Phase II
What's really going on? Finding the needs of your colleagues.

To prepare for Phase II you need to prepare a needs assessment to give to some colleagues. This should be based on the specific goal/objective on which you will focus.

Develop a series of questions you want answered that will allow you to find out what your colleagues may need to know and do in order to carry out their efforts toward the goal/objective. Questions might touch on the following:

1. The overall intent of the school improvement plan.
2. The intent and expectation of teachers in your school building.
3. Resources provided by the district (financial, material, human)
4. Process of assessing teacher, school, or district efforts
5. Types of professional knowledge needed
6. Other concerns

Process of conducting the needs assessment

This process has some main components

1. Develop your need assessment
2. Locate the people you need to talk to. Preferably colleagues at your grade level or in your department, or folks that are part of a group you typically meet with to work on school/curricular issues.
3. Gain access – contact people to let them know when the need assessment is to be done. If you are talking with them in person, make an appointment otherwise select the date to send the needs assessment and a date of when you need the information returned to you.
4. Analyze your data to figure out what people are really telling you.
5. Follow-up
    a. Send a thank-you within a day of receiving the responses – preferably a handwritten one…yes, even in the age of e-mail
    b. As you begin to make sense of what this person has shared with you, write/call and let them know what you have come to understand.

Write-up

Writing a Summary/Analysis of the Need Assessment

1. State what areas/topics you are pursuing from your SIP.
2. Briefly share details about the background of the people you sent your need assessment to and his/her role in the school – remember to include yourself. This should include years teaching, gender, years in the school or district, current responsibilities/role, and expertise they may have related to your need assessment topic.
3. State what you hoped to achieve by conducting the needs assessment? Explain why you are pursuing the particular issues that you asked about in your needs assessment.
4. What did you find out? Write about the facts uncovered, insights gained, and your reflective reaction. (Include a display of your results in the form of a figure or a table.)
5. Reflect on your findings and discuss what direction you know have that will influence the development of your service project.
6. Attach a copy of your need assessment.
7. Attach a copy of your need assessment results (raw data).

Need Assessment – One graduate student's example

In her service project titled "A math skills class for struggling freshmen" (excerpted here with permission), Cuzzone collected data for her needs assessment from five teachers who serve on a math committee. She developed and asked them the following questions:

1. Why do you think our students aren't meeting state standards in math?
2. How does our curriculum prepare students for the PSAE?
3. What can we do to help more students meet state standards on the PSAE?
4. What is your opinion of our school's tardy policy? (When students are more than a minute late to class, they are not allowed in. They go the tardy room and do nothing.)
5. What is your opinion on our policy that when a student fails a math class first semester, they should be dropped from the class second semester?
6. If students who fail math class do not get to continue to second semester, what can we do with these students so they are still learning math?
7. What is your opinion about giving students incentives if they meet or exceed state standards on the PSAE? If you feel this is a positive, what incentives?

Here is a small section of all the responses she received (this is the raw data):

1. Why do you think our students aren't meeting state standards in math?

A. Students are not prepared.
B. Students do not take the tests seriously and randomly fill in circles to get the test complete
C. Too many students are not in Advanced Algebra by the time they take the test so they are not prepared.
D. Students are not prepared for the test. They have not learned enough mathematics content to be successful and therefore, do not do well on the test. Also, students struggle in reading and they have to read a lot on the test
E. Too many students lack the math skills and problem solving skills that they need for the state test. Also, our tests are not multiple choice so students do not have enough practice with these types of tests.

2. Do you think our curriculum prepares students for the PSAE? Please explain.

A. Yes. Students who are successful in our college prep classes meet state standards.
B. The college prep track and the honors track prepare our students for the PSAE.
C. The college prep classes do prepare our students but the core classes aren't as rigorous.
D. Students who are at least in Advanced Algebra are prepared but if students are not in these classes, are not prepared. Students who were in AP1 and AP2 are not prepared. Students who have failed a math class and didn't make up the class during the summer are not prepared for the PSAE.
E. Students in the college prep classes and honors classes are prepared but students who are in
F. the lower level classes are not as prepared. If students failed a class and are not in at least Advanced Algebra, then they are definitely not prepared.

When Cuzzone wrote up Phase II, she prepared the following figures from her raw data. Here is what she wrote for two of her need assessment questions and how she displayed and referred to her data in the results section of her paper.

Results

Overall, my colleagues do not think that students are prepared for the PSAE (see Figure 1). Students either lack math skills or problem-solving skills. "Too many students are not in advanced algebra by the time they take the test so they are not prepared" (C. Potter). Also, we have a high number of students in lower level math classes that have not been taught all of the math content covered on the tests. We need to change things that we are doing so that all students have learned the content that the PSAE test before they take the test.

Why do you think our students aren't meeting state standards in math?	
Not Prepared	80%
Don't take test seriously	20%
Don't read well	20%

Figure 1. Question 1 results

I know that some of the teachers in my department do not think that our students are prepared for the PSAE, so I asked teachers if they thought our curriculum prepares students (see Figure 2). Most teachers think that the college prep and honors tracts do prepare our students. Students that are in the lower tracks are not prepared. Also students who fail a class and do not take summer school are behind. They also have not learned enough of the material that is covered on the test. If we keep the core classes, then we have to design a curriculum so that it prepares students for the PSAE. As stated by M. Kent, lead math teacher, "We can offer classes for the failures to take to prepare for the PSAE or help students with basic math so that they will be better prepared to pass math the following year." This is something that we should look into and see how we can help these students.

Do you think our curriculum prepares students for the PSAE?	
Yes, for students college prep classes	100%
Not students in the lower-level classes	80%
Students who failed are not	20%

Figure 2. Question 2 results

Samuleson (with permission) , another graduate student (who explored the problem solving process) wrote about her results this way (here is a small excerpt from Phase II). She collected data from five colleagues.

Results

I learned that most teachers are incorporating some types of problem-solving activities in their classroom instruction; however not all teachers have adopted a formal model for directly teaching the problem solving process (see Figure 1). I was actually a little surprised to learn that some specific methods for teaching problem solving skills are being directly taught to students. "I use *Who Done It.* Over three days, students must solve a mystery in cooperative groups" (Teacher 1). The two classes where direct problem solving is taught are applied technology and health. After thinking about the curricular content of these classes, the problem solving process has a good fit. This makes me think that the process can be made to fit nicely in any subject matter course.

How often problem-solving activities are part of lessons	
Often	60%
Seldom	40%
Problem solving activities used	
1. Cooperative (e.g., team building)	14%
2. Critical thinking (e.g., use of scenarios)	57%
3. Mathematical (e.g., conversion of and application of equivalent measures)	28%

Figure 1. Percentage and types of problem solving used in teaching and learning

EXCERPTS REMOVED

Teachers may feel apprehensive about integrating problem solving activities or participating in professional development about the problem solving process. Time and student motivation are big factors as they are for many educational initiative start-ups (see Figure 4). It will be important to develop professional development that is meaningful to the vast majority of involved staff. It will also be important to provide teachers with sufficient materials and resources to start integrating the program and time to meet with colleagues to discuss methods.

Interest in professional development to integrate problem solving into lessons	
Yes	60%
Maybe	40%
No	0%
Problem solving information needed	
1. New problem-solving strategies	14%
2. Know more about differentiation	14%
3. Know more about how to teach problem solving	28%

Figure 4. Professional development topics and interest in participating in professional development

Evaluation of Phase II **Needs Assessment write-up**				
Goal/Topic/Activity being pursued from the SIP articulated		3	1/0	Unclear about the connection to the SIP
Issues to be explored through the needs assessment articulated	5	3	1/0	Issues unclear or not fully developed, missing
Profile of participants in the needs assessment comprehensive		3	1/0	Profile of participants in the needs assessment comprehensive missing elements or unclear.
The write-up clearly presents a coherent foundation around which the needs assessment was organized.	5	3	1/0	The write-up lacks a foundation.
Paper makes a strong, well-supported explanation of what was gained from the needs assessment	5	3	1/0	The paper focuses on description rather than analysis.
Snippets of needs assessment data are used effectively to illustrate and support assertions.		3	1/0	Snippets missing or relevance questioned
Data from needs assessment aggregated and displayed in a comprehensive, clear manner (e.g., table or figure)		3	1/0	Data from needs assessment not aggregated, (b) display is confusing or lacks detail, (c) missing
Reflection evident		3	1/0	Reflection not evident or of not sufficient depth; not based on findings
Needs assessment document attached			1/0	Needs assessment document missing
Needs assessment raw data attached			1/0	Need assessment raw data missing
Headings structured follows APA format. Heading titles are meaningful.			1/0	
The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability (tabs, page numbers). Errors are so few that just minor touch-ups would get this piece ready to share.		3	1/0	