

---

---

**SUCCESSFUL  
TEXAS SCHOOLWIDE  
PROGRAMS:**

**SELF-STUDY AND PLANNING GUIDE**

---

---

**The Charles A. Dana Center  
The University of Texas at Austin  
2901 North IH-35, ECN 2.200  
Austin, TX 78722-2348  
(512) 475-9708  
Fax: (512) 232-1853  
<http://www.starcenter.org>**

**February 1997**

Funding for this product was provided by a grant from the Texas Education Agency through Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I funds, with additional funding support provided by Region VIII Comprehensive Regional Assistance Center: The STAR (Support for Texas Academic Renewal) Center



## **Research Staff and Contributing Authors**

Kim Anderson  
Rose Asera, Ph.D.  
Margery Ginsberg, Ph.D.  
Janis Guerrero-Thompson, Ph.D.  
Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., Ph.D.  
Veena Kaul  
Dorothy Knight  
Laura Lein, Ph.D.  
Liz Lilliott  
Richael McClure  
Sandra Okolica  
Mary Ragland  
Janine Saunders  
Juanita García-Wagstaff, Ph.D.  
Darlene Yañez

The Charles A. Dana Center  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Philip Uri Treisman, Ph.D., Executive Director  
Joseph F. Johnson, Jr., Ph.D., Director of School Improvement Initiatives  
Rose Asera, Ph.D., Director of Research and Evaluation  
Mary Ragland, Project Director

## **Table of Contents**

Acknowledgments.....	iii
Introduction .....	v
Suggestions for Using the Self-Study and Planning Guide.....	vi
Glossary .....	vi
<u>Thematic Module I: Focus on Academic Achievement for Every Student</u> .....	1
<u>Thematic Module II: No Excuses</u> .....	11
<u>Thematic Module III: Experimentation</u> .....	18
<u>Thematic Module IV: Inclusivity</u> .....	24
<u>Thematic Module V: Sense of Family</u> .....	32
<u>Thematic Module VI: Collaboration and Trust</u> .....	41
<u>Thematic Module VII: Passion for Learning and Growing</u> .....	47
Suggested Readings.....	53
Self-Study and Planning Guide Feedback Form.....	54

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This School Self-Study and Planning Guide was based on a study of the following 26 schools:

Adams Elementary School, Cleburne ISD; Ina Lee Roden, Principal  
Apple Springs Elementary School, Apple Springs ISD; Leroy Spencer, Principal  
Boys Ranch High School, Boys Ranch ISD; Larry White, Principal  
T. A. Brown Elementary School, Austin ISD; Letitia Hinojosa, Principal  
Kate Burgess Elementary School, Wichita Falls ISD; Gail Taylor, Principal  
C. F. Carr Elementary School, Dallas ISD; Jean Dixon, Principal  
Cisco Elementary School, Cisco ISD; Mary Schustereit, Principal  
East Side Elementary School, San Felipe-Del Rio CISD; Roberto Zaragoza, Principal  
El Magnet at Zavala Elementary, Ector County ISD; Marilee Holmes, Principal  
A. G. Hilliard Elementary School, North Forest ISD; Rufus Allen, Principal  
Hueco Elementary School, Socorro ISD; Elfida Gutierrez, Principal  
R. L. Isaacs Elementary School, Houston ISD; Leon Pettis, Principal  
Lamar Elementary School, Corpus Christi ISD; Yvonne Duran, Principal  
Los Fresnos Intermediate School, Los Fresnos CISD; Myrna Brogdon, Principal  
Leo Marcell Elementary School, Mission CISD; Aurora Delgado, Principal  
Nixon-Smiley Middle School, Nixon-Smiley CISD; Gary Tausch, Principal  
Lucille Pearson Elementary School, Mission CISD; Mona Parras, Principal  
L. R. Pietzsch Elementary School, Beaumont ISD; Shirley Bonton, Principal  
Sagamore Hill Elementary School, Fort Worth ISD; Sherry Breed, Principal  
E. J. Scott Elementary School, Houston ISD; Artice D. Hedgemon, Principal  
Annie Sims Elementary School, Mount Pleasant ISD; Judy Walker, Principal  
Springlake Junior High, Springlake-Earth ISD; Bill Verden, Principal  
Sunrise Elementary School, Amarillo ISD; Richard Ross, Principal  
Three Way School, Three Way ISD; Don Paris, Principal  
West Avenue Elementary School, North East ISD; Jacqueline Lee, Principal  
George C. Wolffarth Elementary School, Lubbock ISD; Armando Garcia, Principal

Each of these 26 schools allowed a team of researchers to visit their campus, conduct interviews and make observations. School personnel, parents, community members, and students generously gave of their time so that others could learn from their experiences. Without their passion for excellence and their willingness to share, this school improvement initiative would not exist. Special thanks to El Magnet at Zavala Elementary, Hueco Elementary, Los Fresnos Intermediate, Pietzsch Elementary, and Scott Elementary who allowed a team of researchers to return for a second, more extensive visit.

The Charles A. Dana Center gratefully acknowledges the following individuals for their insights into the preparation of this self-study and planning guide:

Letitia Hinojosa, Principal, T. A. Brown Elementary School, Austin ISD

Jacqueline Lee, Principal, West Avenue Elementary School, North East ISD

Ina Lee Roden, Principal, Adams Elementary School, Cleburne ISD

Patrick Bingham

Ernesto Cano

Marcelo Cavazos

Salvador Cavazos

Dr. Nolan Estes

Antonio Garcia

Luisa Huckestein

Marsha Marchbanks

Dr. Martha Ovando

Vincent Padilla

Sandra Phelps

Bradley Scott

Jennifer Scott

Dr. James Scheurich

## INTRODUCTION

The Charles A. Dana Center recently completed a study of twenty-six high-achieving, high-poverty schools in Texas. Each school has its own unique social and cultural make-up, and has developed particular strengths to address the needs of its community. Some of these schools are located in rural areas, others in urban settings. Language arts curriculum varied from whole language to phonics approaches. Where some schools used constructivist learning approaches, others engaged in direct teaching. Charismatic leadership styles and personalities were found in some of the schools, but not in all. Even the presence of instructional technology had a broad divergence, with some schools representing cutting edge uses, while in others computer technology was all but absent.

What these schools did have in common, however, was a core of interrelated characteristics which have been grouped into seven themes: (1) Focus on Academic Achievement for Every Student; (2) No Excuses; (3) Experimentation; (4) Inclusivity; (5) Sense of Family; (6) Collaboration and Trust; and (7) Passion for Learning and Growing. The evidence of these themes varied considerably in the different schools. Nonetheless, the themes reflect a foundation of attitudes and strategies that makes academic success possible for all students.

To help other schools improve student learning, the Charles A. Dana Center has developed this Self-Study and Planning Guide drawing from the Successful Schools Research Project. The seven themes outlined above provide the direction for a structured process by which a school can begin the evaluation and planning necessary for school improvement. School communities may use this guide to create opportunities for group reflection, evaluation, and brainstorming in regards to school improvement goals and strategies. The guide is designed to allow for maximum flexibility in its use. Individuals, small groups of school personnel, existing planning and decision-making bodies, or larger group settings within the community-at-large will all gain valuable insights from these exercises.

Each module in this guide corresponds to one of the seven themes, and contains worksheets with questions that promote self-evaluation as the starting point for the planning process. The questions are divided according to indicators that provide direction for the self-study and planning activities. Critical self-assessment, goal setting, and planning are the intended results of the discussions centered on the philosophy and practices of successful schools. The last worksheet in each module is designed to organize the information gained and to aid in developing an individualized campus plan. This guide is currently being field tested and will be revised as needed after adequate feedback has been obtained. Please add to our database of information by filling out the Feedback Form at the end of this packet and returning it to us.

Used in conjunction with the Video Discussion Guide, the Self-Study and Planning Guide provides a school with the means to identify areas of concern, explore conditions in each of those areas, and begin the process of planning for school improvement that is vital to the Campus Improvement Plan. This encourages school communities to create benchmarks by which progress toward identified goals can be measured and to revisit progress at appropriate intervals. Timelines for these activities will vary with each school. However, the success of self-study and planning to improve student achievement depends on providing adequate time and encouraging the school community in this concentrated effort.

**Thematic Module I: Focus on Academic Achievement for Every Student**

Successful schools share a common mission: the academic success of all students. This mission encompasses two key elements: (1) each school needs to keep its attention focused on the academic development of each student; and (2) each school needs to aim for success for each student.

**Indicator A: Making Decisions for Academic Achievement**

Decisions are driven by the mission of academic achievement. This includes all decisions about curriculum; instructional strategies (including lesson plans); staff development; budget; scheduling; and the use of staff, building space, ancillary personnel, volunteers, or any other resources.

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
Are the goals for academic achievement for each student clear and measurable? Does everyone understand the goals?	
To what extent does the Campus Improvement Plan establish challenging academic goals for all students, taking into account students in migratory situations, students developing English proficiency, students who recently immigrated, students experiencing homelessness, students with disabilities, students who meet low-income or gifted and talented criteria?	
Who developed the school mission statement? Does the mission statement truly reflect the mission of the school?	

**Indicator A: Making Decisions for Academic Achievement, Continued**

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
List the three most important decisions made by school personnel this past year. How does each decision relate to the mission of academic success for every student?	
Who participates in decisions about: curriculum, instructional strategies (including lesson plans), staff development, scheduling, budget, use of staff, building space, ancillary personnel, volunteers, or other resources?	
Does the Campus Improvement Plan consistently reflect the mission of academic achievement for each student?	

**Indicator B: Planning for Academic Achievement**

Curriculum, staff development, textbook selection, and technology purchases are aligned to ensure that students will successfully attain TAAS objectives, as well as attaining other objectives deemed important by school personnel, which extend beyond TAAS requirements.

Reflective Questions	Response
<p>How have curriculum, textbook selection, and technology purchases been aligned to focus success on TAAS and other school goals?</p>	
<p>Review the campus professional development activities for the past six months. How are those activities aligned with the goals for student achievement?</p>	
<p>How does the budget support these challenging goals?</p>	

**Indicator C: Using Assessment for Academic Achievement**

Assessment data are consistently used to determine how to improve teaching and learning in order for all students to attain TAAS objectives as well as attaining other objectives deemed important by school personnel, which extend beyond TAAS requirements.

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
How does your school measure academic success?	
How are TAAS and other related assessment data used to identify and to respond to the strengths and needs of each student and each teacher? How often is this done?	
How and how often are other goals monitored and assessed?	
How does the Campus Improvement Plan address the needs of students who are not currently achieving at a high academic level? To what extent is this section of the plan implemented?	
Have specific challenging performance objectives been established for those students who are not currently achieving academic success?	

**Indicator C: Using Assessment for Academic Achievement, Continued**

<b>Data Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
What do the data reveal to be the current achievement for <u>all</u> students on TAAS?	
What do the data reveal to be the current achievement for <u>all</u> students on the other measures?	
What do the TAAS data reveal to be the current achievement for:	
Students in migratory situations?	
Students developing English proficiency?	
Students who recently immigrated?	
Students experiencing homelessness?	
Students with disabilities?	
Students who meet low income criteria?	
Students in gifted and talented programs?	
Each ethnic group?	
Boys and girls?	

**Indicator C: Using Assessment for Academic Achievement, Continued**

<b>Data Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
What do other measures reveal to be the current achievement for:	
Students in migratory situations?	
Students developing English proficiency?	
Students who recently immigrated?	
Students experiencing homelessness?	
Students with disabilities?	
Students who meet low income criteria?	
Students in gifted and talented programs?	
Each ethnic group?	
Boys and girls?	

**Indicator D: Sharing Accountability for Academic Achievement**

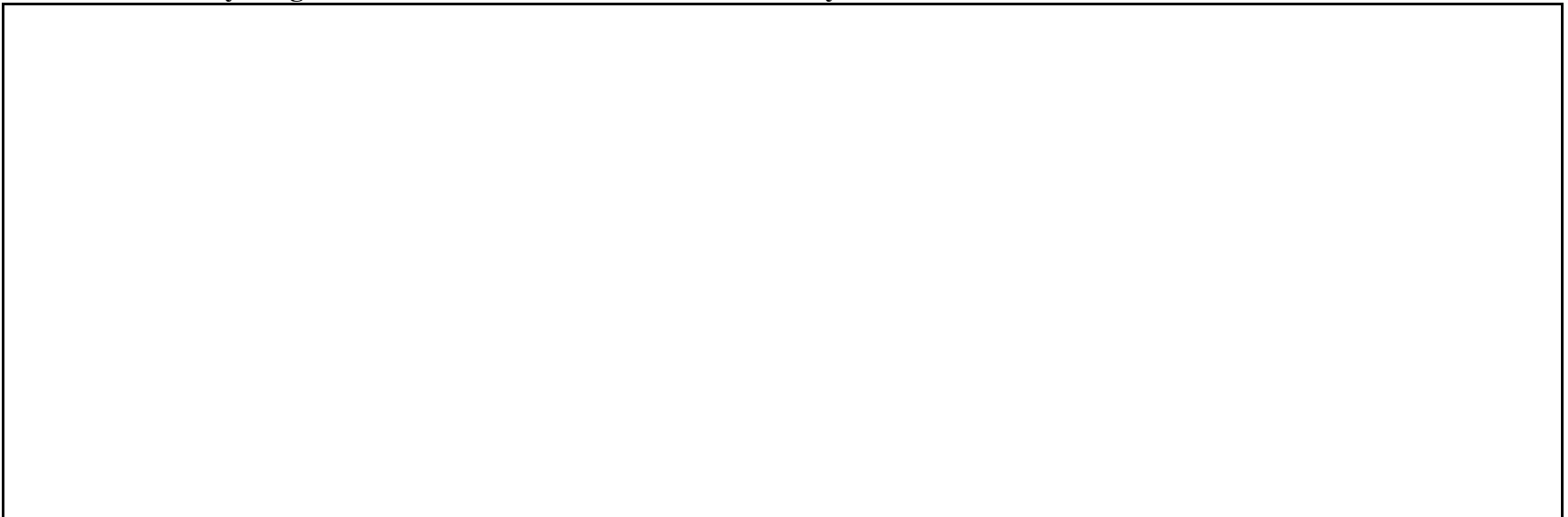
All members of the school community (teachers, administrators, parents, support personnel, members of the community and students) share a sense of accountability to ensure the academic success of every student.

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
<p>How is a shared accountability for the academic success of all students repeatedly communicated to all members of the school community? Do all members of the school community frequently mention, on a voluntary basis, that “we are all responsible for all of the students”? Has this accountability assumption become deeply embedded in the culture of the school community?</p>	
<p>In what specific ways are new teachers/staff selected, monitored and evaluated to ensure improvement of student academic achievement?</p>	

**What else is happening at our school that demonstrates our focus on academic success?**

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a student to write their response to the question above.

**In what other ways might the mission of academic success for every student be furthered?**

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a student to write their response to the question above.

**Given the review of the data on current levels of student achievement and our commitment to academic achievement, what will be the school's challenging goals for the academic achievement of all students, as well as for special populations of students? (Note: Ultimate goals for special populations of students should never be less than the goals for the general population.)**

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for the user to write their response to the question above. The box is currently blank.

**Use this worksheet to organize your information and to develop your Campus Improvement Plan.**

What schoolwide reform strategies will you use to ensure a strong focus on the academic achievement of every student?	How will you determine if the strategies are accomplishing the goals? What benchmarks will you use?	What resources will you use to implement the strategies?	Given an assessment of your progress, what, if any, reformations of strategies and/or goals are necessary at this point to ensure academic success for every student?

When will you revisit and evaluate the goals, strategies and progress towards projected outcomes established here?

**Thematic Module II: No Excuses**

There are no acceptable excuses for the failure of any student. Successful schools believe all students should be able to succeed, regardless of the problems facing the student, home-related issues, resource difficulties, or any other mitigating circumstances.

**Indicator A: Working with Rules for Improvement**

The school and its representatives are willing to challenge rules that do not serve students well and to negotiate changes that are in the best interest of students.

Reflective Questions	Response
<p>Are there rules that the school community perceives as not in the best interest of students? If so, have there been efforts to negotiate changes in those rules?</p>	
<p>In situations where state or federal rules are barriers, have waivers been sought?</p>	

**Indicator B: Taking Responsibility for Improvement**

When results do not meet expectations, educators do not blame outside forces, others, or each other. Instead, they reflect upon their own efforts to find opportunities to improve.

Reflective Questions	Response
Both formally and informally, who does the school community say is responsible for non-attainment of goals or failure to meet expectations, such as expectations for individual, classroom, and schoolwide TAAS scores?	
What happens when significant goals or expectations are not met? How does the school community respond to such failures? Discuss specific examples.	
What resources have been utilized to help the school community maintain their energy and enthusiasm to promote an attitude of “no excuses”?	
To what extent do educators evidence different expectations based on student socio-economic status, ethnicity, language background, or other family characteristics? In what ways are these expectations obvious? How do other educators respond when differing expectations are evidenced?	

**Indicator B: Taking Responsibility for Improvement, Continued**

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
What strategies have been utilized to increase the quantity and quality of the learning experiences of students with home-related issues? (e.g., socio-economic status, migratory status, homelessness)	
For students who don't take TAAS, how is the school ensuring that they are making substantial progress toward challenging academic goals?	
<b>Data Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
What percentage of your students took the TAAS test last year?	
What do the data show to be the exemption rate on TAAS for:	
Students in migratory situations?	
Students developing English proficiency?	
Students who recently immigrated?	
Students experiencing homelessness?	
Students with disabilities?	
Students who meet low-income criteria?	
Each ethnic group?	
Boys and girls?	
Students who are involved with Juvenile Court?	
Students who are involved with Department of Protective and Regulatory Services?	
Students who move often because of home-related issues such as unemployment of a family member?	

**Indicator B: Taking Responsibility for Improvement, Continued**

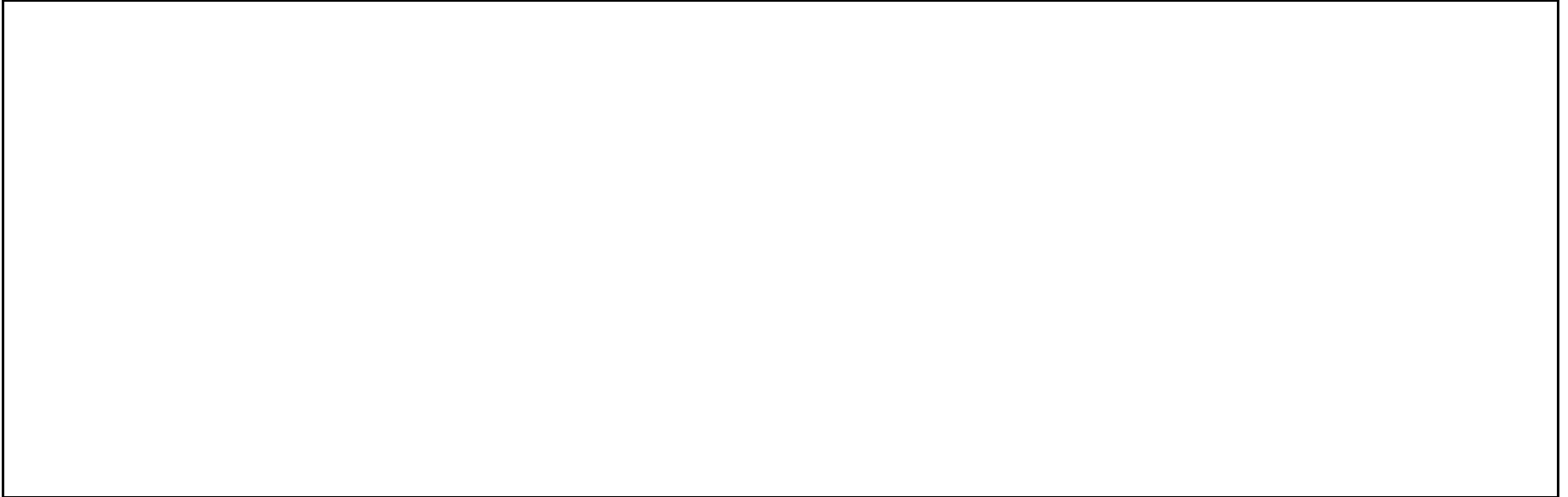
Data Questions	Response
What percentage of students with home-related issues are being served in special education classes?	
What percentage of these students have been served at the school (seen the school counselor, received a home visit from a teacher or social worker etc.) to meet their home-related issues?	
What do the data show to be the student attendance for:	
Students in migratory situations?	
Students developing English proficiency?	
Students who recently immigrated?	
Students experiencing homelessness?	
Students with disabilities?	
Students who meet low-income criteria?	
Each ethnic group?	
Boys and girls?	
Students who are involved with Juvenile Court?	
Students who are involved with Department of Protective and Regulatory Services?	
Students who move often because of home-related issues such as unemployment of a family member?	

**Indicator C: Using Resources for Improvement**

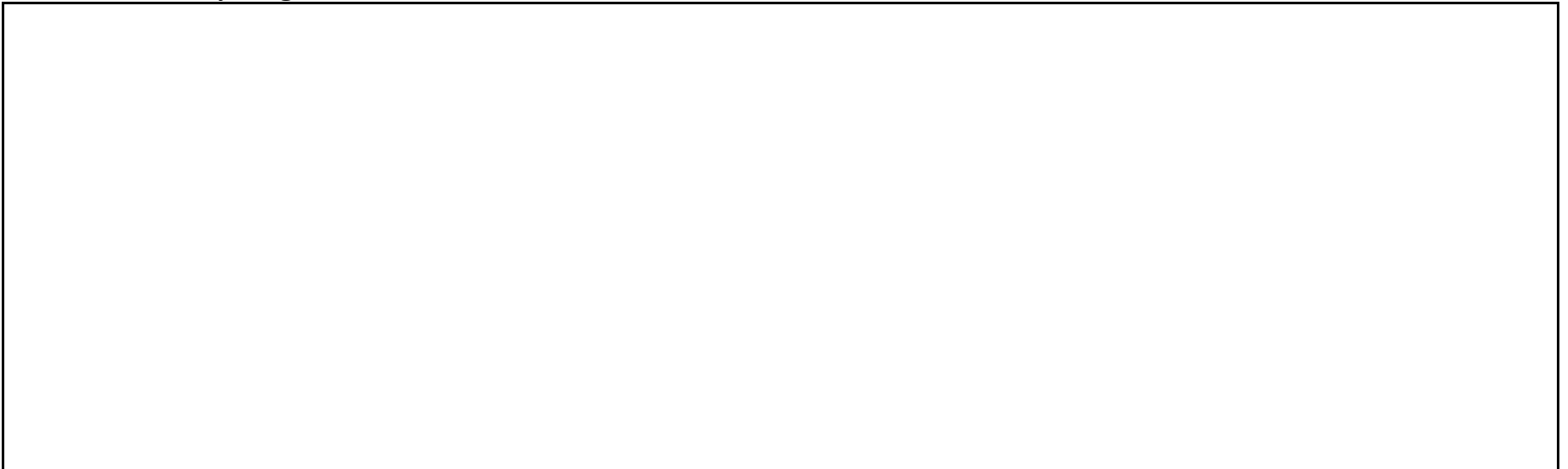
Lack of resources is typically viewed as a challenge that will be overcome. Educators are creative in identifying and pursuing new ways of acquiring resources, both within and outside of the school system to better respond to student needs.

Reflective Questions	Response
<p>What resources have been identified as needed by your school? How has your school sought to fulfill these types of needs in the past? What other creative ways could your school utilize to obtain resources?</p>	
<p>Throughout the school community, what are the general beliefs about needing and obtaining resources? Is there a general belief that the school always finds a way to get needed resources?</p>	
<p>Does the Campus Improvement Plan promote creative use of resources and the development of new resources to ensure that needs are met?</p>	

**What are we doing to add to the belief that there are “no excuses”?**



**In what other ways might the attitude of “no excuses” be furthered?**



**Use this worksheet to organize your information and to develop your Campus Improvement Plan.**

What schoolwide reform strategies will you use to achieve your goals to develop an attitude of no excuses?	How will you determine if the strategies are accomplishing the goals? What benchmarks will you use?	What resources will you use to implement the strategies?	Given an assessment of your progress, what, if any, reformations of strategies and/or goals are necessary at this point to ensure that there are no excuses for the failure of any one student?

When will you revisit and evaluate the goals, strategies and progress towards projected outcomes established here?

**Thematic Module III: Experimentation**

Schools that work successfully with diverse groups of students use a variety of approaches. The school environment allows all participants--administrators, teachers, parents, students, other staff--the space, resources, and support to experiment, fail, and try again. Such schools anticipate that some new efforts will not be considered successful immediately, and some methods may never work out. Failure, particularly failure from which someone learns, is considered an important part of the educational process.

**Indicator A: Supporting Teacher's Experimentation**

Teachers are encouraged to experiment as they consider instructional approaches that might improve teaching and learning.

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
Do teachers and administrators feel comfortable experimenting with instructional approaches? Do all school community members feel comfortable with this experimentation?	
Are teachers confident that administrators and parents will support experimentation?	
Identify significant examples of experiments that have succeeded and ones that have failed.	
When teachers or other school personnel present new ideas, do school leaders listen? Is consensus reached about the merit of those ideas? To what extent are school personnel encouraged to pursue their ideas through pilot studies or other experiments?	

**Indicator B: Planning/Evaluating Experiments**

Educators select and evaluate experiments based on their potential to improve student achievement. Failures are accepted as positive steps toward eventual solutions.

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
To what extent are ideas for experiments researched to determine the likelihood of success? How is that information used before deciding to pursue the experiment?	
Who decides whether to initiate an experimental program? Are evaluation criteria specified prior to implementation of experiments? As experiments are implemented, how is progress monitored and evaluated? How are the data obtained used to determine gains?	
When experiments are considered, what processes are used to insure that everyone involved in the implementation and all those affected by the experiment have a sense of ownership?	
How is failure determined? Who decides if an experiment is a failure and when is the decision made? What data are used to make decisions regarding success and failure?	
How are successes and failures used in the school improvement process? How does the Campus Improvement Plan build on what the school has learned through positive and negative experiences?	
How does the Campus Improvement Plan build on successful activities and programs already begun?	

**Indicator C: Learning from Experimentation**

School community members share, cooperate, and learn from each others' successes and failures.

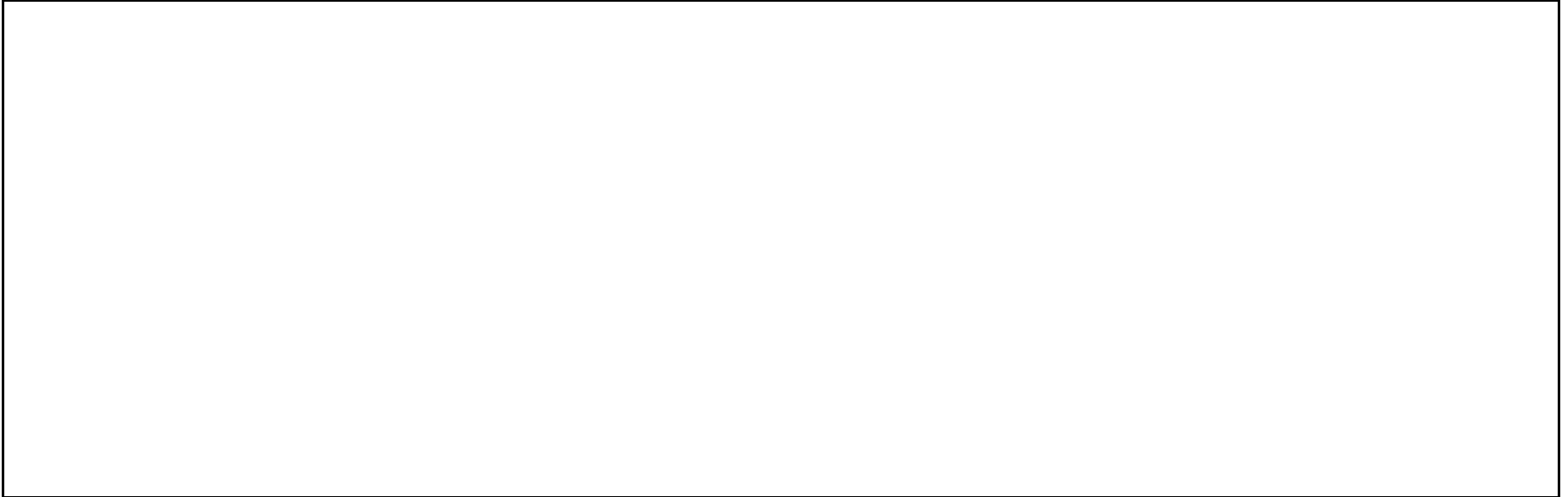
<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
How do teachers learn from the experiments that occur in other classrooms?	
Identify specific, significant examples of sharing of successes and failures. What results did the sharing produce?	
What experiences of success and/or failure have been used to expand and refine staff development?	
How does the Campus Improvement Plan support the process of developing and refining experimental programs?	

**Indicator D: Encouraging Experimentation**

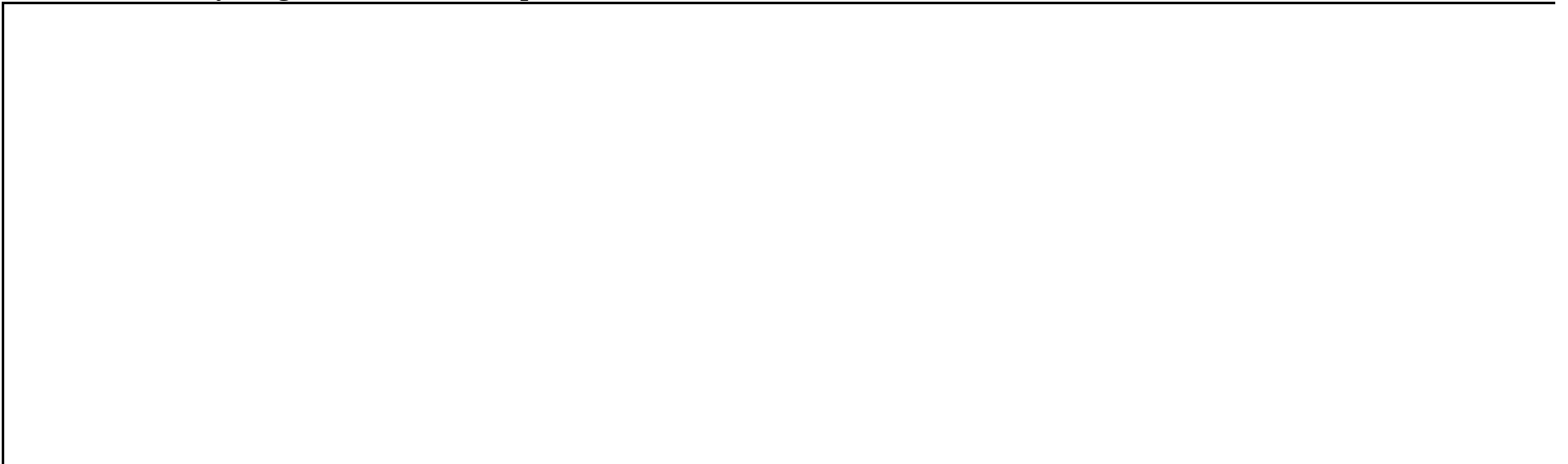
Students are encouraged to experiment and to identify new ways to accomplish tasks. Failures are viewed as learning opportunities for both teachers and students.

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
Do students feel safe in trying new ways to accomplish tasks or investigate questions?	
How are students encouraged to engage in learning experiments? How do students use the failure of an experiment as an opportunity to learn? Identify some specific examples of this learning strategy.	
How is experimentation encouraged in all areas of the curriculum?	
How do students and teachers use the failure of experiments as learning opportunities? Identify some specific examples of this learning strategy.	

**What are we doing that adds to the attitude of experimentation?**



**In what other ways might the attitude of experimentation be furthered?**



**Use this worksheet to organize your information and to develop your Campus Improvement Plan.**

What schoolwide reform strategies will you use to achieve your goals to develop an attitude of experimentation?	How will you determine if the strategies are accomplishing the goals? What benchmarks will you use?	What resources will you use to implement the strategies?	Given an assessment of your progress, what, if any, reformations of strategies and/or goals are necessary at this point to further an attitude of thoughtful experimentation?

When will you revisit and evaluate the goals, strategies and progress towards projected outcomes established here?

**Thematic Module IV: Inclusivity**

Everyone who touches the student is included in the school’s success. School staff (including teachers, administrators, counselors, nurses, cafeteria workers, and custodians), as well as community members and parents, contribute to the school’s success.

**Indicator A: Involving Everyone in School Improvement**

School personnel, families, students, and other community members are often involved in the improvement of the school, its programs, curricula, and facilities. As such, everyone who works at the school, attends the school, sends students to the school, or lives in the school’s community has a strong sense of ownership in the school and its success. Consequently, everyone’s input is solicited in a variety of ways and everyone can participate in important decision-making processes.

Reflective Questions	Response
Who participates in efforts to improve your school? How significant is this participation?	
How are community members and organizations/businesses involved in school improvement efforts?	
What percentage of families are involved in assisting their child with school work at home?	
What percentage of families are involved in participating at school-sponsored social activities?	
What percentage of families are volunteering to assist with special events (e.g. field trips)?	
What percentage of families are volunteering regularly at school?	
What percentage of families are participating in parent-teacher conferences?	

**Indicator A: Involving Everyone in School Improvement, Continued**

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
What percentage of families are participating in site-based decision making processes?	
What percentage of families are participating in the evaluation of school activities and policies?	
To what extent are families that historically have not been involved in school activities (e.g. parents with limited literacy, families who live in shelters, non-English speaking) participating in the above activities?	
How are volunteers utilized at the school? How might they be recruited?	
How does the school encourage the involvement of office staff, custodial staff, cafeteria workers and other support personnel beyond their traditional roles? To what extent are these personnel involved in decisions that affect the school?	
Are school support staff, (social workers, diagnosticians, counselors) included in the school decision-making process?	
How are educational aides utilized? How might they play a larger role in the school's decision-making processes?	
How are the contributions of all members of the school community acknowledged and valued?	

**Indicator A: Involving Everyone in School Improvement, Continued**

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
<p>Was the Campus Improvement Plan developed with the participation of all team members? Who knows and understands the goals and major activities of the Campus Improvement Plan? Who doesn't know? Why?</p>	
<p>In what ways does the Campus Improvement Plan support shared responsibility for high student achievement?</p>	

**Indicator B: Encouraging Leadership**

Leadership emerges from teachers, counselors, other school personnel, parents, and members of the community. Administrators encourage the development of such leadership.

Reflective Questions	Response
<p>Have teachers, counselors, and other personnel, parents and other members of the school community emerged as school leaders? If so, what do they lead and how significant is their role as a leader? Give significant examples of leadership.</p>	
<p>How are these forms of leadership encouraged? What is being done to prepare members of the school community for broader leadership roles?</p>	
<p>In what ways does the Campus Improvement Plan support emerging leadership?</p>	

**Indicator C: Encouraging Family Involvement**

Teachers, counselors, school social workers, and school administrators maintain open door policies to encourage families to interact with the school. Family members are given opportunities to build upon their natural teaching roles through work with their children at home and at school. Regular efforts are made to ensure that family members understand what their children are learning in school. Barriers to the involvement of families are identified and directly addressed.

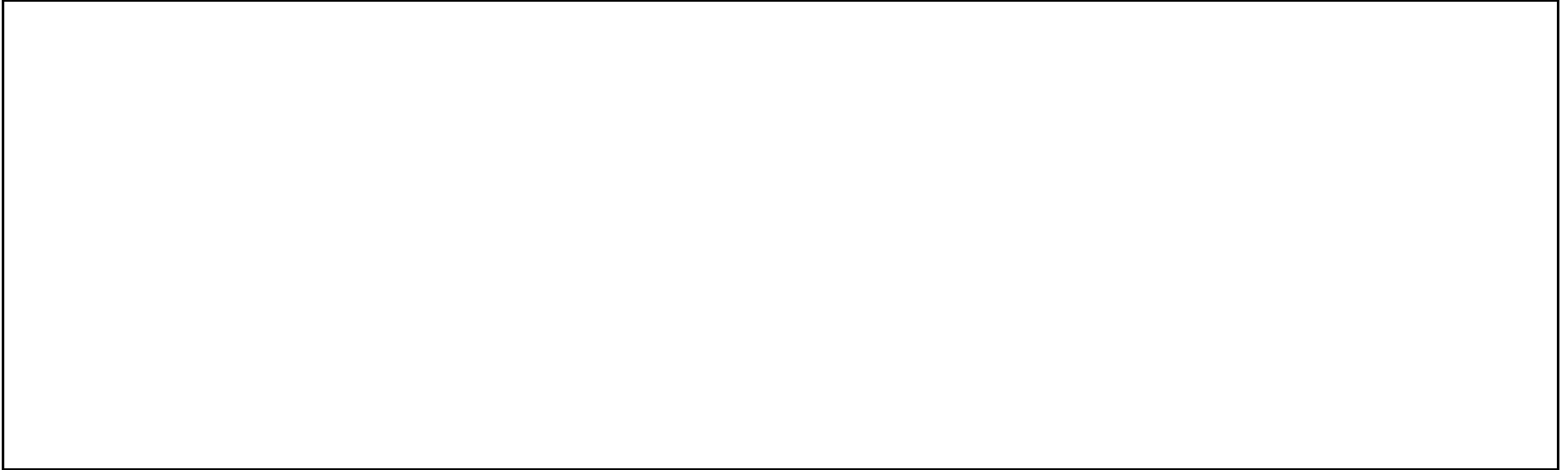
Reflective Questions	Response
How do school personnel encourage families and community members to interact with the school?	
In what ways does the school involve family members in the learning process of their children?	
How are families informed about what their children are learning in school?	
What efforts are made to inform families who do not communicate in English? What special efforts are made to ensure their understanding and maintain their involvement?	
To what extent do family members understand the objectives of TAAS? The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills? The School Report Card?	
To what extent does the school support families by providing family literacy programs, transportation and child care for meetings, in-home conferences, and other services to meet needs that families might have?	
How does the Campus Improvement Plan support the involvement of families and community members in planning, reviewing and improving programs?	

**Indicator D: Encouraging Student Involvement**

Students have input into a variety of decisions that influence their school experience. The students themselves have a sense of ownership in the school.

Reflective Questions	Response
How are students involved in decision-making about the school and its success? How frequently does this take place?	
How do you know that students feel ownership for the school and its success?	
How might students become more involved in the decision-making process?	
Were students involved in the development of the Campus Improvement Plan?	

**What are we doing that adds to inclusivity?**



**In what other ways might inclusivity be furthered?**



**Use this worksheet to organize your information and to develop your Campus Improvement Plan.**

What schoolwide reform strategies will you use to achieve your goals for inclusivity?	How will you determine if the strategies are accomplishing the goals? What benchmarks will you use?	What resources will you use to implement the strategies?	Given an assessment of your progress, what, if any, reformations of strategies and/or goals are necessary at this point to ensure that you are reaching your goals for inclusivity?

When will you revisit and evaluate the goals, strategies and progress towards projected outcomes established here?

**Thematic Module V: Sense of Family**

The school sees itself as a family, rather than as an institution. Every member is valued, and the school is interested in all aspects of each member's life. Traditional school roles are often blurred as school community members are willing to do whatever is needed to ensure all students do well physically, emotionally, socially and academically.

**Indicator A: Respecting the Student**

Students are valued and respected as multi-dimensional human beings with richly diverse backgrounds, attributes, and skills. Students know they are valued by school personnel.

Reflective Questions	Response
In what specific ways does the curriculum of the school convey that all students are valued?	
How does the school address the development of the whole student? Are students recognized for non-academic accomplishments? To what extent are <u>all</u> students recognized in positive ways (consider each racial/ethnic group by gender, students with developing English proficiency, students in gifted and talented programs and other special needs groups)?	
To what extent is the cultural and linguistic diversity of the students celebrated through classroom and school activities?	
To what extent are students with special needs separated, or not separated, from other students for academic instruction and extra-curricular activities? What efforts are made to be sure that students with special needs are valued? How might these efforts be improved?	

**Indicator A: Respecting the Student, Continued**

How are new students and their families (including homeless and highly mobile families) welcomed and made a part of the school family?	
What processes are in place to ensure that these new students have access to the educational programs they need?	
What processes are in place to ensure that these new students have access to appropriate support services?	
How and to what extent are stigmatizing labels avoided and heterogeneous grouping strategies used?	
How and how often is student learning celebrated? How are art, music, and physical education an integral and valued part of the school?	
To what extent are teachers trained in teaching students with different learning styles? To what extent is this training regularly used in the classroom?	
In what ways does the Campus Improvement Plan reflect efforts that will lead to greater valuing and respect for students and their families?	

**Indicator B: Building Relationships with Families**

Families and the involvement of families in their children’s learning are seen as critically important. School personnel work to build positive relationships with families and create an atmosphere of learning and growth for all family members.

Reflective Questions	Response
What is done to create a friendly, welcoming attitude toward parents? How are parents received in the office and around the school? How and to what extent is parent input considered in creating a welcoming atmosphere? What space is provided for parents at the school?	
In what situations are translation services provided to parents? Are there situations in which such services are not currently provided, but need to be provided?	
How is communication delivered to parents who can’t read?	
What is the nature of routine parent/teacher communication? Do all parents receive positive comments about their children? How are student difficulties with academic or social matters addressed with parents.?	
What opportunities are provided at the school for parents to continue their own learning?	
How is the curriculum adapted to reflect the value that is placed on families?	
How is the importance of family reflected in the school’s mission statement?	

**Indicator B: Building Relationships with Families, Continued**

<p>How does the Campus Improvement Plan enhance the capacity of parents to support the learning of their children?</p>	
<p>How does the Campus Improvement Plan build the capacity of school personnel to better support the involvement of parents and community members?</p>	

**Indicator C: Building Relationships Within the School Community**

There is a strong sense of family shared by the members of the school community, reflected in actions, beliefs and language.

Reflective Questions	Response
<p>In what specific ways do the school’s hiring practices reflect a commitment to a sense of family?</p>	
<p>What actions are being taken to connect and build support networks among <u>all</u> members of the school community?</p>	
<p>How are new members of the school community welcomed and mentored?</p>	
<p>In what ways is the language used to talk about students, parents, and all community members reflective of a sense of family at the school?</p>	
<p>Are there significant segments of the school community (i.e., part-time staff, special programs staff, para-professionals) that do not participate or are not known to the rest of the community? What can be done to include them?</p>	

**Indicator D: Making a Comfortable, Safe Environment**

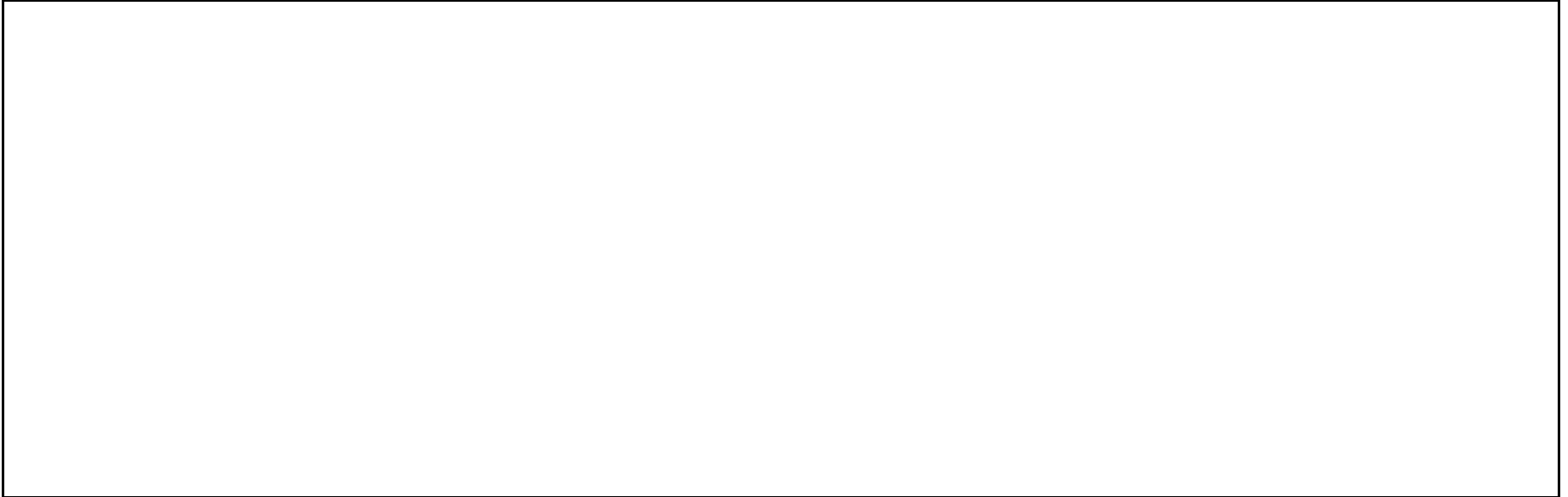
Appropriate conduct, for both students and adults, is embedded in the school’s culture. The school is a safe, clean, and welcoming place.

Reflective Questions	Response
What is the current absentee rate for teachers?	
What does teacher tenure and attendance indicate about the sense of family at the school?	
How and how often are rules for appropriate conduct of students and adults communicated?	
Is there a schoolwide discipline plan, and in what ways do <u>all</u> school community members uphold it? How do we ensure that rules for students are administered thoughtfully, consistently, and fairly? What do discipline records indicate about discipline practices (consider all student populations and genders)?	

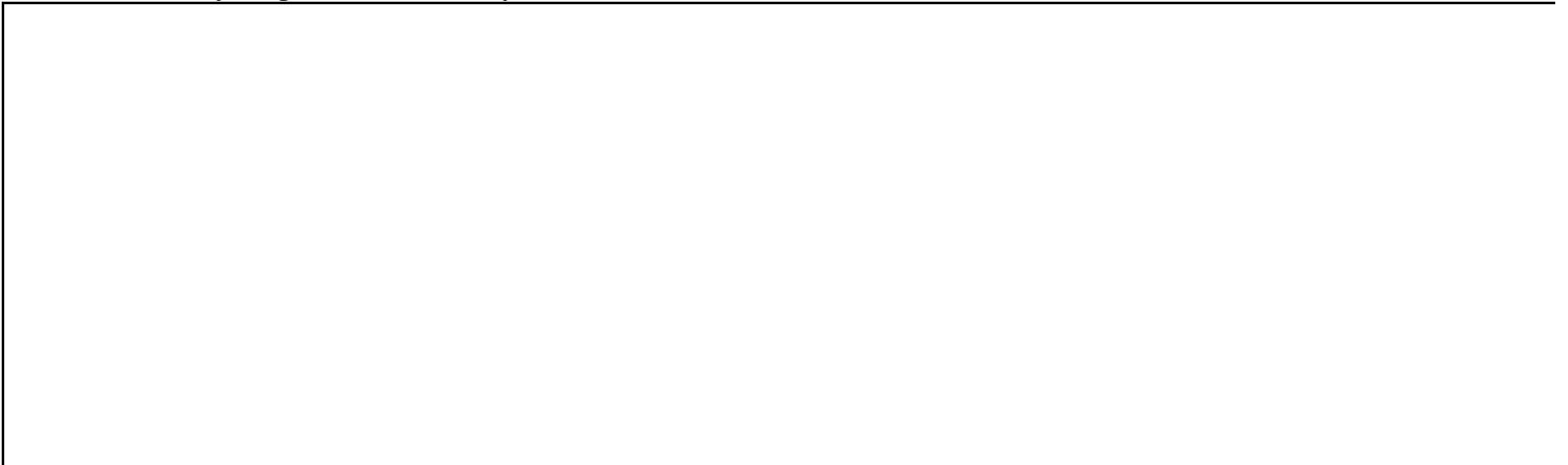
**Indicator D: Making a Comfortable, Safe Environment, Continued**

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
Think of accidents/incidents that have occurred. What steps have been taken to prevent their reoccurrence? In what ways is the safety of all school community members planned for and enforced by all school community members?	
How do you know that your students feel they are treated with respect? What evidence do you have/need (consider all groups and genders)?	
In what ways does the school's environment and appearance reflect a sense of family?	
How does the Campus Improvement Plan support making the school a safe, clean and welcoming place?	

**What are we doing that adds to the sense of family?**

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a student to write their response to the question above.

**In what other ways might a sense of family be furthered?**

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a student to write their response to the question above.

**Use this worksheet to organize your information and to develop your Campus Improvement Plan.**

What schoolwide reform strategies will you use to achieve your goals for a sense of family?	How will you determine if the strategies are accomplishing the goals? What benchmarks will you use?	What resources will you use to implement the strategies?	Given an assessment of your progress, what, if any, reformations of strategies and/or goals are necessary at this point to ensure that there is a sense of family?

When will you revisit and evaluate the goals, strategies and progress towards projected outcomes established here?

**Thematic Module VI: Collaboration and Trust**

The work of all participants in the school is based on collaboration with other participants and trust in the support that will be available. Collaboration and support continue even when efforts are difficult or are succeeding.

**Indicator A: Encouraging Open Communication**

School personnel openly share concerns and successes, strengths and weaknesses with each other. They provide assistance to each other and learn from each other.

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
What are the formal and informal ways school personnel share concerns and successes?	
How do school personnel, formally and informally, assist each other in learning how to improve student achievement?	
Are sharing and assistance common practices in the school?	

**Indicator B: Sharing Decision Making**

Teachers and other school personnel share decision-making responsibility related to curriculum, instruction, school organization, and the use of resources. School personnel work together to make high quality decisions. Forums are held in which school personnel openly discuss programs, policies, and practices. School personnel express their concerns freely, helping shape the direction of the school.

Reflective Questions	Response
<p>Who participates in decision-making related to curriculum, instruction, school organization, and use of resources? How are site-based committee members chosen?</p>	
<p>What kinds of forums or other approaches are provided for discussions of programs, policies, and practices? How do these discussions inform the direction of the school?</p>	
<p>How does the Campus Improvement Plan ensure that school personnel will have adequate opportunities to work together and learn from each other?</p>	

**Indicator C: Supporting Cooperation**

Cooperation extends beyond grade-level groupings as teachers work toward the accomplishment of school goals.

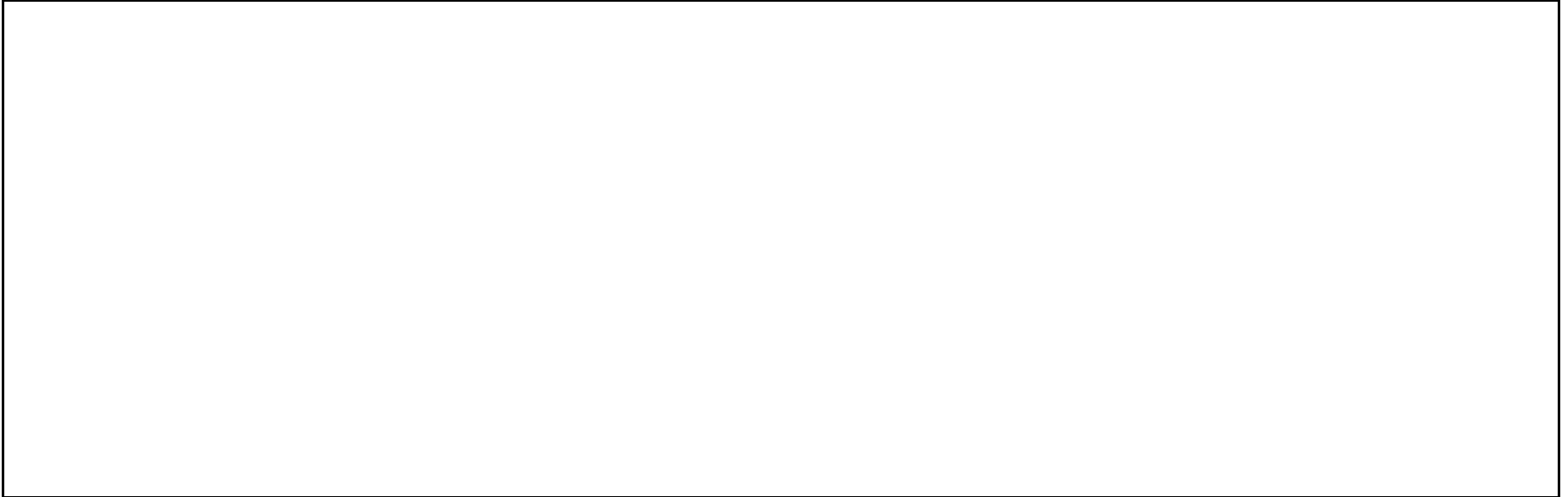
Reflective Questions	Response
<p>What arrangements are in place to support cooperation among teachers? By grade level? Across grade levels? By subject area? Between feeder schools? How frequently does this cooperation occur?</p>	
<p>How are teams of teachers brought together to focus on academic success? How often do they meet?</p>	

**Indicator D: Supporting Teachers**

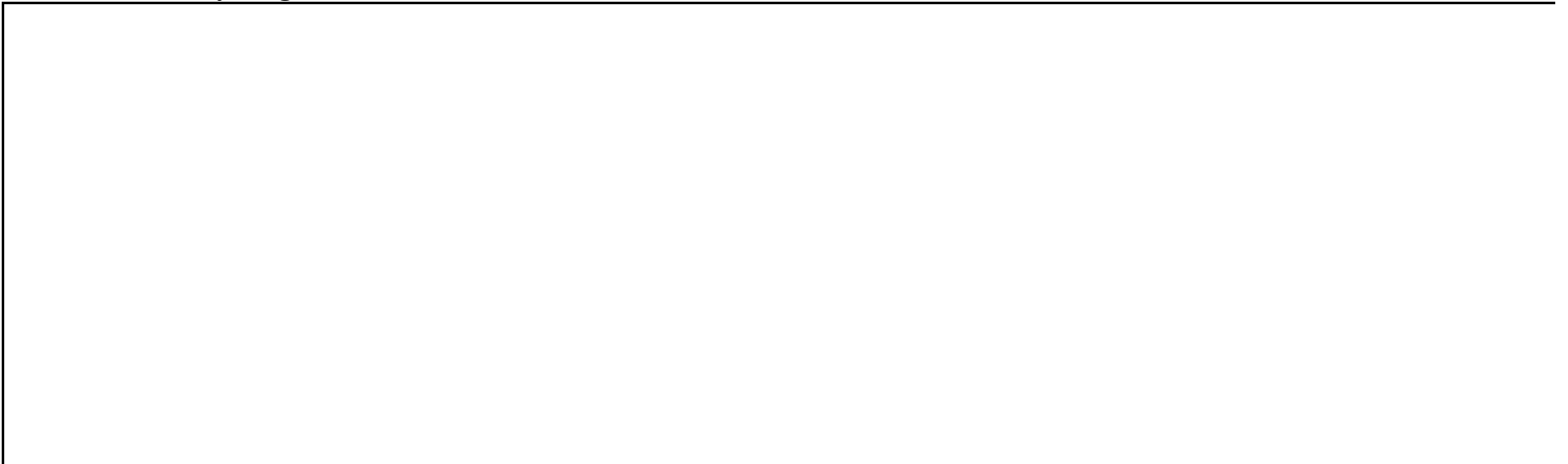
Teachers and other school personnel openly take problems to school administrators, since there is no fear of reprisal. Administrators spend more time and energy identifying, acknowledging, and rewarding positive teacher behavior responding to “negative” teacher behavior. When problems arise with teachers, administrators address the problems in a manner that demonstrates respect for the professionalism of the teachers(s) involved.

Reflective Questions	Response
How comfortable do teachers feel about going to the school’s administrators with problems? Have there been any reprisals?	
Are administrators seen as supportive of teachers? How is this communicated to teachers?	
Do teachers feel that administrators believe they are capable of teaching well? Do a significant number of teachers feel at odds with administrators? If so, what is being done to address this?	
Do teachers and administrators feel they are all part of the same team, working together for student success?	
How does the Campus Improvement Plan reflect the shared perspective of all participants?	
What strategies in the Campus Improvement Plan support district-wide collaboration and communication for campus improvement?	

**What are we doing that adds to collaboration and trust?**



**In what other ways might collaboration and trust be furthered?**



**Use this worksheet to organize your information and to develop your Campus Improvement Plan.**

What schoolwide reform strategies will you use to achieve your goals for collaboration and trust?	How will you determine if the strategies are accomplishing the goals? What benchmarks will you use?	What resources will you use to implement the strategies?	Given an assessment of your progress, what, if any, reformations of strategies and/or goals are necessary at this point to ensure collaboration and trust?

When will you revisit and evaluate the goals, strategies and progress towards projected outcomes established here?

### **Thematic Module VII: Passion for Learning and Growing**

The work of the school is motivated by a passion for learning, never "resting on its laurels." New horizons, new gains, new mountains to climb are continuously sought out. Such discovery and learning on the part of all participants is considered the central business of the school.

#### **Indicator A: Continuous Planning for Improvement**

Throughout the school, there is continuous planning for improvement. There is an ongoing search for better approaches for addressing challenges. Barriers, failures, and problems are treated as issues to be studied, understood, and resolved. Even when results indicate high levels of achievement, educators expect themselves to constantly achieve higher goals. The school is a true community of learners. As students learn, educators are always engaged in the process of learning, growing, and improving.

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
What examples indicate that educators are constantly engaged in the process of learning, growing, and improving? Is there a process in place to support continuous planning for school improvement?	
How are barriers, failures, and problems related to student learning addressed? Give some significant examples.	
What happens when goals are reached? What happens when goals are not reached?	
Does the Campus Improvement Plan support the continued professional growth of members of the school community?	
How does the Campus Improvement Plan provide for the creation of future goals when current goals are/are not met?	

**Indicator B: Using Data for Improvement**

Even when results are impressive, teachers use data from their own practice and from outside their school to create even better approaches to improving student achievement.

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
How do teachers regularly use data from their own classrooms to improve instruction? Give significant examples of this.	
How do teachers use data and information from outside the schools, such as from state reports or professional associations, to improve their practice? Are these data and information shared? Are there procedures for doing this regularly?	
How will data be utilized to gauge progress toward campus goals?	

**Indicator C: Empowering Teachers for Improvement**

Teachers regularly engage in problem solving efforts, often without the involvement of administrators. Teachers are empowered to identify and study problems, and to creatively pursue solutions.

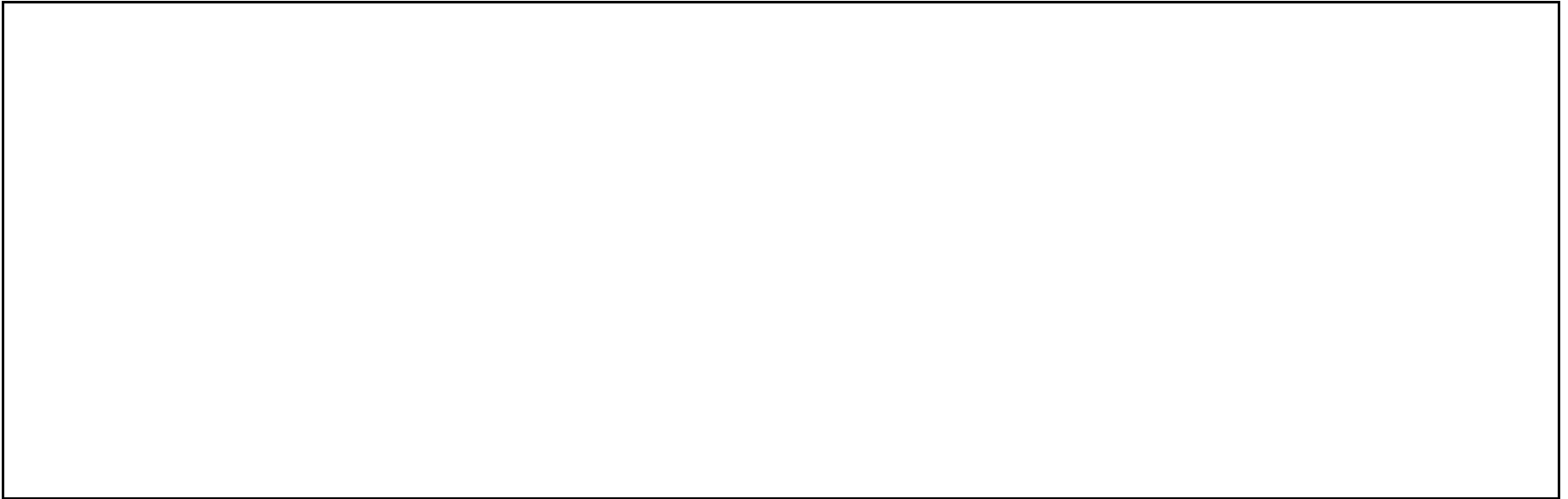
<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
Do teachers feel they can move forward on their own to identify problems and to improve their own practice? What is the evidence that they feel this way?	
How are teachers supported as creative problem solvers? How are their solutions and improvements shared among teachers?	

**Indicator D: Monitoring Progress for Improvement**

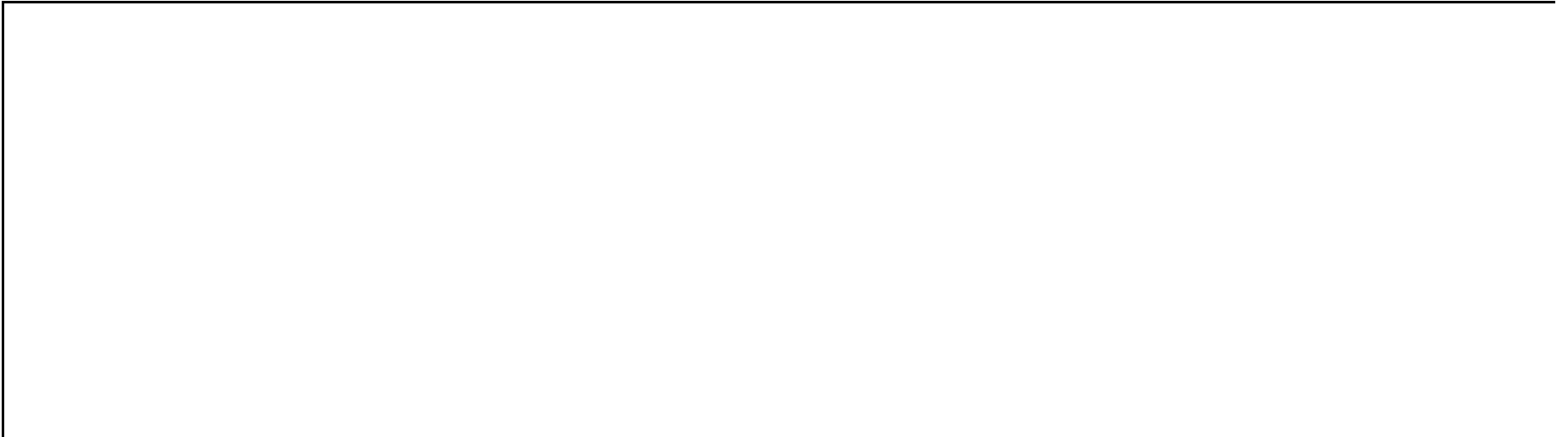
Progress toward the mission is constantly monitored by teachers and administrators. Educators routinely gather data and make adjustments.

<b>Reflective Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
How are barriers, failures, and problems related to goal achievement addressed? Give some significant examples.	
What data are routinely gathered to assess progress? How are these data used for campus improvement planning?	

**What are we doing that adds to a passion for learning and growing?**



**In what other ways might a passion for learning and growing be furthered?**



**Use this worksheet to organize your information and to develop your Campus Improvement Plan.**

What schoolwide reform strategies will you use to achieve your goals for a passion for learning and growing?	How will you determine if the strategies are accomplishing the goals? What benchmarks will you use?	What resources will you use to implement the strategies?	Given an assessment of your progress, what, if any, reformations of strategies and/or goals are necessary at this point to ensure a passion for learning and growing?

When will you revisit and evaluate the goals, strategies and progress towards projected outcomes established here?

## Suggestions for Using the Self-Study and Planning Guide

In order to effectively use the thematic modules in this guide, the school will need to determine which individual(s) or existing team(s) would best undertake the study of each module or if a new team(s) should be formed to conduct the study. The procedure for approval of the school improvement strategies resulting from the completion of this study should also be established in order to ensure that action will result from this process.

An initial review of each thematic module is necessary to determine if the information required to answer all questions is available or will need to be gathered before beginning the study. If a school begins the study immediately by answering the questions that do not require additional information, a timeline should be established for the gathering of information and completion of the questions related to the data. Also, a study group may want to begin with the module(s) considered most critical to school improvement. A timeline for undertaking and completing each module should be established to support the successful completion of the process.

After answering the questions found in the thematic modules, the group may determine that it needs to seek additional information as a part of its continued school improvement initiative. The individual(s) or team(s) experienced with this process of self-study and planning might create new questions that need to be asked in light of the new data.

The process of self-study and planning advocated in this guide encourages school communities to identify strategies that support the seven themes from the research study and begin to synthesize these strategies with the successful practices and dynamics already in place at the individual schools. This collaborative process reflects the alignment and commitment of the school community to school improvement.

### GLOSSARY

- Campus Improvement Plan - Each public school in the state of Texas is required to develop and revise annually a plan that outlines strategies for school improvement. The plan must include a mission statement, campus performance objectives, designation of resources, time lines, means of measurement, and strategies for implementing curriculum, instruction, staff development, and parental involvement improvements.
- Site-Based Decision Making - According to Texas law, public schools are required to have in place an active group of school community members (including parents and students as appropriate) to make site decisions regarding staffing, staff development, curriculum, instruction, and implementation strategies.
- TAAS/TAAS Objective - The Texas Academic Assessment of Students (TAAS) is the standardized test required to be used for assessment of student academic performance by the public schools in the state of Texas. The TAAS objectives determine the knowledge and skills measured by the TAAS test.
- 
- School Community - The term “School Community” as used in this document includes all teachers, administrators, parents, support personnel, members of the community, and students in the school and indicates a relationship based on belonging to the same community.

### **Suggested Readings**

- Comer, P. James (1996). Rallying the Whole Village. New York: Teachers College.
- Elmore, Richard F., Peterson, Penelope L., & McCarthy, Sarah J.(1996). Restructuring in the Classroom-Teaching, Learning & School Organizations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Herman, Joan L., & Winters, Lynn (1992). Tracking Your Schools' Success. New York: Corwin Press.
- Maeroff, Gene I (1993). Team Building for School Change. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, Nel (1992). The Challenge to Care in Schools-An Alternative Approach to Education. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sergiovanni, Thomas J. (1994). Building Community in Schools. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Slavin, Robert E. (1996). "Never-Streaming: Preventing Learning Disabilities." Educational Leadership 53, 5: 4-7.
- Trueba, Henry T. (1987) Success or failure?: learning and the language minority students. Cambridge.
- Wilson, Suzanne M., Peterson, Penelope L., Ball, Deborah L. & Cohen, David (1996). "Learning by All". Phi Delta Kappan 77, 7: 468-476.

## Self-Study and Planning Guide Feedback Form

We appreciate your suggestions as we strive to make the Self-Study and Planning Guide more useful for schools. Please take a few moments to share your thoughts with us on the effectiveness of this Guide.

1. Provide us with some information on the people who worked with the Self-Study and Planning Guide at your campus. Who participated in the improvement planning process, utilizing the Self-Study and Planning Guide?

Persons Involved	Number of Persons	Persons Involved	Number of Persons
a. Teacher	_____	e. Central Office Personnel	_____
b. Principal	_____	f. ESC Consultant	_____
c. Counselor	_____	g. Other (Please specify)	_____
d. Parent	_____	_____	_____
		_____	

2. Which modules did you complete? Approximately how much time, in hours, was involved in the completion of the improvement planning process, utilizing the Self-Study and Planning Guide?

\_\_\_\_\_ Modules completed                      \_\_\_\_\_ Hours involved

3. How helpful was the Self-Study and Planning Guide in providing an effective process for your committee or team to begin self-evaluation and planning for school improvement? (Mark one response.)

- Very Helpful                       Somewhat Helpful                       Unsure  
 Somewhat Unhelpful                       Very Unhelpful

Comments:

4. Please help us to identify some of the **strengths** of the Self-Study and Planning Guide. What did your committee or team find **most helpful** about each of the following:

The Format of the Self-Study and Planning Guide:

The Reflective Questions:

(Please note any questions that you found especially helpful.)

The Data Questions:

(Please note any questions that you found especially helpful.)

Organizing Questions for Developing the Campus Improvement Plan:  
(Please note any questions that you found especially helpful.)

Other Comments:

5. Please help us to identify some of the **weaknesses** of the Self-Study and Planning Guide. What did your committee or team find **least helpful** about each of the following:

The Format of the Self-Study and Planning Guide:

The Reflective Questions:  
(Please note any questions that you found least helpful.)

The Data Questions:  
(Please note any questions that you found least helpful.)

Organizing Questions for Developing the Campus Improvement Plan:  
(Please note any questions that you found least helpful.)

Other Comments:

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with us! Please mail this Feedback Form to:

The STAR Center  
The Charles A. Dana Center  
2901 North IH 35, ECN 2.200  
Austin, Texas 78722-2348

Distributed by : The STAR Center

