

DOINGWHATWORKS



SAMPLE MATERIAL

The Ohio Improvement Process: Using the Ohio Decision Framework Tool

Ohio Department of Education

Topic: Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making

The Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) unified state system of support is directly focused on improving students' academic achievement. As part of the system, the four-stage Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) helps districts build capacity for sustained improvement, beginning with a comprehensive needs assessment using the Ohio Decision Framework (DF) tool. This sample material explains the components of the DF tool.

The OIP brings together processes, structures, tools, and people as they work through four stages:

1. Using data to identify areas of greatest need
2. Developing a plan to address the identified needs with a limited number of focused goals and strategies
3. Implementing the plan
4. Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement process in changing instructional practice and impacting student performance.

ODE's integrated data warehouse system prepopulates the DF tool with relevant data. District and school leadership teams examine these data as they conduct an in-depth needs assessment and work through the improvement process. To support districts in using the DF tool, ODE has trained State Support Teams (SSTs), who work with personnel at Ohio's Education Service Centers, and Regional Facilitators.

States and districts may find this example helpful as they design similarly functioning data warehouse systems. It may also be useful when considering the processes, structures, tools, and resources needed to build district capacity toward a coherent approach to an improvement process.

The following acronyms are used in the sample material:

- DF - Ohio Decision Framework
- OIP - Ohio Improvement Process
- OLAC - Ohio Leadership Advisory Council
- DLT - District Leadership Team
- BLT - Building Leadership Team
- CSLT - Community School Leadership Team

Ohio Improvement Process: Setting the Stage for Focused Needs Assessment and Planning Using the Ohio Decision Framework Tool

Ohio is committed to the implementation of a unified state system of support directly focused on improving the academic achievement of all students and student groups. The *Ohio Improvement Process (OIP)* is Ohio's strategy for ensuring a systematic and coherent approach for building the capacity of all districts and schools to improve instructional practice on a district-wide basis, and sustain significant improvement in student performance for all students across the district. Inherent in the OIP is the belief that (1) improvement is everyone's responsibility – at all levels of the district and in all districts, but especially those in corrective action or improvement status; (2) state-developed products and tools, including professional development, need to be designed for universal accessibility and applicability to/for every district in the state; (3) a unified statewide system of support requires the intentional use of a consistent set of tools and protocols by all state-supported regional providers, rather than allowing for multiple approaches across the state, based on preference; and (4) improvement efforts should be focused on improving instructional practice and performance at all levels in the system.

The Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) involves four-stages across which processes, structures, tools, and people are connected – all with the intent of helping districts enact *Ohio's Leadership Development Framework* by (1) using data to identify areas of greatest need; (2) developing a plan to address those areas of need that is built around a limited number of focused goals and strategies to significantly improve instructional practice and student performance; (3) implementing, and monitoring the degree of implementation, of the plan with integrity; and (4) evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement process in changing instructional practice and impacting student performance.

Redefining Leadership

In March 2007, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE), in partnership with the Buckeye Association of School Administrators (BASA), convened a large stakeholder group to identify the essential practices that must be implemented by adults at all levels of the education system for improvement in student performance to be made. This group, the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC), recommended the creation of a new leadership framework that could be used to distribute key leadership functions, align and focus work across the system, and hold adults at all levels accountable for improving instructional practice and student achievement.

Using the Decision Framework Tool to Support District-wide Implementation. Stage 1 of the OIP begins with a comprehensive needs assessment using the Decision Framework (DF) tool. The DF is a decision-making aid designed to assist districts in making informed decisions – based on what their data tell them – about where to spend their time, energy, and resources to make significant and substantial improvements in student performance. A state-developed data warehouse allows for relevant data needed to complete the DF process to be readily available to districts and buildings, and community schools (i.e., Ohio's name for charter schools). Such data are organized in such a way as to allow DLTs and BLTs, and CSLTs, to answer essential questions and make decisions about their greatest need related to improving student performance. To that end, the DF is used to help DLTs and BLTs, and CSLTs:

- Sort through and categorize data in meaningful ways;
- Prioritize areas of need and make decisions based on an analysis of data;
- Identify root causes of prioritized needs; and
- Develop a more focused plan leading to improved student achievement.

The Decision Framework is organized around the four levels outlined below, each of which asks teams to consider essential questions and their degree of implementation and/or level of concern in relation to each (e.g., curriculum alignment and accessibility) identified as being important for improving academic performance of all students, including sub-group populations.

Level I: Student Proficiency

In Level I, leadership teams review student proficiency data across four years by grade level, building level/grade span, and disaggregated student groups to identify up to two content areas of greatest concern. Further analyses using subscale performance data are completed by the team only for those content area(s) identified as areas of greatest concern. The remainder of the DF – Levels II, III, and IV – provide essential questions for helping districts conduct a root cause analysis of those factors contributing to the district's current situation. Level II, which has a direct impact on student performance, is completed for each area of concern identified under Level I of the DF. Levels III and IV, which have a more global impact, are completed once.

Level II: Instructional Management (*Curriculum, Assessment, & Instructional Practice; Educator Quality; Professional Development*)

In Level II, leadership teams answer essential questions in relation to each of the content area(s) of greatest concern identified under Level I. Essential questions under Level II focus on curriculum, assessment, instructional practices; educator qualifications, teacher and principal turnover; and the degree to which district professional development (PD) is aligned to problem areas, is designed to promote shared work across the district/buildings, and is effective in helping teachers acquire and apply needed knowledge and skills related to the improvement of instructional practice and student performance. Following the completion of the Level II analyses, teams make decisions about the most probable causes contributing to the major problem areas identified under Level I.

Level III: Expectations & Conditions (*Leadership; School Climate; Parent/Family, Student, Community Involvement*)

In Level III, leadership teams answer essential questions related to leadership; school climate (including student discipline occurrences, student attendance and mobility, students with multiple risk factors, and teacher and student perception); and parent/family, student, and community involvement and support to identify additional probable causes contributing the areas of greatest need identified in Level I.

OLAC-OIP Connection

OLAC, using OIP and embedded tools such as the Decision Framework, support the (1) collective use of relevant data to make better informed decisions about instructional practice; (2) use of a limited and focused set of goals and strategies to improve instructional practice; (3) development of shared instructional practices; (4) full implementation of shared instructional practices across the district; and the (5) ongoing monitoring of the degree of implementation of these practices, as well as the provision of feedback and support in relation to what is and is not working well.

Level IV: Resource Management

In Level IV, leadership teams answer essential questions related to resource management – defined as the intentional use of time, personnel, data, programmatic/fiscal resources – to identify additional causes contributing the area(s) of greatest need identified in Level I.

Through the completion of the DF, leadership teams prioritize areas of greatest concern, as well as causes contributing to those areas of concern.

The decisions made by the team at Stage 1 of the

OIP using the DF provide the foundation for creation of a district plan with a limited number (two to three) of focused goals and a limited number (three to five) of focused strategies associated with each goal.

At the school level, Building Leadership Teams (BLTs) complete a similar process at stage 1 of the OIP by using a building-level decision framework to review data and identify a limited number of action steps for improving performance to reach district goals. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) describe the development of strong building leadership teams (BLTs) and the distribution – throughout the team – of some of the 21 practices that characterize the job of an effective principal as key steps in enhancing student achievement. Such practices, identified through McREL's meta-analysis of 35 years of research on school-level leadership, suggests that leading a building requires a "complex array of skills" not likely to be found in a single individual and support the need for strong leadership team structures.

The DF assists DLTs, BLTs, and CSLTs in selecting the "right" work (i.e., work that has a high probability of improving student achievement), based on data-based decision making and focused planning, as well as developing the collective know-how to do the right work across the system.