This workbook includes a process to use to examine Reading First assessment data and to create Actions Plans to improve School-Level Reading First Implementations in response to the data. The goal is always to improve student achievement.

When considering use of a particular action, be sure that the action is aligned with the State Reading First Plan. In all cases, the State Plan takes precedence.

For electronic copies of this workbook, contact:
Western Regional Reading First Technical Assistance Center (WRRFTAC)
RMC Research Corporation
497 Oakway Road, Suite 280
Eugene, OR 97401-5619
(503) 552-5795 cdevalerio@rmccorp.com

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The Action Planning Process

What is Action Planning?

Action Planning is a process through which a school leadership team makes schoolwide plans to improve the performance of targeted groups of students who are not making adequate progress in a Reading First implementation. The process is done just one or two times a year and involves examination of targeted groups of students rather than the student population as a whole (means or medians) or individual students. These groupings are determined according to grade level and risk status of students at the beginning of the school year.

To conduct Action Planning, it is recommended a school divide its students into twelve groups for examining the data. These twelve groups are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. First Grade – High Risk</td>
<td>5. First Grade – Some Risk</td>
<td>8. First Grade – Grade Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Third Grade – High Risk</td>
<td>11. Third Grade - Some Risk</td>
<td>12. Third Grade – Grade Level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Action Planning process includes several major steps. The process begins with gathering data to determine which groups have or have not made adequate progress. “Adequate Progress” is defined as a group making or maintaining needed progress to reach or remain at grade level performance. The school leadership team examines this data to determine which particular groups of students are not making adequate progress and therefore need a written action plan. After these groups are identified, the school leadership team establishes the order in which action plans will be written. The process of creating action plans for these identified groups is then set into motion.

Steps in the Action Planning Process

Step 1 - Gather and Display Adequate Progress Data
The Action Planning process begins with an analysis of student performance during the previous school year or most current time period. The purpose of the analysis is to identify particular groups of students for whom an Action Plan is needed because the group as a whole did not to make adequate progress. Adequate Progress is a term used to describe students' movement along the achievement continuum. In order for students to be considered as “making adequate progress” when conducting action planning, the following criteria are used:

- Students starting the school year at Grade Level must remain at Grade Level status at the end of the school year in order to be considered as having made adequate progress.
- Students starting the school year at Some Risk must move to Grade Level status by the end of the school year in order to be considered as having made adequate progress.
- K-1 students starting the school year at High Risk must improve to Some Risk status by winter and Grade Level status by the end of the school year in order to have made adequate progress.
- Grade 2/3 students starting the school year at High Risk must improve to Grade Level or Some Risk status by the end of the year in order to have made adequate progress.
The reason for the difference between *High Risk K-1* and *High Risk 2-3* adequate progress guidelines is that students in second and third grade may be very far behind at the beginning of the school year, and it is reasonable to assume that many of these students will need two years of work to catch up to grade level. On the other hand, we now have enough data to show that schools providing instruction with enough intensity can move a large majority of their *High Risk K-1* students to *Grade Level* status in one year.

Below is a chart that summarizes adequate progress:

Form A (*Summary of School Data*) can be used to record adequate progress data for a school. The small boxes within the form can be used to record the number as well as percent of students who made adequate progress for each risk group at each grade level. Note that the form also includes columns to record end-of-year progress monitoring data as well as end-of-year comprehension outcome data. This end-of-year data can be combined with adequate progress data to give a succinct picture of each grade level’s overall achievement.

Below is an excerpt from the Form A. The excerpt shows the row for recording second grade data. There are similar rows for other grades:
Directions for completing the adequate progress section of Form A Summary of School Data:

- In each box write a fraction showing the number of students making adequate progress. The denominator of the fraction is the number of students in the designated grade level that began the school year or time period at the risk level indicated. The numerator is the number of students who made adequate progress according to the guidelines previously defined.

On the example above, in the column titled From Some Risk to Grade Level, the denominator would be the number of students (27) who began the year at Some Risk in second grade. The numerator is the number of those students (20) who moved to Grade Level by the end of the school year.

- In each box, write the percentage of students making adequate progress next to the raw numbers. Using the example above, 27 second grade students began the year at Some Risk and 20 of these students ended the year at Grade Level. For the fraction 20/27, the percent is 74%, which signifies that 74 percent of the students in second grade who began the school year at Some Risk moved to Grade Level status by the end of the year and thus made adequate progress.

Recording Outcome Data. The two columns furthest to the right on the Summary of School Data are not for recording adequate progress; these columns are for recording the percent of students who, at the end of the school year, scored at or above grade level on the school's progress monitoring assessment as well as on the comprehension outcome assessment. This additional end-of-year outcome data is vital in making decisions about actions to be taken to improve a school's Reading First implementation.

The National Center for Reading First Technical Assistance Center (NCRFTAC) has created a number of tools to help schools in the action planning process. These tools will be discussed at each step of the action planning process at which one or more of these tools could be helpful.

**Tools for Action Planning - Gather and Display Progress Monitoring Data**

- **Electronic System for Constructing Reports of Adequate Progress:** NRFTAC has constructed an electronic system through which school progress monitoring data can be entered into an Excel spreadsheet. This data input will result in a chart showing the extent that adequate progress has been made from the beginning of year to mid-year and from the beginning of year to end of year. The report will indicate adequate progress made for each of the twelve groups described above.
Step 2 – Analyze Data to Determine Groups that Did Not Make Adequate Progress.

When the Summary of School Data table is completed, the leadership team examines the fraction and percent in each box to determine if a sufficient number of students in each group made adequate progress. There are no set expectations indicating the percent of students who should made adequate progress within each group at each grade level. However, if a school expects to increase the percentage of students reaching proficiency levels on outcome measures, leadership personnel should expect a large majority of students to improve their performance throughout the school year. Below are some guidelines for adequate progress expectations:

- For students at Grade Level, nearly all of these students at K-3 should remain at Grade Level status throughout the school year.
- If instruction is effective, a large majority of Some Risk students should be expected to move to Grade Level status by the end of the school year.
- For students at High Risk in grades K and 1, a significant proportion of these students should move to Grade Level status by the end of the school year. Data indicate it is more difficult to move High Risk students up the achievement continuum in grades 2 and 3, without substantial intervention. If data indicate few of these students have made adequate progress, the team should strongly consider writing an action plan to increase instructional intensity for these students.

Some state departments of education have set state Reading First adequate progress goals that individual schools are expected to achieve. For example, one Reading First state director requires 60% while another requires 70% of all K-3 students to make adequate progress in order to receive continuation funding; another state requires that 50% of students within a school make adequate progress in three of four grade levels K-3. If a leadership team is unsure if their Reading First state office has an expectation for adequate progress, the team should contact their state Reading First director.

Once leadership teams determine group(s) needing action plans, Form B Identifying and Prioritizing Groups for Action Planning should be used to record this information. A check should be placed in the appropriate box(es) at the top of the form for each group identified as needing a written action plan. This process is illustrated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups for Which an Action Plan is Needed</th>
<th>High Risk Students</th>
<th>Some Risk Students</th>
<th>At Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Form B – Identifying and Prioritizing Groups for Action Planning
Step 3 - Prioritize Creation of Action Plans

In this step, the school leadership team prioritizes the order for creating Action Plans for the groups identified in Step 2. A school creates written action plans for every group of students that did not make adequate progress, with the goal of bringing all students to grade level performance. As not all action plans can be written and implemented at the same time, the leadership team will need to prioritize the order in which action plans will be developed. Use the bottom half of Form B Identifying and Prioritizing Groups for Action Planning for recording the order in which group action plans will be written:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Plan Number</th>
<th>Grade and Group(s) Targeted by Action Plan</th>
<th>Date Action Plan to be Created</th>
<th>Date Action Plan to be Implemented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>First Grade/Grade Level Students</td>
<td>6/15/08</td>
<td>8/20/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Second and Third Grade/High Risk Students</td>
<td>6/16/08</td>
<td>8/20/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kindergarten/Some Risk Students</td>
<td>7/02/08</td>
<td>8/20/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that, in some cases, a particular Action Plan may be suitable for two groups if the plan for the groups has a number of common features. In deciding on a priority for plans, consider these factors:
- Begin with groups that have the most children.
- Place an emphasis on all Grade 1 groups.
- Place an emphasis on second and third groups at High Risk.

Step 4 - Create Action Plans

The work on creating action plans begins with creating an Action Plan for the first group listed on the prioritized list. Other action plans should be created and implemented as soon as possible, but not so fast as to overwhelm a staff. A problem solving process is used to create each group action plan. The process involves a number of steps as illustrated below:

- Define the Problem
  What is the problem?

- Evaluate
  How well did the Action Plan work?

- Conduct Problem Analysis
  Why is it happening?

- Implement the Plan
  How will we ensure all steps in the Action Plan have been implemented?

- Determine the Goal
  How well do we want our students to perform?

- Create a Plan
  What will we do about it?
Define the Problem
The initial step in using the problem solving process is to identify and then define the problem. A problem can be defined numerically as the difference between what is expected and the actual performance. For example, a particular school may expect that 90% of their first graders who started the year at Grade Level remain at Grade Level status at the end of the year. Adequate progress data for that school shows that only 60% of these first graders remained at Grade Level at the end of the year. The difference between expectation and performance is 30 percentage points.

The definition of the problem is recorded on the front page of Form C Action Plan for Targeted Group as illustrated below:

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Identify/Define the Problem: “90% of first graders who started the 2007-08 school year at Grade Level status were expected to remain at Grade Level status at the end of the year. Only 60% of these students remained at Grade Level. The difference between performance and expectation is 30 percentage points.”
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Conduct Problem Analysis
Problem analysis is the process of gathering relevant information about the critical components of a school’s Reading First plan and implementation of that plan in order to determine the underlying cause(s) of the identified problem. These critical components include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Materials and Instruction</th>
<th>5. Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Assessment</td>
<td>7. School Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Data Utilization</td>
<td>8. Reading First Coach</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conducting a problem analysis is a key step in the problem solving process. If a leadership team can determine why a problem is occurring, the chances of creating a successful action plan are greatly increased. The time spent on this analysis should provide sufficient information to indicate that an action plan has a good probability of being successful once it is implemented.

The process of analyzing problems begins with an analysis of a school’s Reading First plan for the targeted group of students and the implementation of that plan to determine where adjustment(s) need to be made. There are specific tools and strategies that can be used to do this problem analysis. One set of documents that may be helpful include the Grade Level Implementation Questions.

Tools for Action Planning - Conduct Problem Analysis
- **Grade Level Implementation Questions.** These are sets of accompanying documents to the Practices Handbook for grades K, 1, and 2/3. Each of these documents contains questions that a leadership team should consider when conducting a problem analysis at a specific grade level. All questions are related to implementation of a school’s Reading First plan in each of the eight critical components mentioned above.
Beneath each of the questions asked within the documents are criteria that help further define each question. If the answer to a specific question about the school’s Reading First plan or implementation of that plan is unknown, it is important not to guess at a response. Rather, the team should take the time to obtain the answers to these questions through discussions with school personnel and observations within classrooms.

As the leadership team engages in this process, members should note areas that may be problematic. Once this is completed, the team should prioritize and determine the most probable cause(s) of inadequate progress. The team should summarize this information on the bottom of the first page of the Action Plan for Targeted Group. These areas then become the focus of the Action Plan.

For example, one leadership team completes a problem analysis of second grade Some Risk students who as a whole group made less-than-expected adequate progress. One issue discerned during the problem analysis involves Time and Grouping. According to the school’s Reading First plan, these students are to receive an extra 45 minutes of reading instruction per day. However, the leadership team becomes aware that these students actually receive only 15 extra minutes per day of reading instruction because of certain grouping practices that are occurring during this time within targeted classrooms. The team summarizes the problem analysis on the front page of Form C Action Plan for Targeted Group as follows:

**Summary of Problem Analysis:**
“Time and Grouping Practices: Grade 2 Some Risk students receive only 15 minutes of extra reading instruction per day. This is not enough time to meet these students’ instructional needs for annual and “catch-up” growth. This instructional time needs to be increased.”

Form C – Action Plan for Targeted Group

**Determine a Goal**

The Action Plan begins with the leadership team creating a goal for the upcoming period of time in which the new action plan will be in place. This goal statement should include: a) the specific group for whom the action plan is being created, b) the time frame, and c) the criterion. This goal is written on the front page of Form C Action Plan for Targeted Group. One example of a group goal is illustrated as follows:

**Goal of the Action Plan:**
“By the end of the 2008-08 school year, 90% of our first grade students who began the year at Grade Level status will remain at Grade Level status.”

Form C – Action Plan for Targeted Group

**Create a Plan**

The Action Plan itself is a written plan specifically describing the changes needed to solve the identified problem. There should be a clear link between the information obtained during the problem analysis and
Changes that will be made to the targeted group's action plan. The *Practices Handbook* is one tool that can be very helpful in this process.

**Tools for Action Planning - Create Action Plan**

- **Practices Handbook.** The *Practices Handbook* includes descriptions of practices at schools that have produced significant gains in student reading performance with high-risk populations. The Handbook is divided into eight sections: Materials and Instruction, Time and Grouping, Assessment and Data Utilization, Professional Development, Schoolwide Organization and Support, School Leadership-Principal, and Reading First Coach. Each section contains information that describes detailed practices conducted in specific grade levels for children at *Grade Level, Some Risk* and *High Risk* status. Members of the school leadership team ideally will become familiar with this Handbook before beginning the Action Planning Process and can use the Handbook as a resource during the Action Planning process.

The numerical headings in the *Grade Level Implementation Questions* documents (e.g. B.1, F.5) are directly related to the framework in the *Practices Handbook*. If a team is using these documents, a cause for problem can be matched with specific actions presented in the *Practices Handbook* to help correct the problem. For example, a leadership team is concerned that Grades 2 and 3 *High Risk* students at their school have not made adequate progress. The team uses the *Grade Level Implementation Questions* to help determine the cause of this problem. They determine that one probable cause of the identified problem is found in A.4.d (no pacing guides are being used with intervention core reading program and therefore not enough material is being covered). The team uses the *Practices Handbook* under A.4.d. and finds suggestions for using a pacing guide with an intervention core reading program.

**Example of Matching Problem Analysis to Action Plan**

A leadership team notes during the problem analysis that the extra reading time that is available for their third grade *High Risk* students is being used primarily as fluency practice with partner reading. No teacher-led instruction occurs during this time period. The team writes in the Summary of Problem Analysis that this is likely a major cause of this group’s lack of adequate progress. The *Practices Handbook* indicates that schools making significant progress use this time to provide intensive teacher-directed instruction on grade-level content and on skill gaps from earlier grades to these students. The leadership team therefore decides to provide more intensive teacher-led instruction during this time period. As a result, the Action Plan then reflects changes needed to remedy this specific issue under Materials and Instruction. Actions may also need to planned for Professional Development and any other areas that may be affected due to these changes.

The second page of Appendix C *Action Plan for Targeted Group* is used to record specific actions that will be made to the current plan for the targeted group. Guidelines for completing this form are as follows:

- **Column 1 - Area for Action Plan.** This first column identifies critical components of the Action Plan. These areas are reflective of the sections in the *Practices Handbook*: Materials and Instruction, Time/Coverage/Mastery and Grouping, Assessment, Data Utilization, Professional Development, Schoolwide Organization and Support, School Leadership/Principal and Reading First Coach.

- **Column 2 - Action to Be Taken.** This column is for writing down specific, observable, measurable steps indicating what will be done differently in the upcoming period. **Descriptions of new plans must be specific enough so that it is possible to determine when the action has been**
implemented. The form is available electronically so that the space for the describing the plan is limitless.

- **Column 3 - Person Responsible.** This column is used to indicate the person who is responsible for implementation each particular step in the Action Plan. Although a number of people may be involved in implementing a particular step in the plan, this designated individual oversees this action.

- **Column 4 - Report on Progress of Implementation.** This column can be used throughout the school year to report on progress of particular actions. Each time an action is actually taken on a specific step in the plan, the action and date should be recorded in the last column.

**Implement the Plan**
The Action Plan should be implemented as it was designed. As noted above, Column 4 of the *Action Plan for Targeted Group* is used to document implementation of each step in the plan. The designated person in Column 3 is responsible for doing so. This person generally has two responsibilities: 1) Ensure that each designated step in the Action Plan actually takes place, and 2) Confirm that this step is put into action as it was designed. The best laid Action Plans will be meaningless unless the steps within the Action Plan are actually taken.

**Evaluate the Plan**
The effectiveness of an Action Plan cannot be determined before its implementation. Therefore, the Action Plan should be monitored and then evaluated at the end of the goal period. The leadership team should gather at various times throughout the year to examine data and discuss progress on each of the steps within the Action Plan, handle issues as they arise, and make changes to the plan as needed. An Action Plan can be carefully and thoughtfully planned, but the ultimate test is if the Action Plan indeed increases student achievement.

At the end of goal period, the leadership team should convene to formally evaluate the Action Plan. The team should reflect back on the original goal of the action plan as written on the first page of the *Action Plan for Targeted Group*. Possible outcomes include:

- The goal was met. The changes reflected in the Action Plan met a high number of students' needs and should become part of the school's overall Reading First plan.
- The goal was not met, but achievement of the targeted group improved. Make additional changes as needed to the targeted group’s Reading First plan and/or implementation of that plan.
- Data indicate little progress was made with the targeted group of students. Reanalyze the problem to determine other changes that might better address the problem.