

D. PROGRAM EVALUATION/ANNUAL REVIEW

Evaluation/Annual Review of Schoolwide Programs

Title I regulations require that a school operating a schoolwide program annually evaluate the implementation of, and results achieved by, the schoolwide program. This evaluation must determine whether the schoolwide program was effective in increasing the achievement of students in meeting the State's academic standards, particularly those students who had been furthest from achieving the standards. The school must revise its plan as necessary based on the results of the evaluation to ensure the continuous improvement of student achievement. [34 CFR 200.26(c)].

The regulations use the term "evaluation," which has a specific meaning in the research field. However, for Title I purposes, the intent is that schools conduct an annual review of the strategies in the schoolwide plan to determine if they are contributing to the desired outcomes either in terms of improvement in student achievement, or increases in other activities that lead to increased student achievement such as greater parental involvement or more high-quality professional development.

The annual review can serve other valuable purposes. Results can--

- Inform internal program management and help school leaders make informed decisions to improve the quality of their program;
- Answer stakeholder questions and help them better understand how effectively the school is meeting its stated goals;
- Increase understanding of specific strategies and help the school determine the usefulness of the activities it has undertaken to increase student achievement; and
- Promote interest in and support of a program or activity by illustrating certain strategies, their outcomes in terms of improving student achievement, and increasing support for their use.

Identifying the Questions to Ask

There are two types of questions that schools will want to consider. The first type asks whether or not the program is being implemented as the planning group intended. It measures progress toward reaching benchmarks and provides information that can be used to guide future decision-making and improve the program's operation in subsequent years. The second type looks at outcomes and answers the question "did the achievement of students in meeting the State's academic standards increase to the desired level, particularly for those students who had been furthest from achieving the standards?" In all cases, the questions should be closely related to goals and objectives in the school plan.

For example, a schoolwide plan might have a goal indicating that an increased percentage of students will attain grade level proficiency in reading as evidenced by a classroom-based assessment given every eight weeks. One of the strategies for reaching this goal might be to better align its kindergarten through grade 3 (K-3) instruction with State standards through the use of common planning time for K-3 teachers.

The evaluation of the implementation of the schoolwide program might reflect these questions:

- Is there evidence that common planning for instruction by K- 3 teachers produced more lessons and units that were aligned with the State standards than were previously aligned?
- Was the pacing of instruction aligned across the classrooms of the K-3 teachers who planned together?
- Do participating teachers feel that common planning time has improved their teaching?

The evaluation of the outcome of the schoolwide program might reflect the following questions:

- Was the target percentage of students meeting State standards reached in each quarter, in all grades?
- What percentage of students, as a whole and in disaggregated groups, has achieved proficiency relative to the State's academic content and achievement standards and how does this compare to the percentage that achieved proficiency before schoolwide plan implementation?
- What does other student achievement data indicate about student progress toward meeting the State standards, including pre- and post-test scores, grades, quarterly reading achievement results, or other diagnostic classroom or school-based results?

Questions that look at both the implementation of the schoolwide program and the results achieved provide the basis for program evaluation and improvement. A school that monitors and adjusts its program based on feedback will become increasingly effective.

Once the school has identified the questions to be answered, it will want to consider which questions have the highest priority in a given year and consider limiting the review to those questions only. For example, a school operating a schoolwide program that has been newly identified for improvement because of low reading scores may decide to focus its annual review on the reading strategies being implemented and whether the desired outcomes are being reached. Another school may have implemented new parental involvement strategies during the past year and decide to focus its review on whether those strategies are being implemented as planned and if they are accompanied

by increased parental involvement, an important factor in improving student achievement.

A more detailed discussion of this topic can be found in the section headed The Evaluation/Review Process.

Deciding Who Should Conduct the Evaluation/Annual Review

Deciding who will conduct the annual review is an important decision. Specifically, the school must decide whether the review will be conducted *internally* (by the school staff) or *externally* (by a person or persons outside of the school, such as staff from the school district, from a regional educational laboratory, from an institution of higher education, or from any other technical assistance provider). This is a decision that should be made collaboratively between schools and their districts. The availability of resources and staff, outcomes of prior reviews, and the experience of the school with implementing schoolwide programs are all factors that should be taken into account. Districts and schools are strongly encouraged to use outside reviewers whenever possible. If resources do not permit the use of outside reviewers on an annual basis, districts and schools might consider using an outside reviewer every couple of years.

The Evaluation/Review Process

The remainder of this section provides basic information a school should consider whether it conducts the review internally, or oversees and participates in an evaluation conducted by external reviewers. In cases where outside reviewers are not being used, districts and schools are encouraged to consult with individuals with experience in conducting such reviews for further information about what the review process might entail.

Program evaluations/reviews are usually organized and carried out according to the following steps.

1) Identification of purpose and intended audiences – The annual review of a schoolwide program includes determining the percentage of students who reach proficiency on the State’s annual assessments. Additionally, it examines the operation of the school: the implementation of instructional strategies, the participation of stakeholders, the degree of parental involvement, and other elements that support increased student achievement, as detailed in the schoolwide program plan.

The intended audience for the annual review is all stakeholders, internal and external to the school. These stakeholders are persons with an investment in the school, many of whom were involved from the beginning in the development of the school’s mission and goals and in the program planning process. They have an interest in knowing whether or

not those goals are being met, and want to know what will be done with the results of the annual review. These stakeholders include (1) those involved in day-to-day program operations, such as teaching, administrative and school support staff; (2) those served by the program, such as students, parents and community members; and (3) those in a position to make recommendations and/or decisions regarding the program, such as members of the school planning team, school administrators, and school district personnel.

2) Identification of issues and development of review questions – Program review begins at the same time that the schoolwide program is being designed. That is, while the school planning team is developing measurable goals and strategies, it should be considering how the success of those strategies would be determined. Planners should envision what progress toward long-term goals would “look like” at the end of the school year.

Key review points should be related to each goal in the schoolwide plan. Questions can address the following:

- Inputs – For instance, what resources were identified in the schoolwide program and to what degree were they utilized?
- Activities – Did planned events such as professional development, parental involvement activities, schoolwide instructional units, take place as scheduled?
- Short-term impacts – What were the short-term results of implementing a particular strategy in the schoolwide plan? Was training provided for the targeted number of school staff? Did the training affect subsequent instructional decisions?
- Longer-term impacts – An annual schoolwide review can provide incremental information that tracks outcomes over time. For instance, a schoolwide program might begin a dropout prevention program for sixth graders with the goal of a reduced dropout rate when those students are in ninth grade.

Once the target objectives have been clarified, reviewers create specific questions that the review will answer. The answers to some questions will be easily determined (e.g., gains in student scores on State assessments), but some will be more difficult to measure (e.g., a positive change in student attitude). Each potential evaluation question should be screened to ensure that it elicits information that is--

- Relevant to the schoolwide program’s goals and objectives;
- Important to a significant number of stakeholders;
- Of continuing relevance and interest; and
- Attainable, given time, resource, and staff constraints.

3) Identification of data collection instruments – Next, reviewers determine how data that answer each question will be collected. Evaluators will collect both quantitative

(empirical and numerical, such as tallies and test scores) and qualitative (survey responses on attitudes, personal interviews, observations, journals), depending on the review question. Appendix VII provides one tool for data tracking and collection as well as an explanation of a few of the typical data collection instruments. Examples of data collection instruments include document reviews, tallies, questionnaires, interviews, surveys, observations, assessments, attitude inventories, and focus groups. It is the job of the reviewers to align each question with the appropriate data collection method.

4) Collection of data – When data collection instruments have been identified or created, reviewers are ready to gather information. Every stakeholder who will provide the reviewers with information should have a clear understanding of why the review is being conducted, the types of data being collected, and how the results will be used. Data collectors should consider the needs of subjects (e.g., need for anonymity, need for an interpreter) and should obtain any required clearance or permission that is necessary before soliciting information. Because any bias on the part of a data collector can compromise the credibility of the findings and overall results, data collectors should be carefully trained, and there should be consistency in instructions and data collection procedures so that results are reliable across survey groups. Information should be gathered from as many members of a sample group as possible to ensure that the results are statistically significant.

5) Analysis and interpretation of results – After the data are collected and checked for accuracy, they should be analyzed and interpreted. The initial analysis may raise new questions and/or uncover findings that were not anticipated, and in this case a second analysis may be appropriate. For example, an analysis of assessment data might reveal that students, in the aggregate, have higher performance in reading/language arts than they do in mathematics. A second level analysis might ask why that is so and consider the possibility that there is a relationship between scores and times of day that reading and mathematics are taught or differences in how they are taught.

Overall, the information that emerges from the data analysis should clearly describe the progress the school has made in implementing its program and increasing student achievement and indicate areas where revisions or additional work is needed. Data gathered in response to each research question should be addressed separately; it should yield detailed findings that clearly indicate whether or not a key strategy or action in the schoolwide plan was implemented as planned. For example, reviewers might determine that participation in professional development for teachers resulted in more effective use of data to improve student achievement. Or, reviewers might conclude that although the schoolwide program school identified a strategy as important, insufficient time or resources were devoted to accomplishing it.

6) Reporting – The report should be clearly and concisely written and available to all stakeholders. The report typically includes background information, the evaluation

questions, a description of evaluation procedures, an explanation of how the data were analyzed, findings, and a conclusion with recommendations.

Accountability for Results and Continuous Improvement

The schoolwide review team, along with the outside reviewer if one is being used, should present the results to staff in the school, parents and other community members. The evaluation will provide a roadmap for the future progress of the schoolwide program, so it is very important that the presentation and any accompanying materials be clear, understandable, and avoid the use of technical jargon. The presenters should be prepared to answer any questions posed by stakeholders.

The first cycle of continuous improvement is completed when the school uses the results of the review to more effectively implement its schoolwide program and to improve student achievement. Once the findings have been widely disseminated and input has been received, the schoolwide team identifies which recommendations will be incorporated into the existing school plan. Some suggested steps for carrying out this process follow:

- Review the strategies and action steps originally proposed in the schoolwide plan.
- Use the findings and recommendations to identify the parts of the schoolwide plan that have been implemented ineffectively or not at all.
- Solicit the input of all stakeholders in identifying more effective strategies to achieve identified goals.
- Identify any additional training that is needed to improve implementation.
- Determine if additional resources are needed to implement the revised improvement plan and, if so, how they will be obtained.
- Re-establish responsibilities and timelines for implementing the revised plan.
- Communicate to all stakeholders what has been incorporated into the revised plan.
- Review the implementation review design that was used and make changes as appropriate to reflect plan modifications in preparation for the following year's evaluation.

The purpose of the annual review of the schoolwide program is to ensure that the program described in the schoolwide plan is implemented as designed and that its implementation has a positive effect on student achievement. Thus, the results of the annual review should not be perceived as a sign that the school should start over again with a new plan. Instead, the school should revise its existing plan to incorporate the revisions and reflect a revitalization of the school's commitment to implementing a schoolwide program that helps all students achieve at high levels.