



ACTIVITY 3.11

Action Planning for Assessment Balance and Quality

PURPOSE

Through the activities in this guide you have been reflecting on and discussing your current situation as well as your vision for the future, thinking about where you want your district or school to be relative to student assessment. You can transfer to a written action plan your team's analysis of your current system as well as your goals for a new system. The work to be completed for the new system will vary based on the profile you created and how far you have already progressed. Some leadership teams will be able to take action on their own; others may want to bring into the process a larger group of district or school stakeholders. Still others may first need to educate their peers or the instructional staff about the need for and promise of assessment balance and quality.

Like the district curriculum guide or set of state standards that can collect dust on top of the file cabinet in classroom where teachers define their own curriculum, there is no guarantee that action plans will fulfill their promise. But just as you can raise the probability that the written district curriculum is also the taught, tested, and learned curriculum, you also can increase the likelihood that your action plans for assessment will succeed. Here's how:

- Ensure your plan is grounded in the clear vision your team refined over the course of its study, using well-articulated beliefs about assessment as the foundation for that vision.
- Use the five actions self-analysis to focus on results by identifying long-term goals and specific, achievable milestones to chart the progress of your plan.
- Develop clear strategies aimed at reaching the goals and milestones with the required funding and other resources identified and allocated, if applicable.
- Identify the staff development required for teachers and administrators and plan for it to be readily available. Just as important, consider and plan for the time and conditions needed for adult learning to succeed. The aggregated results from the leaders' self-analysis of the Assessment Leadership Success Indicators (Activity 3.10) are one of the means to assist in the identification of the appropriate staff development.
- Recognize and communicate to others that the plan's sole purpose is to improve student learning, making it even more difficult to leave on a shelf.

If your school or district has a preferred planning process used successfully in the past, has a series of planning templates for documenting the goals and objectives, or follows a policy that guides the makeup of a planning team, we encourage your leadership team to put those tools to use here.

Prioritizing the Actions to Take

As you begin planning you may ask, "Where do we start? What should we do first, second, third . . . ?" The following questions may help give you consider the options:

What will be quickest or easiest to do immediately? The focus here is finding a scope of work that can be accomplished quickly yet contribute to realizing the vision.

For example, if your district has identified student achievement standards, but they are written in language that may be difficult for students or their families to understand, you can rewrite them into student- or family-friendly language, post them online or print them in the parent handbook, and regularly share them with students. This will immediately help both students and their parents. Students know where they are headed in their learning, and their parents will be better able to follow their children's progress and provide better ongoing feedback.

What will have the most impact? Examine your action plan and discuss the potential effect of your proposed actions. For example, you may decide that because quality professional development around assessment literacy is the underpinning of all five actions, refining your professional development program will have the greatest impact.

What actions are prerequisites to others? Ensuring all staff understands the difference between formative and summative assessment may be the starting place for your system because identifying the purpose for assessing is prerequisite to ensuring assessment quality.

What actions will support other district goals to improve learning? Assessment literacy can bring coherence and support to your district's or school's established goals and initiatives. Taking the time to establish the links between assessment literacy and response to intervention, or differentiated instruction, as two examples, can pay off in deeper understanding of how initiatives can connect and support each other.

TIME

The development of an action plan will vary depending on a number of factors. If all the stakeholders are present then the design of the plan may take 2 to 4 hours. If a core of leaders is present then the initial design may go over a period of days until all the necessary individuals have had a say in the design of the plan and agree to its components.

SUGGESTED ROOM SETUP

Tables and chairs for flow of discussion and a means to record and view the components of the plan as it unfolds

DIRECTIONS

Action Planning Templates

To provide a simple model for your action plan we have included sample planning templates for each of the five actions in Figure 3.7.

Top Section of the Action Plan Template

The top section of each of the five templates that follow crosses the various roles and levels in the organization of a school system. It is designed to help your team think about all the different levels and positions in the organization that could be called on to contribute to the plan's success. The intent is to foster thinking that reaches from the classroom to the boardroom in the design of your action plan. As an example, think

about Action 1 and the work you need to do to balance your district assessment system. Within each cell of the table, enter what responsibilities fall to each player at each level. What is the school board's job relative to assessment balance, if any? The superintendent's? The teachers'?

Bottom Section of the Action Plan Template

The bottom section of each template is the action planning tool where you specify exactly what is to be done to create assessment balance and quality. Your team may have one goal for each of the five actions or several goals for each, depending entirely on your District Assessment System Self-Evaluation results. List here those activities supporting each goal for each of the five actions, describing the intended outcome, specific tasks required, the person(s) responsible, required resources, and the timeline for accomplishment.

A Point to Consider

Implementing a comprehensive action plan will unfold over time and will impact on multiple facets of the school organization. As with any dynamic system or organization when an impact is made in one area there will be reverberating impacts in other areas. Thus, it is essential that you revisit your action plan at least yearly to assess the effects of the changes and to make adjustments as needed to the plan to meet your intended outcomes.

Figure 3.7 Action Plan Templates

Action 1: Balance Your Assessment System

Roles and Responsibilities			
Position	District Level	School Level	Classroom Level
School Board			
Superintendent			
Curriculum Director			
Principals			
Curriculum and Instruction and Professional Development Staff			
Teachers			

Action Plan Goal				
Intended Outcome	Specific Tasks Required	Person(s) Responsible	Required Resources	Time for Accomplishment

Action 2: Continue to Refine Achievement Standards

Roles and Responsibilities			
Position	District Level	School Level	Classroom Level
School Board			
Superintendent			
Curriculum Director			
Principals			
Curriculum and Instruction and Professional Development Staff			
Teachers			

Action Plan Goal				
Intended Outcome	Specific Tasks Required	Person(s) Responsible	Required Resources	Time for Accomplishment

Action 3: Ensure Assessment Quality

Roles and Responsibilities			
Position	District Level	School Level	Classroom Level
School Board			
Superintendent			
Curriculum Director			
Principals			
Curriculum and Instruction and Professional Development Staff			
Teachers			

Action Plan Goal				
Intended Outcome	Specific Tasks Required	Person(s) Responsible	Required Resources	Time for Accomplishment

**Action 4: Build Effective Systems
for Communicating Assessment Results**

Roles and Responsibilities			
Position	District Level	School Level	Classroom Level
School Board			
Superintendent			
Curriculum Director			
Principals			
Curriculum and Instruction and Professional Development Staff			
Teachers			

Action Plan Goal				
Intended Outcome	Specific Tasks Required	Person(s) Responsible	Required Resources	Time for Accomplishment

Action 5: Link Assessment to Student Motivation With Assessment *for Learning* Strategies

Roles and Responsibilities			
Position	District Level	School Level	Classroom Level
School Board			
Superintendent			
Curriculum Director			
Principals			
Curriculum and Instruction and Professional Development Staff			
Teachers			

Action Plan Goal				
Intended Outcome	Specific Tasks Required	Person(s) Responsible	Required Resources	Time for Accomplishment