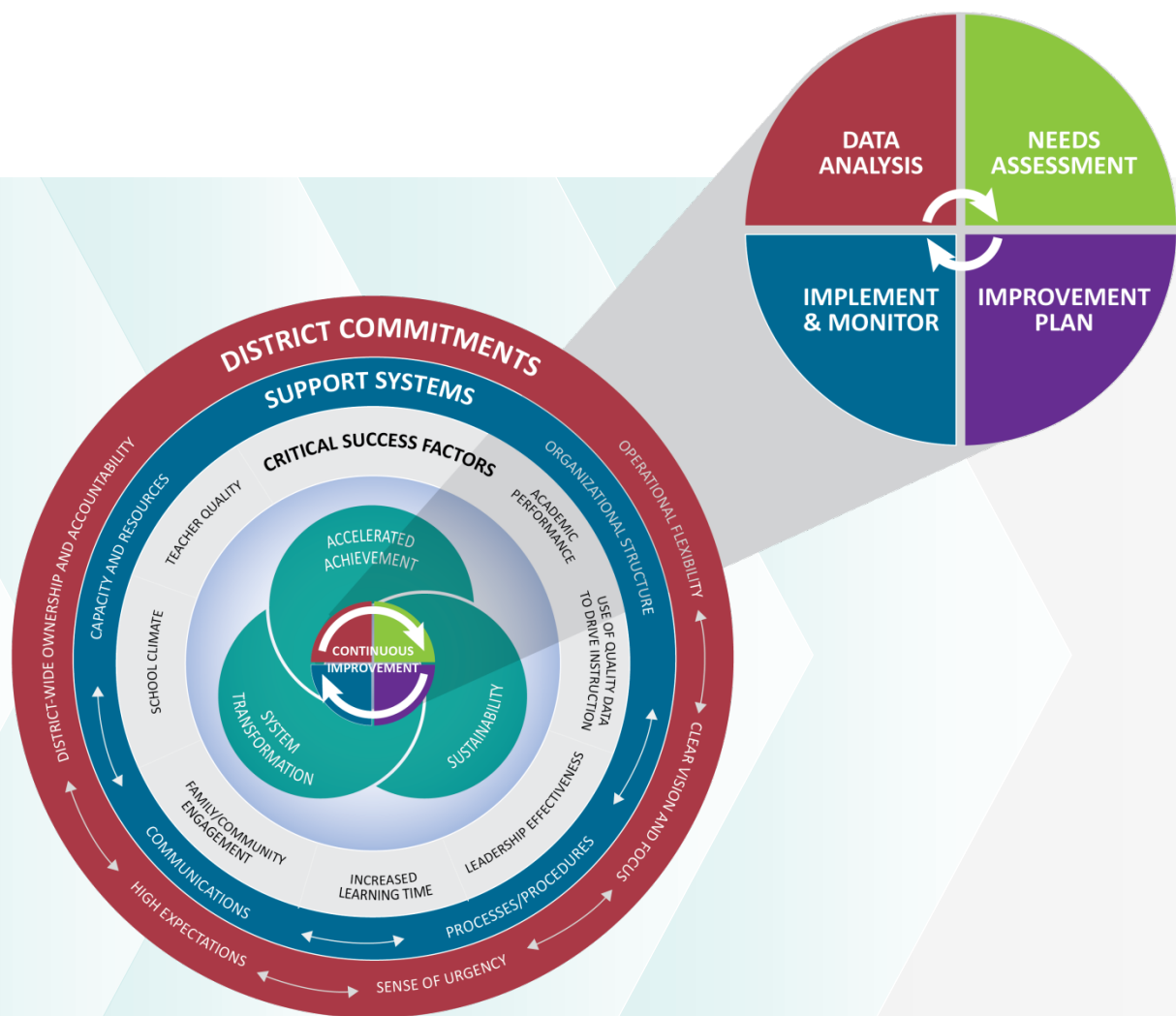# Guidance for the Texas Accountability Intervention System
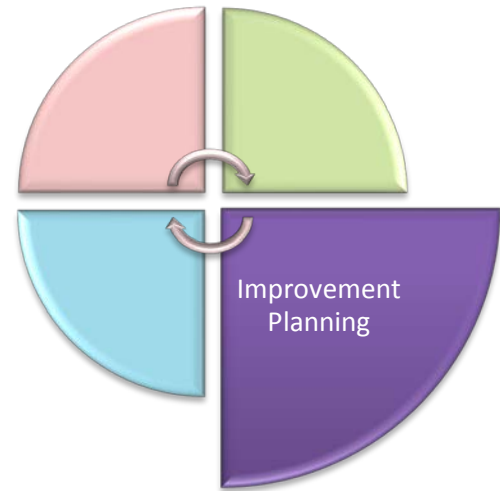## Improvement Planning Guidance

Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) Improvement Planning Guidance

Introduction

The intent of this document is to provide support for the development of targeted improvement plans for campuses and Local Education Agencies (LEAs)/campus. The process set forth is aligned to the State Framework, which includes the Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) continuous improvement process. Targeted improvement plans are best practice for any LEA/campus regardless of accountability ratings; however, they are a requirement for LEA/campus in improvement (TEC §39.106 and P.L. 1114 (b), 19 TAC §97.1071).

Improvement
Planning

Design and Framework:

Part 1 of this guidance document covers general research and best practice for developing improvement plans. Part 1 is designed as a 5-step process to be used by any LEA/campus that needs additional support or information creating improvement plans.

Part 2 is a step-by-step guide for LEA/campus in improvement due to accountability ratings and/or PBM staging. Part 2 is designed to help guide the campus or district intervention team which includes the DCSI and the Professional Service Provider (PSP) through the required TEA improvement plan submission as required by TEC §39.106 (d) and 19 TAC §97.1071.

Note: Campus Improvement Plans (CIP) and District Improvement Plans (DIP) are comprehensive plans that include all of the activities of an LEA/campus. The improvement plan guidance in this document is designed to help develop a targeted plan to address areas of low performance as stated in TEC §39.106 (d) and 19 TAC §97.1071.

Part 1: Improvement Planning

> **Step 1**: Assessing Readiness for Planning

> **Step 2:** Establishing Priorities Aligned to Core Values

> **Step 3:** Backwards Planning and Setting Annual Goals

> **Step 4:** Dissecting Annual Goals to Determine Strategies and Interventions

> **Step 5:** Evaluating and Making Adjustments to the Plan

Step 1: Assessing Readiness for Planning

Before beginning an improvement plan, it is imperative for the LEA/campus to ensure that it does not jump from the identification of problem areas to proposed solutions without determining why the problem exists. With this in mind, the following questions are intended to serve as a checkpoint to determine whether the LEA/campus have completed the needs assessment process and is ready to move forward with the improvement plan.

- Has the LEA/campus studied trends in the data using multiple sources?
- Has the LEA/campus clearly defined the problem?
- Has the LEA/campus conducted a root cause analysis that establishes causal and/or contributory relationships between the problem and the identified need or focus area?
- Has the LEA/campus prioritized needs based on the results of the root cause analysis?

Step 2: Establishing Priorities Aligned to Core Values

Understanding the root cause of problem areas via a thorough needs assessment will lead to a more targeted plan focused on priorities. It is critical to narrow identified needs to a list of prioritized needs to include in the improvement plan so that a plan of action can be developed that will have an impact and not be too broad. Too many priorities can translate into no priorities. The priorities should align with the vision and core values of the LEA/campus. An improvement plan should be developed with the core values in mind and address areas most critical to improving student success.

Questions to consider when establishing priorities:

- What outcomes do we want for all students?
- What root causes and needs were identified by the needs assessment process?
- What was the process for establishing prioritized needs?
- How are the prioritized needs identified for the improvement plan aligned to desired outcomes for students?
- Which, if any, low performing student groups not represented in the prioritized needs?
- Are we selecting a need out of habit or based on current data?
- How do the identified priorities represent the LEA/campus core values?

Step 3: Backwards Planning and Setting Annual Goals

Sound improvement plans begin with the end in mind. The ultimate goal must be known in order to develop a plan to achieve that result. Each LEA/campus should establish clear annual goals for each identified need to help drive the improvement planning process. Annual goals reflect the progress the campus/LEA hopes to make in one year towards closing the gap and increasing performance for each identified need. *"What does the LEA/campus want to accomplish in one year?"*

Annual goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART). (See Appendix A)

- **Specific:** Goals need to be clear and focused. This is what ensures the improvement plan will be targeted.

- **Measurable:** Goals should be measurable so that you have tangible evidence that you have accomplished the goal. Also, track goals using data in order to gauge improvement or to identify potential problems.

- **Attainable:** It is important to have high expectations, but goals should be attainable for LEA/campus-specific situations and involve the ability for immediate action. Goals that have immediate positive impact will also help with stakeholder buy-in.

- **Relevant**: Goals need to connect to the core values and desired outcomes.

- **Time-bound**: Goals should have clear checkpoints and an endpoint. Annual goals can be broken down into short term goals for monitoring purposes.

Backwards planning using annual goals can keep the work aligned to LEA/campus core values, targeted, and prevent random activities and strategies from becoming part of the plan. Knowing the end result keeps the work focused on that outcome. Developing a plan aligned to annual goals ensures proactivity rather than reactivity interventions.

Step 4: Dissecting Annual Goals to Determine Strategies and Interventions

Improvement plans are the road map for addressing areas of low performance and addressing identified needs. The improvement plan should contain strategies that have been determined as necessary to address identified needs in order to make progress toward annual goals. A **strategy** is the broad, over-arching approach the LEA/campus plans to take to achieve their goal. Strategies address, "*How will the annual goal be accomplished?*"

When determining the most effective strategies:

- Review the data analysis findings and trends.
- Analyze student groups in order to determine the impact of the proposed strategy on all students.
- Consider current successful interventions.
- Evaluate resources in order to determine the efficacy or ability to implement proposed strategies.
- Determine if the strategy can be implemented with fidelity and in a timely fashion.

Once annual goals have been written and strategies to accomplish these goals have been determined:

1. Develop short term goals and interventions to ensure that the plan is on track to meet the desired outcomes for the year. These interventions are the specific actions and daily activities to implement your strategy.
2. Establish short term goals to help evaluate the success of interventions and their evidence of impact. This enables mid-course corrections to be made in order to achieve an annual goal.
3. Remember that annual goals always link back to the original problem or gap revealed in the data during the data analysis and needs assessment work.

When developing the improvement plan, the interventions implemented are based on short term goals and support the overall strategy which will help achieve the annual goal. Short term goals make clear "*What needs to be accomplished in the next 3 months to move closer to fully implementing our strategy to achieve the annual goal?*"

Note: For more information on research-based strategies and ideas for interventions, please see the Planning Resources developed by TCDSS at http://www.tcdss.net/.

Improvement Planning Guidance

Step 5: Evaluating and Making Adjustments to the Plan

An important part of an effective improvement plan is the allowance for flexibility and adjustments to the plan as data reveals the need to make corrections. The TEA Guidance document on Implementation and Monitoring, http://www.tea.state.tx.us/pmi/accountabilitymonitoring/ goes into more detail about effective ways to measure the fidelity of implementation and methods for collecting data for monitoring purposes; but in the meantime, when evaluating and designing the improvement plan there are several important points to consider:

Questions to consider when EVALUATING the plan:

- Is the plan easy and understandable for all stakeholders?
- Is the plan realistic yet infused with a sense of urgency for improvement?
- Is the plan focused on core values and student success?
- Is the plan "in writing" and easy to reference on a regular basis?
- Is the plan focused on actions to address areas of low performance?
- Is the plan flexible and does it allow for mid-course corrections?
- Is the plan based in annual goals and short term goals?

Questions to consider for ADJUSTMENTS to the plan:

- What is the set schedule for regular review of the improvement plan?
- How does the intervention team assess whether the improvement plan is continuing to impact student success once implemented?
- If change to the improvement plan is needed, what is the process for developing mid-course corrections?
- Do all of our goals, strategies, and interventions have data sources that the intervention team can review in order to determine the effectiveness of interventions or need for adjustments?
- Before adjustments are made, has full implementation occurred? Does the LEA/campus have enough data to determine whether it is the intervention or implementation that is not effective?
- Who is involved in the decisions to make adjustments to the plan?

Closing and Next Steps:

Once the targeted improvement plan has been developed and evaluated, it is time to move to action and implement the plan. For information and resources for implementing and monitoring an improvement plan, please see the TEA Guidance document on Implementation and Monitoring at http://www.tea.state.tx.us/pmi/accountabilitymonitoring/ or http://www.tcdss.net/.

For campuses/LEAs designated for improvement, please continue with Part 2 of this document for directions and support in completing the TEA required improvement plan for submission by October 31 or November 15, 2013.

PART 2: Completing the Required TEA Improvement Plan

For LEAs/campuses with required improvement plan interventions go to http://www.tea.state.tx.us/pmi/accountabilitymonitoring/ or http://www.tcdss.net/ for a step-by-step guide to complete the improvement plan.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Strategic & Specific

- **Strategic** goals are those "vital few" high impact goals that will address the largest gaps between your current reality and your long-term goals. In the context of the Improvement Plan, quarterly **strategic** goals would propel you closer to your annual goal, and ultimately your vision for transforming your campus. For other campuses, strategic goals would aligned to the campus/district vital few priorities.

- **Specific** goals provide concrete evidence of improvement and facilitate clearer communication. Specificity will enable a more targeted approach and enable greater flexibility in how to pursue the goal as obstacles present themselves.

Measurable

- **Measurable** goals provide you concrete criteria for assessing progress. The measurement *should* be both formative and summative and *may* be quantitative or qualitative measures.

Attainable and Aggressive

- **Attainable** goals should be achievable within the timeframe established (i.e., 90 Days), but aggressive enough to inspire people to rise to the occasion.

- **Aggressive** goals should inspire team members to stretch themselves.

Results-based and Relevant

- **Results-based** goals focus on the results you hope achieve (outcomes or impact) through implementing a process. Results-based goals answer the question "What improved?", and are motivating. Often, we focus on writing process-based goals. Process-based goals are things you can check off your list (activities) and move-on. True improvement is measured by the outcomes you yield not the actions you take.

- **Relevant** and directly connect to daily work and the mission of the organization. Relevant goals build buy-in and a clear understanding of how working toward this goal will positively impact the team and the organization.

Time-bound

- **Time-bound** goals specify the time-frame within which you hope to achieve the goal (i.e., 90 Days or Annually)

S.M.A.R.T. Goals – *Questions to Consider*

Strategic & Specific

- **Has the LEA/Campus selected those "vital few" goals that will yield us the greatest impact towards attaining our long-term goals?**

- **Have the LEA/Campuses answered the Who, What, When, Where, Where, Why?**

    o Who is involved
    o What we hope to accomplish
    o Where this will take place
    o When this will be accomplished
    o Why we want to accomplish this goal

Measurable

- **Does the goal measure the progress that will be made?**
- **Has the LEA/Campus indicated by "how much" or "how many" they want to improve?**
- **How will the LEA/Campus know when the goal has been accomplished?**

Attainable and Aggressive

- **Is the goal attainable within the timeframe allotted (i.e., 90 Days or Annual)**
- **Does the goal stretch the LEA/Campus?**

Results-based and relevant

- **Is the goal measured by a result (outcome or impact) achieved, rather than an action completed?**
- **Is this goal relevant to our staff? Would staff understand why this is one of our chosen goals?**

Time-bound

- **Has the LEA/campus specified the timeframe within which this goal will be achieved?**

References:
O'Neill, J. & Conzemius, A. (2006). *The Power of SMART Goals.* Bloomington, IN, Solution Tree
Smith, D.K. (1999). *Make Success Measurable: A Mindbook-Workbook for Setting Goals and Taking Action.* New York, NY, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
TOP Achievement at http://topachievement.com/smart.html