

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

GUIDE TO WORKING WITH EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

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About This Guide

Guide to Working With External Providers was researched and written by Bryan Hassel, Ph.D., and Lucy Steiner with support from North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, a wholly owned subsidiary of Learning Point Associates. Dr. Hassel is the cofounder of Public Impact, an education policy firm based in North Carolina. Steiner is a research associate with Public Impact.

The guide draws on an earlier publication titled *Guide to Working With Model Providers*, which focused exclusively on comprehensive school reform (CSR). It was written by Katie Walter and published in 2000 by the Regional Educational Laboratory Network. The usefulness of this earlier publication and requests for more information by schools and districts interested in hiring a wide range of external providers led to the development of the current guide.

Guide to Working With External Providers is based on the latest research and field experience related to how schools and districts can work most effectively with a host of external providers. During its development, researchers reviewed the academic literature on school-provider partnerships, interviewed top scholarly experts on the subject, and interviewed a wide-ranging group of practitioners involved in school-provider relationships. Those practitioners included representatives of schools, districts, and a range of external providers. Drafts of the guide were subjected to rigorous review by evaluators, practitioners, and others with expertise in this area.

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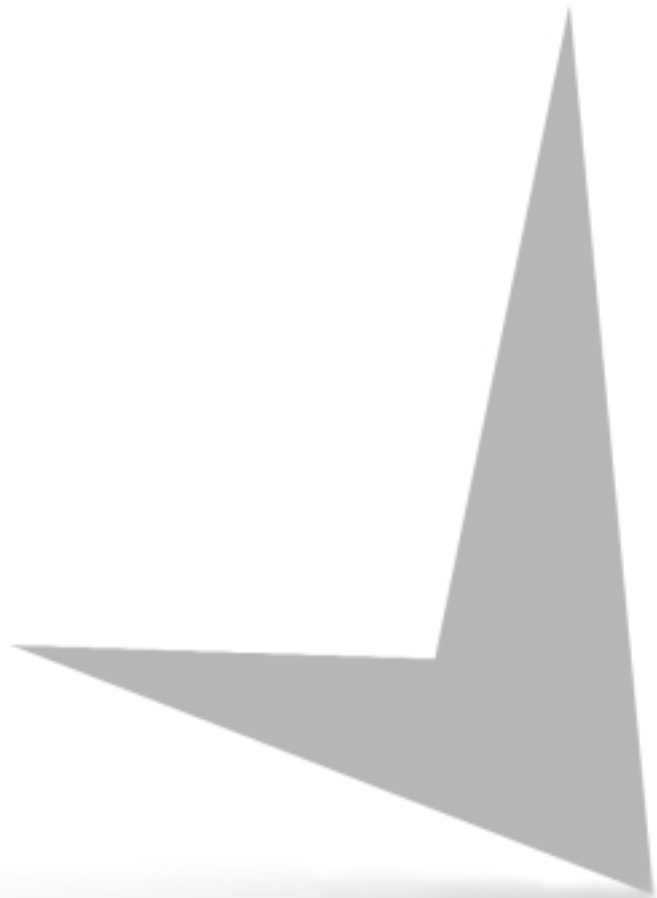
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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Guide

Schools and districts are turning more often to external service providers for help in improving teaching and learning. Such outside contractors come in to help with curriculum and instruction, strategic planning, professional development, technology use, leadership training, and the whole gamut of needs faced by schools and districts. These partnerships have great potential: They can bring in much-needed perspective and expertise. But having an external partner is no guarantee of success. Districts and schools everywhere have struggled with how to make the most of their relationships with external providers.

Productive partnerships between schools and external providers are built on strong foundations. One fundamental building block of these foundations is *clarity*—a clear understanding of what the partnership will entail, what expectations all parties will bring to the table, and how the partnership will evolve and grow over time. Another is *communication*—a commitment on the part of all parties to provide ongoing feedback to one another and to assess and improve the partnership as circumstances change, problems emerge, and successes occur.

The purpose of this guide is to help schools and districts put these building blocks into place. Although it is not designed to provide a cookie-cutter approach, it does aim to give your school or district a better understanding of the issues you will need to consider when embarking on a partnership with an external provider. The guide is designed to provide a step-by-step approach to researching and selecting a high-quality provider, establishing an effective partnership agreement, and evaluating the success of the partnership. It digs beneath the surface and explains how actual schools and districts have successfully negotiated these partnerships.

Working with an external provider is one step in a long improvement process for schools or districts. The *Guide to Working With External Providers* aims to help your school or district with this one aspect of your reform efforts. Though this step is important, you must undergo significant work—before, during, and after working with an external provider—that is not discussed in depth in this guide. (See “Steps in the School Improvement Process for Schools or Districts Hiring External Providers” on page 3.) This document is not a guide to overall school improvement. As indicated by the items in bold type in the chart on page 3, it focuses primarily on selecting an external provider, establishing a strong relationship and agreement with the provider, working with the provider over time to implement its services, and using evaluation to improve the partnership’s effectiveness. Other critical steps in the school improvement process—such as performing a needs assessment, aligning district or school efforts, eliminating programs, and reallocating resources—are discussed only in passing, though the guide directs readers to other resources when possible.

STEPS IN THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS FOR SCHOOLS OR DISTRICTS HIRING EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

Areas in bold type indicate steps covered in this guide.

- Creating a vision for the school
 - Performing a needs assessment
 - Collecting, organizing, and analyzing multiple sources of data
 - Determining priorities and setting goals
 - Developing a school improvement strategy and action plan
 - Creating a framework
 - Putting together a selection team
 - Writing a request for proposal (RFP)
 - Researching your choices
 - Selecting a provider
 - Conducting initial conversations
 - Checking references
 - Reaching an agreement on selecting a provider
 - Negotiating a contract
 - Working with the external provider
 - Creating an implementation plan
 - Overcoming implementation barriers
 - Using results of evaluation to set new goals and reshape implementation
 - Selecting, revising, and eliminating other programs as a means of supporting the external partner's services (ongoing)
 - Working with the district office to distribute resources and consider structures in ways that best support implementation (ongoing)
 - Reflecting on, evaluating, and refining the plan and process
-

Section Structure

This guide is divided into five main sections: Creating a Framework, Selecting a Provider, Negotiating a Contract, Working as Partners, and Planning for the Future. Each section addresses a number of vital issues you should think through as you forge and manage relationships with external providers. (See “Vital Issues Addressed in This Guide” below.) Within each section is a series of steps that includes a discussion of the issue under consideration.

VITAL ISSUES ADDRESSED IN THIS GUIDE

Section 1: Creating a Framework

- Putting together a selection team
- Writing a request for proposal (RFP)
- Researching your choices

Section 2: Selecting a Provider

- Conducting initial conversations
- Checking references
- Reaching an agreement on selecting a provider

Section 3: Negotiating a Contract

- Understanding the package of services and materials supplied by the provider
- Determining actions and support provided by the school and district
- Focusing on outcomes and evaluation measures

Section 4: Working as Partners

- Creating the school or district implementation plan
- Addressing common issues that arise during implementation
- Establishing an evaluation plan

Section 5: Planning for the Future

- Determining contract length
 - Reshaping the relationship after the natural end of the contract
 - Terminating partnerships that do not meet expectations
-

Section I is written as a series of planning steps for you to follow before you select an external provider. The steps are designed to help you do the following: put together a selection team with responsibility for selecting a provider, clarify your needs by developing a request for proposal (RFP) that outlines the essential characteristics you are looking for in a provider, and develop a list of potential providers.

Section II outlines the selection process of finding an appropriate, high-quality provider. It takes you through the process of reviewing potential providers, checking references externally, and reaching an agreement internally on whom to select.

Section III describes how to negotiate a contract that sets the stage for a strong and effective partnership. The section is organized into pairs of steps—one from the perspective of the school and district and one from the perspective of the provider—that are meant to demonstrate the complementary actions of each. Each of these steps is supported by tools the parties can use to set the terms of their relationship.

Sections IV and V describe the relationship between the school or district and the provider after basic contract provisions have been established. The steps in these sections are written as joint actions, signifying that the school, district, and provider are now unified in working toward the same goal of improved teaching and learning. Although these two sections discuss some issues that may not be written down in a contract, all issues should be talked about *before* an agreement is reached. It is important to understand every issue that will potentially affect the partnership.

Tools in the Toolkit

Where appropriate, the guide presents tools designed to help you think about the issues and communicate with the provider on the particular topic discussed in the section. (These tools are found in the Toolkit at the back of the guide.) Although the tools are presented as documents that can be filled in, you may choose to use them simply as a starting point for discussion. Indeed, you or the provider already may have documents that either answer many of the questions posed in the tools or serve the same purposes. In either case, such tools will spark your discussion and bring up issues not already under consideration.

TOOLS

- TOOL 1: REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) WORKSHEET**
A template designed to help you write an RFP
- TOOL 2: PROSPECTIVE PROVIDER INFORMATION SHEET**
An information sheet to use as you gather background material about individual providers
- TOOL 3: EVALUATION OF PROSPECTIVE PROVIDERS**
A worksheet to rate how each provider fares after initial conversations are complete and references are checked
- TOOL 4: PROVIDER SERVICES AND MATERIALS QUESTIONNAIRE**
A questionnaire to ensure you understand the specific details of the provider's services
- TOOL 5: GAP ANALYSIS**
A tool to document the gaps that exist between your needs and the services offered by the provider
- TOOL 6: PROVIDER COSTS QUESTIONNAIRE**
A questionnaire designed to help you get a handle on the costs of the provider
- TOOL 7: PROVIDER PREFERENCES FOR SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL-LEVEL POLICIES**
A tool that allows the provider to identify school-level policies it feels are needed or useful for implementation
- TOOL 8: PROVIDER PREFERENCES FOR SUPPORTIVE DISTRICT-LEVEL POLICIES**
A tool that allows the provider to identify district-level policies it feels are needed or useful for implementation
- TOOL 9: SCHOOL OR DISTRICT EVALUATION OF PROVIDER SERVICES**
A template for assessing the quality of the services the provider is delivering
- TOOL 10: PROVIDER EVALUATION OF SCHOOL OR DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION**
A set of questions to help the provider assess the school or district's progress toward implementation

Organizer's Checklist: An Action Planner

Directions: Use this checklist to plan your organizing steps and meetings. It serves as a reminder of the process outlined in this guide. Each of the items in the checklist is covered in more detail beginning on the pages listed below.

Preliminary Actions (page 10)

Step 1: Knowing Your Needs (page 10)

- Conduct a thorough needs assessment.
- Identify expert sources to assist with the needs assessment if required.

Step 2: Viewing the Landscape of External Partners (page 12)

- Identify the types of services offered.
- Identify the types of providers.
- Identify the characteristics of high-quality services.

Section 1: Creating a Framework (page 16)

Step 1: Putting Together a Selection Team (page 16)

- Decide who should be on the selection team.
- Decide what role various team members will have on the selection team.
- Decide what input other key stakeholders not on the selection team will have.
- Determine the logistics of selection team meetings.

Step 2: Writing a Request for Proposal (RFP) (page 17)

- Identify your most pressing needs.
- Identify the outcomes you expect to get as a result of hiring an outside provider.
- Identify the services you would like the external provider to deliver.
- Identify your selection criteria.
- Address logistical concerns.
- Write an RFP outlining your needs, the outcomes and services you expect, and your selection criteria.

Step 3: Researching Your Choices (page 21)

- Issue an RFP.
- Consult with schools or districts similar to yours.
- Consider various types of providers.
- Contact professional organizations.
- Conduct an Internet search.
- Look at original research.
- Ask another entity to conduct a search for you.

Section 2: Selecting a Provider (page 24)

Step 1: Conducting Initial Conversations (page 24)

- Discuss your selection criteria with the potential provider.
- Discuss the cost of services with the potential provider.
- Discuss the outcomes you expect and your timetable with the potential provider.
- Discuss the provider's evaluation strategy.

Step 2: Checking References (page 26)

- Ask the provider for references.
- Contact schools or districts similar to yours that have worked with this provider.

Step 3: Reaching an Agreement on Selecting a Provider (page 26)

- Ask key stakeholders to review or formally approve your choice.
- Build support for your choice among the wider school community.

Section 3: Negotiating a Contract (page 30)Step 1: Understanding the Package of Services and Materials Supplied
by the Provider (page 30)

- Communicate the school or district's needs to the provider.
- Identify gaps between what the school or district requires and what the provider's standard package can provide.

Step 2: Determining Actions and Support Provided by the School or District (page 31)

- Discuss cost and payment arrangements.
- Discuss school-level policies that are required for effective implementation.
- Discuss district-level policies that are required for effective implementation.
- Discuss other ways the district can support implementation.

Step 3: Determining Outcomes and Evaluation Measures (page 34)

- Agree on formative and summative outcome measures.
- Agree on a timetable for measuring outcomes.
- Agree on consequences of achieving or not achieving expected outcomes.

Section 4: Working as Partners (page 36)

Step 1: Creating the School or District's Implementation Plan (page 36)

- Work with the provider to develop a flexible implementation plan upon which both partners agree.
- Maintain open communication.

Step 2: Addressing Common Issues That Arise During Implementation (page 36)

- Gain support from school staff.
- Customize services to local context.
- Schedule professional development.
- Find time to learn and reflect on new practices.
- Address the problem of conflicting efforts and shifting priorities.
- Align services with district and state standards and assessments.
- Address turnover of leadership and staff.
- Train new teachers.

Step 3: Establishing an Evaluation Plan (page 42)

- Align the evaluation plan with wider accountability systems.
- Set up mechanisms for collecting ongoing and final evaluation data.
- Collect information on the implementation process.
- Collect information on how well the partnership is meeting outcomes.
- Review evaluation data and make changes to the partnership as necessary.

Section 5: Planning for the Future (page 46)

Step 1: Determining Contract Length (page 46)

- Agree upon a contract length acceptable to both parties.
- Work with the school or district attorney to draw up the best possible contract.

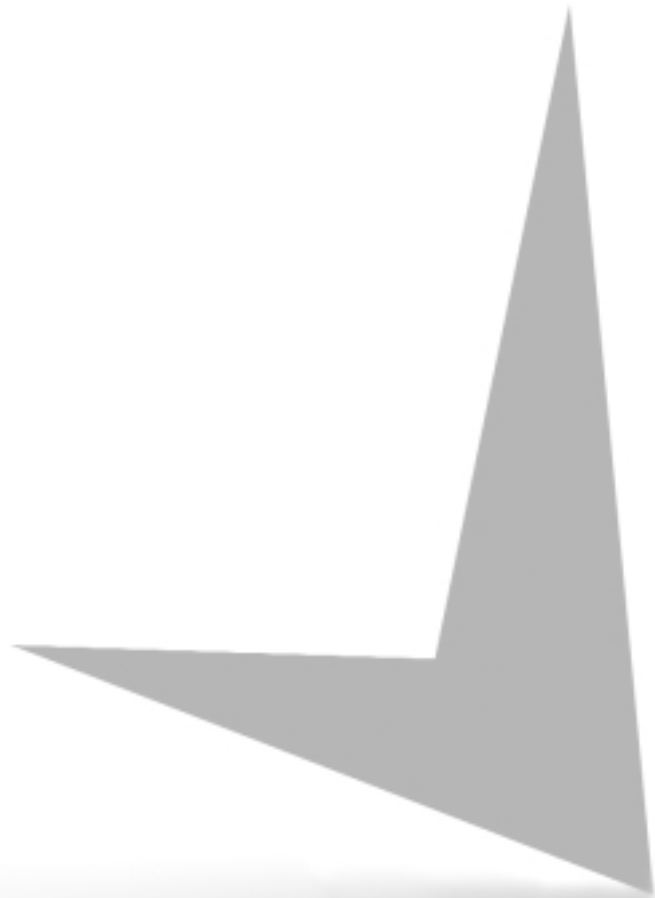
Step 2: Reshaping the Relationship After the Natural End of the Contract (page 46)

- Discuss the possibility of extending the length of the partnership.
- Explore options with the assistance of the school or district attorney.

Step 3: Terminating Partnerships That Do Not Meet Expectations (page 47)

- Agree on the grounds under which the parties might decide to end the partnership.
- Agree on logistics for terminating the partnership.

PRELIMINARY
ACTIONS



PRELIMINARY ACTIONS

Step 1: Knowing Your Needs

Although many schools and districts have worked diligently at school improvement for several years, recent federal and state accountability programs have stepped up the pressure on all entities to improve student learning, particularly for economically disadvantaged students. Under the accountability provisions in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, thousands of schools may be labeled as “low-performing” or “in need of improvement” during the next few years. This environment is rife with both opportunity and peril. The public pressure to improve student achievement has given school leaders an unusual chance to make lasting and substantive changes in how schools are operated. It also has driven many schools to find quick-fix solutions to their low achievement scores. Even schools and districts that have avoided the “low-performing” label are under pressure to address persistent achievement gaps; educators know that schools can always strive toward a higher level of performance. As a result, school improvement is truly a nationwide phenomenon, going on in every kind of community and every school.

The message is clear from schools that have transformed themselves into strong learning communities for all students: The work of school improvement is complex, and it takes time. Rather than rushing to implement a program or bring in an outside expert to “fix” your school, you first should take a long, hard look at what you are currently doing—how decisions are being made, who has authority, where money is being spent, what areas of student achievement need improvement, what the current areas of strength are, and what teachers need to know and be able to do to better meet student learning needs (Hassel, 1999; Newmann, Smith, Allenswork, & Bryk, 2001).

The many people who were consulted during the development of this guide agreed the needs-assessment process is crucial. A successful needs-assessment process helps you focus on your most pressing and important needs. Undertaking a thorough self-assessment sets the stage for all the upcoming work for several reasons. A needs assessment:

- Helps you determine whether you need outside help.
- Helps you build on your existing strengths.
- Helps develop and communicate a vision for reform.
- Helps you determine what kind of help you need.
- Lays the foundation for a strong relationship with an external provider.

Although it is beyond the scope of this guide to offer how-to instructions on conducting a needs assessment, the importance of getting this step right cannot be overemphasized. You may be in a position to conduct a needs assessment internally. If so, you will want to modify some of the subsequent steps in this guide and have an internal needs assessment assume the highest priority. But if you are not in a position to conduct an internal needs assessment, you may decide to turn to an external provider for help with this initial task.

A good needs assessment must meet three requirements. First, it should get input from a *variety* of stakeholders, including not only school and district staff but also parents, community members, and students. All participant groups should be representative of the school population. This

stakeholder input allows you to gather information about the beliefs and values that are unique to your district or school community—which, in turn, will influence the type and delivery of services that will best meet your needs.

Second, a needs assessment should provide *specific* details about a school's needs. For example, identifying “reading” as a weakness in the school curriculum is too broad to be of much use. Instead, you should highlight which specific skills within reading are weak, as well as which groups of students (by grade level, native language, race/ethnicity, and so on) are having the most difficulty. Pinpointing your student-learning needs allows you to take the crucial next step: analyzing whether staff members have the skills and competencies they need to meet these critical student-learning needs.

Third, a needs assessment should help you *prioritize* needs. There may be many areas that you would like to improve, but setting numerous goals could result in none being reached successfully. A lack of coherence and alignment with a few established priorities is one of the major stumbling blocks that undermine many partnerships with external providers (Finnigan & O’Day, 2003; Newmann et al., 2001). After you determine your goals, they should be presented in a clear and concise manner that is accessible and understood by all major stakeholders. (For more information about how to conduct a needs assessment, consult “Suggested Resources on Conducting a Needs Assessment” below.)

SUGGESTED RESOURCES ON CONDUCTING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

These resources also may be helpful when performing evaluations throughout the reform process.

At Your Fingertips: Using Everyday Data to Improve Schools, by Kristi Ross, Denise Bradley, and Peter Teitelbaum (edited by Karen Levesque). Published by MPR Associates (1998).

Data Analysis for Continuous School Improvement (2nd ed.), by Victoria Bernhardt. Published by Eye on Education (2003).

Making Good Choices: A Guide for Schools and Districts (Rev. ed.), by Bryan Hassel and Maria Ferguson. Published by North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2001). Available online at www.ncrel.org/csri/choices/makegood/mgc.pdf.

Making Schools Smarter: A System for Monitoring School and District Progress (2nd ed.), by Kenneth Leithwood, Robert Aiken, and Doris Jantzi. Published by Corwin Press (2001).

Planning and Conducting Needs Assessments: A Practical Guide, by Belle Ruth Witkin and James W. Altschuld. Published by Sage Publications (1995).

Research-Based Strategies to Achieve High Standards: A Guidebook on School-Wide Improvement, by Sylvie Hale. Published by WestEd (2000). Available online at www.wested.org/csrd/guidebook/toc.htm.

Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement, by Mike Schmoker. Published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1999).

Step 2: Viewing the Landscape of External Partners

After you have determined your need for external help through the needs-assessment process, you can choose from many providers that offer a wide range of services. To get a sense of what the provider landscape looks like, read the following descriptions of the types of services offered, the types of external providers, and the definition of high-quality services.

Types of Services Offered

According to the school leaders and providers interviewed during the development of this guide, successful collaboration efforts are based on a variety of general types of services:

- Strategic planning
- Leadership development
- Reshaping of school culture
- School governance
- Assessment strategies
- Data analysis
- Curriculum components
- Classroom management
- Instructional methods
- Community involvement
- Parent involvement
- Use of technology

Comprehensive school reform (CSR) models, for example, are designed to coordinate a school or district's efforts in many of these areas into a single strategy so that all the components work together. (For more information, see "Comprehensive School Reform Program" below.)

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL REFORM PROGRAM

The Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Program began in 1998 and was reauthorized as Title I, Part F, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which was signed into law as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act on January 8, 2002. More than 5,000 schools nationwide have received grants of at least \$50,000 per school per year, renewable for three years.

The CSR Program is designed to improve student achievement by helping public schools across the country implement schoolwide reforms that are grounded in scientifically based research and effective practices. CSR entails coherent schoolwide improvement that covers virtually all aspects of a school's operations. The law requires CSR schools to access high-quality technical assistance from outside partners experienced in schoolwide reform. In this way, all components of the school—from its curriculum to its governance, and from its professional development to its parent involvement approach—are coordinated in a single strategy. This concerted effort to have all educational components work in tandem with one another avoids the fragmentation of implementing a collection of separately focused reform measures.

For more information about CSR, see the U.S. Department of Education Web site at www.ed.gov/programs/compreform/index.html.

Many providers will provide services in several different areas. In some districts interviewed during the development of this guide, many of these services were offered by a single provider. In other cases, a combination of services was offered by a host of providers over time. Although it may make sense to have multiple providers, this approach raises its own set of difficult issues that will need to be thought through. Many partnerships falter because schools and districts are spread too thin and have too many competing initiatives. (More information about the selection process is presented in Sections 1 and 2 of this guide.)

Of course, schools and districts may enlist many other kinds of external providers—companies that build schools, maintain school grounds, provide security, prepare lunch, and so on. But the focus of this guide is on services that relate directly to schools' core work of teaching and learning.

Types of External Providers

External providers fall into the following categories:

- Regional service centers. At the state level, some states have regional service centers that are designed to provide help in many aspects of school improvement—including staff professional development—to the schools in their geographic regions.
- State departments of education. State education departments also might provide various types of assistance, particularly to schools with persistently low student achievement.
- Colleges and universities. University and community college instructors can offer both a research perspective as well as a history of similar work in similar types of schools.
- Professional organizations. Numerous professional organizations offer a range of services to their members. Included in this category are curriculum-specific organizations (such as the National Council of Teachers of English) as well as those associations targeted at particular types of school leaders (such as the National Association of Secondary School Principals).
- Teachers unions. Some teachers unions offer technical assistance in a wide range of areas.
- Private providers. Possibly the largest and most wide-ranging category belongs to private providers. These individuals, as well as larger organizations such as textbook companies, offer services to help schools in literally every aspect of school improvement. Private providers may be for-profit or nonprofit companies.

Before even turning to an outside provider, however, schools and districts should examine their internal resources. School districts themselves might be the best and most cost-effective option, depending on their capabilities. Many school districts have literacy coaches, curriculum specialists, and other staff members with specific areas of expertise. In addition, staff members with specific expertise at the school level often are the most efficient and successful change agents in their schools. Using internal staff wisely—perhaps by reallocating staff members to support your highest priorities—can have tremendous capacity-building benefits for the school or district.

High-Quality Services

Although the types of services offered and the number of potential providers may seem overwhelming, there is good news. No matter what type of help your school or district needs and what type of provider you ask to provide it, there is general agreement about the kind of help that fosters long-term improvement: Research on the qualities of effective professional development is applicable when hiring any type of external provider.

Numerous studies document that much money and time are wasted on professional development activities that do not have an impact on student learning. Professional development often tends to take the form of “one-shot” workshops with little follow-up, and it typically does not focus on the skills teachers need to help students master specific content (Cohen & Ball, 1999; Garet, Birman, Porter, Desimone, & Herman, 1999; Little, 1997; Parsad, Lewis, & Farris, 2001). Such professional development is still undertaken in most schools, despite the fact that numerous case studies of successful schools have provided evidence about what works, and a small number of more recent studies have begun to show that professional development activities with certain characteristics have a direct, measurable impact on student achievement (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Johnson & Murphy, 2000; Kennedy, 1998; Smylie, Allensworth, Greenberg, Harris, & Luppescu, 2001; Wenglinsky, 2000).

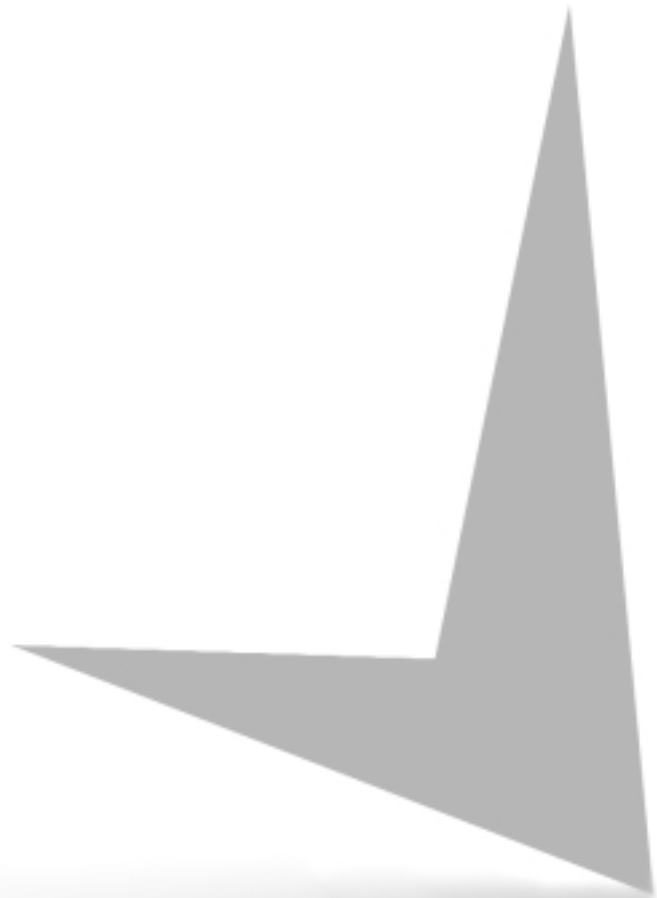
Although current research does not provide a clear list of the most critical characteristics of high-quality provider services, five characteristics do appear consistently in the research. These qualities are thought to be the most relevant for schools and districts in the process of evaluating the quality of multiple external providers. In order to avoid the failures experienced by so many schools, all schools and districts hiring an external provider should make sure the provider offers services that have the following characteristics:

- Aligned with established goals. All plans and activities should be aligned with goals that were established by the school or district during the needs assessment and school or district improvement processes.
- Part of a long-term strategy. The provider's services should be offered as part of a long-term strategy for improved student learning. The provider should be candid about the fact that making changes to affect student learning is a complex and difficult task that takes time.
- Customized. The provider should be prepared to tailor its approach to the school or district's unique circumstances and needs. It should have a viable plan to get buy-in from key stakeholders.
- Research based. The provider's approach should be backed by evidence that it gets the desired results in similar circumstances. Ideally, this evidence should come from scientific research, but often no such research exists. In such cases, evidence could take the form of strong anecdotes of effectiveness, references from successful users of the approach, and other indications the approach is “best practice.”
- Capacity building. All services should be delivered with a strategy for training the school or district to be able to practice and assess these skills independently. The provider should have a plan for building capacity at the school or district level and evidence that it has accomplished this goal in the past. These capacity-building services could take the form of a trainer-of-trainers model, annual “brush-up” trainings, and/or codevelopment of services with a site-based professional development design team.

After the preliminary actions of knowing its needs and viewing the landscape of external providers, the school or district is ready to embark on specific steps of working with external providers.

SECTION 1

Creating a Framework



SECTION 1: CREATING A FRAMEWORK

After going through an intensive process of determining a vision for the school, performing a thorough needs assessment, looking over the types of services and external providers that are available, and understanding the characteristics of high-quality services, you are in a position to build the framework for a strong selection process. At this point, you can begin putting together a selection team, writing a formal proposal outlining your needs, and researching your choices.

Step 1: Putting Together a Selection Team

Involving a wide range of stakeholders in the decision to hire an outside provider is important for many reasons. Casting a wide net ensures that decisions respond to the real needs of the diverse students who attend your school. Broad involvement also helps foster ownership and a commitment to working with the provider to implement its services. Some administrators mention the importance of ensuring that these decisions are not perceived by teachers as yet another “top-down” initiative.

At the same time, most schools and districts find that having the selection team report to someone with decision-making authority is essential to move the process forward in an efficient fashion. One way to balance these two concerns is to invite different types of input at different stages. For example, the selection team might invite other stakeholders to take part in the needs-assessment process or conduct research on potential providers. Later in the guide (Section 2, Step 3, on page 26), you will find some suggestions about submitting the selection team’s decisions to a wider audience for review.

Your school or district already may have a group in place that could take on the job of selecting an external provider. At the school level, an existing school-improvement team or a site council may take on this task. At the district level, a committee with responsibility for curriculum and instruction or for aligning district initiatives might be tapped for this role if the group has broad enough representation. (For ideas about whom to include in a selection team, see “Building a Selection Team” on page 17.)

If your school or district decides to create a new selection team from scratch, think through how this group will communicate and collaborate with preexisting entities and be sure it has representation from key constituencies within your school population. Also, be sure everyone on the selection team is assigned a role in the selection and implementation process. No one person should be responsible for managing the entire process.

BUILDING A SELECTION TEAM

When forming a selection team to choose the external provider, consider people such as the following:

- School and district administrators
 - Teachers representing various grades, content areas, and teams
 - Representatives from the school improvement team, professional development committee, or other site-based management team
 - Representatives of the teachers union
 - Other professional staff
 - Parents
 - Community representatives
 - Students
-

Step 2: Writing a Request for Proposal (RFP)

Most districts and schools select external providers by word of mouth. A common scenario is for someone in the district office to ask around and find out where his or her colleagues have gone for help, and who has provided good services. Often, district administrators meet presenters at conferences and then invite them to do work in their districts. These approaches might work, but they are somewhat haphazard in that they do not ensure that you are tapping into a broad range of available providers.

Successful districts and schools use a more purposeful, targeted approach. First, members of the district or school selection team group design a request for proposal (RFP) that spells out clearly what they are looking for in a provider. Schools and districts that have determined their strengths and priorities for academic improvement during the needs-assessment process are in a stronger position to write an effective RFP. Because they have put in hard work examining their current practices, including thinking through the shared values and beliefs that currently shape their school culture, they are ready to develop such a profile. This RFP may be publicly issued in such a way that providers are invited to bid on the work according to the specifications outlined in the profile. Or the team members might use the RFP internally to guide their investigation into their options. Either way, building a list of components or characteristics to look for is an important step in making sure you select the best possible provider.

Thinking Through Your RFP

When thinking through your RFP, consider the following questions:

- What are your needs?
- What outcomes do you expect as a result of hiring an external provider?
- What services would you like the external provider to deliver?
- What are your selection criteria?
- Do you have other logistical concerns?

What are your needs? Based on the needs-assessment process, you should have a strong idea about the type of assistance you need in terms of “content.” However, you also need to make a decision about how targeted you want this partnership to be. Most schools need help in a number of areas. You will need to determine what areas are essential for the provider to focus on and which are merely desirable and may need to be abandoned if they would dilute the effort.

Another note of caution: A large body of research suggests that many school-improvement efforts fail because they do not address the “core” of learning—what actually happens in classrooms between teachers and students (Elmore, 1996; Tyack & Tobin, 1993). This situation poses a dilemma for school leaders who know for reforms to last, teachers need to have the *will* as well as the *capacity* to do things differently. Many “process” approaches are based on this premise: For there to be lasting change, teachers have to want to do things differently (Fullan, 1982; McLaughlin, 1991; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). But if the effort focuses *exclusively* on process, it runs another risk: It will not affect the “core” and therefore not affect student learning. A well-thought-out approach acknowledges and addresses this dilemma. As you make your decision, recognize that the most effective services are likely to be those concentrating on the specific content students will be asked to master, the challenges they are likely to encounter, and research-based instructional strategies to meet those challenges.

What outcomes do you expect to get as a result of hiring an external provider? In addition to knowing what your needs are, you also should describe the outcomes you expect as a result of hiring an external provider. The specifics of these outcomes will likely be modified during conversations with providers and during contract negotiations, but knowing roughly what you expect means you are more likely to select a provider that is able to accomplish your goals. In many cases, schools and districts confuse service delivery with outcomes. Simply delivering services is not the measure of whether a provider has succeeded. Outcomes should be described in terms of specific student and teacher learning that will occur as a result of services rendered.

In writing your RFP, focus on specific, achievable outcomes that can be measured. For example, many schools would like to improve student literacy in the early grades. But the specific outcomes that individual schools are looking for might be very different. School X might write: “To vertically align the literacy curriculum in the early grades so that students’ sight-reading skills improve as measured by reading records, teacher observation, and district-mandated assessments.” School Y might write: “To foster students’ desire to read independently for pleasure as measured by teacher and student self-reports, parental observation, and use of classroom and library materials.”

What services would you like the external provider to deliver? At this point, you also should begin thinking about the specific services you want a provider to deliver. As with outcomes, the specific services may well be modified at a later stage in the process, but having an idea of what you are looking for will help you conduct a more effective search. In many cases, the best mode of delivery may depend in part on the beliefs and values of your school community. (School beliefs and values are discussed in more detail on page 20.) For example, your desired outcome might be a higher percentage of students taking Algebra I in eighth grade. To accomplish this outcome, think about what kind of services would be most effective with your teachers and what you would want a provider to do. Some possibilities might be to lead a series of professional development sessions for math teachers, provide one-on-one coaching and modeling, or design a system of peer observation and support. But perhaps you do not know what kind of delivery

would be most effective; in such a case, indicate that you would like a provider to suggest a package of professional development opportunities that lead to higher numbers of students taking Algebra I.

What are your selection criteria? When determining your selection criteria, there are many things to think through. Be sure to consider the five characteristics of quality provider services, the kind of assistance you need, and the beliefs and values of your school community.

- The five characteristics of quality provider services. Regardless of the type of services you need, you should insist upon services that are aligned with established goals, part of a long-term strategy, customized, research based, and capacity building. These five quality factors set the groundwork for outside help that will really make a difference in student achievement. To illustrate the importance of searching for providers that have these characteristics, look to the experience of one highly successful superintendent: When a provider refuses to customize its services, the superintendent looks elsewhere without hesitation.

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF QUALITY PROVIDER SERVICES

- Aligned with established goals
 - Part of a long-term strategy
 - Customized
 - Research based
 - Capacity building
-

- The type of assistance that you need. Beyond these basic characteristics of excellent provider services, look for many other specific features so you get assistance that fits your unique circumstances. One way providers differ is in the *intensity of the help* they offer. Some CSR providers, for example, offer services that cover virtually all aspects of a school's operations—from curriculum to governance to parent involvement. Other providers offer much more targeted help with a specific function, such as literacy coaching or analyzing assessment data.

Another factor that characterizes providers is the degree to which they focus on *content versus process*. Some providers train teachers to use a particular instructional strategy or curriculum component; others focus on making changes to school governance or teachers' collaborative working relationships.

Still another area in which providers differ is in the *prescriptiveness of their approaches*. Some providers come with a focused, predetermined set of goals, skills, or materials; others work with school leaders to help them develop these aspects of their school-improvement effort for themselves.

- The beliefs and values of your school community. It is essential to know your school community when identifying the kind of assistance you need. During the needs-assessment process, many of these issues should have surfaced (for example, teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning and their attitudes toward change, the current level of parent involvement, decision-making patterns, and staff members' willingness to collaborate). Up to now, the process outlined in this guide has focused on the "hard realities" of your situation—the objective facts that describe where you are today. But two schools could very well find themselves in the same objective situation, yet choose different paths because the values and beliefs that school stakeholders bring to the table are different.

The hard realities, for example, may tell you that you need to revamp teachers' instructional behaviors in order to raise student achievement, but the providers will not tell you which of several instructional approaches will provide the best match to your needs. To answer that question, your school or district leaders will need to reflect on the type of school they want to create and the kinds of approaches most likely to succeed. For example, some groups of teachers are eager for opportunities to team-teach; other groups of teachers would find this approach extremely challenging.

Do you have other logistical concerns? In addition to selection criteria related to quality and fit, you also may have concerns about logistical issues, such as timing, cost, and service delivery. Before searching for a provider, you should clarify how much you are willing or able to spend. You also should have an idea of how long you expect the partnership to last. Both of these issues are subject to change as the partnership evolves (for example, some providers will be able to help you identify external funding sources to support their services). But, at the outset, you should have a rough idea of how much you expect to spend and when you expect to see results. Depending on your circumstances—remote or rural location, for example—you may have preferences about how services are delivered that need to be clarified from the beginning.

Getting the RFP Down on Paper

Having taken the time to think through the kind of help you need (the "content," the essential characteristics all providers should have, the special considerations unique to your school or district community, and your logistical concerns), you are ready to write your own RFP. This RFP should state very clearly what you are looking for in a provider—not just in terms of the content of its services (for example, help with curriculum development), but also in terms of its delivery style (for example, a targeted provider that has a highly prescriptive approach to improving literacy).

TOOL 1: REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) WORKSHEET

(SEE PAGE 57) *Tool 1 is a template designed to help write an RFP. The first section provides you with a space to outline your needs, the second section helps you determine your selection criteria, and the third section documents any logistical concerns. As a result of using this tool, you will have the material you need to create an RFP for selecting an outside provider.*

Step 3: Researching Your Choices

There are many different ways to go about finding providers with the potential to deliver the help you need. By focusing on the priorities you already identified, you can narrow down your search considerably because many providers will not offer services that fit your needs. At this point, you want to know if the provider offers the services you are looking for and, ideally, if it has had successful experiences working with schools and districts similar to yours. As an initial step, you will want to build a manageable list of potential providers that you want to contact directly for more specific information. In terms of where to turn to build that list, here are some suggestions from successful “buyers”:

Issue an actual RFP. In a large district, a specific RFP seems particularly appropriate. The scale of the job is likely to entice several providers to express interest. The key to this strategy would be to get the RFP out to a broad range of providers. (For ideas about where to send it, consult the “Types of External Providers” list below.)

TYPES OF EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

- Regional service centers
 - State departments of education
 - Colleges and universities
 - Professional organizations
 - Teachers unions
 - Private providers
-

Consult with similar peers. Although using word-of-mouth recommendations alone are not sufficient, you can learn a great deal by speaking with schools or districts that have similar needs. What providers have they used in the past? Which ones were helpful? Which were not? Consulting with your peers also can yield information about the likely costs of different services and the funding sources available to pay for them.

Look at the provider list. The “Types of External Providers” list also is a good place to start a more general search. Think through each type of provider and consider the following questions: Is this type of provider available to me? (For example, does a local college or university have professors willing to engage in the type of work you are looking for?) Is this type of provider likely to provide high-quality services in the areas we are looking for? If the answer to these questions is yes, write down the name on a list of providers you want to investigate further.

Contact professional organizations. By contacting well-respected, high-quality professional organizations, you may get recommendations for strong external providers. This source seems like a particularly good place to get recommendations as long as you do extensive follow-up research on the possibilities. One thing to determine when contacting a professional organization is whether it offers its own services or recommends the services of other providers.

Conduct an Internet search. There are several tactics to take on searching the Internet, some of which depend on the specificity of your needs. One approach is to get more information about providers you are considering by going directly to their Web sites. The second approach is to enter a specific curriculum or an instructional service directly into a Web search engine and see what turns up. For example, searching "cooperative learning" or "building collaborative teacher teams" will turn up several promising references to existing books and programs. The authors of these books might be excellent candidates to provide help or direct you to resources.

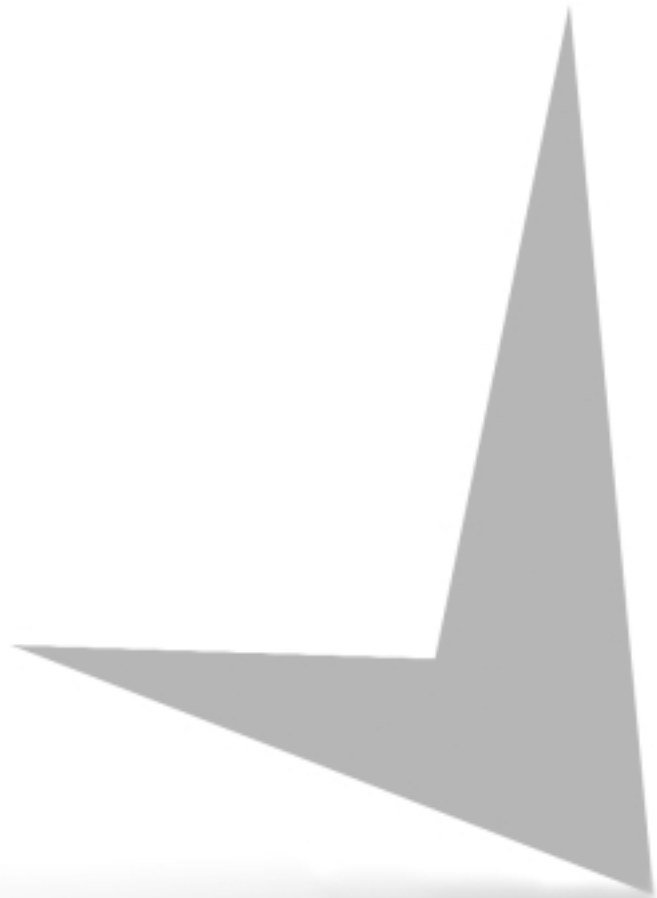
Look at original research in your area of interest. Another way to find high-quality providers is to find out who is doing research in your area of interest. Try searching the What Works Clearinghouse Web site (www.w-w-c.org), the online federal education database, or do a library search of relevant research articles in scholarly journals. You might find someone who has the latest information about your particular area of need. If these researchers do not offer services themselves, they may be able to recommend someone who does work with schools directly.

Ask another entity to conduct the search for you. If conducting a search seems overwhelming, one possibility is to ask another entity to help you conduct a search. A trusted provider you have worked with in the past, a local university or community college professor, or some other knowledgeable advisor might be willing, for a fee, to help review the type of help available in your area of interest.

TOOL 2: PROSPECTIVE PROVIDER INFORMATION SHEET

(SEE PAGE 61) *Tool 2 is an information sheet for you to use as you gather background material about individual providers. You may want to make several copies of this sheet to use as you collect information.*

SECTION 2 | *Selecting a Provider*



SECTION 2: SELECTING A PROVIDER

As mentioned at the beginning of this guide, two building blocks are essential for establishing a strong relationship with an external provider: *clarity* and *communication*. These building blocks are especially important when selecting an effective provider.

Step 1: Conducting Initial Conversations

Up until now, the burden has been on you to set the stage by clarifying your needs. At this point, you are ready to meet with potential providers to communicate your needs and determine which provider will best meet them. During these conversations, the provider has an equal responsibility to determine if you are appropriate for its services. In order to lay a firm foundation for a strong working relationship, this step requires full disclosure of information and open communication between both parties. This disclosure includes, on your part, a frank conversation about current school culture: decision-making processes, level of teacher collaboration, teachers' openness to new instructional methods, level of parent participation, and other factors. In these conversations, consider several important points:

Does the provider offer services that have the five quality characteristics? Every provider you consider should offer services that are aligned with established goals, part of a long-term strategy, customized, research based, and capacity building. These characteristics are crucial, but they are not always easy to determine. For example, many external providers cite research supporting their approach. One question to ask would be if their research is self-generated or independent. (See Tool 2 on page 61 for sample questions you might ask to determine if the provider's services have these characteristics.)

Does the provider offer services that meet the essential criteria you identified while developing your RFP? By having your RFP on hand and asking about essential criteria, you can be sure you are getting information about the provider's ability to meet your particular needs.

Are the provider's services cost-effective? Presumably, all schools and districts operate within budget parameters when hiring outside providers. In general, research has shown that schools and districts spend about 1 percent of their total budget on professional development (Choy & Chen, 1998). This amount compares with the 4 percent or 5 percent spent on average by private-industry companies on employee training (Klein, Medrich, & Perez-Ferreiro, 1996). In addition to finding external funding, many districts and schools have freed up additional funds for professional development by reallocating existing resources. (Although it is beyond the scope of this guide to discuss funding in depth, see "Suggested Resources on Resource Reallocation" on page 25.) Whatever the source of funds, though, seek a provider that is upfront about both direct and indirect costs associated with its services and that shows its value for money.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES ON RESOURCE REALLOCATION

Many of these references were written specifically for schools implementing CSR, but the information is applicable to others as well.

A Better Return on Investment: Reallocating Resources to Improve Student Achievement. Published by North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2000). Available at www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/pdfs/booklet.pdf.

District Leaders' Guide to Reallocating Resources, by Fran Walter. Published by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2001). Available online at www.nwrel.org/csrdp/reallocating.pdf.

How to Rethink School Budgets to Support School Transformation, by Allen Odden, Ph.D. Published by New American Schools (n.d). Available online at www.naschools.org/uploadedfiles/How%20to%20Rethink%20School%20Budgets%20to%20Support%20School%20Transformation.pdf.

Rethinking School Resources, by Karen Hawley Miles, Ph.D. Published by New American Schools (2000). Available online at www.naschools.org/uploadedfiles/rethinking-resources.pdf.

Rethinking the Use of Educational Resources to Support Higher Student Achievement, by Karen Hawley Miles, Ph.D. Published by North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2000). Available online at www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/go/go600.htm.

Do you and the provider agree about the outcomes you expect from the partnership? During this initial conversation, you will of course want to discuss outcomes. Although this conversation is not the appropriate time for a detailed discussion of every potential outcome and how it will be measured, you will want to be sure that you and the provider are in general agreement. For example, some providers may be reluctant to set student-achievement targets while others routinely include targets in their contracts. (For a more thorough discussion of outcomes, see Section 3, page 34, of this guide.)

Does the provider have a strategy for evaluating whether these outcomes are met? A strong provider will have a clear evaluation plan that includes both summative measures (to gauge whether specific goals have been met at the end of a partnership) and formative measures (which can be analyzed during the course of a partnership to determine if implementation is on target).

Do you have personal rapport with the provider? Consider how well you think you would work with the provider, and how well you think other staff members from your school or district would work with it. Unlike the other issues mentioned in this list, your instinctive feeling about whether you want to work with a particular provider is purely subjective. Every person who was interviewed during the development of this guide agreed that when entering into a partnership, it is imperative to take these subjective criteria into account. In fact, most said they ultimately chose one provider over another because of a belief that they could work better with the people involved. They learned to select a provider that seems trustworthy, likeable, and straightforward.

To make this determination, it is important to find out which *specific individuals* will be providing the services. Especially in larger organizations, the people involved in making the “sale” may not be the ones delivering the “goods.” Find out who will be on-site daily and meet those individuals in person. Find out about stability by asking how much staff turnover the provider has. Be cautious about a provider that cannot tell you about the staff members who will be implementing its services. (For more information about building a strong relationship with an external provider, see the Spring 2002 issue of *Notes & Reflections*, an NCREL publication designed for professional developers, available at www.ncrel.org/info/notes/spring02/spring2002.pdf.)

Step 2: Checking References

As a last step before making a decision, the selection team members should contact other schools or districts *similar to their own* that have worked with the provider they are considering. This may involve a telephone call, or it may involve visits by members of the selection team to the school for site visits and interviews. During these conversations, it is important to check whether the information they got from the provider is accurate by asking about the “must-have” characteristics identified during the RFP process. Does this provider offer services that have the five essential characteristics? Does the provider have the characteristics you identified as critical to your school or district? Were there any problems during implementation? Have the provider’s services achieved the expected results? Did the school or district have a good working relationship with this provider? Did the provider deliver as promised?

TOOL 3: PROSPECTIVE PROVIDER EVALUATION

(SEE PAGE 63) *Use Tool 3 to rate how each provider fares after initial conversations are complete and references are checked.*

Step 3: Reaching an Agreement on Selecting a Provider

Having gathered information directly from the provider and from other schools that have used this provider, your selection team should have the information you need to come to a consensus about which provider to recommend. Even though you have been gathering some degree of input throughout the selection process, the next step in the decision-making process is to ask a wide range of stakeholders to review your decision.

If your school or district is taking on a comprehensive partnership that will involve multiple stakeholders and services, you might decide to go through a formal decision-making process for selecting a provider. Some districts approach this task by asking key stakeholders to vote on whether to hire a particular provider; others build consensus by holding a series of informational meetings.

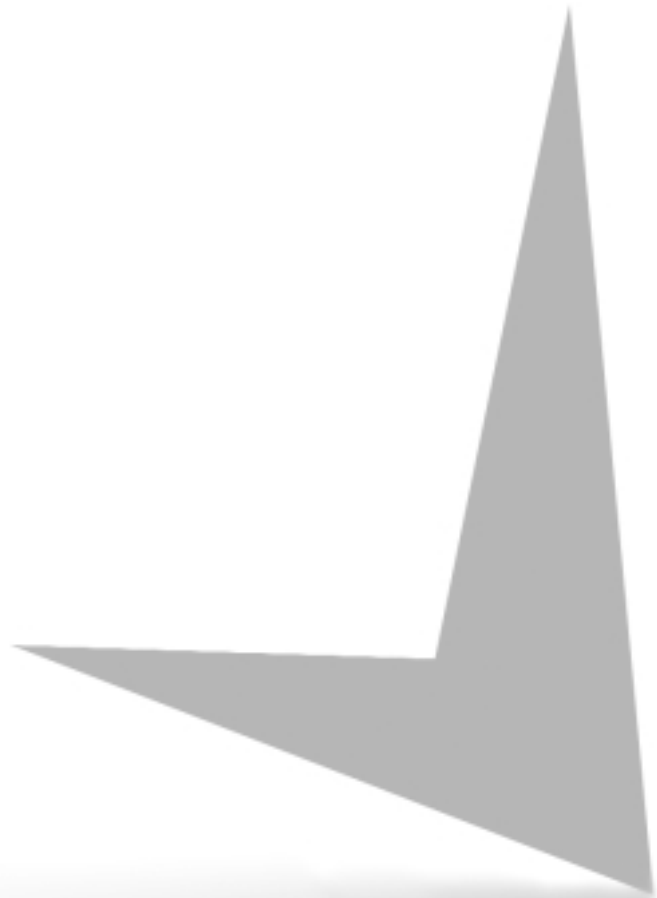
Before scheduling these meetings, think through how you will reach each constituency most effectively. One option is to develop a formal presentation outlining the provider’s background and the services it plans to implement. Other options include small-group discussions, parent

forums, surveys, and feedback sessions in which the provider answers questions from particular stakeholder groups. Your choice of delivery will depend on the characteristics, prior experiences, and needs of your unique school community. The important thing is to design a presentation mode that is comfortable for all participants and invites genuine input.

If you are hiring a provider for less comprehensive services, you will still need to ask key stakeholders to review your decision. In many districts, the key stakeholders at this point are the people who hold the purse strings: the superintendent (and/or the assistant superintendents) and the school board; their agreement is critical. In most cases, you will want to get input from the wider community as well to ensure even a small-scale partnership has solid support. A wide range of potential stakeholders can be considered, including teachers, noninstructional staff, school support teams, parents, community members partnering with the school, and district officials. When determining what role various stakeholders will play, strive to create a healthy balance between casting a wide net and creating an efficient process that allows for closure.

SECTION 3

Negotiating a Contract



SECTION 3: NEGOTIATING A CONTRACT

After finalizing your choice for a provider, you are now in a position to enter into negotiations with the provider to establish a contract and working relationship that is acceptable to all parties. This section of the guide explores three central issues that make up the framework of a partnership agreement with a provider: the package of services and materials the provider will supply, actions the school and district will take to facilitate implementation, and outcomes and evaluation measures.

Step 1: Understanding the Package of Services and Materials Supplied by the Provider

The “core” of the partnership agreement is a clear statement of the package of services and materials the provider will offer the school. Most external providers will come to the table with a more-or-less standard package of services. The aim of this part of the negotiation is to explore ways in which the standard package might be *customized* to the school's particular circumstances or requirements. In most cases, a single provider will not meet every one of the school's expectations. As a result, schools need to gain an upfront understanding of what an organization can provide, what it cannot offer, and what it might be able to provide with appropriate modifications.

For this negotiation to be possible, the provider must make clear to the school the specific services and materials that will be provided and the background and qualifications of the staff members who will be delivering them. For example, if the provider offers on-site consulting, the school needs to make sure it understands (among other things) what the duration, frequency, and content of services will be; if and how the provider encourages peer coaching; and what the procedure is if the school finds the provider's consultants unacceptable for any reason. The school also must be fully aware of what materials and services required for implementation are not part of the package of services. For instance, extensive use of computers may be part of the provider's intervention, but the school must provide the actual equipment. Failure to work out format, content, and logistical details before implementation is underway can lead to unnecessary tension in the working relationship and, possibly, unsatisfactory outcomes.

TOOL 4: PROVIDER SERVICES AND MATERIALS QUESTIONNAIRE

(SEE PAGE 65) *Tool 4 helps you understand the specific details of the provider's services. You also may use this tool as a comparative checklist if the provider presents you with a draft contract outlining its proposed services. Using this checklist should reveal any areas of uncertainty or misunderstanding about the proposed package of services.*

Schools and providers need a process by which they can come to agreement about services and materials. Using the information from the needs assessment and the priorities listed in the RFP as a starting point, both parties should identify “gaps” between what the school and district require and what the provider's standard package can provide. For example, some providers may not

have strong capacity-building strategies in place to keep the intervention thriving after their work is completed, but they may be able to modify their services to include this component.

To identify gaps, think through the following questions: What areas of need are not addressed adequately by the chosen provider? In what ways, if any, do the provider's services not match with the state and district standards, curriculum, or assessment practices? Are there certain required programs or practices the school must pursue that conflict with the provider's services? Are there unique values held by the school community that might be accommodated by the provider? These gaps can form the basis for discussion about where the provider's services can (and cannot) be modified to fit the school's circumstances. Areas for which services can be adapted should be included in the partnership agreement.

TOOL 5: GAP ANALYSIS

(SEE PAGE 67) *Tool 5 helps schools and districts document the gaps that exist between their needs and the services offered by the provider. As a result of using this tool, both parties should have a clear picture of the services and materials the provider will provide, including any modifications to the provider's standard package.*

Step 2: Determining Actions and Support Provided by the School or District

All providers need some degree of support at both the school and district levels in order to implement their services successfully. Schools and districts must provide a certain infrastructure, which may or may not be in place at the time the provider is hired. Though outside the scope of this guide, an important piece of the infrastructure is the skills and knowledge of the school-level and district-level people who are carrying out the work entailed. Information about staff skills is presumably clear from the needs assessment and should be shared with the provider, but most providers also will have their own methods of assessing existing staff knowledge and designing programs to address weaknesses and enhance strengths. Accordingly, this guide focuses on the parts of the infrastructure that providers are less able to influence directly: authority, resources, and support.

Cost and Payment Arrangements

During contract negotiations, providers must do more than apprise schools and districts of what services and materials they will provide. They also need to specify how much the services and materials will cost. In addition to direct costs, the provider also needs to make clear to the school and district if there are costs to implementation not included in the stated price. Being upfront about both direct and indirect costs avoids later misunderstandings that can undermine the partnership. Other costs might include teacher stipends for extra time spent on professional development, technology and equipment, travel, and substitute teachers.

The issue of payment will likely involve two major discussions: one between the school or district and the provider to determine the payment schedule and, if necessary, one between the school and district office to clarify how the school will pay for implementation. The discussion between

the school, the district, and the provider is important for determining the times and frequency of payment. No matter how the budget allocation for a school works, the school and district should strategize ways in which the external provider can be paid in a timely fashion. By the same token, the provider will need to adjust to when the district or school can pay.

TOOL 6: PROVIDER COSTS QUESTIONNAIRE

(SEE PAGE 69) *Tool 6 helps schools and districts get a handle on the costs of a provider by guiding them through a set of questions concerning the costs of general assistance, consulting, professional development, materials, and other services. It also provides space for providers to note additional staffing, equipment, and other options not included in the contract.*

Supportive Policies for the Partnership at the School Level

Providers may have certain requirements or preferences about school policies and procedures. With regard to school leadership, providers may require principals to attend training sessions with the faculty. With regard to school staff, providers may require a certain amount of common planning time for grade-level teams each week; they may need teachers to be able to attend a certain number of professional development days on a certain schedule; or they may need schools to use certain evaluation procedures or provide certain kinds of data on an ongoing basis. Whatever the preferences of the provider, they should be made clear during contract negotiations.

TOOL 7: PROVIDER PREFERENCES FOR SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL-LEVEL POLICIES

(SEE PAGE 73) *Tool 7 allows the provider to identify school-level policies that are needed or useful for implementation. For each area identified by the provider, the tool allows the school to describe whether these policies are in place. Additional space is provided for the two parties to address the differences between what the provider requests and what the school can offer.*

Supportive Policies for the Partnership at the District Level

Providers also differ in the types of authority, resources, and support they expect from the district. Understanding these expectations upfront can help the district set priorities for improving its own infrastructure for reform. This kind of advance planning helps avoid common problems during implementation.

The district plays an important role in supporting implementation in several areas:

Adequate Funding. Districts can provide funds in a number of key areas: ongoing professional development, technology, conferences, and substitute teachers.

Supportive District Policies and Procedures. Such policies and procedures may include the following: clear lines of authority, leadership stability, evaluation procedures, focus and alignment with other initiatives, and direct technical assistance.

- **Clear Lines of Authority for Decisions About Budgets, Staffing, Scheduling, and Programs.** Many providers suggest interventions or practices that require districts and schools to make substantial changes in their current operations. The provider should know with whom it needs to work to implement the required changes. For example, many schools have some school-site autonomy with regard to curriculum; other schools, however, are required to use districtwide curriculum materials. In the latter case, a provider that wants to introduce new curriculum materials will need to get a waiver from the district office to do so. All parties should be clear about who in the district office has the authority to grant such a waiver and, ideally, whether that office is willing to grant the waiver in advance.
- **Leadership Stability.** Because a change in personnel can easily derail an effort, districts should work hard to maintain leadership stability. Recognizing the importance of this task, one superintendent said he begins planning for a successor as soon as he makes a new hire. He also works only with providers that have strategies for building capacity throughout the school so new practices can continue under new leadership.
- **Evaluation Procedures.** Does the district have evaluation procedures that align with those of the provider? What role does data-driven decision making currently play in school operations? Does the district report achievement data to schools in an ongoing and timely manner?
- **Focus and Alignment With Other Initiatives.** Do the services of the external provider align with other district initiatives? In many cases, competing district initiatives or changing priorities are a major barrier to new partnerships. To the extent possible, providers will want to know their partnership is important to the district and that it will continue to be a priority for the duration of their working relationship.
- **Direct Technical Assistance.** Some districts, especially large ones, may be in a position to provide schools with technical assistance that supports or complements the provider's services. For example, the district office may have a team of data specialists, curriculum providers, or literacy coaches who could be brought in to help with a particular intervention or to be trained along with the school staff.

TOOL 8: PROVIDER PREFERENCES FOR SUPPORTIVE DISTRICT-LEVEL POLICIES

(SEE PAGE 75) *The provider may use Tool 8 during contract discussions to make known its preferences for district support. Discussion should focus on discrepancies between the support the provider requests and the support the district is willing or able to provide.*

Step 3: Focusing on Outcomes and Evaluation Measures

Ideally, discussions about outcomes have taken place prior to this point. Most likely, negotiations would not have reached this stage without straightforward conversations about what the school or district can expect to happen as a result of hiring a particular provider. But that is not the same as writing outcomes and evaluation measures into a contract. Every partnership will be unique, but the following issues might come up during this process.

How are outcomes described? As mentioned earlier, some districts will not work with a provider that does not set goals for improved student achievement. Such goal setting would include not only the goals themselves but also the measurements used by the provider and school to determine if these goals are met. Many schools and districts are under tremendous pressure to meet state and federal accountability provisions, and they will likely hire a provider that understands and appreciates their sense of urgency. On the other hand, some successful providers are wary of other providers who promise too much in terms of achievement gains. Successful providers know that high-quality interventions take time and a lot of work to accomplish and are affected by circumstances out of the provider's control. In other words, beware of quick fixes. Some providers deal with this dilemma by setting "targets" for student-achievement gains as opposed to promising that certain gains will be met.

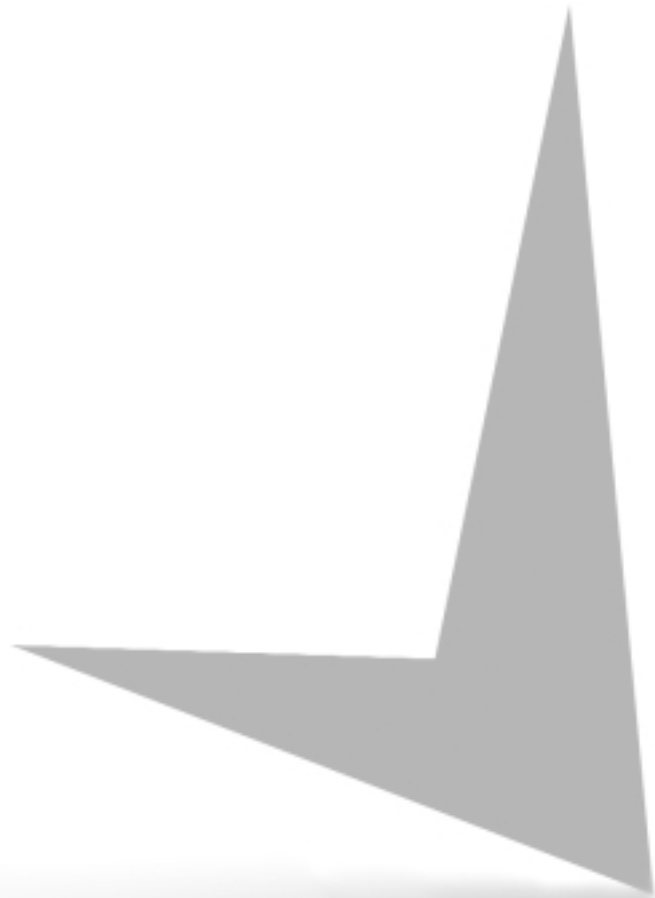
In addition to student-achievement gains, other ways to measure the effectiveness of an intervention during implementation are specific to the intervention itself. For example, a provider focusing on building collaborative teaching teams could measure whether and how often teachers are meeting, how often teachers are using new instructional strategies because of these meetings, and whether teachers report that these meetings are effective and useful. A strategic planning helper could be held accountable for meeting deadlines, for stakeholder evaluation of its processes, and for being responsive to inquiries and requests.

The important things at this stage are to include reasonable measures of the intervention's final results and also to institute some process of feedback and discussion to evaluate how things are going so that midcourse corrections are possible. The contract should include not only what will be measured but also a timetable for the evaluation of outcomes.

What hinges on the outcomes? This is a key question. As mentioned earlier, many providers typically include "targets" for improved achievement in a contract, but they are not willing to tie their compensation to specific test-score increases because so many factors are beyond their control. However, they are open to other possibilities. One approach to the issue of setting student-achievement targets, for example, is to offer the provider a potential bonus if the targets are met. Other possibilities include continuation of the contract, which could be broken down into ongoing continuation and renewal of the contract for another year. In other words, what expectations must the provider meet to keep the job from month to month? What expectations must the provider meet to get the job again next year? (For assistance thinking through criteria you might use to evaluate a provider, see Tool 9 on page 77.)

SECTION 4

Working as Partners



SECTION 4: WORKING AS PARTNERS

By carrying out the activities described in earlier sections, each party had the opportunity to make clear what it needs, what it expects, and how it can contribute to the implementation of the provider's services. These actions are essential elements of any successful partnership. In addition to these actions, a key consideration is how the work is actually going to get done. Working as partners requires a game plan for implementation, troubleshooting, and evaluation.

Step 1: Creating the School or District Implementation Plan

Any well-prepared provider should enter into a partnership with an already established, systematic plan for the steps of implementation. Based on its experience, the provider should know what components of its services should receive the initial focus and how and when the other components will eventually be introduced. Even if the provider has modified its plans to fit the circumstances or preferences of a particular school or district, it still should have an overarching implementation strategy that is made clear to the school and the district at the beginning of the partnership.

To ensure results, the implementation plan should include provisions for periodic rethinking of the implementation strategy. Schools, districts, and providers are all dynamic systems that should respond to new situations and research. It is possible an implementation strategy designed two years previously may no longer be the most effective strategy. Therefore, any implementation plan should remain flexible enough to respond to new environments or new information. By maintaining open and frequent communications, the school, district office, and provider should be able to discuss honestly any need for revision of the implementation plan and come to a consensus about the revision.

Step 2: Addressing Common Issues That Arise During Implementation

The key factor in confronting problems is one that already has been mentioned: maintaining ongoing communication. Such communication allows the partners to be proactive rather than waiting to cope with problems as they arise. Ongoing communication also facilitates the sense of having a shared goal. If the school, district, and provider all see themselves as being on the same team, this connection will lead to less finger-pointing when a mistake is made—because mistakes *will* be made. The connection also promotes more constructive discussion on the question: How are we going to solve this problem?

Keep a written record of the communication between the parties. For example, some providers keep a log of when communication took place with district or school staff, what was discussed, and what actions were taken as a result of the discussion. According to the providers, such logs help prevent misunderstandings from turning into full-blown problems.

For a detailed explanation of common issues that arise and potential options for dealing with those issues, refer to "Addressing Common Issues That Arise During Implementation of Provider Services" on pages 37–41.

Addressing Common Issues That Arise During Implementation of Provider Services

The following issues commonly arise during implementation of provider services. Options for satisfying each issue are included.

ISSUE 1: GAINING SUPPORT FROM SCHOOL STAFF

Options: Establish a mechanism for staff members to voice their concerns. Schools and districts hiring an external provider should have gone through a comprehensive selection and buy-in process. This situation, however, is not always the case. Some schools may have providers selected for them and may feel no ownership of the partnership. One way of gaining staff support after implementation is for school leaders to establish a mechanism through which teachers can ask questions about the provider and implementation. This approach gives teachers a sense they are being heard, which is an important component in gaining support for any new initiative.

Demonstrate concrete proof of the provider's positive effects and stakeholder support. Offer concrete proof of the provider's "small successes" or successes with students with the same demographics. Though there may not be significant test-score gains within one year of implementation, there are other ways of demonstrating progress. For example, a teacher who has seen students blossom after he or she began adopting new practices may be asked to "tell a story" about the progress some of these students have made. Stories are powerful because they can help skeptical teachers understand how to use the new practices in their classrooms. Such teachers also may begin to be convinced if the school surveys parents, students, and others who all voice support for the intervention.

Establish mentoring or coaching relationships between teachers who have experienced positive results and teachers who have not. While recognizing that success stories may inspire other teachers to try more determinedly to implement new practices in their classrooms, school leaders also may want to consider establishing more involved mentoring relationships between teachers who are having success and those who are not. Skeptical teachers will then have an opportunity to learn about—and gain confidence in—the new practices. Establishing these relationships must be done carefully to avoid insulting any teacher. School leaders may find establishing a supportive relationship between teachers may yield more support for, and success with, the provider's interventions.

Consider allowing teachers who do not support the reforms to transfer to another school. For a variety of legitimate reasons, some teachers may simply not support or feel comfortable with a provider's interventions, even after having had opportunities to express concerns, hear about positive results, and receive training and mentoring. When this situation occurs, some districts allow teachers to transfer to other district schools. Some districts place restrictions on the number of times a teacher may transfer or the period of time this transfer option is available. These considerations are dependent on an individual district's circumstances. Though not all districts favor allowing a teacher-transfer option, the benefits of having supportive teachers implement new practices and keeping teachers happier in their work environment may make the transfer option worth considering.

ISSUE 2: NOT ENOUGH CUSTOMIZATION TO LOCAL CONTEXT

Options: Gather information about how interventions are challenging existing practices, values, and norms. Experienced providers recognize the importance of designing interventions and services that adapt to the local context. Some of this planning can be done ahead of time, but in many cases the complexities of a school and district's culture surface only during implementation. For example, teachers may be uncomfortable taking on new decision-making responsibilities as called for by a particular intervention. In this case, the provider might need to offer teachers more training on researching new curriculum and instructional strategies that meet their particular students' needs than they had anticipated.

In order to recognize what is going on, both the provider and the school or district leadership should collect ongoing feedback about implementation. Through scheduled observations, teacher surveys, and regular conversations, providers should assess the "sticking points" related to staff members putting new practices into effect.

Rethink the implementation strategy. After all parties recognize where these "sticking points" are, the school, district, and provider should discuss the need for revision of the implementation plan. If the provider is willing and able to make midcourse corrections in its implementation strategy, the contract may need to be revised as well—depending on the nature of the changes. At the same time, certain aspects of implementation may be nonnegotiable from the provider's point of view. It is important for the school and district to understand these nonnegotiable issues upfront so that everyone can focus attention on those items that are more flexible.

ISSUE 3: SCHEDULING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Options: Clarify the exact dates of provided staff development. Some schools enter into contracts expecting that providers will conduct professional development sessions during the district's designated professional development days. Because providers cannot always plan their offerings around the schedules of individual schools, the school is then forced to pay for substitute teachers to allow staff to attend the training during regular school days. Understanding the proposed dates before beginning implementation will allow the school to make a fully informed decision in provider selection, negotiate with the provider for different training days, petition the district for a waiver from mandated scheduling of professional development days, or make the necessary substitute arrangements in advance if neither the provider nor district is able to accommodate the school's requests for flexibility.

Reach an agreement with the district on flexibility in scheduling professional development days. Schools generally have limited professional development time and face competing professional development schedules on the part of the district and the provider. Having the autonomy to choose days used for staff training will decrease the expense and difficulty schools face in juggling district-designated professional development days and the availability of provider training. Potential savings in hiring fewer substitutes is one reason a school can give the district in order to gain flexibility in the scheduling of staff development sessions.

ISSUE 4: FINDING TIME TO LEARN AND REFLECT ON NEW PRACTICES

Options: Make scheduling changes. It is very difficult for teachers to find the time to learn and practice new strategies. After assessing how much additional time staff members will need to implement new strategies, schools and districts often need to rework their schedules in a variety of ways to free up time for training, reflection, and collaboration. Some of these strategies include providing extended-day programs, scheduling late-arrival days, reducing some nonteaching duties of the staff, and making the most of the summer months. Depending on the flexibility of the current contract, schools and districts may need to renegotiate certain aspects of teachers' contracts (or arrange waivers or memoranda of understanding) to accommodate these new work arrangements. Teachers also may need additional pay to compensate them for the additional hours they are working beyond the school day.

Integrate professional development into other activities. When the learning of new strategies is built into routine practices, it becomes a powerful tool for change. Instead of relegating professional development to specific inservice days, schools can make professional development a part of each staff member's everyday work by integrating teacher learning into activities such as staff meetings, student evaluation, and collaborative curriculum planning.

ISSUE 5: CONFLICTING EFFORTS AND SHIFTING PRIORITIES

Options: Limit new initiatives. Oftentimes, districts are laden with new initiatives or programs that "sounded ideal" to those bringing in the new services to the district. Among providers and districts, there is a common understanding that districts and schools need to carefully examine what is already on their plate and limit new initiatives. One superintendent even went so far as to create a "new initiative process" for her district by insisting that every new initiative be brought before an established committee that examines whether or not the new initiative is necessary and aligned with existing efforts before granting approval.

Eliminate programs that conflict with new initiatives. In some cases, bringing in a new provider creates inherent conflicts with existing efforts. For example, a provider that encourages teachers to research and select new curriculum materials may run up against a previously established curriculum-selection process. In other cases, in order to implement a new provider's services, the district and school may need to free up staff time by eliminating other programs. In either case, there needs to be open communication about the need for these changes and willingness on the district or school's part to acknowledge and respond to these requests. Clearly, eliminating existing programs can be extremely difficult, particularly for schools that lack resources. Yet by taking action, the school or district sends a powerful signal to everyone involved that this initiative has a high priority and is not just another program that will go by the wayside (Newmann et al., 2001).

ISSUE 6: ALIGNMENT WITH DISTRICT AND STATE STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

Option: Clarify with the external provider how its assessment mechanism will correspond to the state or district assessment requirements. In addition to mapping out how a provider's services will meet the state or district's curriculum standards, schools also need to be clear on how the provider's assessment strategy matches with the state or

district assessment requirements. For example, the state or district may require a certain standardized test and a particular portfolio assessment, but the provider may specify that other assessments be used. The school will end up expending a lot of effort testing its students and compiling portfolios unless it and the provider negotiate an assessment system that both parties find acceptable.

ISSUE 7: UNACCEPTABLE PROVISION OF SERVICES

Options: Establish a contact person within the provider staff in case of difficulties with service or material delivery. Before embarking on implementation, the school should clarify whom it should contact in case any service or product concerns need to be taken care of quickly. Accordingly, this person should have authority to remedy the situation in a prompt manner; his or her name should be identified on the contract. Having an available, authoritative contact person also will benefit the provider because customer satisfaction is a key component in effective implementation.

Establish contract provisions for what happens in the event of dissatisfaction with services or materials. In some cases where the provider is not delivering its services as promised (e.g., trainers are of poor quality, curriculum materials are delivered late, or professional development is not scheduled), the school may want more than assurances that the situation will be rectified as swiftly as possible. For example, being without curricular materials represents a significant problem because most schools face limited instructional days and tremendous pressure to meet accountability measures. Consequently, schools may want to incorporate financial and/or termination repercussions in the contract for certain failures of the provider to provide adequate services. For example, the school may establish that the price of curricular materials not delivered by a certain time will decrease X percent for every day the materials are late. The school and district should work with the district's attorney to draw up the best contract for their circumstances.

Come to an agreement on contract provisions that allow the school or district to terminate the partnership if the provider is unable or unwilling to implement services effectively over time. If the school and the provider have tried other measures to improve implementation without success, they may want to consider ending the relationship. Having already established provisions for such termination will allow the relationship to end as smoothly as possible. (Some considerations for termination are included in Section 5 of this guide. See especially the description of "Potential Grounds for Early Termination" on page 48.)

ISSUE 8: TURNOVER OF LEADERSHIP

Options: Seek support from the district for policies that promote stability of school leadership. Some policies that could potentially enhance the success of implementation include the following:

- A district guarantee that it will hire a principal who supports the provider's service-delivery plans
- A district policy to offer longer contracts to principals who are experiencing success at a particular school
- A district or school policy that offers incentives to principals who remain at a school and continue to be effective leaders

Build internal capacity. One way to counter the negative and potentially crippling effects of leadership turnover is to insulate the reform by embedding it as much as possible into the fabric of school operations. During implementation, the provider should focus as much as possible on building the internal capacity of staff members to use new strategies independently. Providers can contribute to internal capacity in many ways. One way is to promote staff leadership at various levels of school operations by training members of the school community to lead the improvement effort and conduct the provider's activities in the future. For example, a provider that is helping teachers master some new instructional technique could train two lead teachers on its training methods. These lead teachers could help with the provider's intervention and then continue to work with existing and new teachers in the future. Another way providers can contribute to internal capacity is to build reflection time and evaluation into all activities. This kind of work increases understanding about the intervention among school staff and stakeholders. At the end of the day, teachers and other staff engage more deeply with the work; as a result, they emerge with greater capacity to tackle other issues in the future.

ISSUE 9: TRAINING NEW TEACHERS

Options: Incorporate within the contract how incoming teachers will be trained after implementation already has begun. One difficulty many schools face is teacher turnover. Because a provider's training schedule may occur in two-year cycles, for example, contract provisions for training teachers coming in during the second year of implementation need to be discussed and agreed upon.

Build capacity to train new teachers on-site. Some providers establish their final stage of teacher training as train-the-trainer sessions. In this way, either the school or the district develops the capacity to train incoming teachers. This option, though not available to schools in the early stages of implementation, reduces the cost of having the provider train all incoming teachers.

Step 3: Establishing an Evaluation Plan

The primary goal for any evaluation system should be to foster an environment of continuous improvement. The data made available through evaluation should be used by the school, district, and provider to review and renew—on an ongoing basis—the approaches used to improve student learning. This emphasis on ongoing data-driven decision making should lie at the heart of any evaluation strategy. Evaluation mechanisms also play an important role in the way the school is held accountable by the district or state. Evaluation of students, teachers, and schools has become commonplace with the demands for greater accountability within education.

A school that is implementing new services is likely to be part of an accountability system that sets forth goals for the school, establishes measures of success, and specifies consequences for meeting its goals or falling short. Any evaluation of the success of a provider's services needs to be embedded in, or aligned with, this wider system of accountability. The primary question of the evaluation should be the following: Is adopting this provider's services helping the school make progress toward its goals, especially regarding student-learning outcomes?

Progress toward academic goals is likely to be a long-term process. In the meantime, you need to find intermediate measures of progress. Two important categories of progress are worth noting. First, you need *medium-term benchmarks* for measuring progress in improving student outcomes. For example, a school with three-year goals for improving students' reading ability could establish annual targets as medium-term benchmarks. Second, you need to evaluate how well you are *implementing* the provider's approach. This evaluation of "process" can alert you to problems early, allowing time to adjust.

Keep in mind that assessment of a provider's services should be *ongoing*, not simply a once-a-year evaluation of certain quantifiable outcomes. Ongoing assessment, as well as ongoing communication regarding this assessment, is vital to ensuring that implementation and outcomes are kept on track. Schools and providers should work together to design mechanisms for ongoing feedback. These might include the following:

- Immediate evaluations of particular training sessions or on-site consulting visits
- Regular debriefings between school leaders and provider staff
- Time in regular staff meetings to discuss the staff's impressions of the provider's services
- Structured midyear reviews of progress

TOOL 9: SCHOOL OR DISTRICT EVALUATION OF PROVIDER SERVICES

(SEE PAGE 77) *Tool 9 offers a template for assessing the quality of the services the provider is delivering. Some providers have their own evaluation forms; in such cases, Tool 9 can be used simply as a checklist to ensure the provider's form addresses all the issues important to you.*

Providers also may want to guide the school in correctly implementing their services. More than likely, the provider working with a school will have its own methods of assessing the school's progress toward implementation. As in the case of the school's evaluation of the provider, the provider's assessment of implementation should be ongoing—not just a year-end judgment.

TOOL 10: PROVIDER EVALUATION OF SCHOOL OR DISTRICT IMPLEMENTATION

(SEE PAGE 87) *Tool 10 offers a set of questions to help the provider assess the school or district's progress toward implementation. (Schools or districts also may wish to use this tool as a self-assessment of their progress.) Providers may want to guide this process and may have their own materials for doing so, but this tool will help you understand the ways implementation might be judged.*

SUGGESTED RESOURCES ON EVALUATION

Designing an Evaluation: Methodological Approach and Sampling, by Daniel Zalles. Published by Online Evaluation Resource Library (2002). Available online at oerl.sri.com/module/mod4/m4_p1.html.

"8 Smooth Steps: Solid Footwork Makes Evaluation of Staff Development Programs a Song," by Joellen Killion. *Journal of Staff Development*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Fall 2003). Available online at www.nsd.org/library/publications/jsd/jkillion244.cfm.

"For Good Measure: Why Evaluation Is a Critical Part of School Improvement," by Geoff Camphire. *NCREL's Learning Point*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Fall 2003). Available online at www.ncrel.org/info/nlp/lpf03/forgood.htm.

Handbook of Qualitative Research (2nd ed.), edited by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln. Published by Sage Publications (2000).

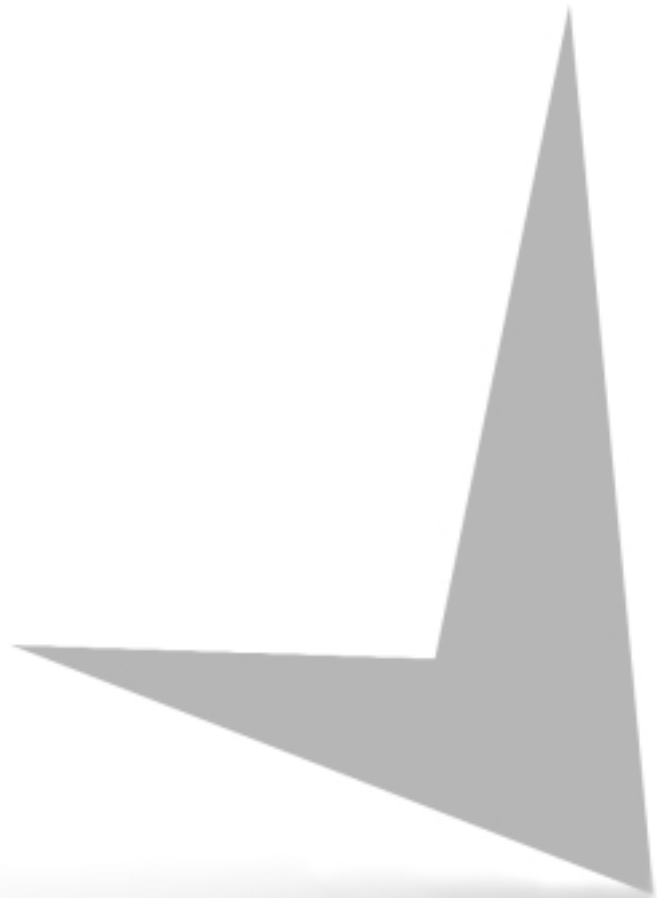
"Keeping Professional Learning on Track With Evaluation." *Notes & Reflections*, Issue 6 (Spring 2004). Available online at www.ncrel.org/info/notes/spring04/spring04.pdf.

Program Evaluation: Alternative Approaches and Practical Guidelines (3rd ed.), by Jody Fitzpatrick, James Sanders, and Blaine Worthen. Published by Allyn and Bacon (2003).

Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods (3rd ed.), by Michael Quinn Patton. Published by Sage Publications (2001).

SECTION 5

Planning for the Future



SECTION 5: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Although setting the basic terms of the relationship and the initial plan for implementation will naturally occupy most of your attention in the beginning stages of the partnership, it is never too early to begin taking a longer view. An initial question is simply the term of the contract: For how long are you planning to work together, at least initially? Then, how do you envision your relationship evolving over time? If all goes well, what might happen next? This guide's premise is that good upfront planning and ongoing communication can help make these partnerships work. But be sure to consider in advance how you will proceed if the partnership does not meet the needs of the school, district, or provider.

Step 1: Determining Contract Length

All parties must agree on an acceptable contract length. A school, district, or provider may be reluctant to sign a long-term contract because of uncertainty as to how well the services will work at the school. Though establishing benchmarks of progress may ease this uncertainty, these parties may still feel some reluctance. However, a long-term contract can benefit everyone. First, a long-term contract sends a signal that the district and school recognize improvements in student achievement and teacher practice take time and effort. Second, it also demonstrates a commitment that will help teachers feel more secure in supporting the reform, thus potentially leading to better implementation and outcomes—a definite benefit for the school. Third, a long-term contract also may benefit the provider, the school, and the district by helping justify the substantial investments they may make in the effort upfront.

In addition, certain funding sources, such as the Comprehensive School Reform (CSR) Program, may envision partnerships that extend over a number of years. A common way to resolve contract-length tensions is to agree to an annual contract with the possibility—and, indeed, expectation—of renewal. It also is possible to enter into a multiyear agreement with periodic reviews and clearly stated grounds for early termination, which is discussed in Step 3 of this section. The school and district should work with the district's attorney to draw up the best contract for their circumstances.

Step 2: Reshaping the Relationship After the Natural End of the Contract

Most providers offer a package of services that changes over time. For example, the first year of implementation might include several days of inservice training for teachers, site visits to other schools implementing similar services, and multiple on-site consulting visits by the provider's staff. In subsequent years, the provider might expect to devote fewer days to all of these activities. Understand that proposed trajectory is vital for schools, and it should be a focus of the negotiations of the provider's package of services (as discussed in Section 3 of this guide).

Hopefully, you have selected a provider that intends to build the capacity of your school to the point where, eventually, few or no provider services are needed. Thus, there may be no clearly defined next steps beyond the length of the initial contract. Though an ongoing partnership

beyond the length of the original contract might not be necessary, touching on the possibility of future relations during the original contract negotiations is a good idea. Assuming the partnership goes well in the early years, what are your expectations about the longer term? Are there additional services you might want to consider? (For some possible scenarios worth considering, see “Alternatives for Long-Term Relationships Between Schools and Providers” below. All of these options should be explored with the assistance of your attorney.)

ALTERNATIVES FOR LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND PROVIDERS

Consider the following alternatives for continuing a relationship with your external provider.

School Self-Sufficiency. Schools using a provider’s services ultimately will become self-sufficient, not requiring additional intervention from the provider. They will gain the capacity to train new staff members in the school’s approaches and to revise the school’s program over time to meet new needs. The provider’s assistance will shift over time toward efforts to build the school’s capacities in these areas.

Networking Relationship. Schools using a particular provider’s services will become largely self-sufficient, as described above. But they will continue to be part of a “family” of schools using this particular provider—attending conferences, receiving newsletters and updates, and networking formally and informally with their peers engaged in similar reforms. This alternative is particularly likely with large-scale reforms such as CSR models.

Continued Services. The provider will continue to provide services to the school or district, either as a continuation of the work already done or by doing work in entirely new areas of school and district operations. Possibilities include continued professional development for new staff; updating of professional development for existing staff; on-site and off-site consulting, coaching, and troubleshooting; and assistance revising the school or district’s approaches over time to meet new circumstances or achieve new goals.

Step 3: Terminating Partnerships That Do Not Meet Expectations

The purpose of this guide is to help schools, districts, and providers begin a partnership on sound footing and to maintain a healthy relationship over time. Striving for clarity and communication at all points in the relationship can go a long way toward avoiding some problems, revealing other problems early, and finding appropriate resolutions. Still, no agreement would be complete without some forethought about the possibility that despite the parties’ best efforts, the partnership might not satisfy everyone’s needs adequately. What will happen after repeated efforts to troubleshoot have failed?

Two components of the initial partnership agreement can help make these difficult situations easier to handle. First, the parties should agree upfront on the grounds under which the parties might decide to end the partnership. Some typical conditions for the early termination of an agreement are listed in “Potential Grounds for Early Termination” on page 48.

POTENTIAL GROUNDS FOR EARLY TERMINATION	
Potential Grounds for Early Termination Initiated by the School or District	Potential Grounds for Early Termination Initiated by the Provider
Failure of the school to achieve results anticipated over a given period of time	Failure of the school to implement the provider's services faithfully over a given period of time
Chronic unsatisfactory ratings of provider's services in evaluations	Failure of the district to provide resources or make policy changes deemed necessary for successful implementation
Any material violation of the contract, gross negligence, willful misconduct, or fraudulent misrepresentation	Any material violation of the contract, gross negligence, willful misconduct, or fraudulent misrepresentation
A change in policy or law or a court decision that makes implementation of the provider's services impossible	A change in policy or law or a court decision that makes implementation of the provider's services impossible
Insolvency or bankruptcy of the provider	Loss of accreditation or other sanction applied to school

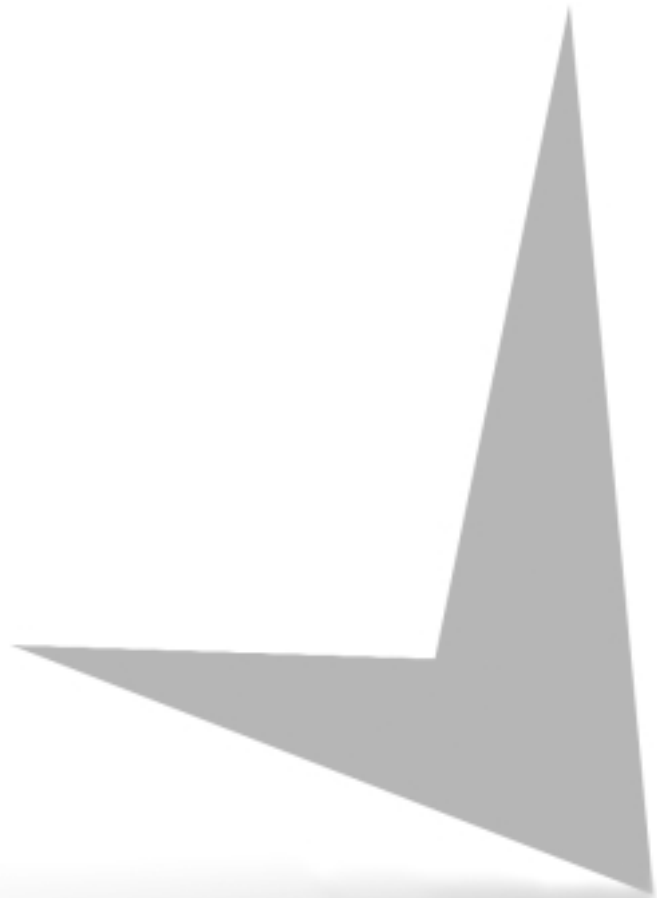
These situations are all worst-case scenarios. In reality, grounds for early termination would be invoked only in extreme circumstances when all efforts to fix the problem had been tried and fallen short. During contract negotiations, language regarding early termination should be explored with the assistance of the school or district attorney.

Beyond agreeing on the grounds for early termination, think through how the parties will wrap up their relationship in such an event. Some of the issues involved in a wrap-up include the following:

- How any final payments due to the provider will be calculated and handled
- How any equipment or funds loaned to the school by the provider will be returned or repaid
- How the parties will handle communication of the end of the partnership to the outside world

Keep in mind that early termination is a rare occurrence. Of the thousands of schools that have hired external providers, the large majority maintain their relationships as planned.

CONCLUSION



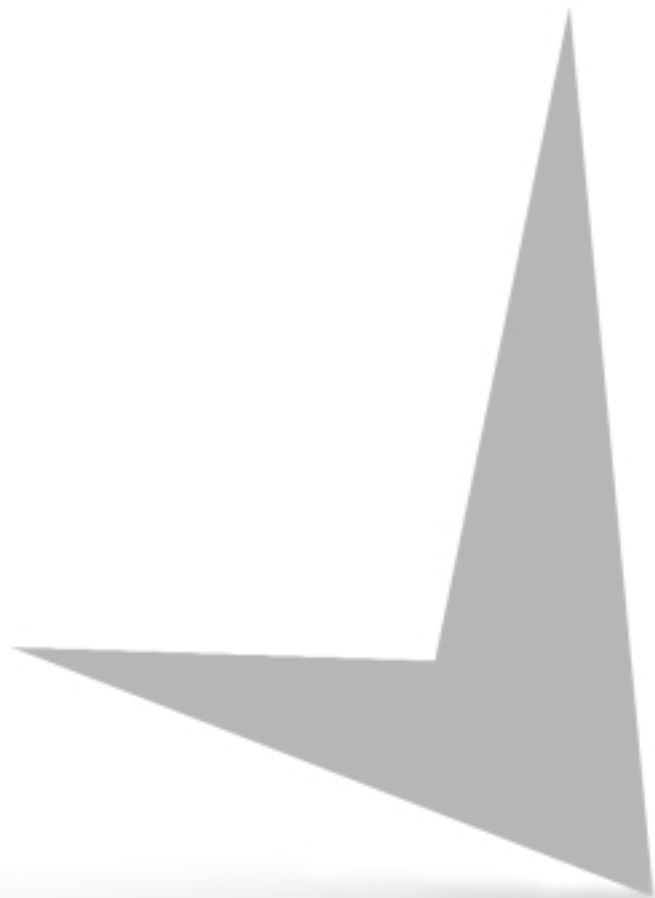
CONCLUSION

After working through the steps and using the tools in this guide, you should be well on your way to developing an effective partnership with an external provider. Your school or district will reap the benefits in terms of improved teaching and student learning.

Seeing all of the issues raised in this guide in one place may make external partnerships seem overwhelmingly complicated. There are so many concerns to raise with the other party, so many questions to ask, and so many uncertainties to clarify. In many cases, the relationship may seem too new to address some of the issues raised here. The lessons from those who have engaged in many of these partnerships, however, are straightforward: The more clarity the parties can achieve in advance, the fewer problems will arise later. And the more communication the parties can maintain over the long haul, the more likely they are to be able to resolve the inevitable challenges that do arise.

Carrying out the activities outlined in this guide will not eliminate all of the potential pitfalls of these complex relationships, but doing so can help schools, districts, and providers set out with their eyes open and with useful tools to help their navigation. With upfront clarity about the destination and the route to get there as well as ongoing communication about how the effort is progressing, these relationships have a chance to make real improvements in student learning.

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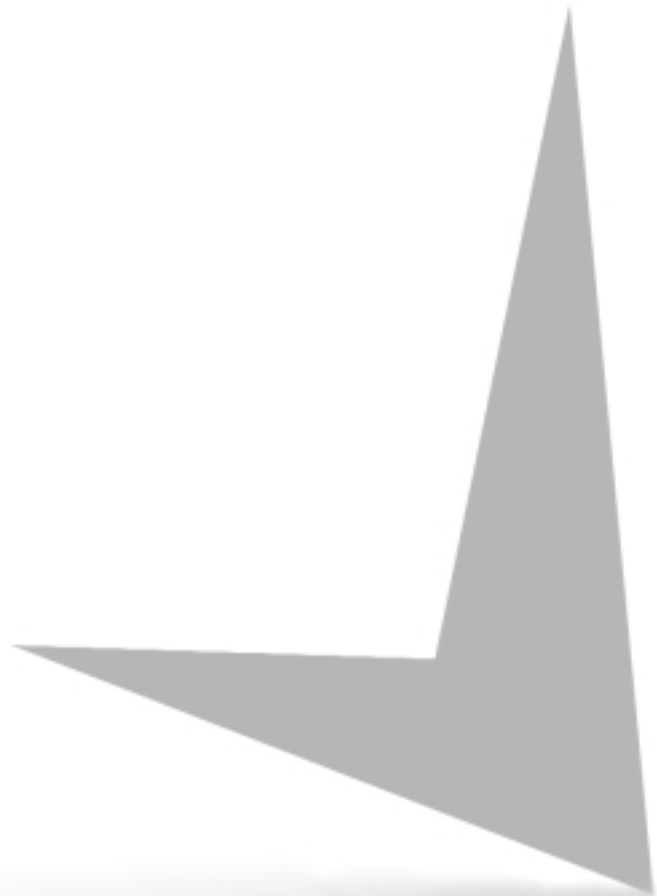


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TOOLKIT



Tool 1: Request for Proposal (RFP) Worksheet

Directions: Respond to each of the following questions. Members of the selection team might want to respond to these questions individually as a prelude to reaching consensus on the final version of the RFP. After you have completed this tool, you can convert the information into a more formal document.

1. What are your needs?

Write down your needs as determined by the needs-assessment process (e.g., high school English as a second language [ESL] students not reading fluently enough in English, science curriculum not implemented consistently, an inexperienced faculty not familiar with strong literacy instructional practices). These needs should be your highest priorities.

2. What outcomes do you expect as a result of hiring an external provider?

Write down the outcomes you expect as a result of hiring an external provider. These outcomes should be directly related to your needs, and they should be measurable. For example, you might include as an outcome: "ESL student academic improvement as measured not only by achievement test scores but also by samples of student work, grades, and teacher observation." Another example might be: "Science teachers leading classroom discussions more effectively to elicit student engagement as measured by peer observation and student surveys."

3. What services do you want the provider to deliver?

Write down the type of services you would like the provider to deliver. For example, you might want the provider to lead a summer professional development workshop with follow-up during the year, or you may want the provider to provide one-on-one coaching to science teachers. If you would like the provider to suggest a package of services, write down something more general, such as: "Provide a package of professional development opportunities that lead to X."

4. What are your selection criteria?

Quality Characteristics. Examine the quality characteristics listed below and modify, rank, or eliminate them from the list. For example, you might be especially concerned that the provider's services are customized to your unique circumstances but not concerned that they be long term because you already have a long-term improvement plan, and this is one piece of that plan.

- Aligned. The proposed services are aligned with the school's established goals.
- Long term. The proposed services are part of a long-term strategy for school improvement.
- Customized. The proposed services are customized to meet the specific needs of our district or school, and the provider has a viable plan to get buy-in from key stakeholders.
- Research based. The proposed services are based on the best available research.
- Capacity building. The proposed services will build our capacity as a school to carry out similar work in the future.

Kind of Assistance. Write down any selection criteria related to the kind of assistance you need. Consider intensity (comprehensive versus targeted help), focus (content versus process), and degree of prescriptiveness. For example, if your experienced faculty would not be receptive to a prescriptive approach, you might write: "The provider will help teachers develop effective strategies—not tell them what to do."

Beliefs and Values. Write down any selection criteria related to your school or district's beliefs and values. What does your school believe is important in terms of teaching and learning? What is the school's vision for student success? How collaborative is the school culture? How open are faculty members to trying new approaches? For example, if your faculty believes in multiple assessments, you might write: "The provider will help teachers develop multiple ways of measuring student progress." If your faculty is uncomfortable with peer observations, you might write: "The provider will build trust among the faculty before introducing peer observations."

5. How should the RFP address logistical concerns?

Submission. Write down the requirements for submitting a proposal, including due date, format in which proposals must be submitted, and how petitioners should submit (mail, e-mail).

Cost. Write down your expectations in terms of direct costs. How much are you willing to spend hiring an external provider? In addition to the actual cost of the provider's package of services, how much are you willing to pay for direct costs related to implementation (e.g., substitute teachers, materials, conference fees, technology)?

Timeline. Write down your expectations for getting the work accomplished. When do you expect the partnership to begin and end? Are you interested in renewing the contract if both parties agree and see a need to do so?

Delivery. Write down any special delivery considerations (e.g., rural schools that are physically isolated may want to ensure electronic communication is a major component of the provider's services, and schools that have a number of special-needs students will want to ensure materials are available in appropriate formats).

Tool 2: Prospective Provider Information Sheet

Directions: Complete the following worksheet for each provider you are considering.

Company or Organization	
Contact Person	
Contact Information	
Web Site	
References	
Reference Notes	
Research or Evidence in Support of Provider's Approach	

Key Questions to Ask the Provider

Write questions below. (See footnote for sample questions related to the five quality characteristics.¹) Then write the provider's response to each question.

<i>Question</i>	<i>Response</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

¹ Sample questions:

1. Our students are required to take a statewide assessment. How will you align your services with this requirement?
2. Can you describe the research that supports your services? In addition to conducting in-house research on the effectiveness of your approach, do you have independent research confirming your findings?
3. How do you plan to assess our teachers' readiness for your services?
4. Describe past situations where you have modified your services or approach to fit the unique needs of a client.

Tool 3: Prospective Provider Evaluation

Directions: Use the following tool to rate how each provider fares after research, initial conversations, and reference checks are complete. Rate the provider on the following scale:

No evidence. The provider does not indicate that its services have this characteristic.

Evidence. The provider indicates that its services have this characteristic.

Strong evidence. The provider provides strong evidence that its services have this characteristic.

1. Does the provider offer services that have the five quality characteristics?

Aligned with established goals

No evidence

Evidence

Strong evidence

Part of a long-term strategy

No evidence

Evidence

Strong evidence

Customized

No evidence

Evidence

Strong evidence

Research based

No evidence

Evidence

Strong evidence

Capacity building

No evidence

Evidence

Strong evidence

2. Does the provider offer services meeting the selection criteria that are unique to your school? Please refer back to Tool 1, Question 4 (page 58) for your customized list of selection criteria relating to *kind of assistance* and *beliefs and values*.

Criterion A: _____

No evidence

Evidence

Strong evidence

Criterion B: _____

No evidence

Evidence

Strong evidence

Criterion C: _____

No evidence

Evidence

Strong evidence

Criterion D: _____

No evidence

Evidence

Strong evidence

Criterion E: _____

No evidence

Evidence

Strong evidence

- 3. Does the provider have the right balance of process and content for your needs?
 No evidence Evidence Strong evidence
- 4. Do you and the provider agree about the outcomes you expect from the partnership?
 No evidence Evidence Strong evidence
- 5. Does the provider have a strategy for evaluating whether these outcomes are met?
 No evidence Evidence Strong evidence
- 6. Are the provider's services cost-effective?
 No evidence Evidence Strong evidence
- 7. Do you think you would work well with this provider, and do you think other staff members from your school or district would work well with this provider?
 No evidence Evidence Strong evidence

8. Other question:

- No evidence Evidence Strong evidence

9. Other question:

- No evidence Evidence Strong evidence

Tool 4: Provider Services and Materials Questionnaire

Directions: Use this tool to assess what you already know about a provider's services and materials and what information you still need to gather. You also can use this tool as a comparative checklist if the provider presents you with a draft contract outlining its proposed services. Using this checklist should reveal any areas of uncertainty or misunderstanding about the proposed package of services.

Part A: Package of Services the Provider Will Supply

Do you have information about the following?	YES	NO	N/A
External provider strategy to ensure alignment between state or district standards and provider services			
External provider assessment strategy, including how the provider makes use of results of standardized tests in planning curriculum and instruction			
Specific changes required in curriculum, instructional practices, scheduling, and class structure			
Period of time in which on-site consulting is provided (e.g., length of the contract)			
Who provides the on-site consulting (contact information)			
Options if the school is not satisfied with the consulting			
Types of ongoing professional development facilitated (e.g., expert coaching, peer coaching, action research, group reflection, individual reflection)			
Types of professional development sessions			
Flexibility to tailor professional development to the school			
Training for those in leadership positions			
Process for providing professional development to new staff at the school site once implementation has begun			
Forms of communication			
Frequency of communication			
Provider's primary contact person			
National, regional, and local opportunities for meetings between faculty from different schools using same services			
Other services _____			

Part B: Package of Materials the Provider Will Supply

Do you have information about the following?	YES	NO	N/A
Subject areas and grade levels (if any) for which curricular materials are provided			
Availability of special materials and tips for modification of curricular materials for students with special needs			
Scheduled delivery of materials, assurance that all materials will be delivered on time, and person to contact in case materials do not arrive on time			
Materials to guide implementation of schoolwide strategies (e.g., common planning time, class scheduling, looping, school governance, community involvement)			
Materials to guide the school and district in self-assessment			
Equipment or materials required by the provider but not included in package materials or services (e.g., computers, networking capabilities, laboratory equipment)			
Other materials included in the price of the services <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>			

Tool 5: Gap Analysis

Directions: Use this tool to record any gaps between your school improvement approach and what the external provider's package of services provides. As described in detail within the text of the guide, gaps could arise from the school's needs, district and state standards and requirements, or values of the school community that are not addressed adequately by the provider. The provider may use this tool to respond to the school's analysis. The provider also may discuss its proposals to address the school's needs, requirements, and values, or cite reasons why it cannot address the school's concerns.

List of Potential Areas of School Needs, Standards, Requirements, and Values	
Curriculum components Classroom management Culture building Community involvement Equity training Instructional methods Data analysis	Parent involvement Leadership development Assessment strategies High expectations Use of technology School governance Special population needs
What are the gaps between the school's needs and the services offered by the provider? <i>(To be filled in by the school)</i>	Can the provider's services be adapted to fill the gaps? If so, how? <i>(To be filled in by the provider)</i>
<i>Example:</i> Our fourth-grade students' scores (on average) are at the 36th percentile in reading comprehension. We need a program that gets these kids up to grade level.	We have investigated several reading programs and found two that have demonstrated results with your target population and fit with our service delivery model. Let's set up a meeting next week to discuss.

Tool 6: Provider Costs Questionnaire

Directions: Read the questions in the left column and write the provider costs in the right column. This tool helps schools and districts get a handle on the costs of a provider by guiding them through a set of questions concerning the costs of general assistance, consulting, professional development, materials, and other services. It also provides space for providers to note additional staffing, equipment, and other needs not included in the contract.

PROVIDER COSTS: GENERAL		
School or District Query	Category	Cost Estimate
What is the total cost of the package of services?		\$ _____
<p>What is the breakdown of annual costs by category?</p> <p>Note if these will change over the length of the agreement.</p>	<p>On-site consulting and technical assistance</p> <p>Professional development sessions</p> <p>Materials</p> <p>Flat fees</p> <p>Other (_____)</p>	<p>\$ _____</p> <p>\$ _____</p> <p>\$ _____</p> <p>\$ _____</p> <p>\$ _____</p>
<p>What are the categories of direct costs that are required or encouraged in implementation but not included in the package of services?</p> <p>1. Put a checkmark by all that apply. 2. Estimate approximate costs for each category.</p> <p>(In some cases, the provider will be able to fill in costs; in other cases, costs will vary by district and should be estimated by school or district after the provider has signified that the item is necessary or preferred.)</p>	<p>____ Additional staff: <i>(Please specify position in space provided.)</i></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>____ Additional technology or equipment</p> <p>____ Teacher stipends for professional development sessions</p> <p>____ Wages of substitutes for teachers in professional development sessions</p>	<p>\$ _____</p> <p>\$ _____</p> <p>\$ _____</p> <p>\$ _____</p> <p>\$ _____</p> <p>\$ _____</p>

(See directions on page 69.)	___ Conferences \$ _____
	___ Faculty travel (for professional development, school visits, etc.) \$ _____
	___ Additional student field trips \$ _____
	___ Other \$ _____
	Total Direct Cost Not Included in Price \$ _____

PROVIDER COSTS: ON-SITE CONSULTING AND OTHER TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE	
School or District Query	Costs
What is the daily rate for on-site consultation? (Specify if rate differs depending on the experience level of the consultant or for any other reason.)	
Does the rate for on-site consulting change if more visits are needed than originally planned?	
Are travel expenses for consultants included in the package of services, or are they billed separately to the school or district as they are incurred?	
Does the provider have a policy to make cost-conscious travel arrangements when possible (e.g., make travel arrangements in advance)?	
What, if any, charges for off-site consulting are not included in the package of services (e.g., phone bills, e-mail accounts)?	

PROVIDER COSTS: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
School or District Query	Costs
Break down the price for professional development sessions (e.g., training, materials, meals). Note what is not included (e.g., lodging, travel) in the price of the sessions.	

PROVIDER COSTS: MATERIALS	
School or District Query	Costs
If applicable, how are costs for curricular materials calculated (e.g., per pupil)? Please provide specific details.	
If applicable, note what other materials (e.g., implementation guides, student progress logs, rubrics) are provided as well as their total costs per school.	

PROVIDER COSTS: OTHER	
School or District Query	Costs
Note any other costs for which the school or district should be aware.	
Would there be any savings on services or materials if the school could "cluster" with other schools using the provider's services?	

Tool 7: Provider Preferences for Supportive School-Level Policies

Directions: In the left column, the provider should identify school-level policies that are needed or useful for implementation. In the middle column, the school should describe whether these policies are in place for each area identified by the provider. In the right column, both parties should address the differences between what the provider requests and what the school can offer. As a start, refer to the following list of school-level policies.

Sample List of School-Level Policies That Are Potentially Useful for Implementation		
Leadership commitment Flexible scheduling Funds available for professional development Time available for professional development		Materials purchasing Staff assignment Evaluation procedures Budget authority
School-Level Policies Preferred by Provider <i>(To be filled in by provider)</i>	Existing School Policies <i>(To be filled in by school)</i>	Resolution <i>(To be agreed upon by each party)</i>
<i>Example:</i> Provider would like to schedule common planning time for grade-level teams three times a week.	We currently have common planning time scheduled once a week.	School has the authority to change schedule and will do so.

Tool 8: Provider Preferences for Supportive District-Level Policies

Directions: In the left column, the provider should identify district-level policies that are needed or useful for implementation. In the middle column, the district should describe whether these policies are in place for each area identified by the provider. In the right column, both parties should address the differences between what the provider requests and what the district can offer. As a start, refer to the following list of district-level policies.

Sample List of District-Level Policies That Are Potentially Useful for Implementation		
Leadership commitment		Clear lines of authority
Leadership stability		Materials purchasing
Flexible scheduling		Staff assignment
Funds available for professional development		Evaluation procedures
Time available for professional development		Budget authority
Alignment with other initiatives		
District Policies Preferred by Provider <i>(To be filled in by provider)</i>	Existing District Policies <i>(To be filled in by district)</i>	Resolution <i>(To be agreed upon by each party)</i>
<i>Example:</i> Provider would like to schedule four days of professional development training sessions during the year.	Current policy is for teachers to attend two days of district-led professional development.	District will waive school's attendance at district professional development days for first year of implementation.

Tool 9: School or District Evaluation of Provider Services

Directions: This evaluation tool allows the school or district to evaluate provider services in seven categories: outcomes, staff, materials, professional development (ongoing), professional development (training sessions), networking opportunities, and other. In the left column, the school should circle the appropriate rating for the listings in each category. In the right column, the school should offer any comments or suggestions related to its ratings. (For example, the school or district evaluator may want to use examples to support his or her rating or may want to make suggestions to change the quantity of services—a topic not explicitly included in rating the quality of a service.) Before each section is a rubric to help schools or districts rate each area. In addition, some sections conclude with a few yes or no questions; these questions provide an opportunity for comments as a means of gathering additional information.

Part A. Outcomes of Provider Services

Rubric for Rating Outcomes of Provider Services	
<p>4: Exceeded the expectations outlined during contract discussions. 3: Met the expectations outlined during contract discussions. 2: Some progress was made, but the expectations outlined during contract discussions were not met. (Priority Area) 1: Little or no progress was made toward the expectations outlined during contract discussions. (Immediate Priority Area)</p>	
<p>Rating of Outcomes <i>Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.</i></p> <p>Overall learning environment: 4 3 2 1</p> <p>Student achievement: 4 3 2 1</p> <p>Student engagement: 4 3 2 1</p> <p>Teacher engagement: 4 3 2 1</p> <p>Principal engagement: 4 3 2 1</p> <p>Student discipline: 4 3 2 1</p> <p>Parent support: 4 3 2 1</p> <p>Central office support: 4 3 2 1</p> <p>Superintendent support: 4 3 2 1</p> <p>Community support: 4 3 2 1</p>	<p>Comments or Suggestions <i>Make any comments or suggestions in this space.</i></p>

Part B. Provider Staff

Rubric for Rating Provider Staff	
<p>4: All experiences were very positive. No significant improvement is needed in this area. 3: Most experiences were positive. Only a few minor improvements are needed in this area. 2: Some experiences were positive. Some fairly significant improvements could be made in this area. (Priority Area) 1: Few or no experiences were positive. This area needs substantial change. (Immediate Priority Area) DK: "Don't Know." The evaluator does not have enough information or familiarity to rate this area.</p>	
<p>Rating of Provider Staff <i>Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.</i></p> <p>Knowledge of services: 4 3 2 1 DK</p> <p>Knowledge of school: 4 3 2 1 DK</p> <p>Knowledge of district: 4 3 2 1 DK</p> <p>Willingness to tailor services to school's individual needs: 4 3 2 1 DK</p> <p>Availability for scheduled meetings: 4 3 2 1 DK</p> <p>Availability for emergency meetings: 4 3 2 1 DK</p> <p>Communication effectiveness: 4 3 2 1 DK</p> <p>Communication timeliness: 4 3 2 1 DK</p> <p>Relationship with school faculty or staff: 4 3 2 1 DK</p> <p>Relationship with central office staff: 4 3 2 1 DK</p>	<p>Comments or Suggestions <i>Make any comments or suggestions in this space.</i></p>

Part C. Materials

Rubric for Rating Materials	
<p>4: The content of the material significantly contributed to improved teaching and learning. The format and language of the material was extremely clear and cohesive. The scope of the material was comprehensive without being overwhelming.</p> <p>3: The content of the material contributed to improved teaching and learning. The format and language were fairly clear and cohesive. The material included all necessary components.</p> <p>2: The content of the material contributed somewhat to improved teaching and learning. The format or language were confusing in parts. The material lacked a few topics or tools that would have been helpful. (Priority Area)</p> <p>1: The content of the material did not contribute much to improved teaching and learning. The format and language were confusing throughout much of the material. The material lacked a number of topics or tools that would have been helpful. (Immediate Priority Area)</p> <p>N/A: "Not Applicable." This type of material was not used by the school or not provided by the model provider.</p> <p>DK: "Don't Know." The evaluator does not have enough information or familiarity to rate this area.</p>	
<p>Rating of Materials <i>Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.</i></p> <p>Informational literature: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Curricular materials Overall: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Language arts: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Math: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Social studies: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Science: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Other: _____ 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Other: _____ 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Implementation benchmarks: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Self-assessment guide: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Other materials: _____ 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p>	<p>Comments or Suggestions <i>Make any comments or suggestions in this space.</i></p>

Part D: Professional Development (Ongoing)

Rubric for Rating Professional Development (Ongoing)

- 4: The purpose of, and directions for, the activity were explicitly and patiently explained. The activity was structured in a way that staff could directly use the results to improve teaching. The activity took place in a fully supportive environment.
- 3: The purpose of, and directions for, the activity were adequately explained. The activity included some structure to help staff tie the results to improved teaching. The activity took place in a generally supportive environment.
- 2: The directions for the activity were explained with little or no attention given to the purpose of the activity. The activity was not structured in a way that staff could directly use the results to improve teaching. The activity was done with little ongoing support from the provider or school leadership. (Priority Area)
- 1: Neither the directions nor the purpose were adequately explained. Staff received no guidance in using the activity to improve teaching. The activity had no ongoing support from the provider or school leadership. (Immediate Priority Area)
- N/A: "Not Applicable." This type of activity was not used by the school or not provided by the provider.
- DK: "Don't Know." The evaluator does not have enough information or familiarity to rate this area.

Rating of Professional Development (Ongoing)
Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.

Use of peer coaching:
 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Use of mentoring relationships:
 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Use of group reflection or sharing:
 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Use of personal journal reflection:
 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Use of other self-assessment tools:
 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Comments or Suggestions
Make any comments or suggestions in this space.

Part D: (Continued)

Yes or No Questions for Professional Development (Ongoing)

Check the appropriate response, and make comments as necessary.

1. Does this provider assess teachers' use of learned professional-development skills in the classroom? ____ Yes ____ No

Comments:

2. Do you think this type of assessment is (would be) helpful? ____ Yes ____ No
Why or why not?

3. Does this provider evaluate if the professional development skills learned by teachers produce increases in student achievement? ____ Yes ____ No

Comments:

4. Do you think this type of evaluation is (would be) helpful? ____ Yes ____ No
Why or why not?

Part E: Professional Development (Training Sessions)

Rubric for Rating Professional Development (Training Sessions)

- 4: All expectations were met. No significant improvements could be made in this area.
- 3: Most expectations were met. Only a few minor changes or improvements are necessary in this area.
- 2: Some expectations were met. There is some room for change or improvement in this area. (Priority Area)
- 1: Few or no expectations were met. A significant degree of change or improvement is needed. (Immediate Priority Area)
- N/A: "Not Applicable." This type of activity was not used by the school or not provided by the provider.
- DK: "Don't Know." The evaluator does not have enough information or familiarity to rate this area.

Rating of Professional Development (Training Sessions)
Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.

Relevance of topics:
 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Knowledge of trainers:
 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Time use effectiveness:
 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Appropriateness of session length:
 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Personal reflection time:
 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Comments or Suggestions
Make any comments or suggestions in this space.

Part F: Networking Opportunities

Rubric for Rating Networking	
<p>4: All expectations were met. No significant improvements could be made in this area.</p> <p>3: Most expectations were met. Only a few minor changes or improvements are necessary in this area.</p> <p>2: Some expectations were met. There is some room for change or improvement in this area. (Priority Area)</p> <p>1: Few or no expectations were met. A significant degree of change or improvement is needed. (Immediate Priority Area)</p> <p>N/A: "Not Applicable." This type of activity was not used by the school or not provided by the provider.</p> <p>DK: "Don't Know." The evaluator does not have enough information or familiarity to rate this area.</p>	
<p>Rating of Networking Opportunities <i>Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.</i></p> <p>Range of people (e.g., different grade levels, positions, geographic areas) invited to networking opportunities: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Quantity of face-to-face networking opportunities: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Range of communication opportunities with other teachers or schools: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Effectiveness of communication opportunities with other teachers or schools: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Quantity of communication opportunities with other teachers or schools: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p>	<p>Comments or Suggestions <i>Make any comments or suggestions in this space.</i></p>

Part F: (Continued)

Yes or No Questions for Networking Opportunities

Check the appropriate response and comment as necessary.

1. Do you feel connected with other teachers or schools using this provider's services?

_____ Yes _____ No

Comments:

2. Do you think this connection is important? _____ Yes _____ No

Why or why not?

Part G: Other Items

Rubric for Rating Other Items	
<p>4: All expectations were met. No significant improvements could be made in this area.</p> <p>3: Most expectations were met. Only a few minor changes or improvements are necessary in this area.</p> <p>2: Some expectations were met. There is some room for change or improvement in this area. (Priority Area)</p> <p>1: Few or no expectations were met. A significant degree of change or improvement is needed. (Immediate Priority Area)</p> <p>N/A: "Not Applicable." This type of activity or material was not used by the school or not provided by the provider.</p> <p>DK: "Don't Know." The evaluator does not have enough information or familiarity to rate this area.</p>	
<p>Rating of Other Items <i>This section may include any specific expectations the school listed in Tool 1.</i></p> <p>Item: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Item: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p> <p>Item: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4 3 2 1 N/A DK</p>	<p>Comments or Suggestions <i>Make any comments or suggestions in this space.</i></p>

Tool 10: Provider Evaluation of School or District Implementation

Directions: The provider should use this tool to assess the school or district's success in implementing provider services. (Schools or districts also may wish to use this tool as a self-assessment of their progress.) The tool includes several "areas of assessment," which may apply to your particular partnership. There is room at the end to enter areas not addressed in the tool. Note that several categories are provided for "student achievement by subgroup." Fill in the subgroups the school or provider wants to look at separately. Some examples might include grade level, racial or ethnic group, gender, and English-speaking ability.

Rubric for Rating School or District Implementation

- E: Excellent Progress.** The school or district is fully meeting expectations in this area. Continuing the tactics used and energy devoted to this area will allow the school or district to meet its goals on its identified time schedule.
- S: Satisfactory Progress.** The school or district is making progress in this area, but some changes in tactics or renewed vigor in efforts could ensure that the school or district will meet its goals on its identified time schedule.
- U: Unsatisfactory Progress.** The school or district is not meeting expectations in this area. The school or district and the provider should meet to determine possible reasons for this lack of progress and agree upon a new approach for meeting expectations in the future.
- N: No Progress.** The school or district has made no progress in this area. This area should be an immediate priority for the school or district and provider. A completely new strategy or more intensive services may be necessary to get this area on track.
- N/A: Not Applicable.** This area is not affected by the provider's services.
- DK: Don't Know.** The evaluator does not have enough information or familiarity to rate this area.

Area of Assessment	Evidence Used	Ranking (Circle appropriate ranking.)	Comments
Overall learning environment		E S U N N/A DK	
Overall student achievement		E S U N N/A DK	
Student achievement by subgroup: _____		E S U N N/A DK	
Student achievement by subgroup: _____		E S U N N/A DK	

Area of Assessment	Evidence Used	Ranking (Circle appropriate ranking.)	Comments
Student achievement by subgroup: _____		E S U N N/A DK	
Student achievement by subgroup: _____		E S U N N/A DK	
Fidelity to provider strategies (e.g., block scheduling, common planning time)		E S U N N/A DK	
Fidelity to classroom instructional or assessment strategies		E S U N N/A DK	
Fidelity to classroom management strategies		E S U N N/A DK	
Fidelity to school governance strategies		E S U N N/A DK	
Fidelity to parent or community involvement strategy		E S U N N/A DK	
Student engagement		E S U N N/A DK	
Teacher engagement		E S U N N/A DK	
Principal engagement		E S U N N/A DK	

Area of Assessment	Evidence Used	Ranking (Circle appropriate ranking.)	Comments
Professional development		E S U N N/A DK	
Professional collaboration		E S U N N/A DK	
Parent involvement		E S U N N/A DK	
Community involvement		E S U N N/A DK	
Central office or superintendent support		E S U N N/A DK	
School board support		E S U N N/A DK	
Union support		E S U N N/A DK	
Other: _____		E S U N N/A DK	
Other: _____		E S U N N/A DK	
Other: _____		E S U N N/A DK	

