

Descriptor Term:  
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Descriptor Code:  
3.2100

Legal References: G.S.115C-47(38), -81, 84.2, -98, -105.21, -105.25, -105.26, -105.27, -105.32, -105.35, -105.47, -301.1; 143 art.33C; HSP-S-000

Cross References:

A. Principles

Principals, assistant principals, teachers and other instructional staff are responsible for designing and implementing strategies to reach the educational goals of the board at each school. Input from the school community, including parents, students, representatives from business and other agencies, is critical in developing an educational program that will meet the needs of the students and the community.

The board affirms the General Assembly's belief that all children can learn and that the mission of public schools is to challenge, with high expectations, each child to learn, achieve and fulfill his or her potential.

Accordingly, the board has established in its policies its vision, standards and means of accountability for the educational program. The superintendent shall provide guidance and establish any other standards necessary for effective implementation of the policies. Principals shall lead each school in implementing the policies. The school improvement plan is one tool that school administrators should use to draw upon the creativity and innovation of the staff and the community. This plan, in its two parts, should identify the school's efforts to improve student performance and reach the educational goals of the board.

B. Part One of the School Improvement Plan: State Program for School-based Management and Accountability

The board endorses the principles set forth by the State Board that all children need to master basic skills and knowledge and build upon this foundation for lifelong learning. Therefore, in developing their school improvement plans, all schools should ensure, to the extent possible, that sufficient resources and curricula are directed towards meeting the goal of having all students performing at grade level or higher in the basic subject and skill areas identified by the State Board.

1. School Improvement Team

Each school must have a school improvement team that develops the school improvement plan. The school improvement team will consist of the principal, representatives of the assistant principals, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel, teacher assistants, and parents of students attending the school. Representatives of each group of school personnel shall be elected by their respective groups by secret ballot. Parents shall be elected by parents of children enrolled in the school in an election conducted by the parent and teacher organization of the school or, if none exists, by the largest organization of parents formed for this purpose. Parents serving on school improvement teams shall reflect the racial and socioeconomic composition of the students enrolled in that school and shall not be members of the building-level staff. The school improvement team is encouraged to

involve and seek assistance from central office personnel. The school improvement team, especially at the middle and high schools, is encouraged to seek input from students. The superintendent shall provide guidance to principals to ensure that the principals establish and work together with school improvement teams to develop, review and amend school improvement plans.

The school improvement team shall follow all legal requirements in developing the plan and in obtaining school approval of the school improvement plan. As a public body, the school improvement team must comply with the Open Meetings Law in regard to its meetings.

Parental involvement is recognized as a critical component of school success and positive student achievement; therefore, school improvement team meetings shall be held at a convenient time to ensure substantial parent participation.

## 2. Mandatory Components of the State Plan

A school improvement plan must include the following components:

- a. The plan must specify the effective instructional practices and methods to be used to improve the academic performance of students identified as at risk of academic failure or at risk of dropping out of school.
- b. The plan must take into consideration the minimum annual performance goal established by the State Board and the goals set out in the mission statement for public schools adopted by the State Board of Education.
- c. The plan must be, to the greatest extent possible, data driven. The team shall analyze student performance data to identify root causes for problems and to determine actions to address them. The plan must contain clear, unambiguous targets, explicit indicators and actual measures, and expeditious time frames for meeting measurement standards.
- d. The plan of a school serving students in kindergarten or first grade must determine how to prepare students to read at grade level by the time they enter second grade. The plan shall require that kindergarten and first grade teachers notify parents or guardians when their child is not reading at grade level and is at risk of not reading at grade level by the time the child enters second grade. The notification to parents shall include a description of assessments used to monitor the student's progress in learning to read, strategies for teachers and parents to implement that will help the student improve and expand his/her reading skills in order to prepare him to read on grade level.
- e. The plan must identify how staff development funds allocated to the school will be used.
- f. The plan must identify how professional development is clearly matched to the goals and objectives of the school improvement and local safe school plans.
- g. The plan must provide a duty-free lunch period for every teacher on a daily basis or as otherwise approved by the school improvement team.
- h. The plan must provide duty-free instructional planning time for every full-time assigned classroom teacher, with the goal of providing an average of at least five

hours of planning time per week.

- j. As part of the school system's efforts to maintain safe and orderly schools, the school improvement plan must address safety and discipline concerns, including any special conditions at the school and any requirements in the local level safe schools plan for school level objectives or strategies. The safe school plan should be integrated into the school improvement plan.
- j. In accordance with policy 1.3100/4.3100 Parental Involvement, the plan must identify the goals and strategies for parents to be involved in their child's education and the education program of the school.
- k. The plan must include a process by which the school improvement team will review the school improvement plan at least once a year. The annual review process must include (1) a review of student scores on all state- and board-mandated tests, and (2) a means for the school improvement team to modify the plan, if necessary, when the school has not met the expected growth score established by the state.
- l. The plan must require the principal to notify the superintendent if the school improvement team has modified a board-accepted school improvement plan.
- m. The plan must include a request for waivers of state laws, rules or policies. Any waiver request must identify the particular state law, rule or policy that inhibits the school's ability to improve student performance, set out with specificity the circumstances under which the waiver may be used, and explain how the requested waiver will permit the school to improve student performance.
- n. The plan may include a request to transfer state textbook funds to another category, as permitted by state law. The request must include how the transfer will facilitate improving student performance.

### 3. Process

School improvement teams should review student performance data from the preceding school year in developing the school improvement plan. Based upon the availability of data and when specific school standards are established by the State Board, the superintendent shall establish the date by which school improvement plans must be submitted.

The superintendent or designee shall review the plans and seek legal review as necessary prior to presenting the plans with recommendations to the board. If the superintendent intends to recommend that a plan be rejected, the superintendent shall notify the principal of the school and explain the reasons for the decision. The school improvement team may then submit a modified plan to the superintendent. The superintendent should submit all school improvement plans to the board at the earliest possible date. After review, the board shall accept or reject each school improvement plan. If a plan is rejected, the board shall explain the reason(s) for the rejection. Any plan modified by the school improvement team after being rejected by the board must be submitted to the superintendent for review. The superintendent shall resubmit the modified plan to the board with his/her recommendations as soon as is practical. The board shall review the modifications along with any recommendations from the superintendent and accept or reject the plan.

If the board and the school improvement team cannot reach agreement on the plan within 60 days after its initial submission, the board or school may request to use the dispute

resolution process developed by the State Board under G. S. 115C-105.20(b)(5). Alternatively, if the dispute resolution process is not utilized, the board may develop a school improvement plan for the school.

A school improvement plan shall remain in effect for no more than two years; the plan must be reviewed at least annually by the school improvement team in accordance with the review process established in the school's plan. If a school does not meet its expected growth standard established by the State Board or if more than 25% of the students performed below grade level, the principal must submit to the superintendent and the board a report from the school improvement team. The report must explain the reasons for the standard(s) not being met and describe any modifications that will be made in the school improvement plan.

After considering any recommendations of the superintendent, if the board is not satisfied with the response of the school improvement team, the board may suggest modifications to the plan or may vacate those portions of the plan that impede student performance and require the school improvement team to revise the plan.

C. Part Two of the School Improvement Plan: Local Education Reform Initiatives

In addition to the basics emphasized in the state testing program, the board expects schools to be guided by the educational goals of the board. The board encourages the schools to consider innovative means of educating students to meet these educational goals. The board has established a vision, standards, and means of accountability in its educational policies to provide guidance to the schools. Many of these policies provide an opportunity for schools to develop innovative plans as a part of their school improvement plan. School improvement plans should reflect the school's efforts to meet the educational goals of the local board.

1. Mandatory components of the Local Plan

The school improvement plan shall also include the following:

- a. Strategies for meeting the education objectives of the board; and
- b. Intervention strategies for students who are not at grade-level proficiency or who are not likely to meet standards of promotion measured by other means.

2. Optional Components of the Local Plan

The board strongly encourages school employees to be innovative in their efforts to meet local education goals. Although not limited to these options, the board has encouraged innovation specifically through its policies on the following issues:

- a. Implementing alternative scheduling of classes or other strategies intended to reduce transitional time and limit interference from non-instructional activities;
- b. Adding hours of instructional time;
- c. Providing additional means for evaluating instructional programs;
- d. Developing and implementing pilot programs; and

- e. Expanding the subject areas or objectives of the curriculum.

A school may also submit a request to the board for a waiver of local board policies. Any waiver request must identify the particular board policy that inhibits the school's ability to improve student performance, set out with specificity the circumstances under which the waiver may be used, and explain how the requested waiver will permit the school to improve student performance.

D. Staff Development

The superintendent shall develop a process by which schools can learn from other schools' improvement plans. The superintendent and the schools are encouraged to use staff development resources to provide training to staff on the development, implementation and evaluation of school improvement plans.

School administrators must be evaluated by their supervisors on the school-based management process as required by board policy and state law and on the effectiveness of the school improvement plan.