

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT MAPPING



Performance Improvement Mapping (PIM) is an intensive, data-driven, results-oriented school planning model. It was developed by the Massachusetts Department of Education (MA DOE) to assist low-performing schools in raising student performance in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Its integrated steps guide school and district leaders to:

- Set student performance goals aligned with state and federal expectations for adequate yearly progress.
- Analyze student assessment data to determine student strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify the specific skills and knowledge that students lack.
- Analyze the root causes of low student performance.
- Appraise current practices to determine what is and is not working.
- Select new research-based strategies.
- Write a prioritized action plan based on the school's analysis of its needs and programs.
- Evaluate the implementation and outcomes of the plan.

PIM as a continuous improvement process

The PIM process is more than a set of instructions for writing a plan; it is a framework for establishing a continuous improvement process that is focused on increasing student performance. Although the written document guides the school's improvement efforts, the larger goal is to foster a school culture of ongoing self-analysis and improvement. A school that undertakes the PIM process can hope to achieve the following:

- Principals will learn how to involve school staff in making informed decisions on program development.
- Teachers will find new ways to interpret data and use it to inform their own teaching.
- Communication about teaching and learning will increase at the grade, subject and school level, and evidence will be used as the basis for decision making.
- School staff will look for root causes before attempting to solve problems.
- Data on program implementation and outcomes will be collected regularly, shared collectively, and used to modify instruction and programming.

Essential conditions for planning

The way a school approaches the PIM process determines how much it will impact the culture of the school. The following conditions are most conducive to creating whole school change:

- School staff must be involved in data analysis and decision making. Schools often choose to have representatives of the staff serve on a school planning team, sharing information and gathering input from the larger staff at critical junctures in the process.
- The main focus of the planning process must be to continuously improve instruction by increasing the effectiveness of curricula, student assessment, professional development, teacher supervision and the supports necessary for learning.
- Schools should direct their energy primarily toward changing what is within their control.
- Any other planning conducted by the school should be integrated with the PIM process.
- The planning process should both inform and respond to the district's improvement plan.

PIM and the school improvement plan



The plan resulting from the PIM process addresses core teaching and learning issues in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. It requires additional components in order to meet all federal, state, and local expectations of a school improvement plan. For example, some schools include sections on building renovations, family involvement, or school climate in their school improvement plans. Schools receiving Title I Part A funds as Schoolwide programs are required by Federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (§1114) must include specific components that may or may not be addressed as a school identifies causes of low student performance and appropriate strategies.

IMPORTANT: Schools receiving Title I, Part A funds as Schoolwide programs must include the following components in their school improvement plans: (A) A comprehensive needs assessment of the entire school; (B) Schoolwide reform strategies; (C) Instruction by highly qualified teachers; (D) High-quality and ongoing professional development for teachers, principals, and paraprofessionals; (E) Strategies to attract highly qualified teachers to high-need schools; (F) Strategies to increase parental involvement in accordance with §1118, such as family literacy services; (G) Plans for assisting preschool children in the transition from early childhood programs; (H) Measures to include teachers in the decisions regarding the use of academic assessments...in order to provide information on, and to improve, the achievement of individual students and the overall instructional program; (I) Activities to ensure that students who experience difficulty mastering the proficient or advanced levels of academic achievement standards...be provided with effective, timely, and additional assistance; (J) Coordination and integration of Federal, State, and local services and programs. For more information on Title I requirements, visit the MA DOE Web site at www.doe.mass.edu/nclb/title_i.html.

Appendix A articulates a suggested structure and format schools may use; however, MA DOE does not require schools to use a specific template for the written plan that results from the PIM process as long as it captures the essential information described below.

- **The Executive Summary is a brief (1-2 paragraphs) holistic description of the essential parts of the plan. It describes the school’s major priorities—the big changes and improvements**

that will be happening in the school—and the rationale for undertaking them.

- **The Narrative provides the reader with relevant background information about the school, describes the planning process the school used, and supports the rationale underlying the critical decisions the school made.**
- **Action plans are step by step “how to guides” for implementing the strategies the school selected and the activities needed to implement them. Benchmarks describe how the school will monitor the quality of the implementation of its most critical strategies, indicate the tools used for measuring the plan's impact on students’ skills, knowledge and behaviors, and articulate the amount of incremental progress that should be made on student outcomes if the school is on track toward reaching its goal.**

Using the PIM process according to a school’s needs



Schools with very low performance will benefit from conducting the PIM process in its entirety. Schools with more limited needs to raise student performance may use the PIM model more flexibly to improve their existing school improvement process. For these schools, the inquiry methods incorporated in the PIM process can serve as a model for how a thorough planning process may be conducted to produce a comprehensive plan to raise student achievement in specific areas.

School and district leaders have inquired about using one or more PIM steps in isolation to strengthen weak links in their process. Because the findings in each PIM step form the basis for the next, the quality of work

performed in early steps determines the success of subsequent steps. Therefore, schools should be sure that they have conducted the quality and type of analysis described in all earlier steps before undertaking an individual PIM step.

Conducting PIM with a trained facilitator

Facilitator: The facilitator will find guidance in this sidebar.

The PIM process is designed for use by school planning teams working with an outside facilitator who is rigorously trained in the model. The facilitator’s role is critical in encouraging school staff to challenge their assumptions about student learning and think critically about their own practice. Furthermore, many of the activities are difficult to describe adequately in a text and are best understood through experience, and a trained facilitator understands the level of quality expected for the products of each step. Schools that try to conduct the process using only the handbook may misunderstand or have trouble completing the activities.

MA DOE periodically offers facilitator training to district staff whose role is to assist schools in improvement planning. Priority is given to staff from districts identified for improvement or with schools identified for improvement. Some consultant facilitators are available. Contact MA DOE at ata@doe.mass.edu for more information.

Conducting PIM without a trained facilitator



Because the number of trained facilitators is limited, the PIM Handbook is available online for schools and districts that would like to try the PIM planning methods on their own. However, it is strongly recommended that the principal of the school not serve as the facilitator of the PIM process. The principal has a unique and important role as the leader of the planning team and must be free to participate in discussions in that capacity without the constraints of a facilitator (who must remain neutral). Furthermore, while analyzing necessary changes to the status quo of a school, an external facilitator may be able to ask more pointed questions about how things are currently done and why.

Schools that use the handbook without a trained facilitator should consider identifying a neutral person with facilitation skills to keep the planning team on task and set a process for making decisions and resolving conflicts. Before beginning, the principal and facilitator should read the entire handbook so they will understand the process as a whole and how each step fits in. The logic model underlying the PIM process relies on the close connections between the steps. It is important to understand the complete process even if the school chooses to use only some of the PIM activities, because the facilitator needs to understand what the outputs from previous steps would be in order to assemble the right information as inputs into the current activity.

The role of the principal in the PIM process



Because he or she is ultimately accountable for the performance of the adults and students in the school, the principal is the leader of the planning team during the development of the written plan, and more importantly,

the person with overall responsibility for implementing the plan. It is critical, then, that the principal is oriented to the process and the anticipated outcomes by someone in an authority role in the district. The conversation should include any potential roadblocks that might emerge, the selection of the team, and when and how the district will support the team through lending content and pedagogical expertise, securing time for the team to meet, etc.

The principal and the facilitator have specific—and distinct—roles throughout the development of the plan. These individuals should meet before the first meeting of the planning team to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each.

Roles and responsibilities of the principal and facilitator

	The principal...	The facilitator...
Organizing the team	Identifies and recruits members of the planning team and makes sure that members attend and actively participate in all meetings.	Identifies rotating roles for members (e.g. time keeper, recorder, etc.).
Setting the stage	Directs the process by setting a vision for the plan. Constantly reinforces the importance of PIM through his/her words and actions.	Provides an overview of the process, the expected products and the time and effort that will be required.
Establishing group norms	Is comfortable ceding the floor to other team members whose views and perspectives might differ from his/her own. Ensures that uncomfortable issues raised during planning meetings are kept confidential.	Helps the group establish written norms and maintains a comfortable environment where risk-taking and reflection are encouraged and supported.
Conducting the work	Creates time for the planning activities. Ensures that follow-up work is completed between team meetings and that documents and materials are organized and readily accessible.	Guides the activities at each step and makes sure the resulting products represent that the step was done thoroughly.

Roles and responsibilities of the principal and facilitator

	The principal...	The facilitator...
Managing discussions	Does not claim to know all of the answers; instead, requests ideas from all group members, particularly when group members have special skills and knowledge that they can contribute.	Keeps discussion focused on the task at hand. Makes sure the team members base their views on data and evidence rather than perceptions.
Sharing the plan	Manages the communication and dissemination of the work of the planning team to the rest of the school and brings the findings of the team to the district level as needed.	Helps the team document their discussions and decisions at each step. Helps the team plan and create documents and presentations summarizing the outcomes of the process.
Implementing the plan	Organizes and monitors the implementation of the plan and allocates the necessary time and human, material, and fiscal resources to embed the plan into the daily work of the school. Holds him/herself and all members of the school staff accountable for the success of the plan.	May consult with the school on the collection of benchmark data and the ongoing evaluation and revision of the plan.

The role of the local school district in the PIM process



Improvement planning should occur both at the district level and in schools; these processes should inform each other both in the analyses of needs and in the identification of improvement initiatives.

Most schools are part of a larger school system and should enter the PIM process with support and direction from the district in both the planning and implementation phases. Districts should support schools in the following ways:

- Handling, or ensuring, facilitation of the process

- Providing data and time for school planning
- Taking part in causal analysis discussions about the results of district reviews of schools and classrooms, curriculum alignment and implementation, professional development needs and the allocation and availability of resources
- Providing content/pedagogical expertise in steps 3, 5, 6, 7
- Providing support for the implementation of identified improvement initiatives
- Providing oversight of and problem-solving around the implementation of improvement initiatives

Districts may choose to involve multiple schools in the PIM process as part of a larger strategy for system-wide improvement focused on its schools with lower performance. In engaging more than one school in the process, the district should:

- Identify trends in student performance (such as the needs of student subgroups) that may not be apparent in individual schools
- Better understand, evaluate, and address gaps in curriculum alignment and the implementation of key district-wide initiatives
- Develop district-wide plans to address needs identified across multiple schools
- Make decisions about the allocation of fiscal, material, human resources, and professional development, to schools based on identified needs

The written plan



School planning teams should note that the worksheets throughout the handbook are tools used to capture information during the work sessions. They are not effective vehicles for communicating the final, overall plan to those who have not participated in the process, such as other teachers, parents, district staff, school councils, school committee members, etc.

At this time MA DOE does not require schools to use a specific template for the written plan that results from the PIM process. However, many schools have asked for guidance regarding the plan's structure and contents. Appendix A contains one possible format schools may use. Schools should first follow any instructions and/or templates for preparing the plan required by their district.

How to use the PIM Handbook



Facilitator: Worksheets may be projected with an LCD projector or duplicated on poster-size paper. While using an LCD projector saves time, posters let planning teams view multiple worksheets at once, including those from previous steps.

The PIM Handbook contains materials and guidance both for participants and the facilitator. Each activity is described so that participants will understand what they are supposed to do and what the end product should be. Guiding Questions at the beginning of each section frame the overall task the school planning team will undertake in that section. Discussion Questions in the text of each section, lead the team through the conversations they need to have to accomplish the work. Worksheets at the end of each step guide participants through the process and help organize the products of the team's work.

Many of the worksheets contain a Rationale Box where teams record key points from their conversations. Notes from the Rational Boxes will be

useful when the team writes the plan. (For guidance on documenting the plan, see Appendix A.)

The Handbook is available for download from MA DOE Web site in Portable Document Format (PDF). Should a school decide to undertake the PIM process, it is recommended that the planning team print the entire handbook. To view or print only certain sections of the handbook (e.g., worksheets or specific steps) use the Adobe Bookmark feature, which displays a list of sections on the left-hand side of the screen. To view Bookmarks, select View from an Adobe Reader or Acrobat menu and then select Bookmarks. Navigate the handbook from the Index by clicking on

an Index title. Electronic copies of the worksheets are available on the Web site in Microsoft Word and Excel.

The PIM Handbook is periodically revised and updated. The date and version number of the handbook are listed at the bottom of each page.

A Tool Kit box like the one pictured below appears at the beginning of each step. It contains a list of the worksheets and other materials and equipment needed to complete the step, as well as useful resources.

Example Tool Kit

Worksheets

The worksheets used in each step are listed here and are physically located at the end of each step in the printed document. When viewed online in PDF format, click on the name of a worksheet to open it in its native format (such as Microsoft Word or Excel).

Other Materials and Equipment

This section lists some of the materials and equipment that the school planning team will need in advance to be prepared to conduct the activities in the step (e.g., overhead projector, LCD projector, etc.).

Resources

This section contains references to resources that are external to the handbook such as web sites or other documentation the team may find helpful in completing a particular step.

