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Webcast Professional Learning Series**

**Viewer's Guide**

**Board Improvement  
Planning for Student  
Achievement**

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## Overview

Planning for district and school improvement has long been a practice in Ontario education. However, in recent years, the quest to prepare every student for the 21st century has led us to examine carefully professional practice and research in this area. As a result, our interest in the district planning process has been reignited and we have come to appreciate the role that precision planning can play in helping us realize our key priorities – namely, improving learning and achievement for all students, reducing achievement gaps and enhancing public confidence in our publicly funded system.

Using the work of Douglas Reeves, Steven White, Mike Schmoker and others, as well as gathering evidence of effective practices from the field, the Student Achievement Division has developed a comprehensive set of tools and resources to assist school districts in planning, designing and monitoring effective improvement strategies. All of these tools – the *Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement*, the *Board Improvement Planning Assessment Tool* and the *School Effectiveness Framework* – reinforce the understanding that board improvement planning has two main purposes:

1. to improve student learning, achievement and well-being, and
2. to build capacity and sustainability in the skill and knowledge of educators.

Reflecting a deliberate movement away from the “everything agenda,” the *Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement* and its related tools and templates are built on the notion of precise SMART goals based on the analysis of relevant data.

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“The everything agenda is an *energy vampire* that sucks all of our energy and serves to leave us tired and frustrated because we can never fully accomplish what we hope to do.”

“Plans that are limited in scope enable staff to focus on a few really important things that will make a difference for students.”

Perkins, 1992, p.4

This webcast depicts two Ontario school boards –Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic DSB and Ottawa Carleton DSB – using the *Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement* (BIPSA) to consolidate their collective thinking about student learning goals and to design their action plans. While each board’s discussion is unique, they share common planning processes – needs assessment and analysis, identification of targeted evidence and ongoing monitoring to stay on track for success.

As you view this resource, we trust you will find useful information in each segment and find opportunity to reflect on the key messages summarized in each, taking into consideration that your board will be at its own stage of actualizing the intended outcomes for our collective work to enhance the achievement of all students.

*Adapted from the video overview of Mary Jean Gallagher, Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Achievement Division, Ministry of Education*

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**Improvement planning is the single-most important business of the school.**

**Three actions are the foundation for positive results:**

- 1. meaningful teamwork**
- 2. clear, measurable goals**
- 3. regular collection of performance data**

**Schmoker, 2008**

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# WEBCAST SEGMENTS

## Board Roles in Improvement Planning

### Trustees

Bill 177 establishes board responsibility for student achievement and well-being. It requires trustees to act as stewards of the board's resources and to develop a multi-year strategic plan aimed at meeting the needs of all students. The Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement (BIPSA) is developed in the context of this multi-year strategic plan. Although trustees are not responsible for the creation of the BIPSA, they are responsible for the multi-year plan and for supporting improved student achievement and well-being. Therefore, they will be interested in BIPSA implementation.

- *How might senior administrators ensure that trustees have an opportunity to explore the impact of the district-wide focus on excellence and continued student improvement?*
- *What strategies could be used to ensure that trustees are kept informed of the progress being made toward the achievement of the board's SMART goals?*
- *How might senior administrators use a comprehensive needs assessment and analysis to identify budget priorities and ensure equity of outcomes for all students?*

### Director and Senior Staff

Commitment to BIPSA goals by every member of the senior team is essential. Their collaboration and focus underscore the importance of the student achievement agenda for every educator and every school in the board.

- *What strategies might be put in place to ensure that every member of the senior team takes ownership for the development, implementation and monitoring of the board improvement plan?*
- *How might the senior team ensure that the plan shows a seamless connectedness through all the components of the plan – from the needs assessment to the identification of SMART goals to monitoring and evaluation?*

- *In what ways might other resources (e.g., Success for All; School Effectiveness Framework; Growing Success) be used to guide and support the development of the board improvement plan?*
- *How might members of the senior team fulfill the monitoring requirements in a manner that will enable them to have a clear picture of progress as well as areas of challenge at any given point in the planning cycle?*
- *How might refinements of any component be made as needs of students and/or educators change during the planning cycle?*

**“Teams are a powerful tool for leveraging the collective wisdom and expertise of individuals and ensuring a level of coherence and alignment that can’t be realized when everyone is off doing their own thing.”**

**Curtis & City, 2009, p. 61**

## **Planning in Action**

The board improvement planning process is intended to result in a living document that guides the work of the organization – in classrooms, schools and districts. Although presented sequentially in the pages that follow, the actual work associated with each stage intersects and overlaps with the other stages. In particular, the work of monitoring informs the conversation at each stage of the process.

**Five district-level responsibilities for student achievement:**

- 1. ensuring collaborative goal setting**
- 2. establishing non-negotiable goals for achievement and instruction**
- 3. creating board alignment with and support of district goals**
- 4. monitoring achievement and instruction goals**
- 5. allocating resources to support the goals for achievement and instruction**

**Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 12**

The boards featured in the webcast describe their motivation for moving forward and share what they have learned during their board improvement journeys. A critical look at the approach used in prior years leads each board to new insights which impact their BIPSA’s current iteration.



## Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

### Context

As part of the preparation to develop the BIPSA process, members of the planning team reflect on guiding principles as they collaboratively create a plan that demonstrates a focused approach to student achievement and well-being as well as a seamless alignment of practices from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

- *What characteristics does the BIPSA need to have in order to ensure the clear alignment of practices from Kindergarten to Grade 12?*
- *What are the implications for the work of the curriculum staff with respect to building and implementing a plan that represents alignment from Kindergarten to Grade 12?*
- *The alignment between the board improvement plan, the school improvement plan and the classroom must be transparent. What items need to be considered and included in the BIPSA in order to make this happen?*

### Process

Optimally, there should be neither a definitive start nor an end to the planning process. Rather, actions are revisited and refined in an ongoing and collaborative manner in response to the ever-changing needs of the organization, its schools and, most importantly, its students.

Members of the Hamilton-Wentworth team discuss their journey in coming to understand the critical aspects of their BIPSA process. They also identify specific areas to build into the support for their plan.

- *How can we ensure that the needs of all students are explicitly represented in the BIPSA?*
- *What are the impediments the senior staff and others might face when determining and carrying out the intended monitoring processes? How might you mitigate these challenges?*
- *Do the professional learning strategies in the plan represent actions that will support capacity building for every educator – supervisory officers, school administrators, department heads, curriculum staff, teachers and support staff?*

- *Do these strategies have the potential to create conversations among all educators in the district?*
- *How might you build in specific and regular times to intentionally and systematically review progress, challenges, new findings and next steps?*
- *How will you know you are making a difference for all the members of your learning community? How might you state this clearly in the BIPSA?*

## Ottawa Carleton District School Board

### Context

Members of the planning team for the Ottawa Carleton District School Board reflect on their learning from prior years. They identify their strengths and build on them as they begin the current year's planning process. Additionally, they identify new information and thinking that will impact on improving student achievement. They keep in mind the need for alignment between their board and school improvement plans.

- *What questions might you pose for all educators in your system as part of the system-wide inquiry associated with the implementation of the BIPSA?*
- *What key strategies need to be put in place in order for your district to sustain improvement and deepen the capacity of the organisation to increase achievement for all students?*
- *How might you ensure that the BIPSA provides a good model for schools to use as they develop their own school improvement plans?*
- *Which indicators of success identified in the monitoring and evaluation section of your plan provide ways to monitor improved student achievement?*
- *How might you create links between the Strategic Plan of the board, the BIPSA and SIPSAs?*

**“Practitioners ... must have the opportunity to reflect on the work, to express their feelings and understandings about the work and to critique their own practice.”**

City, Elmore, Fiarman & Teitel, 2009, p. 158

## Process

Members of the planning team for Ottawa Carleton describe collaboration between senior staff and the curriculum team and the comprehensive collection and sharing of a wide range of informative data as key parts of their process. These actions, they suggest, have resulted in a richly informed planning process.

- *Does the available data provide a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative information necessary to make informed decisions as you work through the comprehensive needs-assessment process? If not, what other sources of data might be considered as part of the collection process during the refinement or next iteration of the BIPSA?*
- *How might you create regular opportunities for senior staff, curriculum staff and others to deepen their understanding of system needs and strategies and to address those needs through joint work?*
- *How might you use the School Effectiveness Framework to extend the knowledge base of senior staff, curriculum staff and others in developing the BIPSA?*

**“** School systems that focus on the core with a coherent strategy, executed and refined over time, are making progress in fulfilling their vision of supporting all children to learn at high levels. **”**

Curtis & City, 2009, p. 12

## Key Components in the Planning Process

### Needs Assessment

The importance of engaging in a comprehensive needs assessment cannot be overstated. Without understanding the precise strengths and learning needs of students, both as individuals and as a collective, it is impossible to identify meaningful goals for the system that in turn will inform improved professional practice and student learning.

- *How might you summarise the available data so that you have a comprehensive understanding of the progress of identified groups of students in comparison to board goals, provincial trends and provincial standards?*

- *What information will be the most relevant as the data are organized and shared with schools?*
- *What approach could be taken in order to model effective ways to analyze and articulate student achievement and professional practice?*
- *What data need to be considered to acquire a clear understanding of the impact of your strategies on student achievement?*
- *Having reviewed all of the data, what are the implications for the next steps in the planning process?*

**“The inquiry process analyzes data to yield priorities that represent high-leverage targets of improvement opportunity in student needs and professional practice, and the resulting hypotheses guide improvement teams to articulate SMART goals.”**

White & Smith, 2010, pg. 34

## **Identifying SMART Goals**

SMART goals have five distinct qualities. They are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound. Research verifies that no more than four to six goals should be undertaken at any one time if boards and schools are to focus on the intended student learning and realize meaningful goals that will impact student achievement.

Although the two boards represented here designed their SMART goals around the four pillars for student success (literacy, numeracy, pathways and community, culture and caring), other boards may find that their needs do not fall neatly under these four pillars and might therefore develop SMART goals on the basis of the knowledge gained in the analysis phase of their comprehensive needs assessment. The four pillars then become strategies for supporting their identified SMART goals.

- *How will you address the need to include all four pillars in your planning process?*
- *How might you ensure the SMART goals that have been articulated are directly responsive to student learning needs, yet will have a substantive impact on achievement across all subject areas, Kindergarten to Grade 12?*

- *How might you convey to staff the connections between the SMART goals in the BIPSA and the Ontario Curriculum, Kindergarten to Grade 12?*
- *What questions might be included in the BIPSA that would generate meaningful inquiries at the school and network levels?*

**“Leaders must make the difficult choice to move from superficial compliance with a myriad of directives ... toward selective and deep implementation of a few areas of focus.”**

Reeves, 2010, p. 37

### **Targeted Evidence-based Strategies**

Current research on student learning and achievement (see reference list) identifies targeted evidence-based strategies that can have a powerful impact on student learning.

- *What sources will you use to determine the research- and evidence-based strategies in the BIPSA?*
- *How might you determine a limited number of the most effective instructional strategies to be included in the BIPSA and supported at the school/network level?*
- *What are the implications for the professional learning of administrators and teachers in relation to the instructional strategies identified in the BIPSA?*
- *How will you know if the strategies being supported are making the intended change in the teaching and learning process, professional capacity and ultimately student achievement?*

**“Research ... shows conclusively that formative assessment does improve learning. The gains in achievement appear to be quite considerable ... amongst the largest ever reported for an educational intervention.”**

Marzano & Waters, 2009, p. 27

## Supporting Professional Learning

Professional learning must be closely aligned to student learning needs – in other words, focused on adult learning that will enable educators to provide the context and learning conditions to build the necessary knowledge, skills and self-regulatory skills students need to demonstrate independently in order to be successful in all areas of learning.

- *How might you determine whether administrators and teachers have the necessary domain knowledge and pedagogical skills to advance student achievement in relation to the identified SMART goals?*
- *What professional learning structures and strategies will you put in place in order to address areas of domain and pedagogical challenges?*
- *How might you scaffold administrator and classroom teacher learning so that it results in independent and confident use of effective instructional and assessment practices in every school/classroom?*
- *How might you monitor the implementation of effective instructional and assessment practices?*

“ Student learning needs are not just student learning needs. They are also a signal for teacher learning needs. ”

Katz, Earl & Jaafar, 2009, p. 66

## Assigning Resources

Thoughtful and differentiated allocation of human, material and financial resources has become common in Ontario school systems. Boards identify SMART goals that will impact the learning of students and select the resources necessary for all members of the learning community. Then boards strategically allocate resources that respond to the continuum of differing needs across all elementary and secondary schools.

- *What criteria might you consider in order to determine resource needs by panel, site, grade, subject, specific student groups and specific educator groups?*

- *What indicators would be used to measure the impact of the resources allocated on student achievement?*
- *How might you monitor the effective use of resources allocated?*

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring is an ongoing process whereby educators look for evidence of growth in student work and, where that growth is not visible, seek differentiated approaches that will bring about the intended outcomes. Monitoring may result in mid-course changes to instruction and to the BIPSA.

Evaluation, on the other hand, comes at the end of a semester, term or school year following the summative assessment process. Provincial assessments provide both formative and summative information that helps to identify student needs and focus school and classroom work for the next term and or school year.

- *What measures of achievement will most clearly inform administrators, teachers, students and parents of progress toward the intended learning goals?*
- *What monitoring information will inform mid-course changes to maximise impact on student outcomes during the year (e.g., mid-semester, mid-term, mid-year)?*
- *What strategies will be used to collect student achievement data in accordance with the monitoring schedule?*
- *How will you address the need for all educators in your board to be able to articulate the qualities of student work that represent Levels 3 and 4, and thus be able to report progress toward both board and school goals and the provincial standard?*
- *What measures will you use to evaluate the progress made at the end of the term/semester and year in relation to the SMART goals identified in the BIPSA?*

**“Measuring results is simultaneously simple and complex. It is a matter of asking the question, Are students learning more as a result of our efforts?”**

**Curtis & City, 2009, p. 182**

# Catholic Perspective

## Catholic Community, Culture and Caring

Catholic boards will have particular interest in this discussion.

- *What strategies can we use to learn more about our students – their prior learning, talents, interests, culture, background, strengths and challenges?*
- *How might the board and schools elicit student voice in relation to interests and concerns, and how can they use what they learn to create a safe, inviting and responsive school culture?*

## Fifth Pillar: Learning with Faith

Learning with faith is the foundation upon which actions are taken in Catholic boards across the province. It is a driving force in the BIPSA.

- *What strategies might be used to ensure Learning with Faith is embedded in every aspect of Catholic Education teaching and learning processes?*



## Addressing Special Education

Boards are mindful of the learning of all students when constructing their BIPSA. This segment highlights discussions that explore the complexities associated with creating a seamless approach to supporting all students.

- *How might you ensure that the learning needs, assessment and instructional strategies and supports for students with special education needs are considered and incorporated in the BIPSA?*
- *What processes might you put in place to ensure that the interests of SEAC and other stakeholders are considered as part of the development of the BIPSA?*
- *How will you identify the learning needs of staff (e.g., principals, teachers and special education staff) and create structures and supports that will provide them with the professional learning needed to support the achievement of students with special education needs?*

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**“Personalization ... puts each and every student at the center and provides an education that is tailored to the students’ learning and motivational needs at any given moment.”**

Fullan, 2006, p. 16

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## Impact on the Classroom

The ultimate intention of creating a Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement is to guide, provide focus and support the work that educators undertake in relation to student achievement. When classroom teachers see a relevant connection, their work becomes clearer and more precise.

- *How will you ensure that all teachers see the relevance of the BIPSA in day-to-day teaching and learning at the classroom level?*
- *What messages will be continuously reinforced in the BIPSA professional learning support and instructional and assessment strategies in order to develop shared beliefs and practices at the school and classroom level?*
- *What strategies might be used to strengthen teacher commitment to developing professional capacity and having students achieve the SMART goals identified in the BIPSA?*

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**“ ... clear goals regarding student achievement and effective instruction undertaken at the school level are the most powerful actions schools can take. ... Such goals should be established at the district level. ”**

**Marzano & Waters, 2009**

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## References and Resources

City, E.A., Elmore, F.E., Fiarman, S.E., & Teitel, L. (2009). *Instructional rounds in education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

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White, S., & Smith, L. (2010). *School improvement for the next generation*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

The following resources can be found on this DVD in “Video and Print Resources” as well as online at <http://www.curriculum.org/secretariat/bipsa/index.shtml>:

- *Board Improvement Planning for Student Achievement (BIPSA)*
- *Board Improvement Planning Assessment Tool*
- *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools*
- *School Effectiveness Framework*
- SMART Goal Examples
  - o Four Pillars – Literacy, Numeracy, Pathways, Community, Culture and Caring
  - o Literacy
  - o Pathways

# Technical Instructions

## How to Access the Print and Video Resources

To access the Print and Video Resources folder in Windows, insert the DVD into the DVD drive of your computer and:

1. Click on the Start menu.
2. Select My Computer.
3. Right-click the mouse on the DVD icon titled BIPSA\_DVD to open a drop-down options list.
4. From the drop-down list, select and click on the Open option.
5. Double-click on the folder titled Print and Video Resources to access the files. Ignore the folders titled Audio\_TS and Video\_TS.
6. Select the resources you wish to use directly from this folder, OR Copy onto the Desktop and open files from the Desktop.

Alternatively, when the DVD is inserted and the options box opens:

1. Select the option Open Folder to View Files.
2. Click on the Print and Video Resources folder.
3. Select the files you wish to use directly from this folder, OR Copy the files onto the Desktop and open them from the Desktop.

To access the Print and Video Resources folder in Mac OS X, insert the DVD into the DVD drive of your computer and:

1. Exit from the DVD player (which typically opens automatically when a DVD is inserted in the drive).
2. Double-click on the DVD icon titled BIPSA\_DVD
3. Select the files you wish to use directly from this folder, OR
4. Copy the files onto the Desktop and open them from the Desktop.

## How to Save the Video Files to Your Computer

The video files can all be copied and saved to your computer using either of the following methods for copying and pasting files.



### Method 1

1. Right-click on the file and choose the Copy option.
2. Right-click within any computer folder into which you would like to save the file, and choose the Paste option.

### Method 2

1. Left-click the mouse on the file you want to save, so that the file is highlighted.
2. Simultaneously press the Ctrl and C keys (or, for Macintosh users, the Command and C keys) to copy the file.
3. Left-click within any computer folder in which you would like to save the file, and simultaneously press the Ctrl and V keys (or, for Macintosh users, the Command and V keys) to paste the file there.

For Macintosh users, the Command key is the one with the following

symbol:  

**NOTE:** If you want to insert video files into a PowerPoint presentation, you must save these video files in the same folder that contains your PowerPoint file. If you save a PowerPoint presentation to another location (e.g., a memory stick, CD-ROM, etc.), you must also save the video files in the same location in order for the video to play. So, if you transfer the presentation to another computer, you must also transfer the video files with it, or else the video will not link to the PowerPoint presentation.

## How to Insert Video Clips (WMV files) into a PowerPoint Presentation

On this DVD, you will find WMV versions of all segments of the webcast. To insert a clip into a PowerPoint presentation, follow the directions below:

1. Open your PowerPoint program.
2. Create a new PowerPoint presentation OR open an existing PowerPoint presentation, and within it, open the slide on which you would like to add the video.
3. Insert the webcast DVD into the DVD drive of your computer.

4. If a new window opens asking how you would like to view the files on the disk, choose the option Open Folder to View Files; OR

If a new window does not open, open the My Computer window from the Start menu. In the My Computer window, double-click on the icon that is shaped like a disk, which will likely be labelled D: or E:.

5. Save the video segment that you want to insert in a PowerPoint into the same folder that contains your PowerPoint presentation.

**NOTE:** Video files that have been saved to your computer can be cropped and edited into smaller segments using Movie Maker (free on PCs) or iMovie (free on Macintosh).

6. Open the PowerPoint slide on which you would like to insert the video, and click on the Insert menu in the PowerPoint menu bar.
7. From the Insert menu, select Movies and Sounds, and click on the Movie from File option.
8. A window opens, prompting you to select the video file that you would like to add. Find and select the video file that you saved in step 5.
9. Once you have chosen the video file you need, another window opens and asks whether you want your movie to play either automatically when you enter the slide, or only when it is clicked. Choose your preference. (You will notice that the starting image of your movie is not displayed on the slide.)





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