School TURNAROUND & Transformation

at **American Institutes for Research**

Guide to Working With External Providers

Third Edition

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Guide to Working With External Providers

PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Third Edition

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has issued a challenge to our nation to turn around our lowest performing schools. States and schools across throughout our country are dedicating themselves to answering this call, but it will require a significant commitment to achieve measurable results. In many areas, school leaders recognize the valuable role that external providers can play in supporting their work. However, finding the right fit can be daunting and time consuming. In response to the shifting dynamics facing schools, American Institutes for Research has updated this resource to support school leaders as they engage in partnership with providers to carry out this important work.

The *Guide to Working With External Providers* was researched and written by Bryan Hassel, Ph.D., and Lucy Steiner. Dr. Hassel is the cofounder of Public Impact, an education policy firm based in North Carolina, and currently serves as its codirector. Steiner is a senior consultant with Public Impact.

The guide is based on existing research and field experience related to how schools and districts can work most effectively with a host of external providers. During its initial development in 2004, 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. With the current investment that the U.S. Department of Education is making in School Improvement Grants, it is critical for both schools and providers to have the tools they need to ensure that their partnerships are successful.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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FOREWORD

Dear Educator:

The *Guide to Working With External Providers* is a comprehensive toolkit and, if you are the leader of a school or district, you may not make it past the introduction. But if you do one thing with this guide, please forward it to two people: the person you have designated with the responsibility for investigating whether or not to hire an external provider, and the person charged with overseeing that process.

As the leader of district and school improvement services for American Institutes for Research, I am committed to delivering high-quality services in the field that positively impact student learning. We are passionate in our belief that all children deserve a quality education. However, we also know that currently not every child is in a position to realize his or her full potential.

In every state, there are schools that are struggling to meet the needs of their students. Education Secretary Arne Duncan has made it his priority to turn around the lowest performing schools in the nation by providing schools with the intensive resources needed to chart their path to success. The work that is done now can provide a roadmap for the leaders of all struggling schools by identifying successful practices that can be replicated in communities serving the neediest students.

We know that school turnaround work is challenging. Many schools and leaders lack the ability and capacity to do this work on their own. Fortunately, there are experts—like American Institutes for Research staff—who are committed to school improvement work, have a proven track record, and stand ready and willing to partner with schools in dire need of turnaround assistance.

External providers who choose to partner with the nation's lowest performing schools to help set them on the track for success have critical key responsibilities. These providers have a moral and ethical obligation to:

- Offer quality services and products that deliver results for children and schools.
- Ensure that the capacity exists within their own organization to maintain the integrity and quality of the services they promised to deliver.
- Collaborate with other partners that bring complementary expertise to a school or district.
- Address school culture and adoption barriers with all key initiatives.
- Position schools for sustainability through building local expertise and community-based support for the work.
- Enter into partnerships because they are a good match for both sides—not because it's just one more contract to feed the bottom line.
- Turn down work when it's not a good match because not every vendor is positioned to serve every school well.
- Contribute learning and best practices to the larger conversation on school turnaround so that effective practices can be brought to scale.

I am committed to these practices, as are many of my colleagues in the field. I hope this guide will help you make the best choices when identifying supports for your district or school.

Jessica Johnson
Managing Director, District and School Improvement Services
American Institutes for Research

naesp National Association of
Elementary School
Principals

nassp®
national association of
secondary school principals

Dear Principal:

As a school leader, you are leading in an unprecedented time in education. U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has made it his priority to turn around the lowest performing schools in this nation and set them on the path to success. This pressure to improve schools and student performance presents challenging work and impacts your daily practice in an ever increasing manner. Yet the amount of money available for school improvement is extraordinary and unparalleled in the history of American education.

As you engage in the work of improving your school, you and your leadership team are faced with a plethora of daily decisions. These new reform realities add additional decisions and considerations to what is already a complex and multifaceted daily job. Hundreds of new vendors have recently appeared on the education scene, each promoting their tools, trade ware, and training. As a principal, you are faced with the decision of being a knowledgeable consumer and choosing the resources that maximize your school's efforts to improve student performance. The DNA of every school is unique, and your selection of an external partner will be critical to your school's success. The National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals are prepared to assist you with these decisions.
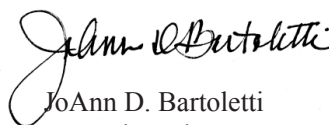
Our organizations have a proven track record in school reform and improvement by giving principals the tools and guidance necessary to succeed, and we are committed to collaborating with you to make the best decisions that meet the needs of your school and students. As you select potential external vendors, you have a great responsibility in ensuring success for your school leadership team, teachers and other school staff, and ultimately your students. Your responsibilities require you to:

- Ensure that vendors offer quality services and products that deliver results for children and schools.
- Ask vendors for documented evidence of their accomplishments in working with schools like yours.
- Enter into a collaboration because it is a good match for both sides.
- Turn down offers when it's not a good match because not every vendor is positioned to serve every school well.
- Ensure that the capacity exists within the vendor's organization to maintain the consistent integrity and quality of the services promised for delivery.
- Determine who from the vendor's organization will be working with your school on an ongoing basis and determine the essential experience that qualifies the person(s) for the anticipated work.
- Be proactive in managing the relationship, and hold the vendor accountable for any timeline set forth for the school improvement plan and related services.
- Be unafraid to acknowledge what is not working in your plan, and be willing to work with the vendor to restructure the scope of work if necessary.
- Foster a sense of teamwork with the school, and ensure that the entire school community is an equal partner in the school improvement efforts.

Our organizations look forward to assisting you as you make these critical decisions, and we hope that this toolkit will provide you with useful guidance and resources.

Gail Connelly
Executive Director
National Association of Elementary School Principals

JoAnn D. Bartoletti
Executive Director
National Association of Secondary School Principals

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 offer their expertise 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.

Many schools and districts are feeling tremendous pressure to meet state and federal accountability provisions, and they likely will want to hire an external provider that understands and appreciates their sense of urgency to make dramatic improvements. 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 by the school and district staff (as well as the provider) to accomplish results and are affected by circumstances that are out of the provider's control. Schools and districts must be cautious of quick fixes and be prepared to commit to hard work.

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 building block 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 the *Guide to Working With External Providers* is to help schools and districts put these building blocks into place. Although this guide 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, managing the partnership, 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. Although 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" on page 3.)

This chart describes the steps in the school improvement process. Areas in bold type indicate steps that are covered in this guide.

STEPS IN THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Advance Planning (not covered in this guide)

- Creating a vision for the school
- Performing a comprehensive needs assessment
- Collecting, organizing, and analyzing multiple sources of data for the needs assessment
- Determining priorities and setting goals
- Developing a school improvement strategy and action plan

Selecting a Provider (the focus of this guide)

- **Creating a framework for the selection process**
  - **Putting together a selection team**
  - **Writing a request for proposal (RFP)**
  - **Finding potential providers**
- **Vetting and selecting a provider**
  - **Conducting initial conversations**
  - **Checking references**
  - **Reaching an agreement on a provider**
- **Negotiating a contract**
  - **Clarifying the package of services and materials supplied by the provider**
  - **Determining actions and support provided by the school and district**
  - **Determining contract length**
  - **Determining outcomes and evaluation measure**
- **Working in partnership with the external provider**
  - **Creating an implementation plan**
  - **Overcoming implementation barriers**
  - **Using evaluation results to set new goals and reshape implementation**
- **Planning for the future**
  - **Reshaping the relationship after the natural end of the contract**
  - **Sustaining the work**
  - **Terminating partnerships that do not meet expectations**

Next Steps (not covered in this guide)

- Selecting, revising, and eliminating other programs as a means of sustaining the improvement work (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.

In other words, this guide is not a blueprint for overall school improvement. As indicated by the bold areas 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 comprehensive 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 where possible.

How to Use This Guide

This guide serves as a resource for making decisions about contracting with external providers. It may be used by educators at all levels of the education system. Although the text is written to "speak" to school and district personnel, it also is applicable and helpful to others. State department of education staff, regional service agency staff, district and school leaders, and external providers will find the guidance and the tools helpful for assisting local education agencies in establishing a process for selecting a provider.

The process of identifying and selecting an external provider and then managing the relationship to ensure success deserves careful thought and planning. The steps and tools in this guide are laid out in a sequential manner and can be followed step-by-step. Some educators in the midst of improvement efforts may find that certain steps in the guide have already been addressed or that their school or district has an established procedure for a particular step. In such cases, leaders may choose to use the tools and guidance from one or a few sections but not others. Education leaders and providers are encouraged to use and modify the tools in this guide to suit their particular needs and context.

Section Structure

This guide is divided into six main sections: Getting Started, Creating a Framework for the Selection Process, Vetting and Selecting a Provider, Negotiating a Contract, Working in Partnership, 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: **Getting Started**
> > Knowing Your School or District Needs
> > Planning Your Budget
> > Viewing the Landscape of External Partners

SECTION 2: Creating a Framework for the Selection Process

Putting together a selection team

Writing a request for proposal (RFP)

Finding potential providers

SECTION 3: Vetting and Selecting a Provider

Conducting initial conversations with potential providers

Checking references

Reaching an agreement on a provider

SECTION 4: Negotiating a Contract

Clarifying the package of services and materials supplied by the provider

Determining actions and support provided by the school and district

Determining contract length

Determining outcomes and evaluation measures

SECTION 5: Working in Partnership

Creating the school or district implementation plan

Addressing common issues that arise during implementation

Establishing an evaluation plan

SECTION 6: Planning for the Future

Reshaping the relationship after the natural end of the contract

Sustaining the work

Terminating partnerships that do not meet expectations

Section 1 is written to help you get organized and get started. Before you can begin the process of hiring an external provider, you must understand your needs and the resources that are available to you. Each of the remaining steps should be aligned with your needs and fit with in the resources you have committed.

Section 2 is written to help you develop a structure 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 understand how to develop a list of potential providers.

Section 3 outlines the actual selection process of finding an appropriate, high-quality provider. It takes you through the process of conducting conversations with potential providers, checking references externally, and reaching an agreement internally on whom to select.

Section 4 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 that both parties can use to set the terms of their relationship.

Sections 5 and 6 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 may 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 section 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 may spark 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: **Prospective Provider Rating Worksheet**
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 that 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 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 needed or useful for implementation

TOOL 9: **School or District Evaluation of Provider Services**
A template for assessing the quality of the services that 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

For an easy-to-use list of tasks involved in working with external providers, refer to "Organizer's Checklist: An Action Planner" on page 7.

Organizer's Checklist: An Action Planner

Directions: Use the following 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.

SECTION 1: **Getting Started (page 12)**

STEP 1: **Knowing Your School or District Needs (page 12)**
- ☐ Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment.
- ☐ Identify expert sources to assist with needs assessment if required.

STEP 2: **Planning Your Budget (page 14)**
- ☐ Determine what resources you already have.
- ☐ Determine timeframe and funding sources.

STEP 3: **Viewing the Landscape of External Partners (page 14)**
- ☐ Identify the types of services offered.
- ☐ Identify the types of providers.
- ☐ Identify the characteristics of high-quality services.

SECTION 2: **Creating a Framework for the Selection Process (page 20)**

Step 1: **Putting Together a Selection Team (page 20)**
- ☐ 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 who are not on the selection team will have.
- ☐ Determine the logistics of selection team meetings.

STEP 2: **Writing a Request for Proposal (RFP) (page 21)**
- ☐ Identify your most pressing needs.
- ☐ Identify your budget, timeline, and logistical concerns.
- ☐ Identify the outcomes you expect to get as a result of hiring an external provider.
- ☐ Identify the services you would like the external provider to deliver.
- ☐ Identify your selection criteria.
- ☐ Write an RFP outlining your needs, the outcomes and services you expect, and your selection criteria.

STEP 3: **Finding Potential Providers (page 26)**
- ☐ 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 3: Vetting and Selecting a Provider (page 30)

STEP 1: **Conducting Initial Conversations (page 30)**
- ☐ 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 33)**
- ☐ Ask the provider for references.
- ☐ Contact schools or districts similar to yours that have worked with this provider.

STEP 3: **Reaching an Agreement on a Provider (page 34)**
- ☐ Make sure you have done your research on each potential provider.
- ☐ Ask key stakeholders to review or formally approve your choice.
- ☐ Build support for your choice among the wider school community.

SECTION 4: Negotiating a Contract (page 36)

STEP 1. **Clarifying the Package of Services and Materials Supplied by the Provider (page 36)**
- ☐ 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 or proposal can provide.

STEP 2: **Determining Actions and Support Provided by the School and District (page 37)**
- ☐ 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 that ways the district can support implementation.

STEP 3: **Determining Contract Length (page 40)**
- ☐ Agree upon a contract length acceptable to both parties.
- ☐ Work with the school or district attorney to draw up the best possible contract.

STEP 4: **Determining Outcomes and Evaluation Measures (page 41)**
- ☐ Agree on formative and summative outcomes measures.
- ☐ Agree on a timetable for measuring outcomes.
- ☐ Agree on rewards for achieving or consequences for not achieving expected outcomes.

SECTION 5: Working in Partnership (page 44)

STEP 1: **Creating the School or District Implementation Plan (page 44)**
- ☐ Work with the provider to develop a flexible implementation plan.
- ☐ Maintain open communication.

STEP 2: **Addressing Common Issues That Arise During Implementation (page 44)**

- ☐ 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 52)**

- ☐ 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 corrections to the partnership as necessary.

SECTION 6: **Planning for the Future (page 56)**

STEP 1: **Reshaping the Relationship After the Natural End of the Contract (page 56)**

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

STEP 2: **Sustaining the Work (page 57)**

- ☐ Embed sustainability strategies throughout implementation.
- ☐ Emphasize capacity building and leadership continuity.

STEP 3: **Terminating Partnerships That Do Not Meet Expectations (page 57)**

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

SECTION 1:
Getting Started

SECTION 1: GETTING STARTED

STEP 1: Knowing Your School or District Needs

Although many schools and districts have worked diligently at school improvement for years, federal and state accountability programs have stepped up the pressure on all entities to improve student learning, particularly for economically disadvantaged students. Under current state and federal accountability measures, thousands of schools are designated as in need of improvement each year. The most chronically underperforming schools are designated for restructuring efforts.

This environment is rife with both opportunity and peril. The public pressure and increased availability of School Improvement Grants to improve student achievement has given school leaders the chance to make lasting and substantive changes in how schools are operated. This situation 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, occurring 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 are current areas of strength, and what teachers need to know and be able to do to better meet student learning needs (Hassel, 1999; Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001).

The Value of a Needs Assessment

A comprehensive needs-assessment process is crucial and may be required for state or federal funding. A successful needs-assessment process helps you focus on your most pressing and important needs. Undertaking a thorough and comprehensive needs 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.
- Increases local buy-in for the improvement initiative.
- 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 a thorough and comprehensive needs assessment, you may decide to turn to an external provider for help with this initial task. The option of collaborating with an external provider on a needs assessment has the advantage of providing an objective view of current practice. An external provider also may be able to provide new or different data not otherwise available to you.

The Four Requirements of a Needs Assessment

A good needs assessment must meet four 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 include several types of data. These data should provide both a snapshot of current practices and an illustration of trends over a period of time. A thorough needs assessment should include *quantitative data*, such as student demographics, test scores, graduation rates, and literacy rates. It also should include *qualitative data*, such as perception data from students, staff, and parents—which can provide insight into the experiences of each stakeholder group.

Third, a needs assessment should provide specific details about students and the system that supports them. 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. Furthermore, the needs assessment should help to identify what aspects of the education system need attention. Data about the instructional delivery systems, resources, staff, programs, or practices that support student learning are as crucial for identifying needs as is an understanding of weaknesses in student learning. Pinpointing your cultural, systemic, and student-learning needs allows you to take the crucial next step: analyzing whether your school or district has the skills, materials, competencies, and resources necessary to meet these critical student-learning needs.

Fourth, 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 for Conducting a Needs Assessment" on page 14.)

SUGGESTED RESOURCES FOR CONDUCTING A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

These resources also may be helpful when performing evaluation 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).

Conducting a Comprehensive Needs Assessment. Published by The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2009). Available online: http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/TheCenter_NL_Jun09.pdf

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

Making Good Choices: Sustainable School Improvement, by Katie E. Walter. Published by Learning Point Associates (2004). Available online: http://www.centerforcsri.org/pubs/mgcSustainableSchoolImp.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).

Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement (2nd ed.), by Mike Schmoker. Published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2006).

School Review Process Guide. Published by The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2009). Available online: http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/SchoolReviewProcessGuide.pdf

STEP 2: **Planning Your Budget**

Before you can begin to invite external providers to submit a proposal, you must first determine what resources you have to devote to the selection process. The process to develop an RFP, solicit and vet proposals, engage stakeholders, and negotiate the contract will take time and require a dedicated budget to support the work. You should be clear about the timeframe, allocated budget, and staff time you are able to dedicate to the process.

STEP 3: **Viewing the Landscape of External Partners**

After you have determined your need for external help through the needs-assessment process and have a clear idea of your budget parameters, you can choose from many providers who 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 different general types of services:

- Assessment strategies
- Classroom management
- Community involvement
- Curriculum components
- Data collection and analysis
- Instructional methods
- Leadership development
- Parent involvement
- Professional learning communities
- Reshaping of school culture
- School governance
- Strategic planning
- Teacher recruitment, induction, and mentoring
- Technology evaluation systems
- Use of technology

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 "combination" 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 2 and 3 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 the core work of schools: teaching and learning.

Types of External Providers

External providers fall into the following categories:

- **Regional Service Centers.** At the state level, many 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 region.
- **State Departments of Education.** State education departments also might provide various types of assistance, particularly to schools with persistently low student achievement. Many states maintain a list of approved external providers, sometimes called *vendors*.

- **Colleges and Universities.** Technical assistance centers or groups at colleges and universities often provide services to schools and districts, In addition, college instructors may be available to provide services. Such centers, groups, and individuals can offer 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 Elementary School Principals or the National Association of Secondary School Principals).

- **Teachers Unions.** Many local 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 are individuals as well as larger organizations such as textbook companies that 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. Mentoring and peer coaching are two strategies that allow a school to grow internal capacity with existing expertise and resources. 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 that 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 certain 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 the school or district improvement processes.

- **Long Term.** 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 grounded in research and backed by evidence from a neutral-party evaluation that it gets the desired results in similar circumstances. Ideally, this evidence of effectiveness 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 that the approach is "best practice." To find out whether the provider's approach is researched based, you will need to ask questions.

  - The first question to ask is whether the provider has conducted a formal evaluation of its products or services through a *randomized controlled trial study*. As mentioned above, many providers may not have been operating long enough to conduct such an extensive evaluation. However, if they have, you should then ask who conducted the evaluation. In some cases, providers will conduct their own evaluations but it is better if that evaluation has been conducted by an objective third party.

  - The second question to ask is if the provider's services and methodologies are rooted in research and, specifically, which studies they are based upon.

  - The third question to ask is whether or not the provider has outcome data on the effectiveness of its products or services in schools or districts with demographics *similar to your own*. If the provider does have such outcome data, request a contact in that respective school or district to discuss these findings and determine the level of satisfaction that the school or district has with the provider.

- **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 levels 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. Another aspect of capacity building has to do with the external provider's capacity to deliver on the scope of work proposed. The provider should be able to demonstrate sufficient staffing, experience, knowledge, and capability to carry out the work.

After you ask several providers for this information, it will easier to determine who is providing information that is relevant and easy to understand. If the information supplied by the provider is unclear, it may be an indication of its inability to communicate effectively.

Upon completion of the preliminary actions of knowing your needs, planning your budget, and viewing the landscape of external providers, your school or district is ready to embark on specific steps of working with external providers.
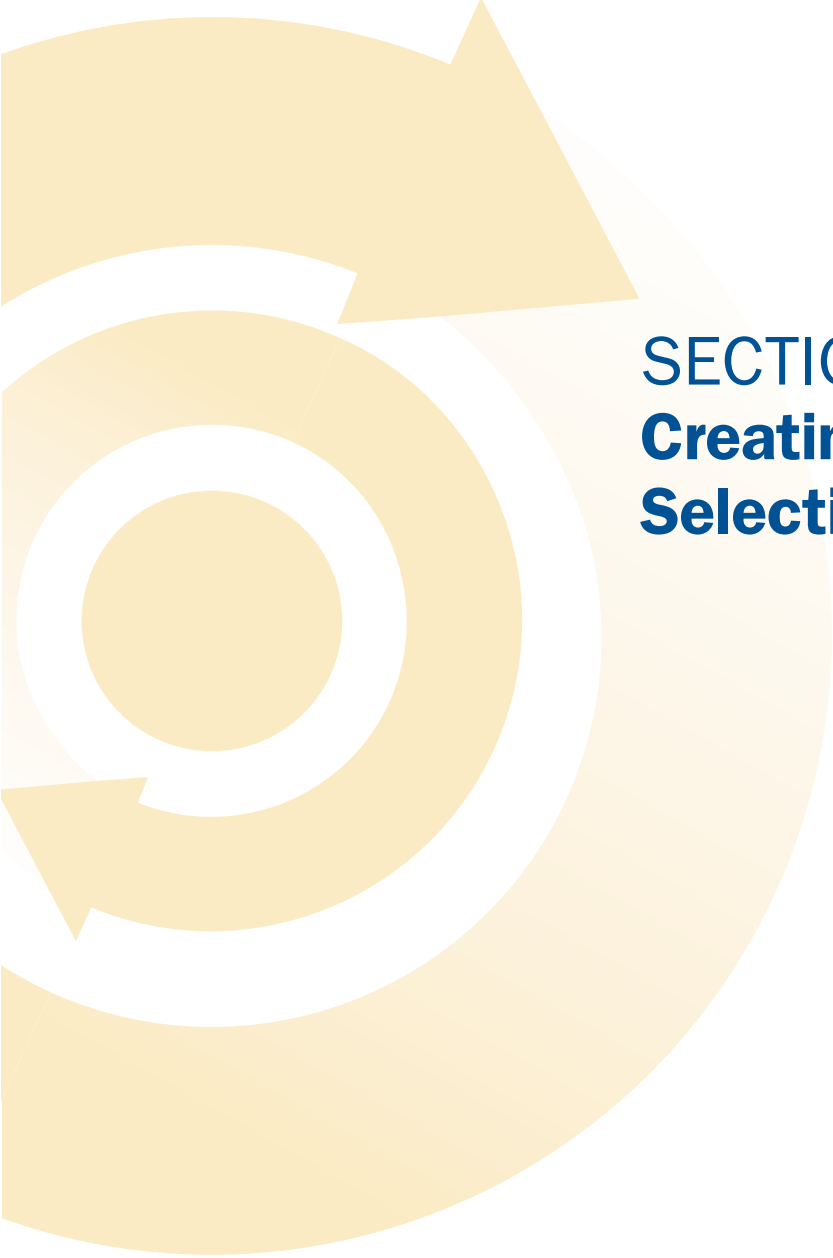
SECTION 2:
Creating a Framework for the Selection Process

SECTION 2: Creating a Framework for the Selection Process

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 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. This process includes putting together a selection team, writing a formal RFP outlining your needs, and finding potential providers.

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. When putting together a selection team, 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. The process of selecting an external provider should be transparent, and members of the selection team should regularly provide meaningful information to constituents about the process.

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 3, Step 3, on page 34), you will find some suggestions about submitting the selection team's decisions to a wider audience for review. The committee may also wish to weigh stakeholder expertise and the likely level of interaction with the provider when considering stakeholder input.

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 21.)

If your school or district decides to create a new selection team, think through how this newly formed group will communicate and collaborate with preexisting committees. Be sure the selection team 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. Though no one single person should be responsible for administering the entire process, identifying a team lead or project coordinator will help to keep the process on track. Designating a point-person to be responsible for

ensuring that project deadlines and benchmarks are met will increase the likelihood of identifying a suitable provider. The amount of time this person will need to devote to the task will depend on the scope of the work proposed and the amount of money devoted to the potential contract. The amount of time that a project coordinator will need to devote to the task of coordinating the process also will impact the budget allotted to the selection process.

Finally, establishing a communications plan at the outset of this process can ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of how information will be shared throughout the selection proceedings and during project implementation. You should not take for granted that all stakeholders will be kept "in the loop" simply because they work together. Taking the time to document who will be the primary point of contact, when and in what manner information will be disseminated, and how questions or concerns will be communicated can prevent misunderstandings, duplication of efforts, and missteps in the 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 (especially at the secondary level)

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 you are tapping into a broad range of available providers.

Successful partnerships between external providers and districts or schools typically begin with a more purposeful, targeted approach. First, members of the district or school selection team can design an 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 are your budget, timeline, and logistical concerns?
- What are the needs and priorities of outside funding sources (i.e., federal grants, philanthropic grants)?
- 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?

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 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 that students will be asked to master, the challenges they are likely to encounter, and research-based instructional strategies to meet those challenges.

What Are Your Budget, Timeline, and 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. These considerations will significantly narrow the field of providers.

What Are the Needs and Priorities of Outside Funding Sources (i.e., Federal Grants, Philanthropic Grants)? The funds that comprise school and district budgets are very often intended for specific purposes. Some monies are earmarked for investments in technology, specific program costs, or instructional materials. Federal funds typically are allocated, along with guidance on allowable costs. Similarly, grants from philanthropic organizations will often be targeted to particular initiatives or improvement efforts. You will need to have a clear understanding of the parameters surrounding the funding that will support the work of the external provider. The RFP should state clearly for potential providers what types of expenses may be covered by the funds you are using

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 identify and successfully intervene with ninth-grade students at risk of falling off track to graduation so that 100 percent of ninth graders progress to the tenth grade."

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 25.) 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 mathematics 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 (1) the five characteristics of high-quality provider services, (2) the kind of assistance you need, and (3) the beliefs and values of your school community.

- **The Five Characteristics of Quality Provider Services.** Regardless of the type of service 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 (discussed in more detail on page 17) 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, he 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 that providers differ is in the *intensity of the help* they offer. Some 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 where 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; still others offer a hybrid approach.

Finally, it is important to know that there are no "silver bullets" when it comes to school improvement. Improvement initiatives such as new curriculum materials or new instructional practices may provide the content; but, ultimately, people—teachers, support staff, administrators, and specialized staff—must take action. Staff must be actively engaged in the implementation of improvement efforts led by the provider. They also must be willing to commit to the hard work necessary for a successful partnership that improves student achievement.

- **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.

Getting the RFP Down on Paper

Having taken the time to think through the kind of help you need (the "content," the essential characteristics that 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 66)**

Tool 1 is a template designed to help you write an RFP. It asks questions about your needs, proposal requirements, expected outcomes, desired services, and selection criteria. 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: Finding Potential Providers

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 you review the information for different providers, you also may learn of other potential services that you did not consider. The more research you are able to conduct in advance, the more you will learn about your needs as well as the various providers available to help you in your mission to improve your school.

Build a List of Potential Providers

As an initial task, you will want to build a manageable list of potential providers to contact directly for more specific information. In terms of whom to turn to build that list, here are some suggestions from successful "buyers":

Issue an Actual RFP. Developing and issuing an RFP may seem like daunting tasks, but careful thought and investment in planning can result in stronger improvement proposals and partnerships than without a deliberate plan to solicit and vet external providers. Both large and small schools and districts can benefit from going through the process. Issuing an RFP can also be beneficial if you are unsure of the best strategy for improvement or if the potential pool of providers is uncertain. 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. (See pages 15–16 for additional details about these types of providers.)

TYPES OF EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

- Regional service centers
- Technical assistance centers or groups at colleges and universities
- Professional organizations
- Teachers unions
- Private providers

OTHER RESOURCES THAT CAN SUGGEST PROVIDERS

- State vendor lists
- State departments of education, which may be able to provide some guidance on vendor selection

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 (which appears on page 26 and is detailed on pages 15–16) 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 may be 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 tacks 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 websites. 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. The prevalence of blogs and other social networking sites can provide another means through which you can solicit recommendations. However, if you are unfamiliar with using these sites, you are encouraged to seek guidance from a more experienced peer so you are not bombarded with responses.

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 website (ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/), 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, another 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 69)**

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 worksheet to use as you collect information.
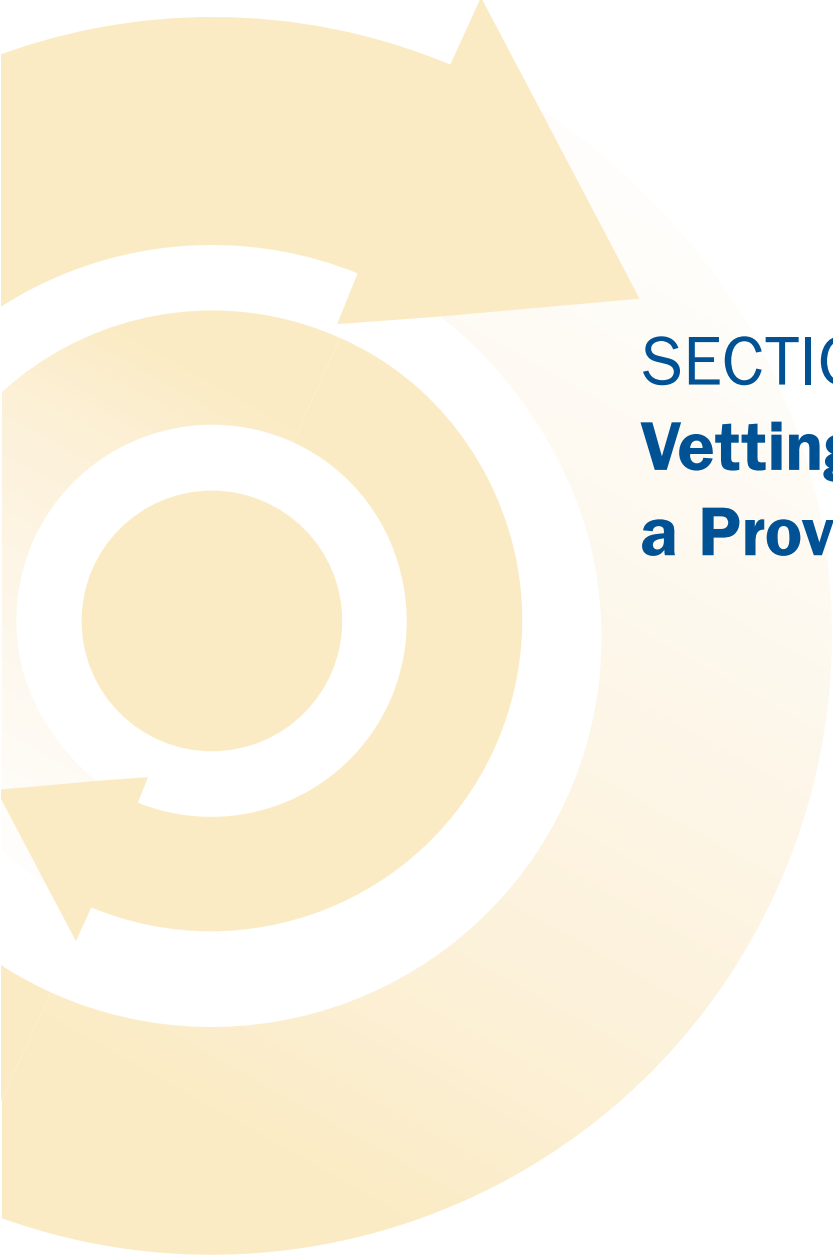
SECTION 3:
Vetting and Selecting a Provider

SECTION 3: **Vetting and 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. In order to compare each provider fairly, it is a good practice to have a prepared list of questions that you ask each provider so you can compare their answers. It is a good idea to take notes during the conversations so you have adequate documentation to drawn upon as you later assess your candidates. Tool 2 (page 69) provides space for writing these questions and the provider's response as well; it also provides space for additional notes.

It also is useful to have a scoring template. A scoring template can be a simple checklist, a rubric, or a standard set of questions with a Likert scale to rate the responses. The aim is to establish a standard set of criteria to evaluate responses. Such a form also should provide space to write down additional notes about each provider. Being diligent with your notes will ensure that you have adequate documentation to drawn upon as you later assess and select your candidates. You can use Tool 3 (described on page 34) as a template for rating potential providers.

During these conversations, the provider has an equal responsibility to determine if the school or district is 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 the part of the school or district as a potential client—a frank conversation about accountability status and potential consequences faced for lack of success as well as a discussion of current school culture: decision-making processes, level of teacher collaboration, teachers' openness to new instructional methods, stability of school staff and leadership, level of parent participation, and other factors. In these conversations, you should consider the following questions.

Questions to Consider

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.

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; unfortunately,

they are not always easy to determine. For example, many external providers cite research supporting their approach. One question to ask would be if this research is self-generated or independent. (See page 70 for sample questions in Tool 2 that you might ask to determine if the provider's services have these characteristics.)

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 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" below.) Whatever the source of funds, though, seek a provider that is upfront about both direct and indirect costs associated with its services and that provides value for money.

Has the Provider Demonstrated That It Is Able to "Hit the Ground Running"? Experienced providers should be able to outline a simple, yet established, systematic plan for the steps of implementation. Even if the provider intends to modify its plans to fit the circumstances or preferences of a particular school or district, it still should have an overarching implementation strategy that can be discussed with some specificity during the selection process. 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.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES ON RESOURCE REALLOCATION

Allocation Anatomy: How District Policies That Deploy Resources Can Support (or Undermine) District Reform Strategies, by Marguerite Roza. Published by the Center on Reinventing Public Education (2008). Available online: http://crpe.edgateway.net/cs/crpe/download/csr_files/pub_sfrp_aa_may08.pdf

A Better Return on Investment: Reallocating Resources to Improve Student Achievement. Published by North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (2000). Available online: http://ontario.worldlibrary.net/Members/Government_Library/Department_of_Education_Collection/NCREL/booklet.pdf

Choosing a School Turnaround Provider, by Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood and Steve Fleischman. Published by Education Northwest (2010). Available online: http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/1050

Choosing an Education Contractor: A Guide to Assessing Financial and Organizational Capacity, by Heather Clapp Padgette and Rachel H. Sherman. Published by American Institutes for Research and The Finance Project (2006). Available online: http://www.financeproject.org/publications/CSRQconsumerguide.pdf

CPRE's School Finance Research: Fifteen Years of Findings, by Allan Odden. Published by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (2007). Available online: http://cpre.wceruw.org/publications/Summing%20Up%2015%20Years%20of%20School%20Finance%20Research%20Jan%20211-1.pdf

Reallocating Resources for School Improvement. Published by The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2009). Available online: http://www.centerforcsri.org/pubs/reallocation/

Reallocating Resources to Support School Improvement, by Sharon Deich. Published by The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2009). Available online: http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/TheCenter_NL_Jul09.pdf

Restructuring Resources for High-Performing Schools: A Primer for State Policymakers, by Karen Hawley Miles and Karen Baroody with Elliot Regenstein. Published by Education Resource Strategies (2011). Available online: http://erstrategies.org/documents/pdf/Restructuring-Resources.pdf

Rethinking School Budgets to Support Whole School Reform, by Allen Odden. Published by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (1998). Available online: http://www.cpre.org/images/stories/cpre_pdfs/pb-06.pdf

Rethinking School Resources, by Karen Hawley Miles. Published by New American Schools (2000). Available online: http://erstrategies.org/documents/pdf/rethinking-resources.pdf

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Strategic Designs: Lessons From Leading Edge Small Urban High Schools, by Regis Anne Shields and Karen Hawley Miles. Published by Education Resource Strategies (2008). Available online: http://erstrategies.org/documents/pdf/FINALREPORTSTRATEGICDESIGNSERS_5-19.pdf

What Is the Provider's Approach? You will want to ask the provider to provide additional details about the initial proposal of work and to answer specific questions. Write down the responses. This write-up can be shared with other stakeholders and allow you to compare proposed services with other providers. 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 a provider can offer, what it cannot offer, and what it might be able to provide with appropriate modifications.

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. This situation may depend on the provider's level of engagement with the school. You also will want to confirm the cost of services provided. (For a more thorough discussion of outcomes, see Section 4, Step 4, on page 41 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? A provider's staff should listen to your concerns. Those staff members also should spend as much time asking questions as they do talking about services they can provide. Consider how well you think you would work with the provider's staff and how well you think other people from your school or district would work with them. 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 who seems trustworthy, likeable, and straightforward.

To make this determination, it is important to find out—to the extent possible—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." However, when responding to a competitive RFP, there is a possibility for the external provider that it may not be awarded the work. This reality makes it difficult to guarantee that specific individuals will be available and not assigned to other work when and if the award is made. In this type of a situation, the provider should still be able to describe the qualifications and credentials of a pool of on-site staff members who deliver the type of service you are looking for. Find out about stability by asking how much staff turnover the provider has. Be cautious about a provider that cannot tell you anything about the staff members who will be implementing its services.

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 step 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 for selection team members to check whether the information they received from the provider is accurate by asking about the "must-have" characteristics they 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 RATING WORKSHEET (SEE PAGE 72)**

Use Tool 3 to rate how each provider fares after initial conversations are complete and references are checked. You may want to make several copies of this worksheet to use as you determine ratings for each provider.

STEP 3: Reaching an Agreement on a Provider

After collecting the proposals submitted by potential providers and gathering information directly from the provider and from other schools or districts 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 from the proposals submitted. 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. Regardless of the actual process used, you will want to ensure that these meetings and discussions include a fair representation of those who will be interacting most with the provider.

Before scheduling these meetings, think through how you will reach each constituency most effectively. One option is to develop a formal presentation outlining each provider's background and the services each proposes to implement. The presentations can be delivered by school and district staff or by the potential provider itself. 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 also will want to get input from the wider community to ensure that 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 4:
Negotiating a Contract

SECTION 4: **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 four central issues that make up the framework of a partnership agreement with a provider: the package of services and materials the provider will supply, the actions that the school and district will take to facilitate implementation, the length of the contract, and the outcomes and evaluation measures.

STEP 1: **Clarifying 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 that 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.

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. In particular, be sure to ask the provider to identify if subcontractors will be utilized and, if so, for what services. You should require that the contractor provide notice when it is hiring new subcontractors and allow you an opportunity to weigh in on their selection. Further, if the provider offers on-site consulting, the school needs to make sure it understands 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 provider may require the school to provide the actual equipment. Failure to work out format, content, and logistical details before implementation is under way can lead to unnecessary tension in the working relationship and, possibly, unsatisfactory outcomes.

TOOL 4: **PROVIDER SERVICES AND MATERIALS QUESTIONNAIRE (SEE PAGE 74)**

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. Because capacity building is critical for your long-term success, you should insist that the provider modify its 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 where services can be adapted should be included in the partnership agreement.

TOOL 5: **GAP ANALYSIS (SEE PAGE 76)**

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 and 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—an infrastructure that 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. Look to all the proposals you received and use the most detailed cost descriptions to help you ask questions of other providers' proposals—particularly those providers that offer the lowest quotes. Other costs might include teacher stipends for extra time spent on professional development, technology and equipment, travel, and substitute teachers. The provider also should articulate how costs will be affected if improvement needs change after the start of the contract and outline a process for adjusting and approving new or revised services and associated costs.

If costs are a concern, many schools or districts try to resolve this issue by requesting the provider to submit a more detailed description of services and costs and then eliminate some in order to bring the price more within their desired range. We recommend a more straightforward approach in working with providers. Tell the provider what your concerns are related to costs, and ask if the provider's services can fit within your range. Otherwise, you may end up eliminating a critical service that you may have otherwise preserved through a negotiation with the provider. The provider may be able to suggest minor changes in service delivery that will save dollars over time while preserving the overall integrity of final deliverables.

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 the 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.

Important Note: Keep in mind that once you have paid the provider, you lose your leverage if you are dissatisfied with any of the work the provider has performed. In your contract, you can stipulate interim payments (which will be issued upon satisfactory completion of assigned tasks that meet the benchmarks outlined in the agreement) and final payment (which will be issued no less than 30 days following contract completion), for example.

TOOL 6: **PROVIDER COSTS QUESTIONNAIRE (SEE PAGE 77)**

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: 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 days of professional development 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, these preferences should be made clear during contract negotiations.

TOOL 7: **PROVIDER PREFERENCES FOR SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL-LEVEL POLICIES (SEE PAGE 80)**

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 then 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: 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 through adequate funding as well as supportive policies and procedures:

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 school and the provider should know with whom it needs to work in implementing 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 school 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 81)**

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: 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, a long-term contract demonstrates a long commitment, which 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 may benefit the provider, the school, and the district by helping justify the substantial investments they may make in the effort upfront.

In addition, some funding sources 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 Section 6, Step 3 on page 57). The school and district should work with the district's attorney to draw up the best contract for their circumstances.

STEP 4: **Determining 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 questions might come up during this process.

Questions to Consider

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 should 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 current 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 that are 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 they 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 may be 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? Or, what expectations must the provider meet to get the job again next year? (For assistance in thinking through criteria you might use to evaluate a provider, see Tool 9 on page 82.)

SECTION 5:
Working in Partnership

SECTION 5: **WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP**

By carrying out the activities described in earlier sections, each party has 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, though, a key consideration is how the work is actually going to get done. Working in partnership requires a game plan for implementation, troubleshooting, and evaluation. The responsibility for a successful outcome is shared between school leaders and providers.

STEP 1: **Creating the School or District Implementation Plan**

Entering into a partnership, any well-prepared provider should have 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 and regular monthly check-ins. Schools, districts, and providers are all dynamic systems that should respond to new situations and research. It is possible that 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. Establishing a plan with designated channels for communicating will help to ensure that concerns are shared in a timely fashion. Regular check-ins and coordination meetings to discuss progress and implementation concerns will ensure that issues are addressed before they grow into full-scale problems. 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?

It's helpful to 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 may arise and potential responses for dealing with those issues, refer to "Addressing Common Issues That Arise During Implementation of Provider Services" on page 46.

Addressing Common Issues That Arise During Implementation of Provider Services

The following issues commonly arise during implementation of provider services. Possible responses for addressing each issue are included.

Issue 1: Gaining Support From School Staff

Responses:

Support Teachers in Their Ongoing Efforts to Help Students Succeed. In the box below, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT, 2010) provides suggestions for supporting teachers.

What Teachers Need to Help Students Succeed

If you want to know what teachers need to succeed in the classroom, ask them. The AFT uses a number of ways to hear directly from our members what they need to do their jobs well. Recently, we asked members what they need to help their students succeed. Not surprisingly, with members in urban, rural and suburban schools spread across the country, we got a range of answers. Some needed basic supplies, such as paper or more textbooks. Others asked for common planning time to consult with colleagues. Still others needed less tangible—yet just as crucial—supports, such as greater respect. These diverse responses all come down to three things teachers need to do a good job for their students: tools, time and trust.

WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY:

Tools

At the school level, teachers and their students need essential supplies, small classes, a safe teaching and learning environment, adequate facilities, current technology and opportunities for parental involvement. Teachers also need common standards for what students should learn, as well as solid curricular materials, pre-service training, professional development, and assessments designed to help students meet those standards.

Time

Teachers spend hours outside of the school day grading papers, creating lesson plans, meeting with parents, and participating in school activities. They work late into the night, and get up in the morning to do it all over again. We can help them by giving them more time during the school day to come together to resolve student issues, share lesson plans, analyze student work, discuss successes and failures, and learn through high-quality professional development. With a team of teachers—not just one at the front of the room—we can help make sure students don't fall through the cracks.

Trust

Teachers must be treated as partners in reform—with a real voice. When teachers are involved in decision making—from the very beginning and through the very end—students benefit. Whether it's a school district seeking a federal grant or an individual school seeking a safer environment for teaching and learning, classroom educators who work with students every day must be involved at every step in the process.

From *What Teachers Need to Help Students Succeed*, available online at http://www.aft.org/pdfs/press/whatteachersneed011210.pdf. Copyright © 2010 American Federation of Teachers. Reprinted with permission.

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 staff can ask questions about the provider as well as offer insight and suggestions for implementation on a regular basis throughout the project. This approach gives staff 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 that 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**

Responses:

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 or 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**

Responses:

Clarify the Exact Dates of Provided Staff Development. Some schools enter into contracts expecting 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 the 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 that 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**

Responses:

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**

Responses:

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 schools, there is a common understanding that districts 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.

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**

Response:

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**

Responses:

Establish a Contact Person Within the Provider Staff in Case of Difficulties With Service or Materials Delivery. Before embarking on implementation—and as part of the communication planning—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. By the same token, the outside partner should be provided with a school or district liaison with a level of authority to help troubleshoot implementation challenges as they arise.

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 (for example, trainers are of poor quality, curriculum materials are delivered late, 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 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 6 of this guide. See especially the description of "Potential Grounds for Early Termination" on page 58.)

Issue 8: **Turnover of Leadership**

Responses:

Seek Support From the District for Policies That Promote the 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 particular schools
- A district or school policy that offers incentives to principals who remain at their schools and continue to be effective leaders
- A district provision for offering mentoring or peer coaching for new or inexperienced principals to integrate them into the culture and practices of the school and district

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 in 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 that providers can contribute to internal capacity is to build reflection time and evaluation into all activities. A provider also can document for the school the methodologies that were implemented as well as the successes and lessons learned throughout the project. This kind of work increases understanding about the intervention among school staff and stakeholders. At the end of the day, teachers and others 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**

Responses:

Specify 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**

A plan for evaluating the provider's services should be established before the work commences so that all parties are clear about the expectations and measures prior to implementation. 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 rewards for meeting its goals or consequences for 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 evaluation of a provider's services should be *ongoing,* not simply a once-a-year assessment of certain quantifiable outcomes. Ongoing evaluation as well as ongoing communication regarding this evaluation are vital to ensuring that implementation and outcomes are kept on track. This ongoing approach will prevent a school, district, or provider from potentially being surprised by a final evaluation that denotes unmet goals or unsatisfactory services. Schools and providers should work together to design strategies for ongoing feedback. These strategies 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 82)**

Tool 9 offers a template for evaluating the quality of the services that 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 that 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 91)

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.

For more information on evaluation, see "Suggested Resources on Evaluation" below.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES ON EVALUATION

Designing an Evaluation: Methodological Approach and Sampling, by Daniel Zalles. Published by Online Evaluation Resource Library (2002). Available online: http://www.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).

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

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

Program Evaluation for the Practitioner: Using Evaluation as a School Improvement Strategy. Published by The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement (2006). Available online: http://www.centerforcsri.org/files/TheCenter_NL_June06.pdf

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

SECTION 6:
Planning for the Future

SECTION 6: 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: 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. Understanding 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 4 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. Although 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.

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 in revising the school or district's approaches over time to meet new circumstances or achieve new goals.

STEP 2: Sustaining the Work

All these efforts during implementation will be essentially wasted if they cannot be maintained. In our experience, the inability to embed successful sustainability strategies into your implementation and develop a long-term plan is the root cause of efforts that cannot be maintained. Throughout this publication, we consistently emphasize capacity building and leadership continuity as critical elements for long-term and lasting success.

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 resolution. 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.

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, most maintain their relationships as planned.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

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, 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 greater the clarity that parties can achieve in advance, the fewer the problems that 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 a set of tools to help with 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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REFERENCES

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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., low graduation rates among groups of students, high teacher turnover, poor comprehension skills in the fourth grade). These needs should be your highest priorities.

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What are your requirements for proposal submission, cost, timeline, and delivery of services?

Proposal Submission. Write down your requirements for submitting a proposal, including due date, format in which proposals must be submitted, and information on how providers should submit (e.g., 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 of Services. Write down any special considerations related to the delivery of services (e.g., rural schools that are physically isolated may want to ensure that electronic communication is a major component of the provider's services; schools that have special-needs students will want to ensure that materials are available in appropriate formats).

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. 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." You also may consider soliciting input from the potential providers for outcome measures based on their approach and strategies.

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. 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 might want the provider to provide one-on-one coaching to science teachers. If you would like the provider to suggest a package of services or if you are unsure of the best approach, you may garner more creative and robust responses with an open-ended request; be sure to indicate your issues, goals, timeframe, and budget so that potential providers offer services that meet your needs.

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. What are your selection criteria?

Prioritized List of Quality Characteristics. Examine the five characteristics of high-quality provider services 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 (if you already have a long-term improvement plan, and this is one piece of that plan). Regardless of how you prioritize these characteristics, you should state clearly your needs and desires for each category. For example, if you want a provider to customize its services to embrace the local culture, describe this need here.

- **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 the 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 the school or district's capacity to carry out similar work in the future. Also, the potential provider possesses sufficient capacity to successfully deliver on the scope of work.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Type of Assistance Needed. Write down any selection criteria related to the type 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."

_____
_____
_____
_____

Customized List of Selection Criteria. After reviewing your prioritized list of quality characteristics, determine your customized list of selection criteria based on type of assistance needed and your school's beliefs and values. (You will use this list in Tool 3.)

Criterion A: _____

Criterion B: _____

Criterion C: _____

Criterion D: _____

Criterion E: _____

TOOL 2:
Prospective Provider Information Sheet

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

Part A: General Information

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

Part B: Key Questions to Ask the Provider

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

Question	Provider's Response
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 to fit the unique needs of a client.

Part C: Additional Thoughts About the Provider

Potential Benefits	Potential Drawbacks

Additional Notes

TOOL 3:
Prospective Provider Rating Worksheet

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:

Scale for Rating Prospective Providers

- *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.

Company or Organization: _____

Contact Person: _____

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 the last part of Tool 1, Question 5 (page 68) for your customized list of selection criteria relating to type of assistance needed 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

Additional Notes: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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)			
Individuals who provide the on-site consulting (background and 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			
How the provider will support sustainability of improvement efforts			
Who "owns" the processes and materials developed by the provider for the school or district			
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 if 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 the package of materials or services (e.g., computers, networking capabilities, laboratory equipment)			
Other materials included in the price of the services: _____ _____ _____			

TOOL 5:
Gap Analysis

Directions: Use this tool to record any gaps between your school improvement approach and what is offered through the external provider's package of services. 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 strategies to address the school's needs, requirements, and values; in addition, the provider may cite reasons why it cannot address the school's concerns.

List of Potential Areas of School Needs, Standards, Requirements, and Values

Assessment strategies	Instructional methods
Classroom management	Leadership development
Community involvement	Parent involvement
Culture building	Professional learning communities
Curriculum components	School governance
Data analysis	Special population needs
Equity training	Teacher recruitment, induction, mentoring
High expectations	Use of technology

What are the gaps between the school's needs and the services offered by the provider? *(To be filled in by the school)*	Can the provider's services be adapted to fill the gaps? If so, how? *(To be filled in by the provider)*
Example: Our fourth-grade students' scores (on average) are at the 36th percentile in reading comprehension. We need a program that gets these students up to grade level.	*Example: We have investigated several reading programs and found two that have demonstrated results with your target population and also 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. (Note that different providers may break down their costs into different categories. This breakdown will depend on the nature and scope of the work as well as the business procedures of the provider.)

Part A: General Provider Costs

School or District Query	Category	Cost Estimate
What is the total cost of the package of services?	**Total cost**	$_____
What is included in this fee?	Notes:	
How does the provider break down the overall costs?	Notes:	
What is the breakdown of annual costs by category? • Note if these costs will change over the length of the agreement. • If the provider's costs exceed your target budget, ask the provider for suggestions to reduce the bottom line.	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ Notes:	$_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____
What are the categories of direct costs that are required or encouraged in implementation but not included in the package of services? • Put a checkmark by all that apply. • Estimate approximate costs for each category. (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 the school or district after the provider has indicated whether the item is necessary or preferred.)	☐ Additional staff: *(Please specify position in space provided.)* _____ _____ _____ ☐ Additional technology or equipment ☐ Teacher stipends for professional development sessions	 $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____ $_____

Part A: General Provider Costs (Continued)

School or District Query	Category	Cost Estimate
	☐ Wages of substitutes for teachers in professional development sessions	$_____
	☐ Conferences	$_____
	☐ Faculty travel (for professional development, school visits, etc.)	$_____
	☐ Additional student field trips	$_____
	☐ Conferences	$_____
	Total Direct Costs Not Included in Price	$_____

Part B: Provider Costs for On-Site Consulting and Technical Assistance

School or District Query	Costs or Additional Information
Is there a daily rate for on-site consultation? If so, what is it? • Specify if rate differs depending on the experience level of the consultant or for any other reason. • Note that not all providers will develop their budgets in this way.	
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)?	
Does the provider comply with government per-diem rates?	
What, if any, are charges for off-site consulting services that are not included in the package of services (e.g., phone bills, e-mail accounts)?	

Part C: Provider Costs for Professional Development

School or District Query	Costs or Additional Information
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.	

Part D: Provider Costs for Materials

School or District Query	Costs or Additional Information
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.	

Part E: Other Provider Costs

School or District Query	Costs or Additional Information
Note any other costs of 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? Please provide specific details.	

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	Materials purchasing
Flexible scheduling	Staff assignment
Funds available for professional development	Evaluation procedures
Time available for professional development	Budget authority

School-Level Policies Preferred by Provider *(To be filled in by provider)*	Existing School Policies *(To be filled in by school)*	Resolution *(To be agreed upon by each party)*
Example: Provider would like to schedule common planning time for grade-level teams three times a week.	*Example: We currently have common planning time scheduled once a week.*	*Example: 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-Level Policies Preferred by Provider *(To be filled in by provider)*	Existing District Policies *(To be filled in by district)*	Resolution *(To be agreed upon by each party)*
Example: 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

4: Provider exceeded the expectations outlined during contract discussions.

3: Provider met the expectations outlined during contract discussions.

2: Provider made some progress but did not meet the expectations outlined during contract discussions. (Priority Area)

1: Provider made little or no progress toward the expectations outlined during contract discussions. (Immediate Priority Area)

Rating of Outcomes
Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.

Overall learning environment:	4	3	2	1
Student achievement:	4	3	2	1
Student engagement:	4	3	2	1
Teacher engagement:	4	3	2	1
Changes in teacher practices:	4	3	2	1
Principal engagement:	4	3	2	1
Positive student behavior:	4	3	2	1
Parent support:	4	3	2	1
Central office support:	4	3	2	1
Superintendent support:	4	3	2	1
Community support:	4	3	2	1

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

Part B: Provider Staff

Rubric for Rating Provider Staff

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.

Rating of Provider Staff

Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.

Knowledge of services:	4	3	2	1	DK
Knowledge of school:	4	3	2	1	DK
Knowledge of district:	4	3	2	1	DK
Willingness to tailor services to school or district's individual needs:	4	3	2	1	DK
Availability for scheduled meetings:	4	3	2	1	DK
Availability for emergency meetings:	4	3	2	1	DK
Communications effectiveness:	4	3	2	1	DK
Communications timeliness:	4	3	2	1	DK
Relationship with school faculty or staff:	4	3	2	1	DK
Relationship with central office staff:	4	3	2	1	DK
Community support:	4	3	2	1	DK

Comments or Suggestions

Make any comments or suggestions in this space.

Part C: Materials

Rubric for Rating Materials

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.

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.

2: The content of the material contributed somewhat to improved teaching and learning. The format or language was confusing in parts. The material lacked a few topics or tools that would have been helpful. (Priority Area)

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)

N/A: "Not Applicable." This type of material was not used by the school or not provided by the external provider.

DK: "Don't Know." The evaluator does not have enough information or familiarity to rate this area.

Rating of Materials *Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.*							**Comments or Suggestions** *Make any comments or suggestions in this space.*
Informational literature:	4	3	2	1	N/A	DK	
Curricular materials							
Overall:	4	3	2	1	N/A	DK	
Language arts:	4	3	2	1	N/A	DK	
Mathematics:	4	3	2	1	N/A	DK	
Social studies:	4	3	2	1	N/A	DK	
Science:	4	3	2	1	N/A	DK	
Other: _____	4	3	2	1	N/A	DK	
Other: _____	4	3	2	1	N/A	DK	
Self-assessment guide:	4	3	2	1	N/A	DK	
Other materials:	4	3	2	1	N/A	DK	

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

Part D: Professional Development—Ongoing (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 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	Comments or Suggestions
Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.	*Make any comments or suggestions in this space.*

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

Part F: Networking Opportunities

> **Rubric for Rating Networking Opportunities**
>
> **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 Networking Opportunities
Rate the following outcomes using the above rubric.

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

Range of people (e.g., different grade levels, positions, geographic areas) invited to networking opportunities: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Quantity of face-to-face networking opportunities: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Range of communication opportunities with other teachers or schools: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Effectiveness of communication opportunities with other teachers or schools: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Quantity of communication opportunities with other teachers or schools: 4 3 2 1 N/A DK

Part F: Networking Opportunities (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

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 or material 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 Other Items

This section may include any specific expectations that the school listed in Tool 1.

Item: _____   4   3   2   1   N/A   DK
        _____
        _____

Item: _____   4   3   2   1   N/A   DK
        _____
        _____

Item: _____   4   3   2   1   N/A   DK
        _____
        _____

Comments or Suggestions

Make any comments or suggestions for other topics in this space.

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

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. 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 should meet with the provider to determine possible reasons for this lack of progress and agree on 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		

Area of Assessment	Evidence Used	Ranking *(Circle appropriate ranking.)*	Comments
Other:		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	
Other:		E S U N N/A DK	
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Other:		E S U N N/A DK	
Other:		E S U N N/A DK	

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