Bridging the Gap Through Continuous Improvement:

The Effective Use of A Comprehensive Needs Assessment

ESSA Academy

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Molly M. Spearman – State Superintendent of Education

Innovation and Support Team

Office of Federal and State Accountability
South Carolina Department of Education

PROFILE OF THE

South Carolina Graduate

WORLD-CLASS KNOWLEDGE

Rigorous standards in language arts and math for career and college readiness

Multiple languages, science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), arts and social sciences

WORLD-CLASS SKILLS

Creativity and innovation

Critical thinking and problem solving

Collaboration and teamwork

Communication, information, media and technology

Knowing how to learn

LIFE AND CAREER CHARACTERISTICS

Integrity • Self-direction • Global perspective • Perseverance • Work ethic • Interpersonal skills

© SCASA Superintendents' Roundtable

Adopted by: SC Arts Alliance, SC Arts in Basic Curriculum Steering Committee, SCASCD, SC Chamber of Commerce, SC Commission on Higher Education, SC Council on Competitiveness, SC Education Oversight Committee, SC School Boards Association, SC State Board of Education, SC State Department of Education, TransformSC Schools and Districts

transformSC

AN INITIATIVE OF SOUTH CAROLINA COUNCIL ON COMPETITIVENESS

AGENDA

- Review of SCDE Vision & Improvement Model
- Definition & Purpose of Needs Assessment
- Elements of Needs Assessment
- Phases of Needs Assessment
- District Opportunities through Needs Assessment
- SCDE Website-Resource Portal
- Resources

Needs Assessment and ESSA

ESEA, as amended by ESSA, requires states and districts to complete a needs assessment for both state and federal programs such as

- Title I, Part A
- Title II, Part B
- Title IV, Part A
- Title IV, Part F
- Title IX, Part B

Conducting a Needs Assessment is also essential across State level Programs

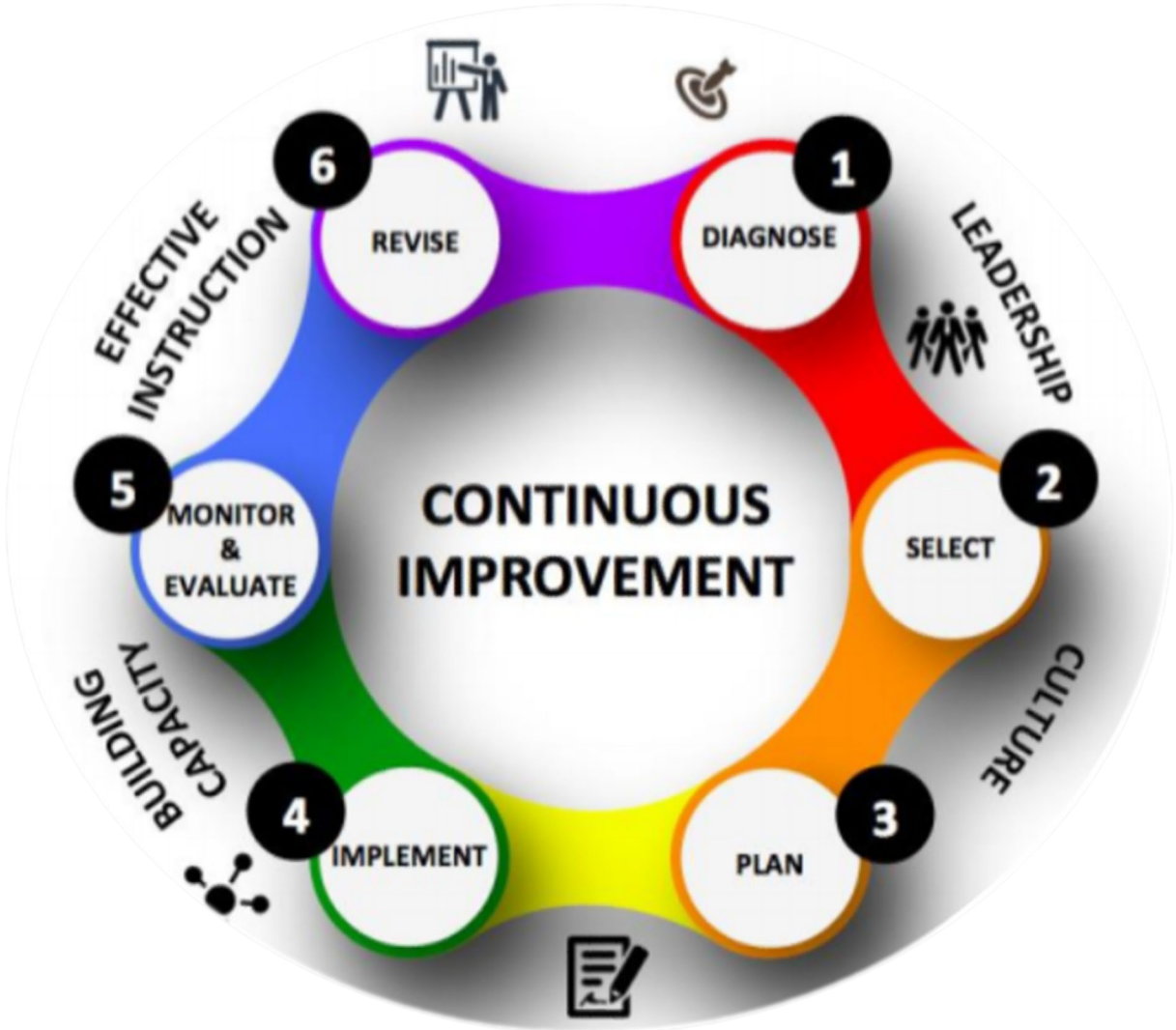
South Carolina School Improvement Model

- **Needs Assessment- identify and assess key deficiencies and provide prioritized recommendation to support improvement**
- Differentiated **Intervention**- tiers of technical assistance designed to tailor support to the specific needs of the school or district
- Focused Improvement- diagnosing deficiencies, identify clear and effective improvement strategies, implement **evidence-based practices** and monitor

South Carolina School Improvement Model

- Innovation- provide research- based innovative practices & design frameworks to scale the innovations
- Increased State Capacity- increased collaboration around school improvement. **Focus on more than just compliance**
- State Stakeholder Participation- Including all the necessary stakeholders

South Carolina School Improvement Model



Why Conduct a Needs Assessment?

- An effective needs assessment helps stakeholders and system leaders understand how the pieces of a complex educational system interact.
- The goal of a needs assessment is to help educators identify, understand, and **prioritize** the needs that districts and schools must address to improve performance.

What is a NEEDS ASSESSMENT?

- Needs assessment is, first and foremost, a **process**—a process that can help educators at all levels successfully identify, understand, and better address education challenges.

- Needs assessment is generally defined as a systematic examination of the **gap** that exists between the current state and desired state of an organization and the factors that can be attributed to this gap.

Key Challenges to a Successful Needs Assessment

- Lack of Time
- Insufficient Tools
  - A **description** of what a needs assessment could look like – but no concrete tools
  - A data **spreadsheet** and questions about school issues, with no help connecting the two
- Asking Wrong Questions- Are you asking the "tough" questions?
- Jumping to Solutions- School and district leaders often jump to the task of brainstorming solutions before understanding the problems to be solved.
- Ineffective Implementation

Four Elements of a Successful Needs Assessment

- Needs Driven and Context-Specific Approach
- Rigorous Data Analysis
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Collaborative Identification of Improvement Needs

Needs Driven
&
Context-Specific Approach

- ***Needs Driven:*** the needs assessment design and scope should be built around an organizing framework that defines the problems, topics, and questions to be addressed.

- ***Context-specific:*** the design and data inputs of the needs assessment must reflect the local context for the work.

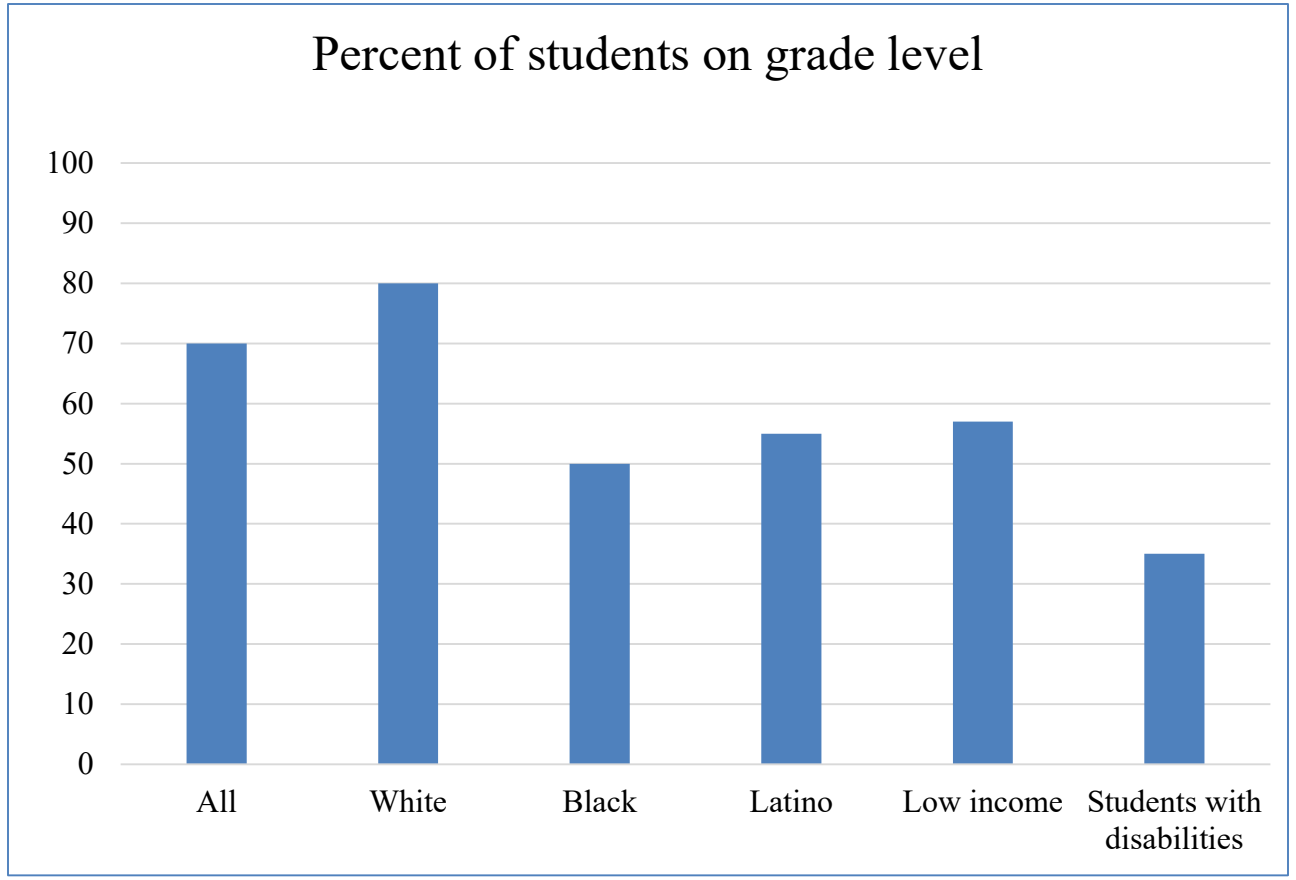
Examine Educational Factors

The data analysis should include educational factors that matter for student learning:

- Aligned curriculum
- Effective instruction
- Strong leadership
- Supports for students and teachers
- A safe and positive climate
- Family and community engagement
- Equitable access to resources

Rigorous Data Analysis

Patterns in student performance -A needs assessment should begin by examining patterns in student achievement data – both overall and for groups.



Rigorous Data Analysis

- Diverse data sets include multiple data types reflecting multiple viewpoints.
- These diverse and high-quality data sources are then used in rigorous data analysis.

Sources of Information

Needs Assessment: should rely on many sources of information, to get the fullest possible picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses:

- State and district data systems
- Master schedules
- Self-assessment rubrics
- Student work samples
- Teacher, student and family surveys
- On-site diagnostic reviews
- Focus groups
- Interviews

Stakeholder Engagement

A needs assessment is a process that should be undertaken with **local stakeholders** rather than completed entirely by a small group of leaders or an outside entity.

- Engaging school staff, parents, a diverse assortment of leaders and external support during each phase of the needs assessment ensures that the planning, data collection, identified needs, and consideration of underlying causes incorporate the input of a **broad knowledge base**.

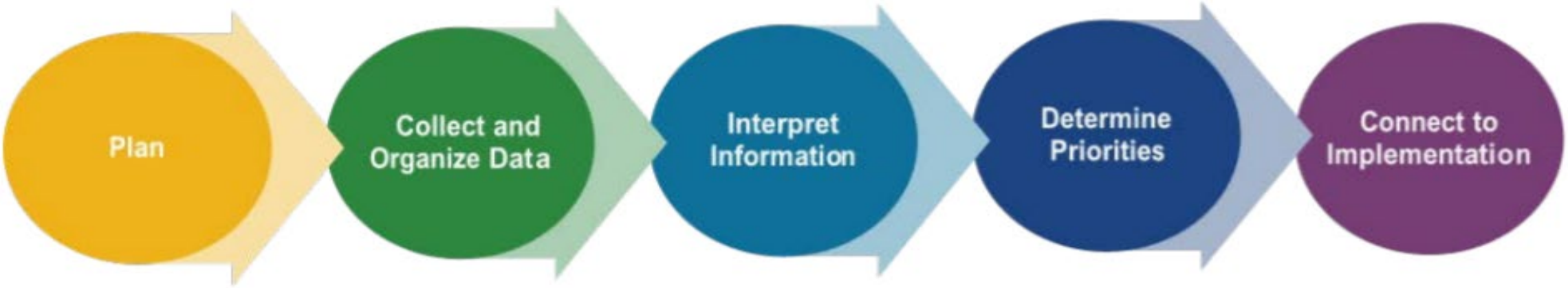
- By developing trust in the process, participating stakeholders are more likely to be **invested in the outcomes** and actively engaged in the selection, development, and implementation of improvement plans and strategies that create lasting change.

Collaborative Identification of Improvement Needs

The primary outcome of the needs assessment process is a set of needs, or **prioritized areas of focus**, that will inform improvement efforts.

- The stakeholders represented in the data collection also have a stake in **identifying** and **prioritizing** needs.
- When **key indicators** are determined at the local level, ownership and understanding increase.
- Research suggests that genuine collaboration requires a shift from a cooperation mindset in which ideas and actions are “mutually agreeable” to ideas and actions that are “mutually beneficial” (Hord, 1981).

Phases of Implementation



The needs assessment process is implemented across five discrete phases: plan, collect and organize data, interpret information, determine priorities, and connect to implementation.

Plan

- Define the purpose and intended outcomes of the needs assessment process within the **local context**.
- Determine the guiding questions that the needs assessment should answer.
- Establish actions, timelines, and responsibilities for all related activities.
- Identify, invite and engage all relevant stakeholders.
- Articulate the content (**what** the needs assessment will cover), the process (**how** the needs assessment will be accomplished), and the presentation (how the results will be conveyed).

Collect and Analyze Data

- Data are a foundational component of any needs assessment process.
- “Raw” data needs to be organized in a way that is useful to draw conclusions and identify improvement needs.
- During this phase of the needs assessment, data are collected in various forms.

Interpret Information

- During this phase, educators examine relevant data to create **meaningful information** by collaborating with multiple stakeholders.
- Collaborating with stakeholders further ensures that data are understood within what is realistic for the local implementation.
- Data should be organized and presented in digestible formats to facilitate examination of trends across time and data sources.

Determine Priorities

- Narrow the list of needs to a key set of priorities for action. Achieving successful outcomes from an improvement process requires directing improvement efforts toward a **manageable set of priorities**.
- Stakeholders must ensure that the priorities identified are **authentic** and **specific** to the needs assessment framework and **local context**.

Connect to Implementation

- The final phase of the needs assessment takes the results of the needs assessment and turns those results into something **actionable**.
- Educators need a deep understanding of the **root causes** so they can be connected to relevant goals and incorporated into an improvement or action plan.
- Priorities drive the selection of **evidence-based strategies** or interventions, how they will be implemented, and how improvement will be evaluated and measured along the way.
- Connecting with **implementation** is critical to realizing change as a result of the needs assessment process.

Collaboration and Support

Actions to Ensure a "High-quality" Needs Assessment

- Set goals at the district level and provide autonomy to schools to use the process to develop strategies and actions to achieve their established goals.
- Work with schools to prioritize their needs according to the assessments.
- Facilitate sharing and presentation of district-level data.
- Support the inclusion of a variety of data sources.
- Bring schools together to focus on related concerns or priorities.

Collaboration and Support

Actions to Ensure a "High-quality" Needs Assessment

- Identify resources and strategies that can work across schools.
- Provide assistance with communications to stakeholders and community members.
- Provide professional learning and support.
- Connect schools with available statewide systems of support.
- Participate in and listen to the conversations related to individual building-level needs assessments.

Collaboration and Support

Actions to Ensure a "High-quality" Needs Assessment

- Determine how school-level data may be aggregated.
- Create opportunities for networking and collaboration.
- Model the use of the needs assessment as a lever for change rather than an instrument of compliance.

SC INNOVATION STATION

- Home
- About
- News
- Assistance
- Comprehensive Improvement Planning
- Evidence Based Interventions
- Teaching Students In Poverty
- Resource Library (Search)

COMPREHENSIVE IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

In this section, you will find resources to help you facilitate a comprehensive district and school improvement planning process. Implementing a data driven continuous improvement process is critical to providing a highly effective teaching and learning environment that supports student success.

- Improvement Planning Requirements and Guidance
- Needs Assessment and Root Cause Analysis
- Data Informed Decision Making
- Action Planning
- Monitoring Implementation
- Evaluating Outcomes and Return on Investment

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COMPREHENSIVE IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

In this section, you will find resources to help you facilitate a comprehensive district and school improvement planning process. Implementing a data driven continuous improvement process is critical to providing a highly effective teaching and learning environment that supports student success.

Improvement Planning Requirements and Guidance

Needs Assessment and Root Cause Analysis

South Carolina Department of Education-Using Evidence Based Interventions & Practices: *A Process Guide for Improvement*

This document provides an overview of an evidence based school improvement planning process and helpful tools to use during each phase of the needs assessment and planning process.

Cognia Improvement Services

Many districts and schools are accredited by Cognia (formerly AdvancEd and Measured Progress) and may also use their continuous school improvement services.

Data Informed Decision Making

Action Planning

Monitoring Implementation

Evaluating Outcomes and Return on Investment

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RESOURCE LIBRARY

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) emphasizes that professional development and ongoing professional learning "are an integral part of school and local educational agency strategies for providing educators (including teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, as applicable, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and to meet the challenging State academic standards."

This section provides educators with best practice resources, tools, webinars, and links to professional support organizations that support them in providing rigorous evidence-based learning within a safe and healthy school environment can be found in this section.

Audiences

- ☐ District Administrators
- ☐ School Administrators
- ☐ Teachers

Topics

- ☐ Andragogy
- ☐ Educational Organizations
- ☐ Federal/State Programs
- ☐ Social Emotional Learning
- ☐ Content Learning
- ☐ Educational Technology
- ☐ Health/Safety
- ☐ Virtual Instruction

Search

10 Best Practices for Teaching Online

Ten best practices for anyone just getting started in the online environment. Using these practices can help develop confidence, comfort, and experience in teaching online.

Apex

The mission of the Apex accredited online school is to create opportunities for middle school and high school students. Apex online courses' flexibility empowers your student to take control of their learning by letting them choose when and where they work. Our caring staff of certified teachers, online tutors, and school counselors surround your student with the support they need to become confident, independent learners and successful in school and life

Be Remote Ready this Fall!

Explore the offerings of live online and blended experiences that give you the choice of pace, place, and path offered by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Blackboard- Transitioning to Online Teaching Workshops

These workshops are designed to equip faculty with the key competencies needed to design, develop, facilitate and evaluate an online course. With a focus on the development of practical skills, these courses give faculty the confidence to transition from teaching face-to-face to a blended or fully online mode leveraging the tools available in the Learning Management System.

COGNIA- Return to School 2020

Bridging the Gap Through Continuous Improvement

RESOURCES

South Carolina Department of Education: *South Carolina School Improvement Framework Version 2.0*

This document provides the plan and process adopted by the South Carolina Department of Education to ensure high-level learning for all students at all schools in South Carolina.

South Carolina Department of Education-*Using Evidence Based Interventions & Practices: A Process Guide for Improvement*

This document provides an overview of an evidence based school improvement planning process and helpful tools to use during each phase of the needs assessment and planning process.

State Support Network- Needs Assessment Guidebook

This document provides an overview of the needs assessment process with numerous resources and references to support districts and schools to develop a successful school improvement plan.

Bridging the Gap Through Continuous Improvement

Innovation and Support Team

Team Lead- Basil Harris: bharris@ed.sc.gov

Devetter Bradley: dbradley@ed.sc.gov

Pat Ciccantelli: pciccantelli@ed.sc.gov

Lynn Hammond: lhammond@ed.sc.gov