

Guidance Notes for Designing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports and Strategically Planning its Implementation

These notes are intended to highlight and guide teams through the work involved in developing

- a prototype *design document* for a comprehensive system of learning supports
- *initial strategic and action plans* for transformation.

The document encompasses Session 6 of the online Leadership Institute that Scholastic Inc. has put on the web as part of our collaboration with them.

Additional resources are cited in the document and are available along with a variety of other aids from the Center's online toolkit and clearinghouse. For access to the toolkit, go to

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/resourceaids.htm>

We are developing additional resource aids as we clarify what is needed.

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Support comes in part from the Office of Adolescent Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (Title V, Social Security Act), Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (Project #U45 MC 00175)

Designing a Comprehensive System of Learning Supports

Ready to make it happen?

- (1) Begin by doing a more refined *mapping* with respect to existing student and learning supports. Clarify current
 - (a) *resource use* – (see tool for mapping – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20mapping%20current%20status.pdf>)
 - (b) *organizational and operational infrastructure* – (see tool for mapping – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/tool%20infrastructure.pdf>)
- (2) After mapping, do *analyses* of the problems related to what is currently being done.
- (3) Use the analyses as the foundation for making the case for moving forward in designing a comprehensive system of learning supports to better address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage disconnected students.

After the case is made for moving toward development of a comprehensive system of learning supports, the next step is to develop a blueprint document detailing the prototype for such a system.

To accomplish this, form a design team.

Overview of the Design Team's Work

There are many ways for a design team to work. Online is a working draft guide (in continuous development) that reflects the process some others have used –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentsupport/toolkit/designteamguide.pdf>

Also online is a generic outline for a design document and a set of templates developed to aid the team in writing a design document. See

- Outline – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentsupport/toolkit/Genericoutline.pdf>
- Templates – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/studentsupport/toolkit/sectiontemplates.pdf>

For an example of a design document, see *Addressing the Internal and External Barriers to Learning and Teaching: Louisiana's Comprehensive Learning Supports System* –

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/summit2002/ladesigndocument.pdf>

Team Membership. The design team needs personnel who understand the basic nature and scope of a comprehensive system of learning supports and who want such a system developed.

The composition should include

- a high level administrator to lead the way
- a cross section of school improvement leaders representing concerns related to student and learning supports, instruction, and management/governance.

Team Goal: The intent is for the team to draft a design document that articulates

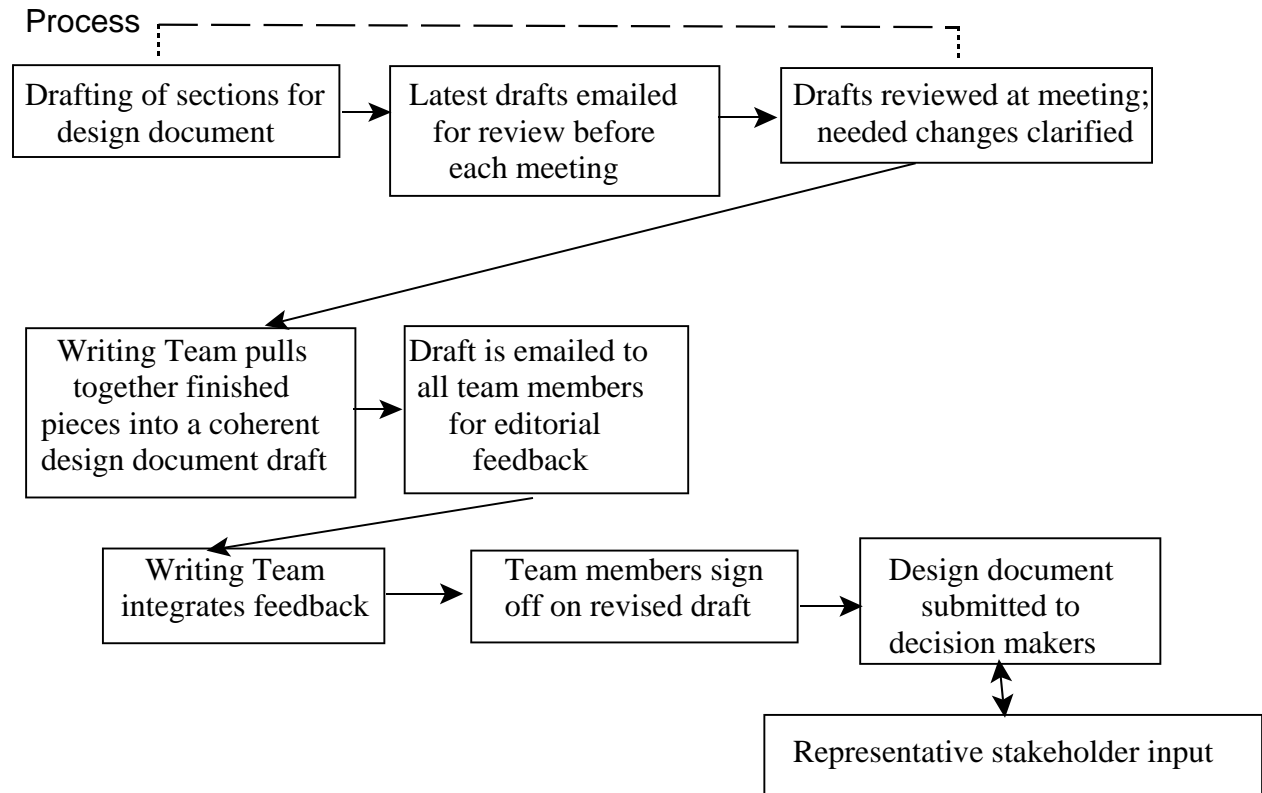
- (1) **the imperative** for a comprehensive system of learning supports
- (2) **an intervention framework** for the system
- (3) **an organizational and operational infrastructure** that ensures schools can begin and sustain development of the system
- (4) **policy recommendations** to end the marginalization of learning supports and enable development and sustainability of the system by ensuring existing resources are coalesced and (re)deployed cost-effectively.

Team Process: Much of the work is done outside of meetings. Each team member pursues (alone or as part of a work group) a set of delineated tasks between meetings focused on developing specific facets of the design document.

Draft sections are emailed to all team members for review before the meeting.

The general format for any meeting involves:

- discussion of strengths and weakness of draft sections and ideas for revision
- clarification of what will be accomplished before the next meeting



As illustrated, once the various sections are drafted:

- (1) one or two teams members (with the best writing skills) pull the pieces together into a working draft of the design document
- (2) then the design document draft is emailed to all members of the team for review and editorial feedback.

If feasible, it helps to share information along the way with key stakeholders so that they are aware and providing input before being presented with the completed design draft. In some places this takes the form of periodic progress presentations that outline key ideas for feedback.

When the document is in good shape, the members sign off and the design is submitted to decision makers for adoption.

At this stage, additional *representative stakeholder input* should be sought (especially from those who can derail the work) and relevant feedback integrated.

Once the design is adopted, the focus turns first to strategic planning and then to action planning.

Initial Strategic and Action Planning for Transformation

The art of progress is to preserve order amid change and to preserve change amid order.

Alfred Lord Whitehead

Strategic planning is key to effective implementation, sustainability, and replication to scale of education innovations. In pursuing such planning, however, it is essential to approach it from the perspective of *systemic change/transformation*.

And, it is also essential not to lose sight of a simple truth:

If innovations do not end up playing effective roles at a school and in the classroom, they aren't worth the time and effort. Schools and classrooms must be the center and guiding force for all strategic education planning.

Strategic planning is necessary to ensure that the vision and design for a comprehensive system of learning supports are effectively and efficiently implemented. The plan spells out an answer to:

How do we get there from here?

The Aim is to Operationalize the Design

To this end, the specific goals for strategic planning are to accomplish the major phases and tasks of systemic change.

First Phase – *Orientation: Creating Readiness & Commitment*

Second Phase – *Start-up and Phase-in: Building Infrastructure and Capacity*

Third Phase – *Sustaining, Evolving, and Enhancing Outcomes*

Fourth Phase – *Generating Creative Renewal and Replication to Scale*

The plan covers about a five year period, outlining objectives and tasks and general strategies for accomplishing them.

Strategic Planning Needs to Reflect Organizational Context

Strategic planning for developing a *comprehensive system of learning supports* is done within the organizational context and is intended to be fully integrated into the overall approach to school improvement.

Based on a clear understanding of the district's vision, mission, values, resources, etc., the team delineates promising strategies and dates for reaching desired results. The plan also includes regular monitoring and revision as necessary.

Note: Based on what is outlined for Year 1, a detailed action plan is developed for Year 1 to spell out specific objectives/tasks/steps and the how, who, when, and results to be achieved.

What is strategy?

"Strategy is . . . well, strategy is *everything*. Strategy is *timing*, then, because, as the comedians tell us, timing is everything. When the time is right, we use the word "opportune" and thus imply the existence of opportunity. This is how intention reconciles itself with reality and how tactics shape strategy. As Tom Peters once said, 'Execution *is* strategy.' Algebraically speaking, that means strategy *is* execution. In much simpler terms, we adapt to changing circumstances. So does strategy."

Fred Nickols (2008)

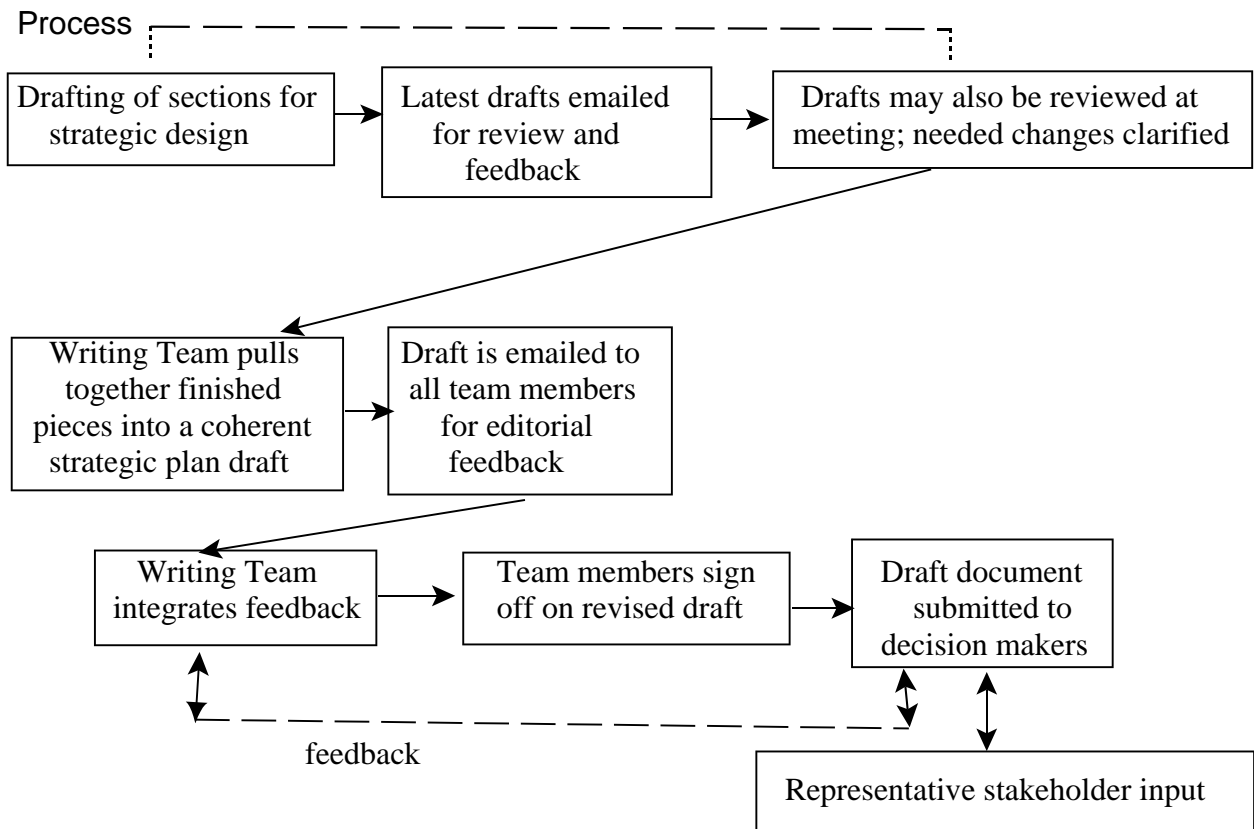
Team Size and Composition

Team size varies. Five members is a reasonable guideline. One should be designated as the team facilitator.

Too large a planning group usually is not a good idea. The majority should have had some formal strategic planning training and/or experience.

All members need to have a good understanding of the current organizational environment (vision, mission, values; political, social, economic, and technical considerations) in which the district and schools operate.

The team can call upon others to form ad hoc workgroups when special expertise is needed.



Team Process

As with the design process, much of the work can be done through individual assignments and email exchanges – with meetings as needed.

- Most of the initial work constitutes drafting sections, sharing them for feedback with team members via email and at meetings, and integrating the feedback.
- This process is continued until each section is seen by members as a good draft.
- Then 1-2 members compile and refine the sections into a draft document which is emailed for feedback.
- Feedback is integrated and the draft is sent back and forth until it is in good shape.

Schedules should be tight enough to avoid losing momentum.

The finished draft is reviewed by designated decision makers, specific concerns are addressed by the team, and relevant changes are made until a final plan is approved.

Again, *representative stakeholder input* should be sought (if feasible as the plan is developed and especially from those who can derail the work); relevant feedback is integrated.

And, remember:

Systemic change requires policy and resource support.

For significant prototype development and systemic change to occur, policy commitments must be made and backed up with effective allocation and redeployment of resources to facilitate organizational and operational changes.

And, don't forget to celebrate the accomplishment of the work.

A Few Notes About Capacity Building and Protection for Change Agents

- Finances, personnel, time, space, equipment, and other essential resources must be made available, organized, and used in ways that adequately implement policy and promising practices
- This includes ensuring sufficient resources to develop an effective structural foundation for prototype development, systemic changes, sustainability, and ongoing capacity building
- Because they are called upon to do many things that will be unpopular with some stakeholders, protections are needed for those on the front line of change