School leaders often ask, "Where do I begin?" The answer to this question depends on the current characteristics of the high school. Here are six different types of high school situations.

High School Types

Fresh Start describes high schools that are new comprehensive schools, a new charter high school, or a recent conversion to small learning communities.

Movie Set describes high schools that have an excellent image and tradition. They meet all state accountability measures. However their public image is better than their true performance. They look good superficially but behind the public façade these high schools are not serving many students well.

Good to Great are high schools that have many good achievements and now want to move to the next level.

Slippery Slope describes high schools that have a history of good performance but their environments and/or communities are changing rapidly. They may be experience demographic shifts or changes in funding. Without some turnaround, they are on the downward slide toward poor performance. These schools are often unprepared to adapt to continuous change.

Excellent Education Except describes high schools that have "excellent education, except" — except they don't meet AYP in one or more subgroups. These schools are good by traditional measures, but the AYP standards and subgroup performance has identified weaknesses.

Not for My Children describes schools for which there is unanimous agreement that they have significant problems, such as student underperformance, high attrition rates, poor attendance, low graduation rates, and often poor student behavior.

Chapter 5 Components of School Excellence

Sequence of Improvement for Different Types of High Schools

Each of the following charts indicates how to use the Components of School Excellence depending on the type of school. The charts indicate the three highest priority starting points. Additional components can be addressed in later steps.

"Fresh Start" High School

Initial Component to Focus on:

Embrace a Common Vision and Goals — Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships for ALL Students

Strategic Objective:

Create teaching and learning practices that are consistent with high expectations and vision

Initiatives to consider:

- Awareness activities on need for change
- Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners
- Creating rigorous and relevant lesson plans
- Reflecting on instruction and assessment with Rigor/ Relevance Framework

Keys to Success:

- Involve all stakeholders in discussions
- Focus on the future needs of students
- Belief that all students can learn
- Constant communication of vision

Key Questions for Leadership Teams:

- How do we define rigor and relevance?
- What do rigor and relevance look like?
- What are our measures of success?
- How do we organize to best meet the needs of students?

Next Components to Focus on:

Inform Decisions Through Data Systems; Address Organizational Structures

"Movie Set" High School

Initial Component to Focus on:

Clarify Student Learning Expectations

Strategic Objective:

Raise expectations and achievement for all students

Initiatives to Consider:

- Awareness activities on need for change
- Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners
- Creating High Rigor/ High Relevance lesson plans
- Reflecting on instruction and assessment with Rigor/ Relevance Framework
- Curriculum Matrix

Keys to Success:

- Involve all stakeholders in discussions
- Focus on the future needs of students
- Belief that all students can learn
- Focus on priority skills and knowledge

Key Questions for Leadership Teams

- Why do we need to change?
- What are the skills students will need in the future?
- How well prepared are our students?
- How do we define rigor and relevance?
- What does rigor and relevance look like?

Next Components to Focus on:

Inform Decisions Through Data Systems; Adopt Effective Instructional Practices

Chapter 5 Components of School Excellence

"Good to Great" High School

Initial Component to Focus on:

Inform Decisions Through Data
Systems

Strategic Objective:

Create a shared passion for change around specific learning goals

Initiatives to Consider:

- Learning Criteria to Support 21st Century Learners
- Stretch Learning
- Personal Skill Development
- Learner Engagement
- Challenging 12th Grade
- Curriculum Matrix

Keys to Success:

- Disaggregating data and ensuring success with all subgroups of students
- Engaging all groups in helping to set goals
- Becoming student centered
- Focus on future needs of students

Key Questions for Leadership Teams:

- How do we want to be evaluated as a school?
- Where are we as a school and where do we want to go?
- What are our goals?
- What are the data indicators of success?

Next Components to Focus on:

Embrace a Common Vision and Goals

— Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships
for ALL Students; Adopt Effective
Instructional Practices

"Slippery Slope" High School

Initial Component to Focus on:

Empower Leadership Teams to Take Action and Innovate

Strategic Objective:

Engage teams to create solutions to problems as they emerge

Initiatives to Consider:

- Creation of teacher teams
- Leadership for Rigor, Relevance and Relationships resource kit
- Relationship building
- Ongoing professional development for leaders and staff
- Leading with Reading in Grades 7-12 resource kit

Keys to Success:

- Spend time team building
- Organize teams
 around groups of
 students with common
 needs
- Measure progress, inform students, and celebrate progress
- Ongoing professional development

Key Questions for Leadership Teams:

- What are priority goals?
- What are the characteristics of students not succeeding?
- What is working well and how can it be expanded?
- What are the best practices we can adopt/adapt?

Next Components to Focus on:

Clarify Student Learning Expectations; Adopt Effective Instructional Practices

Chapter 5 Components of School Excellence

"Excellent Education Except" High School

Initial Component to Focus on:

Adopt Effective Instructional Practices

Strategic Objective:

Improve the achievement of all students through high-quality, personalized instruction



- Instructional Strategies

 How to Teach for
 Rigor and Relevance
 resource kit
- Performance assessments
- Reading comprehension strategies
- Gold Seal Lessons
- Differentiation of instruction
- Inclusion services for special education students

Keys to Success:

- Active learning strategies
- Personalize instruction for individual student needs
- High expectations for all students
- Grading systems that lead to student engagement
- Focus on literacy in all instruction

Key Questions for Leadership Teams:

- Are all students getting best quality instruction in the school?
- Are students actively engaged?
- Is instruction personalized to each student's needs?
- Are special education students being challenged?
- Is there a focus on literacy?

Next Components to Focus on:

Monitor Progress/Improve Support Systems Address Organizational Structures

"Not for My Children" High School

Initial Component to Focus on:
Monitor Progress/Improve Support
Systems

Strategic Objective:

Reduce number of students failing courses and falling below state testing proficiency levels

Initiatives to Consider:

- Pyramid of intervention for academic assistance
- Review and align local assessments
- Student selfdevelopment programs, e.g., AVID
- Ninth grade staff collaboration on student needs
- Credit recovery programs
- Reading in content area

Keys to Success:

- Maintain high expectations
- Identify at-risk students early
- Provide additional supports and academic assistant
- Measure progress, inform students, and celebrate progress
- Focus on literacy in all instruction

Key Questions for Leadership Teams:

- Who are the at-risk students?
- Are these students getting the best quality instruction in the school?
- What supports do they need to improve achievement?
- Are students identified early and provided intervention services?

Next Components to Focus on:

Clarify Student Learning Expectations; Adopt Effective Instructional Practices