

Instructions for Gap Analysis

The Gap Analysis assists in creating a process of defining goals and action steps specifying what would constitute elements of success and setting a timeline. Many planners find it more productive to imagine desired practices before focusing on current practices to keep from getting bogged down by details. There is no single way to approach this exercise.

It is necessary to determine or identify an area of focus prior to beginning the analysis. For example, to determine your progress with your implemented elements of Smaller Learning Communities, each element may be identified as a focus area for a Gap Analysis.

1. Using the element of Personalization (or SLC element of choice) participants will brainstorm **Desired Practices** in their building around Personalization answering the questions “What would it look like if Personalization was alive and well in our high school?” The results of the conversation would then be recorded in the **Desired Practices** column.
2. Describe **Current Practice** as it relates to Personalization (or SLC element of choice) in your building. “Where are we now”? Record the results of the conversation in the **Current Practice** column.
3. Participants discuss the obstacles to reach the **Desired Practice**. At this point don’t spend time problem solving the obstacles. The purpose is just to acknowledge that they exist.
4. What do we need to do to move forward to reach the Desired Practices? These are the **Action Steps** you will do to achieve your goals. Record these steps in the column labeled **Action Steps**.
5. Detailed planning can take place through the use of the **Action Steps Timeline**. What? Who?, and When? are answered through additional conversation related to the Action Steps.

Note: If no significant gaps emerge the group has not gone deep enough in articulating the vision or assessing the current environment. If the Gap Analysis is done thoroughly and correctly, school teams will be able to work smart, not just hard, in achieving the overall vision. Finally, a Gap Analysis will help uncover any obvious skills, staffing, or resource needs. Remember that “something doesn’t need to be broken to improve”.

Excerpted from Seeing the Future: A Planning Guide for High Schools, The Big Picture Company and the US Department of Education’s Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 1999, p. 46.