching, to create the conditions that promote high levels of student achievement, is not easily measured directly. However, correlations between coaching support and reductions in the number of schools failing to meet the state accountability target offer some confidence that the practice can exert influence at the classroom level. By looking at student achievement and school accountability measures over two years, Virginia school improvement leaders note a dramatic reduction in the number of schools not meeting state accreditation standards. Since the inception of its coaching program using Indistar®, Virginia has seen the number of schools in “warning” status drop from 132 in 2007-2008 to 72 in 2008-2009 to 24 in 2009-2010. For 2010-2011, Virginia has identified only 12 schools who have failed to meet all state accreditation standards.

Agencies instituting a coaching program to support school improvement are invited to collect and share their findings about the direct (capacity) or indirect (student achievement) impacts of their coaching initiatives to inform planners putting future programs in place. In addition, useful data can guide decision makers to refine existing programs for subsequent cohorts of schools in need of coaching services. In this way, sponsors and supervisors can model the continuous improvement practices they promote through their school coaching initiatives.

## Next Steps

In collecting best practices from the pioneers launching coaching for school improvement initiatives, a number of ideas emerged for maintaining, reinforcing, and sustaining a coaching program and achieving maximum impact in building school capacity for student success. These ideas are listed here for those considering sponsoring coaching support for schools. Readers are invited to make use of these ideas and share their thoughts, decisions, questions, and results with others on the Indistar® blog at <http://indistar.blogspot.com/>.

Establishing collegial communities of coaches:

The power of professional learning in communities of educators facing common challenges with similar needs has been demonstrated in many areas of education. Sponsors of coaching for school improvement can establish local or regional connections between coaches to foster collaborative problem solving.

Establishing collegial communities of school improvement teams:

Engaging teams is more logistically challenging than bringing individuals together, but teams can host demonstrations of their successes—or even a challenge—in online or face-to-face settings

to learn from others in similar situations. When planned to follow a clearly defined agenda with explicit outcomes and including opportunities for discussion between presenters and audience, these exchanges can expand the range of ideas among the participants thereby building capacity at a regional or state level.

Establish collegial communities of coaching supervisors:

The Center on Innovation & Improvement hosted by the Academic Development Institute ([www.centerii.org](http://www.centerii.org)) regularly invites agencies using Indistar® as the framework for a school improvement coaching initiative to come together and learn from one another. Agencies which employ several coaching supervisors can adapt the CII model and bring the supervisors together to address their role and responsibilities in service of the coaching initiative. For small states with few supervisors (and few resources), contact with neighboring states can be helpful. Contact CII (contact information given at the back of this manual) or post a memo on the Indistar® blog or the Indistar® community page on Facebook to connect with likely collaborators.

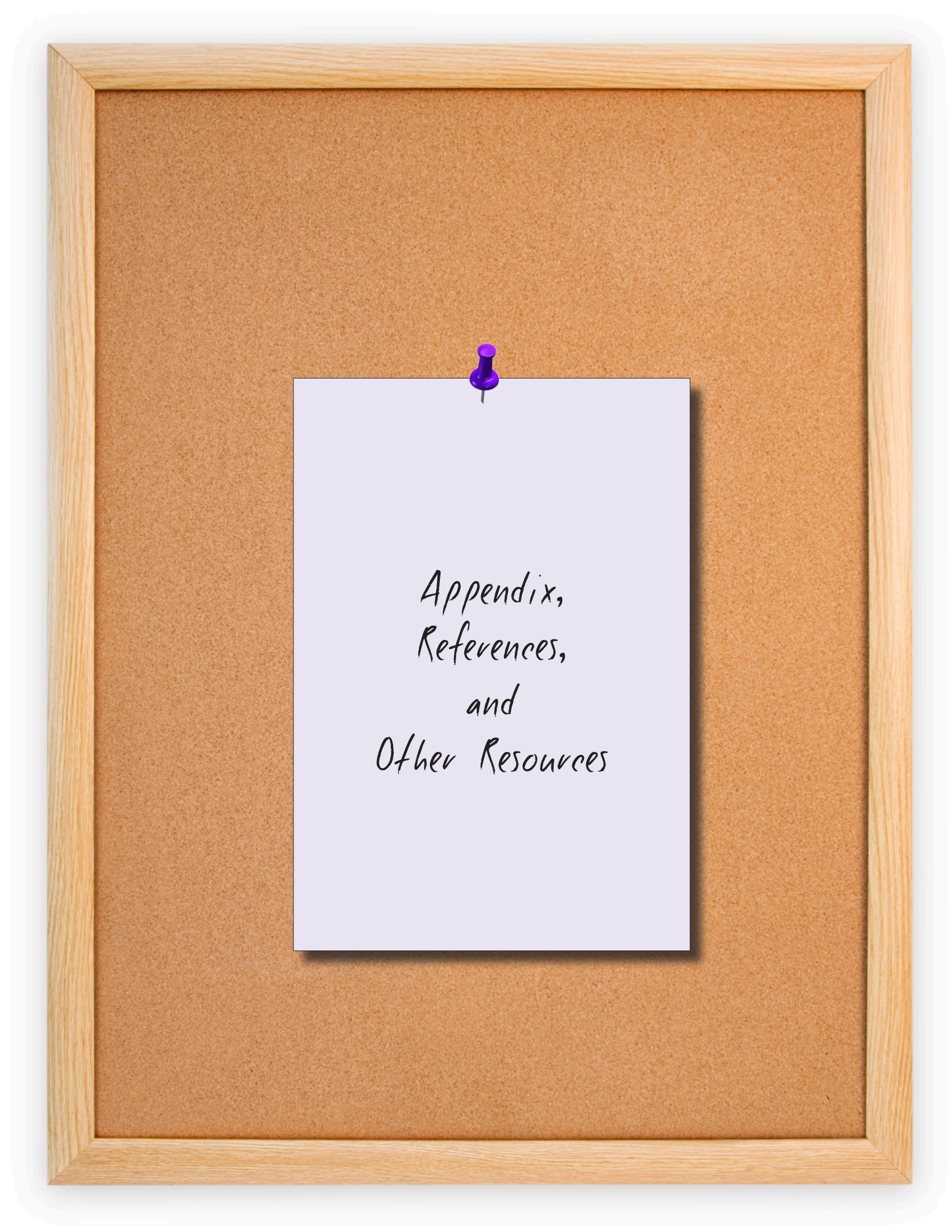
## About the Author

Karen Laba is an education consultant specializing in the design, development, and evaluation of education systems. Across her career, Dr. Laba has worked with state education agencies, districts, schools, and education management organizations to guide continual improvement efforts consistent with local culture and values.

Dr. Laba's protocols are designed to build local capacity to identify strengths and develop plans for change. Her instruments and training strategies are intended for use by local practitioners not only to inform their assessment of school processes but also to build their own expertise in systematic and reliable examination of educational practices. Karen worked with state education agencies to develop accountability systems for traditional and charter public schools and to train personnel to conduct both formative and summative assessments of school quality. Dr. Laba collaborated with agency staff to develop systems of support for schools to enable them to meet challenging targets for student achievement. She guided the design of systems that maximize scarce state and local resources by focusing attention on those factors with the greatest influence on school quality and effectiveness. She is putting her designs into operation through her current work as a coach to school improvement teams in New Hampshire.

Dr. Laba earned her Ph.D. in Education from the University of New Hampshire. She started her education career as a 7th and 8th grade science teacher, then taught high school biology, and was an adjunct instructor in science for prospective elementary teachers. She is Principal Consultant for KAL Consulting in Dover, NH.



A corkboard with a light-colored wooden frame. A purple pushpin is pinned to the top center of the corkboard, holding a white rectangular note. The note contains handwritten text in a cursive font.

Appendix,  
References,  
and  
Other Resources





## Appendix A : Sample Wise Ways®

Indicator: The principal monitors curriculum and classroom instruction regularly. (58)

### Evidence Review:

Maintain high visibility and involvement

Visibility refers to the presence of the principal on the school campus and in classrooms. High visibility by executives has been called management by touring around. In schools, this touring has been associated with positive effects on students' and teachers' attitudes and behaviors. Although the evidence is not conclusive, researchers generally find that learning-focused leaders spend more time in classrooms and on the school campus than does the average school administrator.

Personal involvement means that these administrators are directly involved in leading the school's educational program. Leaders in turnaround organizations in general and highly productive schools in particular have a strong orientation to and affinity for the core technology of their business – learning and teaching in the education enterprise. In the area of pedagogy, they are knowledgeable about and deeply involved in the instructional program of the school and are heavily invested in instruction, spending considerable time on the teaching function. They model the importance of teaching by being directly involved in the design and implementation of the instructional program. They are also knowledgeable about and heavily invested in the curricular program of the school. Finally, they are knowledgeable about assessment practices and personally involved with colleagues in crafting, implementing, and monitoring assessment systems at the classroom and school levels and in checking the effectiveness of NCLB school restructuring work.

**Source:** Sam Redding. *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*

### Evidence Review:

A case study of nine urban elementary schools found that the principals, sometimes with the school planning teams, monitored progress by continually analyzing student data, conducting classroom observations, and analyzing student work to determine the adjustments needed in instruction (Johnson & Asera, 1999). Principals spent a large part of their time in the classrooms—as much as 40 percent in one school—to observe teaching and improve instruction (Johnson & Asera). Common adjustments in strategies entailed adding professional development in teaching-specific skills and resources, such as supplemental curricula.

### Evidence Review:

The school leader should become the instructional leader and be highly visible in classrooms. Strong instructional leadership shows the importance of strengthening instruction that is aligned to standards, curricula, and assessments and guided by ongoing data analysis of both achievement and non-achievement outcomes (Murphy, 2007). The principal needs to set an example, lead the effort, and maintain vigilance toward the targeted, measurable goals (Picucci et al., 2002a).

In one case study, the principal and the assistant principal made short, regular classroom observations. These observations gave school leaders informal and impromptu opportunities to see what instruction was like in classrooms throughout the school. The leaders prepared a one page summary of the observation within 24 hours to share and discuss with the teacher. Rather than become part of the teacher's formal professional record, the summary was used to hone instructional practices (Whiteside, 2006). In another study, principals in turnaround schools indicated that they spent a lot of time in classrooms, monitored teachers closely, modeled good teaching practices, and were highly visible throughout the school. They were also involved in every phase of instructional planning (Duke, n.d.).

**Source:** IES National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools*

### References and other resources:

Duke, D. (n.d.). *Keys to sustaining successful school turnaround*. Unpublished manuscript. Charlottesville, VA:

*Darden/Curry Partnership for Leaders in Education*. Retrieved August 2007, from [http://www.darden.edu/html/standard.aspx?menu\\_id=39&styleid=3&id=3215](http://www.darden.edu/html/standard.aspx?menu_id=39&styleid=3&id=3215)

Johnson, J. F., & Asera, R. (Eds.). (1999). *Hope for urban education: A study of nine high-performing, high-poverty, urban elementary schools*. Washington, DC: Policy Studies Associates and The University of Texas at Austin, The Charles A. Dana Center.

Murphy, J. (2007). Restructuring through learning-focused leadership. In H. Walberg (Ed.), *Handbook on restructuring and substantial school improvement* (pp. 71–84). Lincoln, IL: Center on Innovation and Improvement.

Picucci, A. C., Brownson, A., Kahlert, R., & Sobel, A. (2002a). *Driven to succeed: High-performing, high-poverty, turnaround middle schools. Volume I: Cross-case analysis of high-performing, high-poverty, turnaround middle schools*. Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, The Charles A. Dana Center.

Whiteside, V. B. (2006). *Meeting the challenge of No Child Left Behind: How an inner-city middle school succeeded*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Fordham University, New York City.



## Appendix B: Feedback Using Bloom’s Taxonomy

(Adapted from Idaho Improvement Planning Process Guide, pp. 135-137, <http://csi.boisestate.edu/improvement/files/IBCPlanningProcessGuide.pdf> )

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues proposed a classification of thinking that continues to provide a useful reference for describing the complexity of human ideas. The Idaho Improvement Planning Process Guide lists the categories Bloom identified and examples of question probes that can elicit responses of varying levels of complexity.

A school improvement coach can refer to the question stems to craft formative feedback comments to probe deeply into the team’s analysis of current practice or descriptions of desired outcomes.

In his original taxonomy, Bloom et al. offered this hierarchy:

- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Comprehension
- Application
- Analysis
- Synthesis
- Evaluation

More recent discussions of the taxonomy propose a few changes in terminology and a switch in the sequence of the last two categories:

Remembering	Retrieval
Understanding	Comprehension
Applying	Analysis
Analyzing	Knowledge Utilization
Evaluating	Metacognition
Creating	Self-system Thinking
Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001	Marzano & Kendall, 2007

Before posting coaching comments online or meeting with the team in person, the coach can review the question stems aligned with Bloom’s hierarchy and plan ways to provide feedback that pushes team thinking to the highest levels.

**Knowledge/Understanding:** arrange, define, duplicate, label, list, memorize, name, order, recognize, relate, recall, repeat, reproduce, state.

- What is. . . ?
- How is . . . ?
- Where is . . . ?
- When did . . . happen?
- How did . . . happen?
- How would you explain . . . ?
- Why did . . . ?
- How would you show. . . ?
- Can you select. . . ?
- Can you list. . . ?
- Which one . . . ?

**Comprehension:** classify, describe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate.

- How would you classify the type of. . . ?
- Will you state in your own words. . . ?
- How would you rephrase the meaning. . . ?
- What facts or ideas show. . . ?
- What is the main idea of. . . ?
- Which statements (or evidence) support(s). . . ?
- Can you explain what is happening. . . what is meant. . . ?
- What can you say about. . . ?
- How would you summarize. . . ?

**Application:** apply, choose, demonstrate, dramatize, employ, illustrate, interpret, operate, practice, schedule, sketch, solve, use, write.

- How would you use. . . ?
- What examples can you find to. . . ?
- How would you solve using what you have learned. . . ?
- How would you organize. . . to show. . . ?
- How would you show your understanding/your reasons for . . . ?
- What approach would you use to . . . ?
- What other way would you plan to . . . ?
- What would result if. . . ?
- Can you make use of those facts/that data to . . . ?
- What elements would you choose to change in order to. . . ?

- What questions would you ask in an interview to learn . . . ?

**Analysis:** analyze, appraise, calculate, categorize, compare, contrast, criticize, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, examine, experiment, question, test.

- How would you compare. . . ? contrast. . . ?
- What are the relevant parts or features of. . . ?
- How is . . . related to . . . ?
- Why do you think . . . ?
- What is a theme. . . ?
- What motive is there. . . ?
- Can you list the parts. . . ?
- What inference can you make . . . ?
- What conclusions can you draw. . . ?
- How would you categorize. . . ?
- Can you identify the different parts. . . ?
- What evidence can you find. . . ?
- What is the relationship between. . . ?
- Can you make a distinction between. . . ?
- What is the function of. . . ?
- What ideas justify. . . ?

**Synthesis:** arrange, assemble, collect, compose, construct, create, design, develop, formulate, manage, organize, plan, prepare, propose, set up, write.

- What changes would you make to solve. . . ?
- How can you improve. . . ?
- What would happen if. . . ?
- Can you elaborate on the reason. . . ?
- Can you propose an alternative. . . ?
- How could you adapt to create a different. . . ?
- How could you change/modify the plot /plan . . . ?
- What can be done to minimize/maximize. . . ?
- What way would you design. . . ?
- Suppose you could. . . what would you do . . . ?
- How would you test. . . ?
- Can you predict the outcome if. . . ?
- How would you estimate the results for. . . ?
- Can you construct a model that would change. . . ?

**Evaluation:** appraise, argue, assess, attach, choose, compare, defend, estimate, judge, predict, rate, core, select, support, value, evaluate.

- Do you agree with the actions/feedback. . . ? with the outcomes. . . ?
- What is your opinion of. . . ?
- How would you prove. . . ? disprove. . . ?
- Would it be better if. . . ?
- Why do you think they chose. . . ?
- What would you recommend. . . ?
- How would you rate the. . . ?
- How would you evaluate. . . ?
- How could you determine. . . ?
- What choice would you have made. . . ?
- What would you select. . . ? and why?
- How would you prioritize. . . ?
- What judgment would you make about. . . ?
- Based on what you know, how would you explain. . . ?
- What information would you use to support the view. . . ?
- How would you justify. . . ?
- What data was used to make the conclusion . . . ?
- How would you compare the ideas. . . ?

Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (Eds.). (2001). *A taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing: A revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives: Complete edition*. New York: Longman.

Bloom, B. S., Englehart, M. B., Furst, E. J., Hill, W. H., & Krathwohl, D. R. (1956). Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals. *Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain*. New York: Longman.

Marzano, R., & Kendall, J. (2007). *The new taxonomy of educational objectives*. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

### Appendix C: Selected Coaching Comments

These coaching comments are excerpts from the Indistar® system as of July 2010. They represent a range of quality and effectiveness as formative guidance. Identifying information has been removed to the extent possible.

Coaches and their supervisors can use these excerpts as starting points for a discussion of the power of feedback and its use in the Indistar® system (See Section 1 of this guide). Coaching supervisors can use the examples to devise criteria and additional guidance for coaches to improve their comments. Standards for what counts as an effective coaching comment are yet to be developed, but Indistar® users are invited to submit their ideas to the Indistar® blog (<http://indistar.blogspot.com/>).

Coach (CS)	DATE	COACH NAME	Step 6	You are right on track with the indicators for IID11 and IIIA35 and you can now show that some of those indicators have been completed. Yes, just add the tasks to the third indicator that you have assessed in step 5. And you do not need to add any more indicators at this time. And once you have the tasks added you should then begin to use the minutes part of the plan - I can help you start that.
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Coach (CS)	DATE	COACH NAME	Step 6	In an effort to lend support to this monitoring piece, I’ve decided to go into each school, pull an indicator and a few tasks and then “model” what the tasks should look like as well as the monitoring of those tasks. For YOUR SCHOOL, I’m going to focus on ID08, “The Leadership team will serve as a conduit of communication to the faculty and staff.” The task that reads, “The leadership team will be convened on a regular schedule” is not specific enough to truly be a task. It should say something like “The Leadership team will meet weekly on Wednesday mornings. At these meetings we will discuss instructional issues that pertain to our overall school improvement. Minutes will be kept at these meetings. Those minutes will be distributed to the entire staff as to keep all stakeholders aware of the pertinent decisions made (sensitive issues will not be communicated to the staff).” The monitoring of this task would look like this: 10/23/09 (date of entry) - Our leadership met today and discussed the following: the results of our first nine weeks benchmarks. We noticed that there was a 20% pass rate in one 6th grade math class. We speculated as to the reasons for such a low pass rate (especially in light of the fact that the rest of the 6th grade math classes scored above 85%) and realized that the teacher had already missed 10 days from school.
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Coach (DL)	DATE	COACH NAME	Step 5	Responsibilities for tasks should be distributed among team members; not just the principal. Please let me know if you have problems editing task assignments.
School	DATE	Principal	Step 5	How do you assign more than one person to a task? I wanted to include several team members for the tasks but could only assign one name.

Coach (CS)	DATE	COACH NAME	Step 6	Thank you for keeping me updated with your latest data results and minutes from the various meetings. I know you're keeping busy. As I reviewed the site, I have a few suggestions. Indicator IIA01 - Task 3 - update the backward mapping and be sure to include your efforts with the 45 Day plan information and data from the release tests. How was this shared with the faculty? Indicator IE06 - Task 4 - update the actions the teachers are taking as a result of analyzing the release test outcomes and other data indicators. Task 3 - Even though the site shows this task as complete, you should list how you shared the Language Arts data by AYP subgroup and grade. That was so on target! Indicator IIIC05 - Task 5 update this. And lastly, document the results of the leadership team walk through and administrative observations. You're doing a great job. Keep up the good work.
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Coach (CS)	DATE	COACH NAME	Step 6	<p>Thank you for a very informative conference call. It really helped to review all of the tasks assigned to the indicators and to see the variety of data you are using to select and update the tasks. I believe Lisa is now comfortable with updating the status section of the tasks. Once she does that, the overview sheet will not reflect 0%.</p> <p>I look forward to talking with you in January/February about the results of the peer observations. Your system for observations and supporting documentation will allow for very rich conversations.</p> <p>Thank you for a very thorough update.</p>
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Coach (D)	DATE	COACH NAME	Step 0	IF07	Please revise to reflect a SMART goal in "How it will look when fully met." What specific instructional strategies are you expecting teachers to observe and implement? What professional development will be needed to support this? What is your school wide focus for instructional practice?
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Coach (D)	DATE	COACH NAME	Step 0	IIIA33	Have you considered a strategy/task such as Morning Meetings to meet this indicator?
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Coach (D)	DATE	COACH NAME	Step 5	IID07	What is the XYZsystem????? Also, the task needs to be broken into individual tasks. Each item is a task that can be completed. This will show progress over time, verses waiting for all of it to be done at once. This is a quick win if you break it down.
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Coach (D)	DATE	COACH NAME	Step 5	IIIA06	It appears that you used Wise Ways® in this objective, but the task seems to generalize the objective. You may want to simplify the objective so that it is more general so your tasks can be more specific. You may want to address as a task what you will do to track the data.
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## Appendix D: Login Access Descriptions for Indistar®

**Who has which privileges?** In Indistar, privileges to view, edit, and coach are carefully differentiated.

**State:** Can “see” the work of both district and school teams but can offer “coaching comments” only at the district level. Cannot “see” the Rapid Improvement Leader’s work.

**Consultant to District:** Can “see” the work of both district and school teams but can offer “coaching comments” only at the district level. Cannot “see” the Rapid Improvement Leader’s work.

**District (for the superintendent and district process manager):** Can “see and edit” the district team’s work and respond to “coaching comments” from the state. The district can also “see” the school team’s work and offer “coaching comments.” (The district level access also has the option of using the dashboard for additional reporting purposes.)

**District Liaison (district person working with a school team):** This is typically the district person who works with a school team. This person “sees” and “coaches” the schools to which he/she is assigned. Cannot “see” the Rapid Improvement Leader’s work.

**Consultant to School:** This person “sees” and “coaches” the school teams to which he/she is assigned. Cannot “see” the Rapid Improvement Leader’s work.

**School (for the principal and school process manager):** Can “see and edit” the work of the school teams and respond to coaching comments sent from the District Liaison, School Consultant, or District. (The school level access also has the option of using the dashboard for additional reporting purposes.)

**Multiple School Teams (for team leaders):** If the school has different teams working on different sets of indicators, each team leader can “see and edit” the work of their school team and respond to coaching comments sent from the District Liaison, School Consultant, or District. For example, RtI Team, School Community Council, Special Ed.

**Rapid Improvement Leader (principal in a Rapid Improvement school):** Login only for that principal’s own RIL information, to “see, edit, and respond to coaching comments”.

**Rapid Improvement Leader Mentor (person assigned by the district to mentor the Rapid Improvement Leader (principal):** Can “see” and “coach” the principals in the RIL tool for which the Mentor has been assigned. If the principal wants the Mentor to have access to the work of the school teams, the principal must provide the Mentor with the school team’s login and password.

**Guest Login (school and district):** The “guest login” can be shared with anyone that the principal or superintendent would like to have “read only” access to the data that the school or district has entered into the web application. The user can run the Comprehensive Plan Report and “Where Are We Now” report, without having access to the school or district’s web entry pages.

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- Kostin, M., & Haeger, J. (2006, May). Coaching schools to sustain improvement. *Education Digest*, 71(9), 29-33.
- National School Reform Faculty (NSRF). <http://www.nsrff-harmony.org/> Founded to promote the establishment of critical friends groups; website is a source of a rich library of free collaborative professional learning tools and facilitator guidance.
- National Staff Development Council (NSDC). Membership allows access to newsletters and tools for school teams, principals, district leaders. ([www.nsd.org](http://www.nsd.org))
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- Reeves, D. (2009). *Leading change in your school: How to conquer myths, build commitment, and get results*. Arlington, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).
- Rust, F. O., & Freidus, H. (2001). *Guiding school change: The role and work of change agents*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Schwarz, R. (2002). *The skilled facilitator: A comprehensive resource for consultants, facilitators, managers, trainers, and coaches*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Senge, P., Cambron-McCabe, N., Lucas, T., Smith, B., Dutton, J., & Kleiner, A. (2000). *Schools that learn: A fifth discipline fieldbook for educators, parents, and everyone who cares about education*. New York: Doubleday.
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### Team Building

- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112.
- Indicators in Action—Module 1 Part 1 Building strong instructional teams. <http://www.centerii.org/action/IP-part16.22.10/index.htm>
- National School Reform Faculty (NSRF). <http://www.nsrff-harmony.org/Founded> to promote the establishment of critical friends groups; website is a source of a rich library of free collaborative professional learning tools and facilitator guidance.
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### Planning for Change

- Bernhardt, V. L. (2002). *The school portfolio toolkit: A planning, implementation and evaluation guide for continuous school improvement*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
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### Monitoring Implementation And Impact

- Bernhardt, V. L. (2004). *Data analysis for continuous school improvement*. (2nd ed.). Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

### Selecting and Supporting School Improvement Coaches

- Idaho : <http://csi.boisestate.edu/improvement/files/School%20Improvement%20Planning%20Guide%20-%202009-2010%20-%20Updated%202-26-10.pdf>
- New Hampshire: [http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/integrated/title\\_i\\_a\\_docs2009-10.htm](http://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/integrated/title_i_a_docs2009-10.htm)
- North Dakota: <http://csi.boisestate.edu/improvement/CBResourceBinder>
- Virginia PASS (Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools) Program – Requirements for Coaches [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school\\_improvement/resources/pass/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/resources/pass/index.shtml)



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