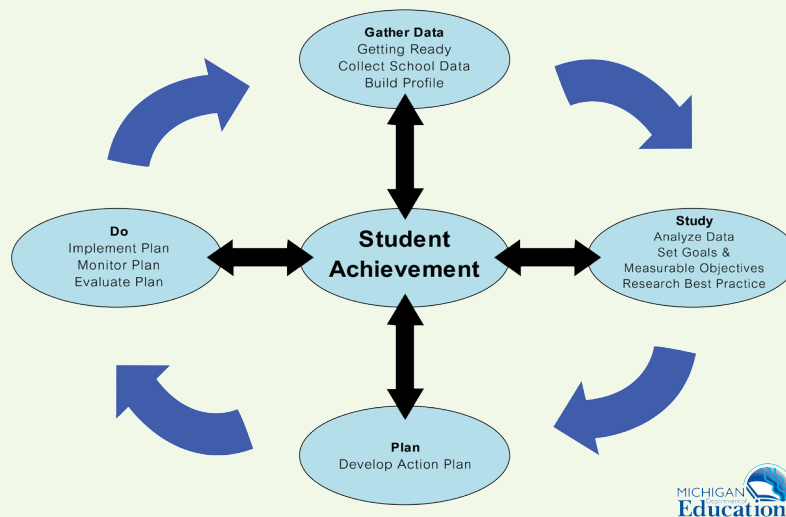




The Michigan Continuous School Improvement Process

The focus of the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is to improve achievement for all learners through support of Michigan schools. Experience has demonstrated that in order to increase achievement, successful schools plan collaboratively.

To streamline a school's efforts and resources to maximize improvement for all learners, the MDE has outlined how a school district can break down barriers and plan collaboratively to develop one common plan for improvement. The Michigan Continuous School Improvement Process serves as the process that organizes staff to analyze data (achievement, perception, process, and demographic) and to develop a comprehensive, continuous improvement plan. The improvement goals are developed as a result of a comprehensive data analysis, leading to the identification of the improvement needs and the development of school improvement goals. Through the development of their school improvement plan, the staff may recognize that their school has key systems missing resulting in a negative impact on student achievement. The School Improvement process will assist in development and implementation of an effective, data driven, focused plan.



The MDE has developed on-line templates and tools to guide schools through their school improvement process. These materials can be accessed on the Michigan AdvancED website (http://www.advanc-ed.org/mde/school_improvement_tasks).

Templates and requirements for both MDE and NCA schools are on this site as well as tools that will provide guidance and help for all schools.



Section 1

Organizing Administrative Systems Packing for the Trip

- 1:1** Organizing Staff Communication
- 1:2** Organizing for Family Involvement
- 1:3** Taking Charge of Your Building's Budget
- 1:4** Organizing for State Assessment
- 1:5** Organizing the School Year: A Monthly Principal Checklist
- 1:6** Identification, Planning, and Compliance for English Language Learners
- 1:7** Coordinating Support Services for English Language Learners with Special Needs
- 1:8** Board Training: The Quality Governance Model
- 1:9** Developing a Strict Discipline Academy

We subtitled this section “Packing for the Trip” because it’s about getting everything ready for your school improvement journey—things probably best undertaken in those August days before you launch yourselves toward another year. But we could as well have called it “Highway Construction” or “Building Dams and Dredging Waterways” because it’s also about setting up the infrastructure within which all the system’s participants will operate as they work on all the other processes. If these systems are working well, they’re almost invisible. Water just flows downhill, and we never know the Army Corps of Engineers has graded the slope. Or “express traffic” just peels off into a center lane, and we hardly notice why lane space opened up around us. But talk to anyone who has worked where administrative systems aren’t smoothly established, and you’ll hear how any piece of work quadruples when you’re not sure of the infrastructure beneath it.

Getting organized—having agreed-upon habits of communication and planning—is largely a leadership responsibility. But smart leaders don’t hole up and design these systems alone. Because everyone’s stake in these systems is so high, people have lots of ideas and expectations. So setting up infrastructure is a place where consulting carefully and accommodating as many ideas as possible will win gratitude and respect. See Section 8 (Sharing Decision Making) for ideas about how to set up teams with clear “charges” and boundaries. Then invite them to work through these processes to improve your infrastructure systems on behalf of their colleagues.

Good luck! Have fun packing thoughtfully for your trip!



Section 2

Holding a Shared Vision Steady The Principal's Compass

2:1 Holding a Shared Vision Steady

2:2 Choosing Smart Risks & Managing Them Wisely

2:3 Principals Leading Toward a Vibrant Culture

So now that we're packed, where shall we go? Paris? The Amazon? A cozy cabin on a lake with loons? Aunt Maggie's for the holidays? It makes a difference, you see. Where we think we're going sets the mood and sustains us when there's construction delay en route. It also guides our choices.

To work well, a vision must be:

- SHORT (maybe even catchy) enough to remember all the time
- STRETCHING (in ways that feed our soul and seem worth giving your lives to)
- SPECIFIC enough to steer by (It would lead you to say "yes" to some things and "no" to others.)

The cluster of packets in this tab is designed to help the leadership of a school articulate and then be wise and clever about following up on the "few simple rules" that underlie your chosen destination.

A vision worth working toward makes all the difference.



Section 3

Tending to Spirit/Culture

Tunes on the Radio

- 3:1** Developing a Climate/Culture Committee
- 3:2** Auditing and Understanding Your School's Culture
- 3:3** Strengthening Teacher-Student Relationships
- 3:4** Developing a School-wide Behavior Management Plan
- 3:5** Mentoring New Teachers
- 3:6** Creating a Supportive Teaching and Learning Environment for English Language Learners
- 3:7** Linking Home, School, and Community for Families of English Language Learners
- 3:8** Building Self-Efficacy and Academic Achievement in Middle and High Schools

When you ease your shiny, new wheels (or your wheezing, ancient junker) out onto the highway and see that stretch of road open up before you, what do you hear? Is Etta James or Marcia Ball moaning the blues? Or is someone punching out the upbeat, contagious rhythms of "Anything Goes!" or "We Are Family!" And when someone steps into your school, what's the "music" they sense in the hallways? In the classroom? In the lunchroom? In the office? In the teachers' lounge?

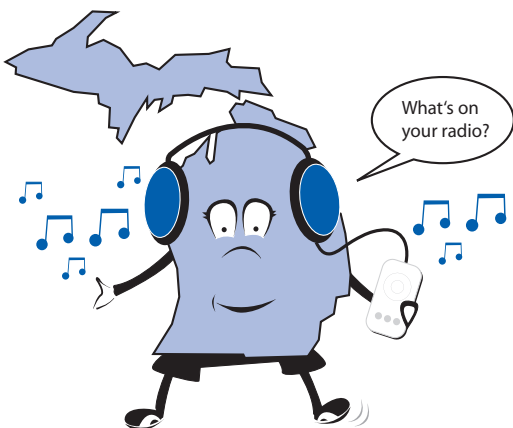
Researchers like those we cite in this cluster of packets point to genuine (perhaps causal) connections between the spirit of a place and the substantive achievement that takes place there.

For one thing, kids who feel cared about bloom. "My teacher cares about me" is still the best predictor of student achievement. And a school that succeeds in surrounding an "at-risk" child with a spirit of caring and hope gives him/her the best possible chance to rise to a personal best.

For another, demonstrably different things become possible when students want to come to school and educators want to come to work. The hard, sustained, creative work of changing an institution like a school is very unlikely to happen from isolated individual efforts, no matter how heroic. But an active, self-aware "learning community" nurturing its own adult-adult relationships and taking collective pride in what they are able to build together is capable of accomplishing things otherwise impossible.

And if there IS that sense of being part of a meaningful learning community, well, the Sister Sledge had it right: "We are Family!"

Build for yourselves the culture you want to be part of!



Section 4

Moving Decisively Toward Data Eye on the Dashboard

- 4:1** Whetting Your School's Appetite for Data
- 4:2** Developing a School-wide Database
- 4:3** Learning from Perception Data
- 4:4** Learning from Process Data: Time for a Tune-Up
- 4:5** Mapping Your School's Resources

Most of us wouldn't move a vehicle very far if our dashboard gauges were on the fritz. We wouldn't know our speed, how much gas we had left, or whether our engine was overheating. But as educators, we've driven for years without data gauges... cruising blind on untested assumptions. It's not that our judgment is bad—we're professionals with hands-on experience and accumulated instincts and wisdom, and lots of times our assumptions are right on the money and empirically verifiable. But sometimes "common wisdom" runs right through counter-intuitive facts, and steers us down familiar dead-end alleys just because we've always "assumed it this way." And we'll never know which assumptions to trust if we don't light up our dashboard with a continuous flow of information we can steer by.

This cluster of packets encourages you to begin looking for data that is *school-wide but classroom-accessible and relevant*. Then build systems that pass the information along from year-to-year and teacher-to-teacher so individual student's progress can be followed. This allows us to assess our own teaching-and-learning systems for their effectiveness in moving *all* learners toward the goal.

Start by finding data you trust. Then steer by it.





Section 5

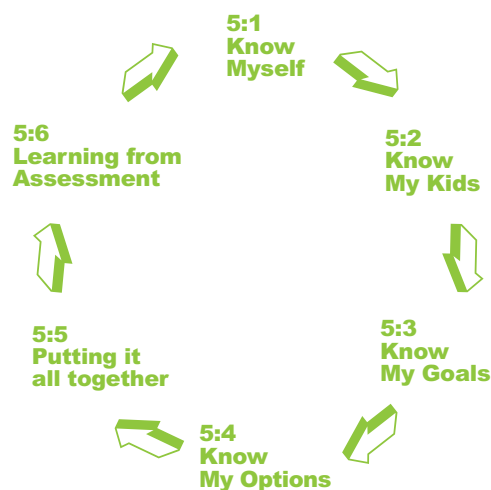
Designing and Delivering Instruction

Steering Instruction

- 5:1** Knowing Yourself as an Educator
- 5:2** Knowing Your Students
- 5:3** Knowing Your Goals: Standards
- 5:4** Knowing Your Options: Instructional Strategies
- 5:5** Putting It All Together: Lesson Planning
- 5:6** Learning from Assessment
- 5:7** Connecting Assessment to Student Achievement and Program Improvement for English Language Learners
- 5:8** Designing and Delivering Effective Instruction: How can we best meet the needs of our English Language Learners?
- 5:9** Developing English Language Proficiency

Folks, pull on your driving goggles and start your engines! With all the preparation under our seatbelts, it's time for the artists/ professionals among us to take the wheel...to do what we've been called to do: to bend down low, look into the eyes of a child and find the invitation that calls out a desire to learn. This is what it's all about.

We've identified six stages to skillful instructional design and delivery, and there's a MI-Map packet for individual teachers or grade-level or subject-matter teams who want to focus down and get better at any one of the stages.



Deepen your conversations about teaching and learning!



Section 6

Aligning Curriculum

The Destination

6:1 Planning Your Move Toward a Standards-based Curriculum

6:2 Grounding Lessons in Standards

6:3 Creating Standards-based Units

6:4 Writing from Experience and in Response to Text

It's true that the subject of increasingly detailed statewide curriculum—first a curriculum framework, then ranges of “benchmarks,” pages of Grade Level and High School Content Expectations, and now Common Core State Standards—has been known to make an educator or two tense up, but that's not because we don't care.

No, what we worry about is that one size will be forced to fit all; that we'll lose individual kids' needs and pace in our efforts to standardize. This cluster of packets is designed to help catalyze the teacher-to-teacher conversations to ensure that won't happen.

Michigan's newly-developed standards are specific enough to allow a “handshake,” for instance, between second and third-grade teaching teams: “When kids come to third grade, we'll be able to tell you specifically how they stand on THESE skills.” The standards also allow student achievement to be tracked and handed to next year's teacher as part of the conversation.

Start with the end in mind.





Section 7

Learning as a Professional Community

Drivers' Education

7:1 Learning Through Job-Embedded Professional Development

7:2 Finding Sources of Job-Embedded Professional Development

7:3 Preparing Teachers to Address the Linguistic and Cultural Needs of English Language Learners for Improved Learning

It never seems like there's time for teachers to learn... weeks and even months flash by like billboards, and it's all we can do to steer around the hairpin curves sometimes. The thought of trying to change a tire on this moving vehicle, map out a new route or practice a different down-shifting technique is crazy-making. Perhaps that's why we educators let ourselves settle for so long for the "sit and get" variety of professional learning whose most memorable element may have been grading papers in the back of the room while speakers droned on.

This cluster of packets is a starter-set of tools Michigan's schools have found useful in the project of taking charge of their own learning. We're sure that you're inventing other learning designs as well—book groups, project-based learning, action research, and peer coaching. We hope that as you find the ones that seem most powerful to you, you'll contribute to MI-Map's expanding collection of professional learning processes.

Shape your own learning agenda.





Section 8

Sharing Decision-making

Let's Caravan

8:1 Developing School Decision-making Teams

8:2 Strengthening Your Team's Capacity

8:3 Running Effective Decision-making Meetings

Like most large-scale human endeavors, steering through educational change is less like air traffic controllers guiding a 747... and more like swooping, zooming, frenetic rush-hour traffic: horns honking, lanes changing, fleeting windows of opportunity opening and closing and construction crews blocking off lanes.

A school staff serious about taking on the shared project of improving its student achievement needs to develop a few basic skills in staying together through the traffic.

These MI-Map packets outline practical steps toward coming to shared judgment about things we don't always agree on. They involve common-sense steps like making sure people are clear about the tasks they undertake...taking time to build relationships before jumping into decision-making and preparing meeting time in a disciplined way. They're hardly rocket science, but they add up to a "whole" that is capable of being bigger than its parts... a team that can tackle any of the other tasks a school might need to accomplish.

Together we can do amazing things.



Section 9

9:1 Using Technology

Using Technology

Tuning the Engine Till It Hums

One doesn't have to be a techno-geek to have a need to know your way around the buttons and levers built into your car. Setting the cruise control, turning up the air conditioning, balancing the front/back speakers or even setting the clock may require a consult with the online manual these days. And don't forget the GPS!!!

Drivers of the 21st century live in a fast-paced technology and media-suffused environment. To be effective one must exhibit a wide-range of critical thinking and problem solving skills to plot a course, stop on a dime, reverse, and reset the direction!

Mi-Map authors identified some of the common skills and tasks that help teachers and students navigate the constantly changing world of technology.





Section 10

Coordinated School Health

Navigating with a Coordinated School Health Framework

10:1 Coordinated School Health

A finely tuned engine is only part of what makes a vehicle tick! Without a coordinated/well-balanced framework to keep everything together, it won't perform very well. Implementing and maintaining all aspects of the car will keep it in tip-top condition. Taking it out on the highway, using the correct fuel, and taking care of it in inclement weather will keep it running for many years!

A Coordinated School Health & Safety Program addresses children's social, emotional, and physical needs so they can be healthy, fit, and ready to learn. The implementation of these eight interactive components can positively impact student academic achievement and empower students with the knowledge, skills, and judgment essential to make healthy and responsible choices in life.

1. Health education
2. Physical education
3. Health services
4. Nutrition services
5. Counseling, psychological, and social services
6. Healthy school environment
7. Health promotion for faculty and staff
8. Parent/Community Involvement

Use the links in this packet to learn all about it!

Healthy kids make better students and better students make healthy communities.

