



Turning Points

TRANSFORMING MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Guide to Data-Based Inquiry
and Decision Making

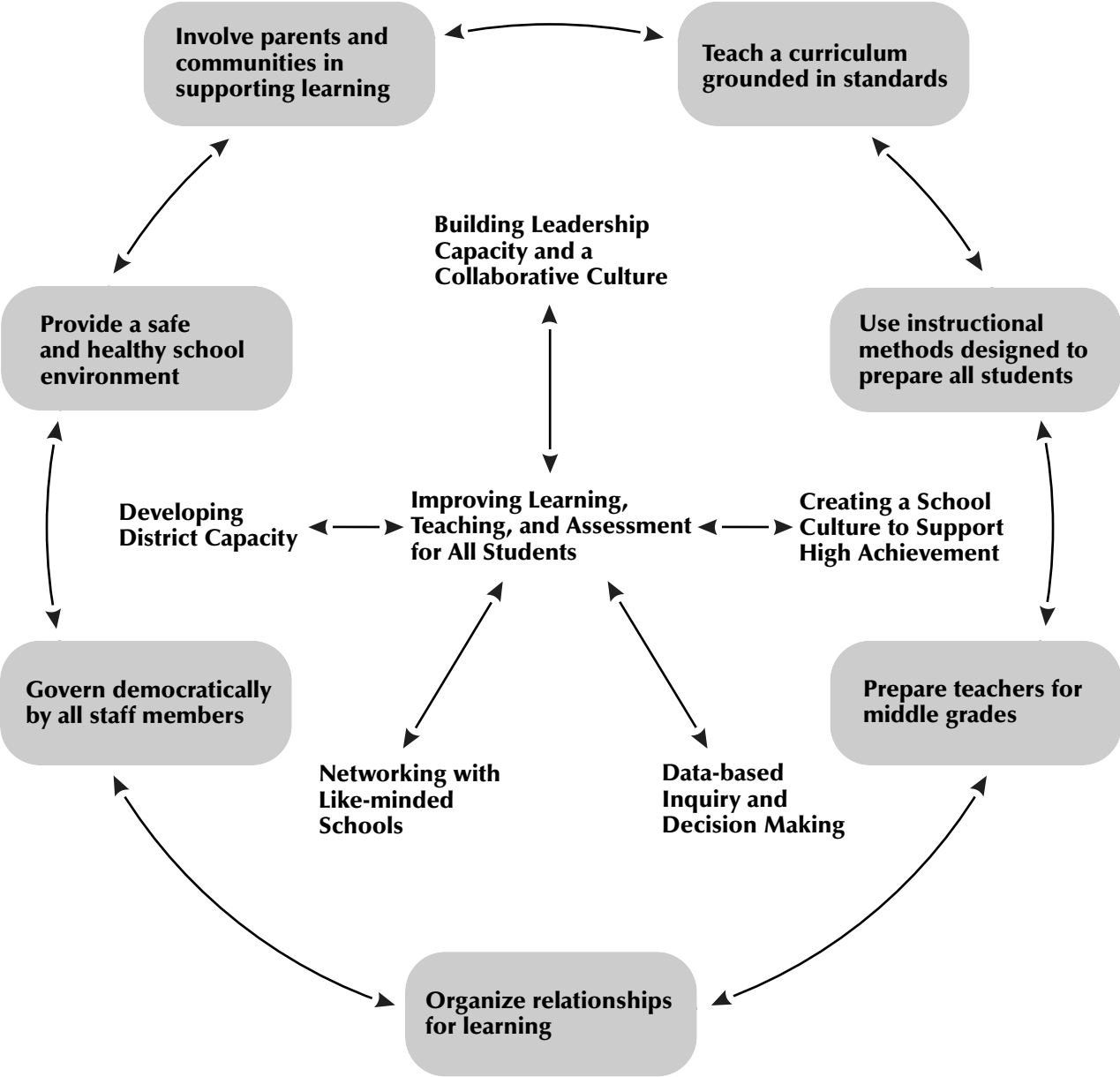




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Turning Points Design Principles and Practices



Turning Points Principles*

- Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best
- Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve high standards and become lifelong learners
- Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing professional development
- Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose
- Govern democratically through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know students best
- Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens
- Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development

Six practices translate these principles into action in each school and throughout a network of Turning Points schools in a district. Within each area of practice, teacher teams, a school leadership team, and faculty committees, engage in collaborative work.

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The Six Turning Points Practices

- **Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment for All Students:** working collaboratively to set high standards, close the achievement gap among students, develop curriculum that promotes habits of mind and intellectual inquiry, utilize a wide range of instructional strategies and approaches, emphasize the teaching of literacy and numeracy
- **Building Leadership Capacity and a Professional Collaborative Culture:** creating a democratic school community, fostering skills and practices of strong leadership, establishing regular common planning time, embedding professional development in the daily life of the school
- **Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making:** setting a vision based on the Turning Points principles, collecting and analyzing multiple sources of data to help improve areas that most impact learning, teaching, and assessment, setting annual measurable goals
- **Creating a School Culture to Support High Achievement and Personal Development:** creating structures that promote a culture of high-quality learning and teaching, establishing small learning communities, eliminating tracking, lowering student-teacher ratios, building parent and community partnerships
- **Networking with Like-minded Schools:** participating in network meetings, summer institutes, and forums; visiting other Turning Points schools
- **Developing District Capacity to Support School Change:** building district capacity through collaboration

Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making enables teachers to participate in school improvement activities in an organized, effective manner.

What is Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making?

In Turning Points schools, people are always asking questions about how the school is doing so they can make things better. Are students really building literacy skills? Is the time scheduled for teacher team meetings adequate? Are the meetings productive? What do student work and statewide test scores reveal about equity for all the different groups within the school? This constant questioning or inquiry occurs in classrooms with students, at Leadership Team and full faculty meetings, and when parents and the community are involved. The focus of inquiry is always on improving teaching and learning for all students.

Today's middle schools are busy places engaged in a wide variety of activities, with increasing pressure to do more with less. Parents, community members, and politicians are all concerned with quality, standards, and accountability. In order to negotiate the problems and challenges associated with this change effort, Turning Points schools use **Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making**.

Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making is a deliberative process in which teachers, administrators, students, parents, and other community members examine and analyze a range of data relating to problems and challenges, and develop action plans to address them.

Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making is not a quick-fix solution to challenges that schools face. It requires time, and a rethinking of how we use the time we have. Used appropriately and consistently, this process results in higher student achievement and an improved school climate.

The Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making Process

Turning Points schools use data to learn about how the school is run, to find ways to improve the school, and to promote equity among students. Teachers, administrators, students, and parents collect information, observe one another, communicate, share what they know, and work together to confront and solve challenges.

This process is particularly valuable in schools. Students attend school to learn to read, solve problems, and develop social skills, among many other things. But learning in schools is not confined to students; it involves all members of the school community—parents, teachers, administrators, and others. Successful schools create opportunities for learning: Are we doing well? What do we need to do to improve? This process of inquiry helps schools become true learning communities that ensure lasting change and real improvement.

This practice includes:



Setting a vision



Collecting and analyzing data from a variety of sources



Identifying strengths and challenges and investigating underlying causes of problems



Creating and implementing action plans to address priorities within the challenge areas

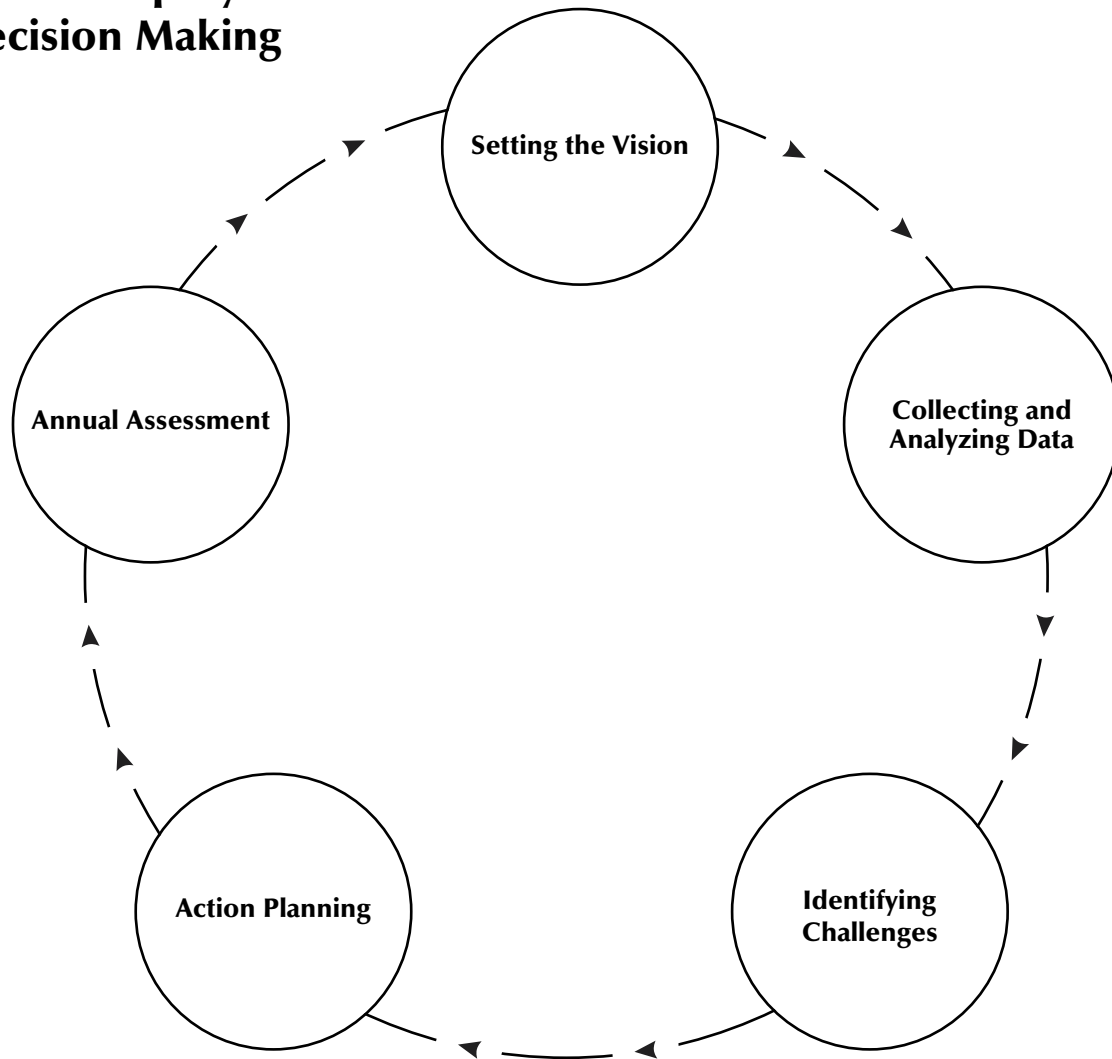


Setting annual goals and assessing progress

“Inquiry builds trust among staff. We can’t be on every committee, but every committee is important to us. Just knowing that my colleagues are following the inquiry process makes me feel good about the plans they will eventually come up with.”

**— Study group member at
Winthrop High School**

Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making



This chart suggests a cyclical process of Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making. Because it is an ongoing process, you may revisit components or conduct them in a different order.

OVERVIEW OF THE COMPONENTS

1

Setting the vision

A school’s vision is based upon the Turning Points principles and what students should know and be able to do upon exiting the school. In this first step, members of the school community pose questions about what they want their middle school to be like. Their collective answers become the vision for the school, providing a collective identity and direction to the Turning Points school community.

2***Collecting and Analyzing Data from a Variety of Sources***

Collecting and analyzing data from a variety of sources includes the School Improvement Self-Study, in which data is disaggregated by race, gender, and income status; sampling of student work; and standardized achievement test data. These sources help teachers, parents, students and other members of the school community know how they are doing, what is and is not working, and how to adjust their efforts towards improvement. Ongoing analysis of data provides schools with a comprehensive picture of its strengths and challenges, enabling the school community to make informed decisions.

3***Identifying Challenge Areas***

Schools identify challenges by analyzing the data collected using the Turning Points benchmarks (see *Benchmarks to Becoming a Turning Points School*) to guide the analysis. These benchmarks can help identify differences between vision and reality, and key challenges. The benchmarks also guide schools to pay particular attention to issues of equity. Identifying challenge areas is a group activity which results in prioritizing a few critical problems for further inquiry in the action planning process.

4***Action Planning***

In action planning, schools focus on those areas for improvement which have the most impact on learning, teaching, and assessment. Causes of problems are identified and solutions and a plan of action are developed. When teachers collaborate to solve problems and are empowered through shared decision making, a more collegial school culture results. Teachers feel a sense of community and that they make a critical difference.

5***Annual and Ongoing Assessment***

Initially, the Leadership Team, and in subsequent years the entire faculty, uses the Turning Points benchmarks to conduct an assessment of the school's progress. This is a streamlined process that takes from 2–3 hours up to a day; it does not involve actually collecting evidence, but rather citing evidence collected during the course of the year. The process includes setting annual measurable goals for improving learning, teaching, and assessment.



Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making

Setting the Vision

After the Whitaker Middle School joined the Turning Points Network, the faculty met to begin work on creating the school's vision. They formed two groups: one to brainstorm what to include in their vision, and the other to generate ideas on how to ensure participation of all members of the school community.

The school vision group set a time limit of one month to formulate their vision: "The vision should be relatively short," one teacher advised. As a basis for their vision, the group decided to use the key Turning Points principle of "Ensure Success for All Students" and the practice of "Creating a School Culture to Support High Achievement and Personal Development."

The group that looked at community involvement suggested that the Turning Points principles be disseminated to all teachers, students, and parents. This group suggested organizing a parent forum to get parents involved. Student discussion around the issues would be conducted during the homeroom period.

Forging a vision is a critical element in the Turning Points design that involves the whole school community in developing a shared concept of "what the school ought to be." Turning Points schools align their vision with the eight Turning Points principles. This vision provides the school community with a guide in making decisions that affect day-to-day activities and long-term goals.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SHARED TURNING POINTS VISION

The school's vision:

- Is developed collaboratively by students, staff, parents, and other community members based on the eight Turning Points principles and six practices
- Is expressed in clear language that is inspirational and free of jargon
- Explicitly states that the school seeks to improve the academic achievement and personal development of all students
- Sets high expectations and standards for all students, staff, parents, and other school community members
- Is known, understood, and owned by the whole school community
- Is continually affirmed, celebrated, and made public to the whole school community (e.g., in publications, parades, and assemblies)
- Forms the basis for the school community to assess progress in achieving core goals
- Is revisited annually

STEP 1 ACTIVITY

Developing the Vision

Building Bricks for a Turning Points Vision

Aim To align the school vision with the Turning Points principles

Context Members of the whole school community are able to express their views for a middle school vision.

Materials Cardboard “bricks”, flipchart, and pens

Process

1. Pose question to participants: What does your ideal school look like?
2. Divide into small groups of five to eight people.
3. After brainstorming, each group writes eight statements or phrases that reflect what they would like to see in the school’s vision statement on cardboard bricks.
4. Give eight more cardboard bricks, each of which states a Turning Points principle, to each group.
5. Each group compares the statements on the two sets of cardboard bricks.
6. The groups identify common elements in their own statements and in the Turning Points principles.
7. Using their common points, the groups compose a concise, clear, and easy-to-remember vision statement on the flipchart to share with the larger group.
8. The vision committee then uses the vision statements developed by each group to draft one common vision.

Collecting and Analyzing Data from a Variety of Sources

Successful, highly efficient organizations continuously tap rich sources of data available to them to make informed decisions and solve problems. Yet, many schools have so much data from so many different sources that they tend to ignore the data or rely solely on limited sources of data such as student test scores.

To get a comprehensive picture of how a school is doing, schools need to collect and analyze samples of student work and teacher practices, the school Self-Study, standardized tests, and other sources of data such as those listed on the next page.

When we use data, we need to ask challenging questions such as:

What strengths and challenges does the data reveal?

What is the data telling us about our efforts to reach our goals?

What can we do about what the data reveals?

EXAMPLES OF SOURCES OF DATA

1

Student work, running records or profiles—sampling of student work assessed by a school-wide rubric or a list of assessment criteria

2

School Improvement Self-Study

3

Standardized tests

4

Quantitative measures such as drop-out and suspension rates, attendance, special education enrollment, enrollment in high-level classes, and grade retention disaggregated by race, gender, and income status

5

Curriculum materials

6

Student self-assessments

7

Professional development calendar or schedule

8

Leadership Team meeting minutes

9

Number and type of parent involvement activities, and the number of parents attending

10

Budget information and analysis

11

Evidence of teachers' planning—curriculum and assessment design

12

School and team rubrics or lists of assessment criteria

The next section outlines three of these data sources in detail: Sampling Student Work, Self-Study, and Standardized Achievement Tests.

SAMPLING STUDENT WORK

At their third academic team meeting in September, four teachers from the seventh grade team at Twin Lake Middle School looked at samples of student work to establish baseline information. The facilitator emphasized, “We need a common understanding of the literacy levels of our students to sustain the instructional focus—literacy—that was agreed on by the whole faculty.”

After much discussion, the teachers agreed that they should give a writing assignment that would allow them to collaboratively assess their students, using a rubric that they had developed. They developed the following assignment: “Teenagers on the street are reported to get into trouble, such as engaging in criminal behavior or getting involved in gang-related activities, after 10:00 p.m. Do you think it is a good idea for cities and towns to enforce curfews—times after which teenagers must be off the streets? Explain your reasons.”

To gain an authentic perspective on what students are learning, teachers need to look at the work students are producing in a formalized way. While many tools such as tests, note-taking, interviews, and surveys can be helpful sources of data for telling us how students are doing, we should not overlook collecting and analyzing the most important data—actual student work. Collecting samples of students’ work is a powerful way of gaining a picture of how students are doing. It provides data about students’ levels of proficiency and enables teachers to gather evidence of students’ progress over time, monitor the effectiveness of their own efforts, and reflect on ideas for revising classroom practices.

COLLECTING AND ANALYZING STUDENTS' WORK

Turning Points schools may use the following collaborative process to collect and analyze a sampling of student work to gain an authentic perspective on how students are doing in school.

Process

1. DECIDE ON WHAT TO MEASURE

A team of teachers meets to decide on what skills, content, and habits of mind are appropriate measures of learning achievement for a particular grade level and discipline. Consider these questions: What do we want students to know and be able to do? What information is most helpful? What do we look for? What school, city-wide, or state standards should be used for this purpose?

2. CREATE AN ASSESSMENT

Teachers in an academic team collaboratively develop an appropriate assessment to determine students' current level of performance, skill, or knowledge. This includes common understanding and agreement on scoring and may involve developing a new rubric or adapting existing school, city-wide, or state rubrics.

3. HAVE STUDENTS COMPLETE AN INITIAL ASSESSMENT TASK

All students undertake an initial assessment at the beginning of the new school year.

4. SCORE THE ASSESSMENT AND COLLECT DATA

All teachers for the particular academic team score the assessment collaboratively and compile the students' scores. Scores are collated and recorded so that they may be compared with data from a similar exercise at different intervals in the year. Aggregate and individual data are analyzed to identify trends or patterns. As a team, decide on instructional strategies to address them.

5. RE-ADMINISTER THE SAME OR A SIMILAR TASK

Administer a similar but different assignment two to three times a year. Score the exercise using the same rubric, and compare the data from the first and subsequent exercises. Teachers analyze the data to determine strengths and gaps. After they identify the most significant gaps, teachers develop strategies to address them.

6. FEEDBACK

In your teacher team discussions and study groups, use analysis of the sets of data, including actual student work, to address problems and give feedback to students to help them improve their performance. You may use the student work publicly as evidence of progress in addition to standardized tests' results.

Following is a worksheet to help you with Collecting and Analyzing Students' Work.

STANDARDIZED ACHIEVEMENT TEST DATA

Standardized achievement tests are one source of valuable data that educators can use to analyze and guide efforts to improve teaching and learning. Test data allows teachers and administrators to focus attention on what children are learning and what facilitates or hinders their learning. However, standardized test data should never be the only source of data that is examined as it provides a narrow snapshot of academic performance.

Thoughtfully analyzed and disaggregated standardized test data provide feedback for improvement strategies and for goal setting. Disaggregated data, which help in understanding the relative performance of sub-groups of students, may provide information about where increases or decreases occurred within a student population and performance differences for different ethnic groups and gender.

When you look at groups of scores, ask a series of questions such as:



What confirms and/or challenges what we expected to see?



What stands out as surprising?



What patterns of high and low achievement do we see?



If comparing scores from different years, what changes do we see?

The importance of disaggregating data is clearly emphasized if we consider the following examples.

FIGURE 1A

Jane Addams Middle School Achievement Test Results – average scores in 1997 and 1998

	MATH	LANG ARTS	SOC. ST
1997	60	50	52
1998	62	60	64

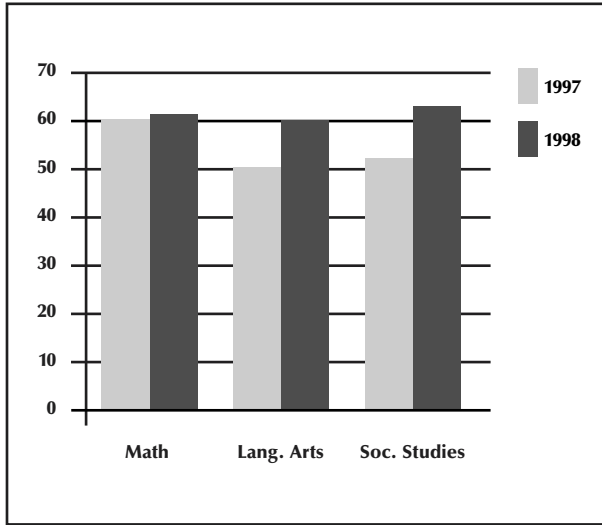
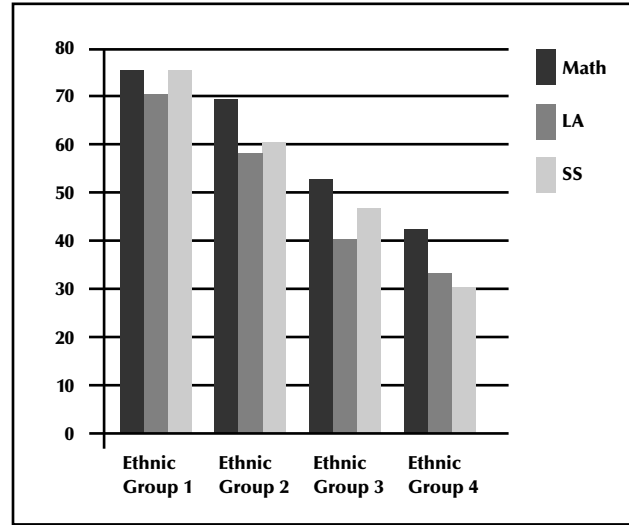


FIGURE 1B

Jane Addams Middle School Achievement Test Results – average scores by Ethnic Group in 1997

	MATH	LANG ARTS	SOC. ST
Ethnic Group 1	75	70	75
Ethnic Group 2	68	55	60
Ethnic Group 3	55	40	46
Ethnic Group 4	43	35	30



If we look at the achievement test results as presented in Figure 1A, we get the impression that Jane Addams Middle School is doing well in increasing student achievement. However, disaggregating this data reveals quite a different picture. It is obvious that there were significant differences in the scores for the different ethnic populations of the school. At Jane Addams, which embraces the Turning Points principles, this data is quite disturbing.

A possible course of action in such a situation may be to:

- Review the data
- Meet as a staff or school community to discuss how to increase the achievement of all ethnic groups in the school
- Create a study group to analyze the problem thoroughly
- Develop an action plan to address the root causes of this problem

Figure 2 further emphasizes the importance of closely examining and analyzing test data.

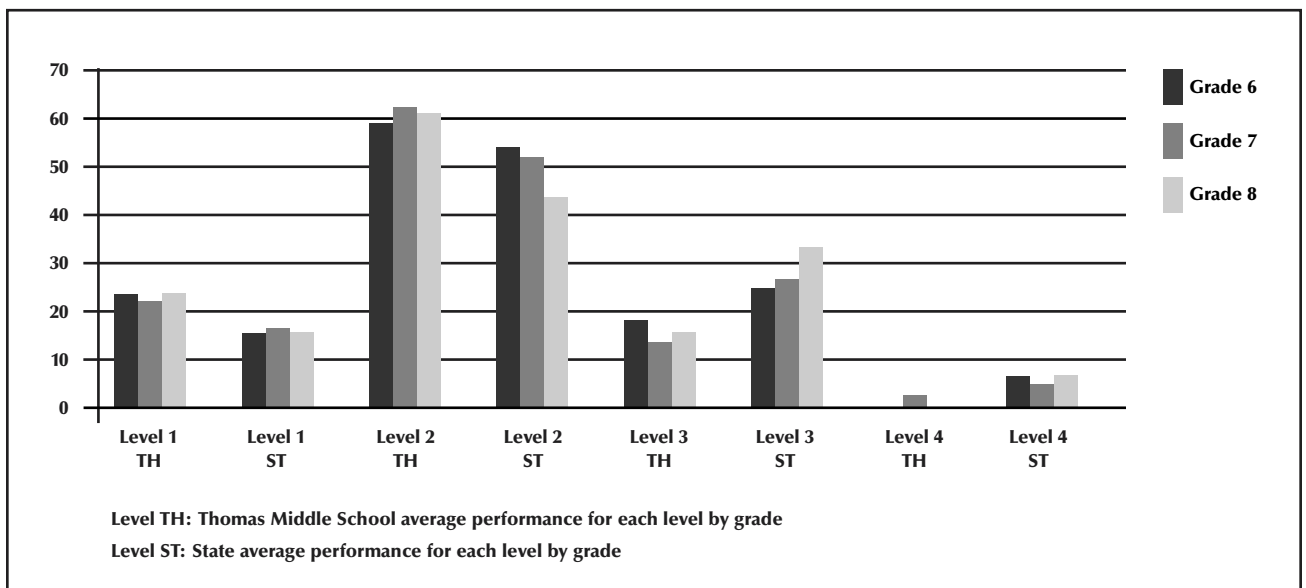
The scores presented in Figure 2 are based on a four-point rubric from Level 1 to Level 4. The bar charts show the percentage of students for each grade who scored in the different levels. By looking at performances at each level, it is clear that more students at Thomas are performing in Levels 1 and 2 than the state average and fewer are performing in Levels 3 and 4 than the state average.

Teachers and teams may be able to analyze similar data for individual classes and students to determine strengths and weaknesses and develop appropriate strategies for all content areas.

FIGURE 2

Thomas Middle School, Stanford Nine Progress Report: Reading Scores by Level

GRADE	LEVEL 1 TH	LEVEL 1 ST	LEVEL 2 TH	LEVEL 2 ST	LEVEL 3 TH	LEVEL 3 ST	LEVEL 4 TH	LEVEL 4 ST
6	23	16	59	53	18	26	0	5
7	21	17	62	52	15	27	2	4
8	23	16	61	45	16	34	0	5



Identifying Challenge Areas

As teachers at the Whitaker Middle School looked at the Self-Study, one group focused on Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment. These teachers found that students receive reading skill enhancement less than once a week. They also identified the lack of varied educational practices as a problem. The School Culture team discovered that contact with parents was mostly around behavior problems. Those working on Data-based Decision Making found that the faculty felt they had little input into school-wide decisions and policies.

Once these challenges were identified, the entire faculty voted to focus on reading skill enhancement, teachers' use of effective educational practices, and decision-making issues as priority challenges requiring further inquiry and the development of action plans. Three study groups were created to address these challenges.

Identifying challenge areas occurs as a school embarks on the path to becoming a Turning Points school. It is a comprehensive process that helps the school prioritize and focus its work. Usually, the Leadership Team facilitates this process. The faculty is divided into smaller groups organized around each of the following Turning Points practices: Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment for all Students; Building Leadership Capacity and a Professional Collaborative Culture; Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making, and Creating a School Culture to Support High Achievement and Personal Development. The groups closely examine the Self-Study and other data to identify gaps between beliefs and practices. As groups identify gaps, they also evaluate whether the gaps are important to them.

Once the groups have compiled their lists of strengths and challenges, they each share what they have identified with the rest of the faculty. They schedule time for general discussion, individual reflection, and voting. The goal is to identify three or four challenge areas that the entire faculty feels, if addressed, will most improve teaching and learning for all students.

What does the data we've collected tell us about where we are in the phases of the benchmarks?

IDENTIFYING CHALLENGE AREAS

Turning Points schools use the following process to analyze data and identify challenge areas to focus on.

Process

1. IDENTIFY AND COLLECT NECESSARY DATA

The Leadership Team uses the Turning Points benchmarks (see *Benchmarks to Becoming a Turning Points School*) to decide which data needs to be collected in order to identify challenges. The data is collected and grouped according to four Turning Points practices: Improving Learning, Teaching, and Assessment; Building a Professional Collaborative Culture and Developing Leadership Capacity; Data-based Inquiry and Decision Making; and Creating a School Culture to Support High Achievement and Personal Development.

2. ANALYZE THE DATA

Distribute copies of all data, including the Self-Study, and the school's vision to all faculty members. Students and parents may also participate in the analysis phase. Students may analyze and interpret data as part of a social studies, math, or science unit. Similarly, parents may give their interpretations, particularly the data on parent involvement.

The entire faculty analyzes the collected data. This is usually most effective in small groups, for example, academic teams, study groups, or small groups at a full faculty meeting. Each group may be assigned different sections of data to analyze, grouped by the four practices. Groups analyze the data, look for patterns, and identify strengths and challenges.

Focus on using the data to raise questions about the school (e.g., why is there a discrepancy between the instructional practices teachers think are important and those that are most often used in classrooms?), rather than jumping to conclusions and solutions about what the data reflects. The following questions may also be helpful:

Is this issue important to fulfilling our vision?

What changes do we see from year to year?

What sub-groups are described by the data?

Are we where we want to be in terms of the Turning Points benchmarks?

Make the data public. It is often helpful to make poster-size charts of key data to post around the school for everyone to consider during the analysis process. Post-it[®] notes may be included to encourage comments.

IDENTIFYING CHALLENGE AREAS (CONTINUED)

3. PRIORITIZE CHALLENGE AREAS

The entire faculty prioritizes challenge areas. Each small group presents its identified challenges to the faculty, naming specific challenge areas. For example, “poor school climate” is too broad. However, “student perceptions of anonymity” and “lack of safety” are more concrete descriptions and offer more possibilities for developing improvement strategies.

The full faculty votes on two to four challenge areas for further inquiry and action planning. The priority challenges should be those that are believed to be the biggest barriers to improving student learning. One way of identifying the priority challenges is to give each faculty member two to four paper dots (the number of study groups there will be depending on the size of the faculty), and have each person place a dot next to those challenges he or she thinks are most critical. The areas with the most dots become the school’s priority challenges.

4. FORM STUDY GROUPS TO ANALYZE CHALLENGE AREAS

Form study groups for each challenge area, with every faculty member participating in one group. Study groups should have six to ten members representing different grade levels and disciplines. Set a schedule of meeting times (e.g., common planning time, after school time) at least twice a month for a minimum of one hour.

Results: Challenges identified for action planning; study groups formed to engage in action planning for each challenge area.

Following are these sample worksheets for Identifying Challenge Areas:

Identify and Collect Necessary Data is to be used by the Leadership Team to identify all the data that needs to be collected and analyzed by the full faculty.

Questions the Self-Study Charts will help to answer and Using Self-Study Charts are to be used with the Self-Study data by the full faculty in groups to identify strengths and challenges in their assigned areas.

Analyze the data is to be used by the full faculty in groups to identify strengths and challenges in their assigned areas.

Action Planning Cycle

After the whole school identified its challenge areas, teachers at Coventry Middle School began more intense work in study groups. The small group that focused on Improving Teaching, Learning, and Assessment had seen evidence from the Self-Study data that there was a low frequency of teaching reading that emphasized skill enhancement. Also, a high number of students had scored at the lowest level on the district's standardized test in reading. The study group decided to focus on understanding why their students did so poorly and what they could do to improve student performance. The group composed the question as, "What are the barriers that impact our students' ability to read, and how can we address them?"

With the question clearly defined, the group began to develop hypotheses that would help to determine the causes of the problem. For example:

■
Students spend a small portion of the day actually reading, so their reading does not improve.

■
Teachers do not explicitly teach reading comprehension strategies across the curriculum.

■
By the time many of our students reach middle school, they believe they cannot read, and they do not want to risk ridicule so they don't try.

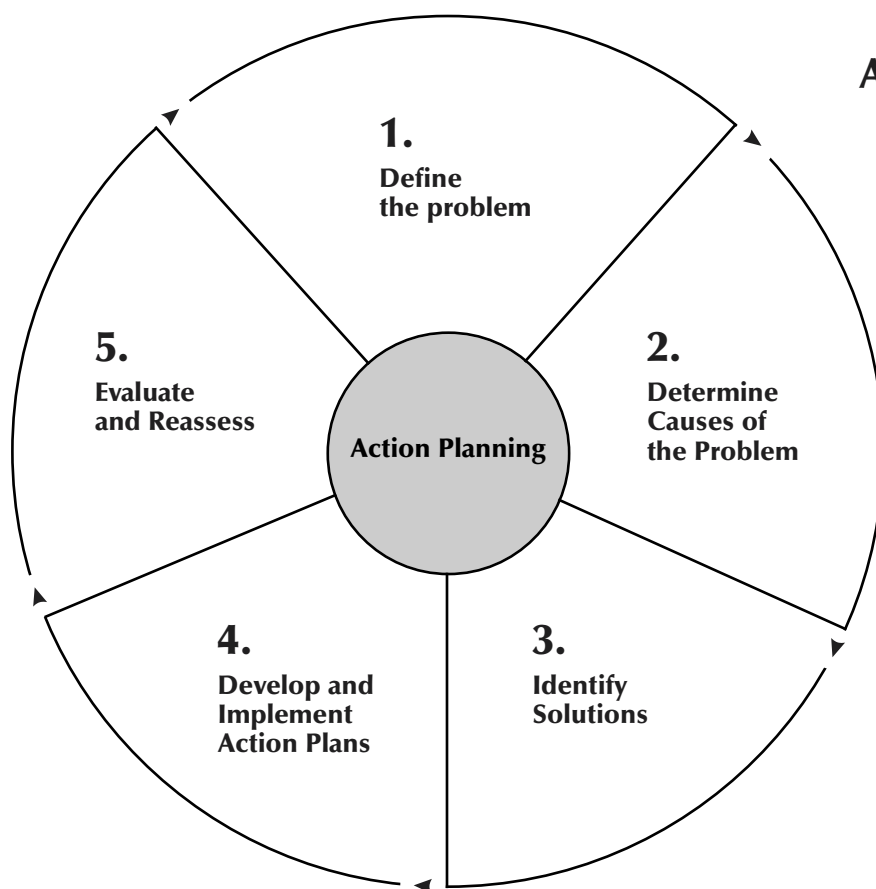
■
Some students don't know how to decode words.

The team brainstormed a long list of possible causes of reading difficulties and then began to evaluate the list and focus on two or three that they thought might make a significant difference for a large number of students. The second part of the question, how can we address the barriers to reading, also guided the group's thinking.

Before identifying specific solutions, group members will need to check further through other data sources and have conversations with other members of the staff and students to test the hypotheses they have generated. The goal is to determine the actual causes of reading barriers. Once the group has identified these causes, they will brainstorm and identify solutions and develop an action plan.

A sub-group will present the action plan to the Leadership Team and, with their support, to the entire faculty. Teachers at Coventry have learned over the past few years that making changes requires careful investigation, thoughtful analysis, a well-defined action plan, and full faculty support in order to produce results that make a sustained difference.

Action Planning focuses on challenges that most impact learning, teaching, and assessment. It involves identifying causes of problems, developing solutions, and creating and implementing a plan of action. The Action Planning Cycle uses data generated from the school Self-Study and other sources. The outcomes of this process are sustained because they are based on data, and solutions are developed by teachers and administrators representing multiple perspectives in the school. The cycle can be lengthy and extend over several months or longer. The amount of time for each step will vary depending on the complexity of the issue, whether other sources of data are needed, and the resources available. The Action Planning Cycle, which involves five sequential steps, empowers the school to confront challenges and develop solutions.



Action Planning Cycle

ACTION PLANNING CYCLE

Once a Turning Points school identifies challenge areas, teams use the process of action planning to develop and implement solutions.

Process

1. DEFINE THE PROBLEM

Discuss the problem. The group gains a clear and common understanding of the problem before trying to solve it. This involves discussion of the true nature of the problem and looking at different facets of the problem. Without a clear understanding of the problem, the group may embark on solutions that are ineffective.

State the problem in the form of a question. The study group states the problem clearly as a question to focus efforts on generating hypotheses and searching for causes.

Result: A defined problem in the form of a question

2. DETERMINE CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM

Brainstorm hypotheses. Why does the problem exist? The study group looks at the challenge area from all perspectives, including those of students and parents. The group gathers additional data, if needed, by talking to people connected with the challenge area and looking over relevant documents. Then the group generates a number of different hypotheses to test.

Prioritize, test, and confirm hypotheses. Which hypotheses seem most plausible? The group tests each hypothesis to see which ones appear to be accurate explanations for why the challenge area exists. For each hypothesis, the group should look for concrete evidence or data that is the source of the challenge problem. To test hypotheses the group may:

Observe classes

Survey and interview teachers, students, and others

Review test scores and other data

Analyze curriculum materials

Engage in group discussion.

Even if one hypothesis is confirmed, the group continues to search for causes by examining the problem from multiple perspectives.

Result: Clearly identified cause(s) of the problem

ACTION PLANNING CYCLE (CONTINUED)

3. IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS

Brainstorm possible solutions. The group brainstorms solutions for the cause(s) and considers resources both within and beyond the school walls. Using a variety of resources such as research, visits to other schools, and ideas from members of the Turning Points Network will help in arriving at solution(s).

Decide on solution(s). The group sifts through the suggested solutions and selects those that best address the problem or challenge area. As you consider solutions, here are some questions to ask:

- Will the implementation of this solution address the problem?*
- What potential obstacles are there?*
- Is the solution practical?*
- Are there enough resources?*

Result: One or more clear solutions

4. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT ACTION PLANS

Create an action plan based on the solution(s) and available resources. The study group ensures that the solutions clearly address the challenge area and the causes of the problem. The group identifies the goals of the action plan, an implementation strategy to solve the problem based on the solution(s), and guidelines for evaluating the plan. A detailed plan of action should include timelines, person(s) responsible, and resources needed.

Present the action plan to the Leadership Team and whole faculty. The Leadership Team helps assess and refine the action plan before it is presented to the whole faculty for approval and implementation.

Implement Action Plan.

Result: An Action Plan that is implemented school-wide.

5. EVALUATE AND REASSESS

Assess implementation. The Leadership Team, study group, or whole faculty assess the implementation of the action plan and make necessary adjustments to it. As you work, consider these questions:

- How effective was the plan?*
- Did it address the problem?*
- Were there any unanticipated outcomes (positive or negative)?*
- Were there any obstacles to implementing the plan?*
- What changes, if any, do you need to make to the plan or its implementation?*

Result: Affirmation of Action Plan or a Revised Action Plan

Following are sample worksheets for Action Planning Cycle Steps 1–4.

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