
Leading Action Research



Sponsored by Project CENTRAL

A Project of the Florida Department of Education
In Collaboration with the University of Central Florida

Introductions

- Why would you like to lead your school through the action research process?
- What do you hope to achieve by implementing action research in your school?

Learning Objectives

- Define the term “action research.”
- Describe the process of action research.
- Provide benefits of action research for the student, teacher, and school.
- Discuss importance of leadership roles.
- Discuss questions that will provide the foundation for action research implementation.

Assessing Current Practices

- How is your school currently identifying student needs in classrooms?
- What current instructional practices are being implemented to address those needs?
- What sources of classroom data are collected to monitor student learning?
- How is your school determining the effectiveness of those instructional practices?

“The idea of action research is that educational problems and issues are best identified and investigated where the action is: at the classroom and school level. By integrating research into these settings and engaging those who work at this level in research activities, findings can be applied immediately and problems solved more quickly” (Guskey, 2000).

A Model of Professional Development

- Action research is a model of professional development in which educators study student learning related to their own teaching and a process that allows them to learn about their own instructional practices and to continue to improve student learning.

Professional Development System Evaluation Protocol

- Protocol Standards

- Faculty Level

- Evaluation: Action Research 1.4.4

Evaluations of the effect of training are incorporated into pilot studies and action research conducted by the teacher

FLDOE, 2004

What is Action Research?

- “Action research is planned inquiry – a **deliberate** search for truth, information, or knowledge” (Schmuck, 1997).

What is Action Research?

- “Action (teacher) research is a **natural extension of good teaching**. Observing students closely, analyzing their needs, and adjusting the curriculum to fit the needs of all students have always been important skills demonstrated by fine teachers” (Hubbard & Power, 1999).

What is Action Research?

- “Action research is a **continuous** and **reflective process** in which educators make instructional decisions in their classroom based on student needs as reflected by classroom data” (Project CENTRAL, 2004).

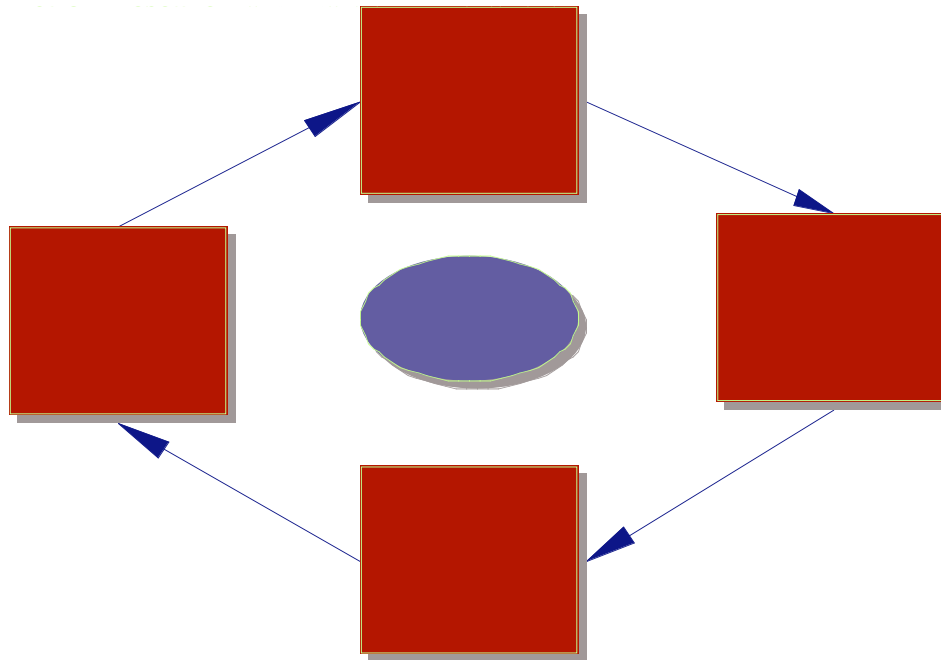
What is Action Research?

- Action research provides teachers and administrators with an opportunity to establish a decision-making cycle that guides instructional planning for the school and individual classrooms.

Goal of Action Research

- The primary goal of action research is to improve student learning by studying and refining the skill of teaching.

The Action Research Process



Questions to ask teachers to establish the basis for implementing action research:

- Based on available data, what do your students need to learn to demonstrate achievement in school?
- What instructional practices are you currently implementing to assist students in achieving their learning goals?

Investigating & Identifying a Classroom Problem

Phase 1

“Teachers who rush to complete the problem formulation stage are more likely to flounder in their later efforts, whereas teachers who take time to reflect on and define their problem are more likely to pursue questions yielding meaningful results.”

~Sagor, 1992

Questions to ask teachers:

- What do you need to learn in order to more effectively guide students to achieve established learning goals?
- What instructional practices would you like to investigate to verify their implementation success?

Investigating & Identifying a Classroom Problem

- Identify an area of concern
- Determine specific information to be collected
- Identify data sources
- Analyze data to determine student needs and strengths
- Identify instructional needs

Focus

- What questions do you have about effectively guiding Phase One of the action research process?

Developing & Implementing an Action Research Plan

Phase 2

The action research plan is a backbone for the action research study – a skeletal frame on which to hang all emerging thoughts about the research question, data collection, and how to sustain the research.

~ Hubbard & Power, 1999

Components of Action Research Plan

- Research Question
- Learner Outcomes
- Instructional Focus
- Data Collection
- Support
- Implementation Schedule

Implementing an Action Research Plan

- Implement the instructional practices consistently
- Implement the instructional practices as they were designed to be implemented
- Monitor student results

Focus

- What questions do you have about effectively guiding Phase Two of the action research process?

Collecting & Analyzing Data

Phase 3

Meaningful action research should not depart from the daily work of classroom teachers, but become “a part of” their daily work. Hence, selecting the data collection strategies to use for study simply means thinking about life in the classroom/school and the ways life in the classroom/school can be naturally captured as data.

~Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003

Data considerations

- What information do I need to collect to measure student learning aligned to my instructional focus?
- What data collection sources will provide me with the needed information?
- Are the data collection sources easy to administer, gather, and analyze?

Classroom Data Collection Tools

- Student work samples
- Published formal and informal assessments
- Anecdotal records, checklists, observations, interviews, and surveys
- Rubrics
- Classroom quizzes, tests, and grades
- Performance assessments
- Research journals, diaries, and logs
- Discussions with mentors, coaches, etc.

Analyzing Classroom Data

- Create an organization system for storing data (binder with labeled tabs per data source)
- Plan time to periodically analyze the collected data
- When analyzing the data, does the information align with the research question & learner outcomes
- Look for central themes across the data and create a list of findings

Focus

- What questions do you have about effectively guiding Phase Three of the action research process?

Making Instructional Decisions & Sharing the Results

Phase 4

People without information cannot act.
People with information cannot help but act.
~ Ken Blanchard

Determining Next Steps

- Continue
- Revise
- Report

When determining the next step, think about and answer the following

- questions:**
- *Are students benefiting from the instructional focus that I have planned and implemented?*
 - *Was the classroom problem solved?*
 - *Did the instructional focus align to my students' needs?*
 - *Were all the phases of the action research process followed?*
 - *Were all of the necessary materials available?*
 - *Did I receive the support I needed?*

Focus

- What questions do you have about effectively guiding Phase Four of the action research process?

Leading Action Research in the Schools

Guidelines to Leading the Action Research Process

- Build a support system for teachers by providing people who are knowledgeable of the action research process, student learning, and instructional practices.
- Set high expectations for the staff and students by establishing a basis for implementing the process through professional development and goals.

Guidelines

- Create a professional library housing professional literature, assessment tools and other instructional resources.
- Provide sufficient and consistent opportunities in the school day for collaborative action research.
- Plan several sharing sessions for faculty to present their action research and findings throughout the school year.

Guidelines

- Continuous encouragement for collaborative inquiry, reflection, and dialogue.
- Principal's involvement and support is consistent and continuously demonstrated through knowledge, organization, and management, as well as the alignment of action research to teacher growth.
- Understands and communicates the benefits of the process.

Benefits of Action Research

■ Students

- ❑ A means of improving student achievement through more effective teaching and administration of schools (Cohen & Manion, 1980; Elliot, 1991; Kemmis, 1981; Nixon, 1987; Stenhouse, 1975).
- ❑ Student learning is being studied.
- ❑ Instructional practices are being designed to accelerate learning and build upon student knowledge
- ❑ Close monitoring is occurring to ensure appropriate progress is being made
- ❑ Adjustments in instruction when needed

Benefits of Action Research

- Teachers
 - Educators involved in action research became more flexible in their thinking, more open to new ideas, and more able to solve new problems (Pine, 1981).
 - Engaging in action research influenced teachers' thinking skills, sense of efficacy, willingness to communicate with colleagues, and attitudes toward professional development and the process of change (Simmons, 1985).
 - Teachers engaged in action research depended more on themselves as decision makers and gained more confidence in what they believed about curriculum and instruction (Strickland, 1988).
 - Action researchers were reading, discussing, thinking, and assessing ideas from related research with expanded analytical skills (Simmons, 1985).
 - Can bridge learned knowledge into actual practice

Questions administrators (leaders) need to ask themselves to increase their knowledge base of action research.

- What do our teachers need to learn to more effectively address the needs of their students?
- What can I do as an administrator (leader) to support teachers in the action research process?

Questions for

administrators (leaders):

- What does the disaggregated data reflect about:
teacher learning?

- instructional strategies being used in
the classrooms?

- student learning?

- How will our teachers evaluate their instructional practices?
- How will our teachers evaluate their professional growth?
- How will our teachers use the information from action research and their reflections to improve student learning?

Reflection question

- What steps will you take to assist in the implementation of the action research process at your school site(s)?

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