



# **Comprehensive Needs Assessment**

## Title I Schoolwide Programs to Support School Reform

An eligible school operating a schoolwide program shall develop a comprehensive plan that (6) is based on a **comprehensive needs assessment of the entire school** that takes into account information on the academic achievement of children in relation to the challenging State academic standards, particularly the needs of those children who are failing, or are at-risk of failing, to meet the challenging State academic standards and any other factors as determined by the local educational agency.

There are **three required components** of a schoolwide program that are essential to effective implementation: **conducting a comprehensive needs assessment**, preparing a comprehensive schoolwide plan, and annually reviewing and revising, as necessary, the schoolwide plan.

1. Conducting a **comprehensive needs assessment**. To ensure that a school's comprehensive plan best serves the needs of those children who are failing, or are at-risk of failing, to meet the challenging State academic standards, the school must conduct a comprehensive needs assessment. (ESEA section 1114(b)(6)). Through the needs assessment, a school must consult with a broad range of stakeholders, including parents, school staff, and others in the community, and examine relevant academic achievement data to understand students' most pressing needs and their root causes. (ESEA section 1114(b)(2); 34 C.F.R. § 200.26(a)). Where necessary, a school should attempt to engage in interviews, focus groups, or surveys, as well as review data on students, educators, and schools to gain a better understanding of the root causes of the identified needs.
2. Preparing a comprehensive schoolwide plan that describes how the school will improve academic achievement throughout the school, but particularly for the lowest-achieving students, by addressing the needs identified in the comprehensive needs assessment. (ESEA section 1114(b)(7)). The schoolwide plan must include a description of how the strategies the school will be implementing will provide opportunities and address the learning needs of all students in the school, particularly the needs of the lowest-achieving students. (ESEA section 1114(b)(7)(A)(i), (iii)). The plan must also contain descriptions of how the methods and instructional strategies that the school intends to use will strengthen the academic program in the school, increase the amount and quality of learning time, and help provide an enriched and accelerated curriculum, including programs and activities necessary to provide a well-rounded education. (ESEA section 1114(b)(7)(A)(ii)). To ensure that the plan results in progress toward addressing the needs of the school, the plan should include benchmarks for the evaluation of program results. This plan may be integrated into an existing improvement plan.
3. Annually evaluating the schoolwide plan, using data from the State's assessments, other student performance data, and perception data to determine if the schoolwide program has been effective in addressing the major problem areas and, in turn, increasing student achievement, particularly for the lowest-achieving students. Schools must annually revise the plan, as necessary, based on student needs and the results of the evaluation to ensure continuous improvement. (ESEA section 1114(b)(3); 34 C.F.R. § 200.26(c)).

## The Steps in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment Process

### Step 1

#### Establishing a Schoolwide Planning Team

Identify Key Stakeholders to be Involved, Including:

- District Leadership
- Teachers
- Paraprofessionals
- School Staff
- Parents
- Community Members
- Students (High School)

#### Review the Purpose and Outcomes for Conducting the CNA

- Establish what is to be accomplished with this process
- Establish **CNA Committees or Focus Groups** composed of staff and community members, parents and/or business partners (See Local Policy)
- Schedule meeting times and invite participants (Recommendation: District and Campus develops a **CNA Calendar of Events**)
- Establish the short-and-long-term timelines for completing the CNA
- Each CNA Committee or Focus Group is assigned one **Focus Area**

##### **8 Focus Areas:**

- Demographics
- Student Achievement
- School Culture, & Climate
- Staff Quality, Recruitment, & Retention
- Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
- Family & Community Involvement, Engagement
- School Organization
- Technology

### Step 2

#### Vision for Reform

In a schoolwide program, an LEA may use Title I funds to implement **reforms** to upgrade the entire educational program of the school. In contrast, in a targeted assistance program, an LEA may use Title I funds only for Title I students — i.e., those who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the State's academic achievement standards. (ESEA section 1111(b)(1)(A)).

A shared **vision** is an essential component of a district or campus culture, and that culture is what should be addressed for the school to truly **reform**.

Before the needs assessment begins, the school staff should discuss what their reformed school will look like in terms of student success, and how that vision differs from what currently exists. This discussion will lead to the identification of strengths and challenges the school should address to achieve meaningful change, improve student achievement, and attain that vision.

A **collective vision** is the engine that drives **school reform**. A collective vision that reflects the intents and purposes of schoolwide programs will capture the school's response to some or all of these important questions:

- What is our purpose here?
- What are our expectations for students?
- What are the responsibilities of the adults who work here?
- How important are collaborations and partnerships?
- How are we committed to continuous improvement?

Gathering a wide array of thoughts and opinions together into a single, organizational vision requires persistence, energy, outreach, and non-judgmental listening. This process is especially important when the group is contemplating the reengineering of every part of the school, from standard operating procedures to expectations for students. The effort is worth the investment, however, since a shared vision is an essential component of a school's culture, and that culture is what should be addressed for the school to truly reform.

### **Step 3**

#### **Creating the School Profile**

As a school prepares to become a schoolwide program, it needs to understand its current status, a snapshot that will help illustrate the gap between where the school is now and where it wants to be when its vision is realized.

A school profile provides that picture; it is a data-driven description of the school's student, staff, and community demographics, programs, and mission. The school profile serves as a starting point for discussion by the planning team, and useful information for each of the focus areas of the needs assessment that follows. It suggests critical areas that might be addressed in the schoolwide plan.

To create the profile, the schoolwide planning team should first decide which focus areas are most essential to reform the school. Although additional factors may be added to the profile,

those listed on the following pages significantly impact student achievement, and, at a minimum, the schoolwide planning team should assess the school's current status with respect to each of them. Some questions that will help the team know what information to collect are listed after each factor.

#### **Student Needs**

- How well are students achieving on State assessments, in general, in identified subgroups and individually?
- Are there measurable goals for achievement that are known by parents, teachers, and students?
- How does the school identify individual student needs?
- What are the student mobility rates? Dropout rates? Attendance rates?
- What, if any, significant disciplinary problems exist in the school?
- What intervention process is in place to ensure that students' educational needs are met in a timely manner?
- Does the school have indicators of student success that are not academic? If so, what are they, and how are they assessed?
- Did the school make AYP last year? In prior years? If not, why?

#### **Curriculum and Instruction**

- How do staff members express high expectations for student achievement? Is the curriculum aligned with the State's challenging academic content standards? How are high expectations set in subjects for which the State has not established standards? Have teachers participated in a curriculum alignment process?
- What instructional materials are used in the school? Are they up-to-date, and do they reflect the State's academic content standards?
- Is there scientifically-based research that supports the curriculum and the instructional program being used in the school?
- What assessment instruments, including diagnostic assessments, are routinely used to measure student achievement? What role do teachers play in deciding what assessments will be used to measure student achievement?
- How are assessment results used?
- Is instructional technology available to all students? Do teachers integrate technology into teaching?
- Does the school evaluate curriculum and instruction to determine whether they address the needs of all students?

#### **Professional Development**

- Are all teachers and instructional paraprofessionals highly qualified?
- Is there a process to determine the professional development needs of teachers?
- What kinds of professional development are offered to teachers? To paraprofessionals? To other staff?
- Is professional development voluntary or mandatory? To what degree does staff participate?
- Is professional development related to classroom instruction?

- How frequently is professional development offered? What follow-up activities take place? Is the professional development ongoing and incorporated into the day-to-day routine of the staff?
- Do teachers have the opportunity to collaborate as team members and/or mentors during these sessions?
- Who provides professional development (e.g., school district, SEA, regional laboratory, etc.)? Are external resources (e.g., expert practitioners, regional laboratories, representatives of higher education institutions, SEA staff, etc.) used to provide staff development for the school? How often does this occur?
- Does the daily teacher schedule allow for common planning time across grade levels and content areas?
- How is professional development evaluated and mid-course corrections made if needed?

### **Family and Community Involvement**

- Do teachers routinely communicate with parents (formally and informally) about the academic progress of their children?
- How are parents and the community involved in activities that support student learning?
- How does the school involve parents and the community in school governance decisions?
- Are health and human services available to support students and their families?
- Are translators and written communications available for families who speak languages other than English?
- Does the school or district offer adult education programs?
- Are staff and students involved in community activities?
- Does the school partner with local businesses to enhance its educational program?
- How does the community view the school?
- How is the effectiveness of parent and community involvement strategies evaluated and revised, as needed?

### **School Context and Organization**

- Does the school have a vision and a mission statement? Are they widely known and understood? Is the vision periodically reviewed to determine if it meets the needs of the school?
- Is the entire school staff involved in decisions about school operations? How?
- Is the school safe and orderly?
- What disciplinary policies exist, and how are these policies enforced?
- What is the school climate? Are staff and student morale high?
- How is the school managed?
- What role(s) does the principal play? Is he or she viewed primarily as an instructional leader? A business manager? A disciplinarian?
- How is the school budget determined, and how are priorities set?
- How all resources (funds, time, and personnel) are currently allocated?
- How are the financial resources prioritized to meet the needs of the school?
- Does the school currently operate with one written plan? Was the plan developed collaboratively? Is the plan followed?
- Overall how much progress has the school made in the last year? In the last two years?

## Step 4

### Identifying Data Sources

The team is charged with gathering and organizing data in the **8 focus areas**. In some areas, the team can access existing data. For example, they will be able to gather quantitative data such as student achievement results, enrollment counts, dropout rates, and graduation rates from school and district records and reports, and demographic statistics from community-based or other organizations.

In other areas, however, the planning team may need qualitative data that reveal attitudes and perceptions. To gather this information, the team may either use existing instruments or design its own to be used for written surveys or face-to-face or telephone interviews, focus groups, or classroom observations.

Obtaining qualitative data requires good organization and adequate time. The kind of information needed and the source of that information will determine the collection method to be used. Safeguards must be taken to ensure that collection methods are appropriate for the groups or individuals surveyed. For example, a lengthy written survey is not appropriate for a parent who has reading difficulties or limited English proficiency; instead, conducting a focus group might be an appropriate means of eliciting useful information.

The following list provides some additional guidelines for obtaining data:

- Explain the purpose of each data collection instrument. Some planning teams write cover letters for surveys explaining how the process works and why answers to the questions are important to school improvement efforts.
- Phrase all questions appropriately, and omit unnecessary questions. It is not productive for the planning team to gather more information than it can handle. Careful proofreading is a must.
- Assure those surveyed that their individual answers will be kept confidential.
- Establish a culture that there are no right or wrong answers and that there are no consequences.
- Give survey participants enough time to think about their answers and return surveys without being rushed.
- Ensure that those who are gathering the data are available to answer questions about the instrument.

Whichever data collection methods are chosen, the schoolwide planning team will need to:

- (1) identify individuals to be surveyed or interviewed;
- (2) determine how to receive the information and follow up with people who do not respond;
- (3) duplicate and distribute data collection forms, as needed;

- (4) organize the data within the identified focus areas; and
- (5) tabulate the data and display results in ways that are clear and understandable.

Creating charts, tables, and tally sheets can help the team organize the data and reveal trends that will be useful later when schoolwide priorities are established.

## **Step 5**

### **Analyzing Data**

Sound data analysis is an essential step in moving from information gathering to the creation of a schoolwide plan that accurately and realistically addresses the key reform issues the school faces. As the planning team analyzes the data it has collected, the gap between the school's established vision for itself and its current operating state will become more clear, and the team will begin to recognize issues that have a significant impact on student achievement. The most important of these will be addressed in the schoolwide plan that is developed.

The following questions can serve as helpful prompts as the planning team discusses the collected data:

- What are the strengths and the challenges of the current school program?
- Does the evidence gathered support staff assumptions about strengths and needs?
- Are there information gaps? What more do we need to know?
- What priorities does the information suggest?

Before distributing reports or findings, the schoolwide planning team should carefully review the data it has collected and the conclusions it has drawn. The team should establish a process to ensure that "outside eyes" (e.g., other teachers, district administrators) review the data and the team's interpretation of the findings. It is essential that stakeholders be able to see a clear connection between the information gathered and the conclusions that are based on that information.

After thorough analysis, the planning team should summarize the data that have been gathered, conclusions that have been drawn, and needs that have emerged in all of the focus areas. This information should be shared with all stakeholders in as many ways as possible because it will be used as the basis for the goals and strategies that will be developed. Once this sharing has taken place, the planning team will work with the school staff to prioritize the needs and determine how the most important of them will be addressed in the schoolwide plan.

## Documentation

For **documentation purposes**, utilize the **Sub-Committee Agenda Form** (Sub-Committees meet to complete the **CNA charts for each Focus Area** or any other CNA topic.

Utilize the **Focus Area Charts**

### 1. You have already determine which types of data to collect and analyze to develop the District/Campus Snapshot

- Select and collect the data to review and analyze
- Decide how the data will be organized (charts, graphs, etc.)
- Ensure that committees follow the process
- Ensure FERPA is not violated

Utilize the **Data Review Checklist** with helpful data sources to develop the district or campus profile. List the date and check off the sources used.

Complete the **District or Campus Snapshot** to develop the executive summary.

### 2. CNA Development

- Engage campus teams in a data-driven process to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment (CNA)
- Review relevant data sources for your district/campus and CNA guiding questions
- Examine multiple sources of disaggregated data to identify the direction for the district/campus
- Determine areas of priority and summarize needs
- Determine the vision for reform and success of all students
- Connect the CNA to the CIP development and review process

### 3. CNA Completion and Review

- CNA committee members meet to review and analyze the current and historical school year's CNA document and current data
- Complete the CNA Focus Area Charts and Guiding Questions
- Identify needs based on information obtained from the CNA review and focus area guiding questions
- Identify strategies to close the education gap among all student subgroups, ensuring that every student has a quality education

### 4. Record Assurance (Documentation)

**Sign in on the CNA Completion and Review form** used when the CNA process is complete and to document all members involved in the CNA process.

**Focus Area**  
**Demographics**

District Number: \_\_\_\_\_ District Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Focus Area Guiding Questions**

What do enrollment numbers indicate for your campus?

What is the number of students in each sub-population? How do these program numbers look by sub-population category?

Who are our at-risk students? What is their at-risk category?

Who are our Migrant students?

What area of the community do the sub-population students come from?

What are the staff demographics on your campus?

What are the teacher/student ratios? How do these ratios compare to student performance?

Other questions addressed:

**Focus Area**  
**Student Achievement**

District Number: \_\_\_\_\_ District Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Focus Area Guiding Questions**

1. List identified priorities based on achievement data disaggregated by sub-population categories.
2. In which content areas are we showing growth? At what percentage rate based on your campus data?
3. Which sub-population groups are making progress on your campus? Why?
4. List intervention strategies/activities that improve student achievement on your campus. Which sub-population are improving? Why?
5. What does your campus data results reflect in the core content areas?
6. What are the student mobility rates?
7. What are the student dropout rates by sub-population?
8. What are the student attendance rates by sub-population?
9. How are you integrating your Targeted Improvement Plan into your current Campus Improvement Plan and Comprehensive Needs Assessment?
10. What instructional supports are in place at your campus to ensure all students succeed and how do they address all sub-populations? Administrative supports?

**Focus Area**  
**Student Culture & Climate**

District Number: \_\_\_\_\_ District Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Focus Area Guiding Questions**

1. How do students describe the campus environment in helping to support learning, promoting student achievement, shaping how people think, feel and act?
2. How does staff describe the campus environment in helping to support learning, promoting student achievement, shaping how people think, feel and act?
3. What does your campus data show regarding student behaviors and discipline by sub-population? How does this compare to classroom student achievement data?
4. Describe your campus expectation in academics, behavior and civics. How do students perceive these expectations?
5. Describe strategies/activities utilized to improve your campus culture and climate.
6. What does the campus data indicate regarding classroom management to support academic achievement?
7. Describe how district-level departments contribute to improving student academic performance on your campus for this focus area.
8. Other questions addressed:

## Focus Area

### Staff Quality/Effectiveness, Recruitment, and Retention

District Number: \_\_\_\_\_ District Name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Focus Area Guiding Questions

1. What does the general data reflect regarding teacher effectiveness on the campus?
2. How is observation and evaluation data utilized to improve teacher performance resulting in student academic growth?
3. What is your campus staff attendance and retention percentage rate? How does this impact student achievement?
4. How is highly effective staff assigned to work with the highest need student sub-population?
5. How is new staff supported to ensure a positive impact on student achievement?
6. What systems are in place to build capacity and support continuous improvement?
7. Describe how campus data is used to determine professional development needs for staff.
8. What types of district professional development has staff attended? How is implementation monitored? What impact has it had on student performance?
9. What type of campus professional development has staff attended to address sub-populations? How is implementation monitored? What impact has it had on student performance?
10. How frequently is professional development offered at the district and campus level?
11. Describe how district-level departments contribute to improving student academic performance on your campus for this focus area?

**Focus Area**  
**Curriculum & Instruction**

District Number: \_\_\_\_\_ District Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Focus Area Guiding Questions**

1. How is campus data used to determine instruction and assessment decisions to improve student academic achievement?
2. How do staff members express high expectations for student achievement? Is the curriculum aligned with the State's challenging academic content standards? How are high expectations set in subjects for which the State has not established standards? Have teachers participated in a curriculum alignment process?
3. What instructional materials are used in the school? Are they up-to-date, and do they reflect the State's academic content standards?
4. Is there scientifically-based research that supports the curriculum and the instructional program being used in the school?
5. What assessment instruments, including diagnostic assessments, are routinely used to measure student achievement? What role do teachers play in deciding what assessments will be used to measure student achievement?
6. How are assessment results used?
7. Is instructional technology available to all students? Do teachers integrate technology into teaching?
8. Does the school evaluate curriculum and instruction to determine whether they address the needs of all students?
9. Based on campus data how are instruction and assessment aligned? How are they aligned to support and challenge student sub-population?

## Focus Area

### Family & Community Involvement/Engagement

District Number: \_\_\_\_\_ District Name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Focus Area Guiding Questions

1. What opportunities are provided for families and community members to be involved in meaningful activities that support students' learning?
2. How are families and the community members involved in campus decision-making?
3. If families speak languages other than English, how does the school communicate in those languages?
4. What types of services are available to support parents of students in sub-population?
5. Describe how teachers effectively communicate with parents (formally and informally) about the academic progress of their children.
6. Are translators and written communications available for families who speak language other than English?
7. Describe how parental community involvement strategies are evaluated and revised, as needed.
8. How does the campus maintain Title I Parent Involvement compliance status with School/Parent Compacts, Parent Involvement Policy, Annual Title I Meeting, and Program Evaluation?
9. Describe how district-level departments contribute to improving student academic performance on your campus for this focus area.
10. Other questions addressed:

**Focus Area**  
**School Context & Organization**

District Number: \_\_\_\_\_ District Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Focus Area Guiding Questions**

1. What does the campus data reflect about classes and schedules for supporting the sub-populations?
2. How is adequate time devoted to core content areas in which students need improvement?
3. Describe the teacher's role in decision-making and school policies for addressing professional development, student academics and instructional activities.
4. Describe the teacher's role in deciding what assessments will be used to evaluate individual student.
5. How does the campus make it easy for stakeholders to be heard and provide input in the decision making process?
6. Describe how district-level departments contribute to improving student academic performance on your campus for this focus area.
7. Does the school have a vision and a mission statement? Are they widely known and understood? Is the vision periodically reviewed to determine if it meets the needs of the school?
8. Is the entire school staff involved in decisions about school operations? How?
9. Is the school safe and orderly?
10. What disciplinary policies exist, and how are these policies enforced?

## **Focus Area**

## **Technology**

District Number: \_\_\_\_\_ District Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Focus Area Guiding Questions**

1. Describe the technology needs of your campus.
2. Describe your campus vision for instructional technology to improve student academic achievement.
3. What is the technology proficiency for staff and students? How is the campus supporting improvement of technology proficiency?
4. List technology professional development available to staff members. How is implementation monitored?
5. What impact has technology professional development had on student and staff performance?
6. In which core content areas is the campus using technology to improve student achievement and how? How does the data support the impact on improving student performance?
7. Describe how district-level departments contribute to improving student academic performance on your campus for this focus area.