Guidance for Departments of Education, Elementary and Secondary Schools.

School Improvement Planning

Federated States of Micronesia
National Department of Education
2009

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Chapter One
What is school Improvement Planning?

School Improvement Planning is one of the strategies being applied throughout FSM to address low and declining standards in schools.

Departments of Education at State and National level are committed to providing a quality education for all students in FSM.

Title 40 of the FSM Code empowers the Secretary of Education to 'Promote education by setting minimum standards for educational administration, programs and facilities.'

Minimum standards are set out in curriculum documents, school accreditation and teacher certification policies.

In January 2009, the FSM Association of Chief State School Officers (FACSSO) made a resolution to establish full implementation of a comprehensive school improvement plan in all FSM schools. This means that it is a mandatory requirement for all schools in the FSM to have a school improvement plan.

Through school improvement planning, schools will tackle the causes of low and declining standards and work towards improving student achievement. School improvement planning will help transform schools into centers of excellence and achievement.

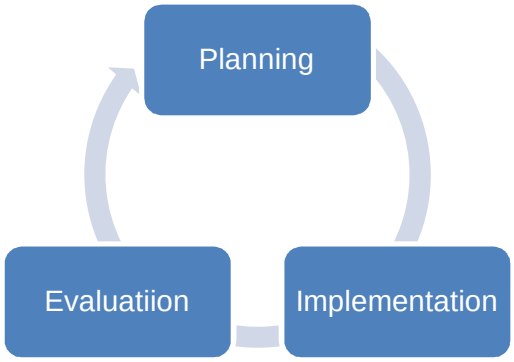
This document offers guidance to State Departments of Education, school principals and head teachers in the implementation of School Improvement Planning at State and school level.

The School Improvement Planning Process

The School Improvement Planning Process is a continuous cycle of self-evaluation, planning and implementation leading towards improvements in teaching and learning in school.

The School Improvement Plan is the document that records all the outputs of the planning process.

School Improvement Planning should be conducted on an annual cycle, based on the school year. The end of the cycle should be when student achievement data becomes available for evaluation.



The annual School Improvement Planning cycle

Transformation

All schools want to provide the best quality education for the benefit of their students. However, student performance data shows that schools in FSM need to make some extensive changes in order to provide children with a modern, quality education.

School improvement planning is a strategy that has been used successfully to transform schools. It is a continuous process of development that leads towards better learning outcomes for students.

The process of school improvement planning is transformational in itself. It engages schools and school communities in self-evaluation and personal and professional growth and development. It encourages reflection, cooperation, collaboration and teamwork in the planning and implementation of a range of innovations that make teaching and learning more relevant, more enjoyable and more successful.

About this booklet

School improvement planning is a mandated requirement for all schools in FSM. This booklet offers guidance to State Departments of Education and schools on how to set about managing and conducting the process of school improvement planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

Ideally, this guidance booklet will be used by State Departments of Education in planning and conducting an ongoing program of training and support for school principals and stakeholders as they work through the process of school improvement planning.

The booklet will also be useful as a step-by-step guide to school principals and teams involved in the process of school improvement planning.

Although the booklet is written in English, facilitators may choose the most appropriate language to use when they conduct activities. Facilitators may decide to use English or vernacular language, depending on the target group.

Parent and community involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement.

Schools cannot be successful if they try to work in isolation from parents, community and stakeholders.

Education research has confirmed that there is a direct link between community and parental involvement in education and improved children's learning outcomes, achievement, behavior, attendance and attitudes towards school.

Why is parental involvement important?

A synthesis of the research concluded that **"the evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life. When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more."** [1]

Further evidence of the importance of parental and community involvement can be found in *Section Two: Further Reading* at the back of this booklet.

[1] *Henderson, Anne. T. and Mapp, Karen L., A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement, 2002, p.7*

Participation

One of the most significant features of successful school improvement programs is the level of participation of parents, community and stakeholders.

Creating good community and parental involvement programs is one of the ways in which the best schools help children reach higher levels of achievement.

To be effective, school improvement planning must involve parents, community and stakeholders as partners in all activities throughout the process.

School principals cannot write a school improvement plan by themselves. Nor can a plan be written by principals and teachers alone.

The first step on the path towards school improvement is recognizing that schools belong to the wider community and that parents, community members and stakeholders have a right to be consulted and involved in the management and running of the school.

The benefits of community participation

The benefits of community participation in school improvement planning are great. Parents, community members and stakeholders have skills and expertise that can be applied to the improvement planning process.

Through consultation and participation, parents, community members and stakeholders develop a commitment towards the success of the school and a sense of ownership.

Involvement in the school improvement process can lead to greater involvement in other aspects of the life of the school, such as helping in the classroom, volunteering to help renovate facilities, supervising homework and attending a fund-raising event.

The role of the principal

Principals play a vital role in the school improvement planning process. However, principals must be careful not to be overbearing and to allow full participation of all stakeholders. This means that they must be instrumental and proactive but also prepared to encourage, to the fullest extent possible, the involvement of others.

Principals must be the type of leader who facilitates rather than the type that is authoritarian. They must set up opportunities for others to be involved in decision making and planning and must delegate where possible.

Principals must also ensure that the school plan remains focused on student achievement.

One of the first tasks the principal must undertake is to introduce the school improvement process by explaining it to a meeting of teachers, parents, community members, students and stakeholders.

Introducing the school improvement process

The school improvement process should be introduced at a public meeting at the school, arranged at a time that allows the greatest possible attendance.

The introduction should be short and to the point. The school improvement process should be explained in outline, perhaps illustrated by flip-charts showing headings and bullet points.

After the introduction, participants could be asked to volunteer to join a School Improvement Team (SIT).

A follow-up letter could be sent to parents who were unable to attend, inviting them to come forward and join the SIT if they wish to be involved.

Chapter Two
Creating favorable conditions for effective school improvement planning

In order to be successful, principals must work to create the most favorable conditions for school improvement planning.

This means preparing the school and the school community to work together effectively.

There may already be favorable conditions in the school, but often it is necessary to persuade and convince some teachers and community members that it is in the best interests of the students for the school and community to work together in partnership.

The training materials provided with this guidance document encourage practical activities conducted by groups or teams of teachers and community members working together. This team approach can strengthen relations between school and community.

The training materials include specific activities on the value of community participation and on different levels of participation.

The school improvement team

The school improvement team (SIT) is the main planning and decision-making body for the school improvement planning process.

It is vital that the SIT be representative of the whole school community and stakeholders. This includes all teachers, parents, students, community members and other stakeholders who wish to be involved.

Principals must work hard to ensure that the SIT is fully representative and contains a mix of people with a range of skills. Ideally, the SIT should be a balanced group, with equal numbers of male and female members. All participants should have a positive attitude towards the process and understand that they must work as a team.

A SIT of about twelve to sixteen people is probably large enough to be representative of a medium sized school. Larger schools may want a larger team. Larger teams are more difficult to manage, however, and so larger schools may find it easier to have two SITs working together but focusing on different grades.

Community members and stakeholders

Community members are people who belong to the local community and are connected with the school. In this guide, the term 'community member' includes parents. Community members may also be grandparents or aunts and uncles of children in the school, former teachers or former pupils.

Stakeholders are people who have an interest in the school but are not connected to the school or local community. Stakeholders may be local government representatives, employers or people concerned with children's welfare, such as health and social services professionals.

The whole school community includes all students, teachers, community members and stakeholders.

Activity One

Community participation

For a number of reasons, some schools are hesitant about inviting community members (including parents) to participate in school activities and decision-making. This activity is designed to show that the benefits of participation outweigh the possible drawbacks.

Community participation is important because it is a factor that supports higher levels of student achievement.

Education research proves that there is a direct link between parent and community participation in education and higher levels of children's learning outcomes or achievement. Creating good community involvement programs is one of the ways in which the best schools help children achieve higher levels of achievement.

Education research has also proved that school support for community learning, such as in after-school study support schemes, can improve young peoples' academic success, motivation to learn and self-esteem. Study support can be particularly effective for school drop-outs.

Study support includes a wide range of activities such as:

- breakfast clubs
- homework and study clubs
- sports
- music and other creative arts
- study and thinking skills
- opportunities to pursue particular interests

(e.g. Computers and foreign languages).

In addition to study support, the services offered by a school might include learning and recreational activities for all members of the community. For example, if the school has a computer lab or library these could be opened for a few hours in the evening or at weekends for community members to use.

Research findings on community participation

For the next activity, you need to make some copies of the following page, entitled 'Nine Research Findings on Community Participation'.

You will need one copy for each group of four or five members of your SIT or workshop participants. If you don't have a copier, you can write the nine findings on a flipchart.

Ask your SIT or workshop participants to work in groups of four or five. Ask each group to read and discuss the nine research findings on community participation. After some time, ask each group to select the five research findings they think are most important and arrange them in order, 1 to 5.

Next, ask each group to discuss what each finding means for the school. For example, the group might discuss what the school is doing or should do in the future in the light of this research information.

Ask each group to record their work on a chart like the one below. An example is given for you.

	Finding	What does it mean for our school?
1	*Parents generally want and need training or direction to help children with their learning activities in the home.*	*We should provide some training sessions for our parents to show them how to help the children with their work at home.*
2		
3		
4		

After some time, ask each group to display their chart on the wall. Ask one group member to present their chart.

Nine Research Findings on Parent and Community Participation

1.	***Parent and community involvement in children's learning is positively related to achievement.***
2.	***The more parents are involved in their children's learning, the better are the effects on children's achievement.***
3.	***The most effective forms of parent involvement are those where parents work directly with their children on learning activities at home.***
4.	***Programs which involve parents in reading with their children, helping with homework, or tutoring them using materials and instructions provided by teachers, show particularly good results.***
5.	***Greater student achievement levels are found when parents attend and actively support school activities and when they help in classrooms or on field trips.***
6.	***The earlier parent involvement begins in a child's education, the more powerful the effects will be.***
7.	***Parents want to help children with their learning activities at home but need training or direction.***
8.	***The most successful parent involvement programs offer a wide variety of ways for parents to participate.***
9.	***There is a clear link between study support programs and improved academic performance, increased motivation, better attendance and greater self-esteem.***

Activity Two

Levels of participation

Schools must actively manage community participation so that community members are able to participate fully in the school improvement planning process.

Not all community members will want to be so fully involved. Some community members may just want to be kept informed about what the school is doing. Others may want to take a more active role in school management and decision-making.

In this activity, your SIT or workshop participants will work in small groups to learn about five different levels of participation in school improvement planning. At level 1, the school offers limited opportunities for participation. At level 5, opportunities for participation are maximized.

The five levels of participation are shown on the following page. Each level is numbered and named, for example, Level 1: Informing. Next to each level is a description.

After matching, the participants should have a better understanding of the different levels of participation. Next, lead a discussion about the current levels of participation actually in FSM schools. Ask participants to give examples of the current level of participation at their own schools.

Encourage participants to monitor the level of participation at their schools throughout the school improvement planning process. The level of participation should improve as school improvement planning continues. The most successful school improvement programs have community participation at level 4 or level 5.

Remind participants that not all community members may want to be involved at the higher levels of participation. Some are happy just to be kept informed. However, it is good practice to create opportunities for those who do want to be involved at higher levels to do so.

Copy the page and cut along the lines to make ten small cards. Distribute a set of mixed-up cards to each group and ask them to match the level with its description.

Levels of Participation

1. Informing:	The school develops a plan. The school informs the community about the plan and tells the community what their role is in implementing the plan.
2. Consulting:	The school develops a draft plan. The school consults the community to get feedback on the plan. The school makes changes to the plan based on community feedback.
3. Deciding together:	The school provides opportunities for community discussion and encourages input of ideas. A plan is developed through joint decision-making and implemented by the school.
4. Working together in partnership:	The school and the community work together to develop a joint plan. The plan is implemented through a partnership formed between the school and the community.
5. Supporting independent community activity:	The school actively supports independent community groups to develop and implement their own plans. The school delegates funds or other resources to the community, using agreed guidelines.

Meetings and Workshops

In the school improvement planning process, it is important that meetings and workshops are managed and conducted in an effective and efficient manner.

Principals, trainers and coordinators must be professional in their management of meetings and workshops.

Meetings and workshops can be effective and efficient if the following points are followed:

- Meetings and workshops should take place at a time that is convenient to the participants and that allows maximum participation. Fathers are often excluded because of the timing of meetings.
- Meetings and workshops should not interfere with the normal running of the school. Classes should not be cancelled for meeting and workshops. If classes are cancelled, lost teaching and learning time must be made up later in the school year.
- Proper notice of the time and place should be given in advance of the meeting or workshop, with an agenda or statement of purpose and content.
- The meeting or workshop room should be clean and light, with adequate seating and table space for activities.
- Chairs should not always be arranged in rows, classroom style. Often it is better to arrange the chairs in a circle. This allows participants to actively contribute.
- All materials should be prepared in advance of the meeting or workshop. There should be adequate copies of handouts or workshop materials.
- Meetings and workshops should start on time and finish at a reasonable time.
- Child-care should be provided for young children.
- Refreshments are not always necessary. Valuable resources that could be spent on student learning materials should not be wasted on refreshments.

Chapter Three
Preparing a School Profile

A school profile is like a school brochure. It contains factual information about the school. If your school already has a school brochure, this guidance may help you revise and update it.

Developing a school profile involves talking with the school community to find out what is special and unique about the school. The process can help the school community to develop a sense of pride in their school.

A school profile may involve finding out about:

- when and why the school was founded,
- who founded the school,
- significant events in the history of the school,
- distinguished and important former students of the school,
- distinguished and important former teachers,
- significant accomplishments of the school, such as in winning scholarships, competitions or sporting events.

As well as finding out about the history of the school, it is also important to include in the school profile some information about the school community. This might include:

- some information about the language or languages used by the local community,
- significant cultural activities for which the community is famous,
- significant events in the history of the community.

Other information that might be included is:

- significant geographical features of the school location,
- the names of the communities served by the school,
- the names of any elementary or high schools that send or receive students
- maps, photographs and diagrams.

The finished profile or brochure should be printed and distributed to the school community.

Vision and Mission

The school profile or brochure should contain a vision and mission statement.

A vision statement is a description of what you would like your school be like at some point in the future. The vision should be a positive image of what the school and the students can achieve. It should describe the skills, values and attitudes all the students will master and attain as a result of attending the school.

A mission statement is a description of how the school will make the vision a reality. The mission statement may describe the learning environment and the teaching and learning programs and activities that the school will implement so that students will attain a high level of achievement.

A school's vision should be focused on student learning, recognizing that children have great potential to learn.

With high expectations and hard work, a vision need not be an impossible dream but can be a potential reality.

A clear vision helps focus attention on what is important, motivates staff and students, and increases the sense of shared responsibility for student learning.

Schools are likely to be more successful in achieving in-depth learning when leaders work with staff and the community to build a collective educational vision that is clear, compelling, and connected to teaching and learning. This collective vision helps focus attention on what is important, motivates staff and students, and increases the sense of shared responsibility for student learning.

Writing a Vision Statement

Writing a vision statement can be a transformational activity because it engages the SIT in working together and thinking clearly about what they want their children to achieve in the future. Working together to create a shared vision can help the whole school community to develop a shared sense of purpose.

SITs can begin by looking at examples of vision statements that might already exist for your school or State Department of Education.

Smaller SITs can begin the process of writing their own mission statement by brainstorming to generate ideas and later refining these ideas to produce a carefully worded vision statement.

Guidance questions for SITs are given in Activity Three below.

Larger SITs or SITs who wish to involve more community members and stakeholders might prefer to conduct the group visioning exercise in Activity Four.

Sharing the Vision

A vision statement has to be shared with others in order to be effective. Having developed the vision, the SIT must now share it with the school community and stakeholders and take into account their comments on the vision so that a final version is agreed on by all.

The vision must be made public. This might be by publishing it in the school profile, brochure, year book, letterhead or any other school publication; or by printing it on posters and displaying them throughout the school and community.

Next the vision has to become the guide for School Improvement. This means that all school improvement activities must lead towards the achievement of the vision.

Activity Three
Writing a Vision

If your SIT or participant group is less than twelve, it should be possible to start developing your vision statement with a brainstorming session for the whole group.

Write the following questions on a flipchart or on the chalk-board.

What future do you want your child to enjoy?

What skills, values and attitudes should your children demonstrate in their daily lives and in the future?

What would you like your school to be like in three years?

Now encourage participants to discuss the questions in smaller groups of three or four.

After some time, ask the groups to give feedback to the questions. Write the feedback in bullet form on a flipchart or on the chalk-board. Ask groups to give reasons for their responses and talk through and resolve any disagreements.

At the end of this activity you should have a lot of bullet points representing the group's vision.

The next step is to write the vision as a carefully worded statement. This should be no longer than two or three paragraphs.

Writing the vision should be a joint activity but it can be difficult to include everyone's ideas. You might find it easier for the SIT to nominate two or three members to write the final vision statement and present it for review and approval at the next meeting.

Activity Four

A Visioning activity

If your SIT is larger than twelve, or if you prefer to use practical activities, you might like to use Activity Four to help write your vision.

In this activity, workshop participants or SIT members work in groups of four or five. Their task is to develop a newspaper front page telling the story of the success of their school in three or four years' time.

Begin by showing an example of a newspaper front page or show the example on the following page of this booklet. Show how the newspaper has a title, date, headlines, sub-headlines and text.

Often the newspaper tells bad news about what has already happened. In this activity, your participants will be asked to write a newspaper front page showing good news stories about events that they want to see happening at their school in the future. The newspaper might be dated three or five years from today's date.

The stories can be about how student achievement has improved, about better school facilities or about better qualified teachers. Participants use their vision of the school to write the newspaper stories.

Now give each group a large sheet of paper and some marker pens. Ask each group to work together to decide what their newspaper stories will be about and what they will tell about their school's achievements in the future. Give time for each group to write their headlines.

After some time, ask each group to pin their newspapers up on the wall. Invite everyone to read and discuss the groups' newspapers.

Next, ask the group to identify a smaller group of three or four members. This group will be responsible for taking the ideas from the newspapers and writing them as a vision statement for the school.

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Flood disaster in FSM a potential disaster to coffers

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

Palikir, Pohnpei, FSM – When early December flood waters washed across FSM's low outer islands the damage was enormous. The ocean, when it receded brought home with it large portions of the shore lines of those islands. Retaining walls designed to hold off the sea were in left in ruins. Most importantly, taro patches and other crops were inundated with salt water and lay scorching in the sun in the wake of the capricious Pacific Ocean.

Relief was required for islanders whose food supplies were damaged or even destroyed.

Governors from each of the states issued declarations of emergency. Some FSM states were later than others in declaring a state of emergency due to technical communications problems and other problems of human error but as soon as the last state declared the emergency, the President of the FSM declared a state of emergency for the nation and monetary aid flowed. It flowed not only from countries interested in the development of the FSM but it flowed from within from the FSM General Fund.

Before the disaster occurred the FSM Congress passed a $1.4 million appropriations bill for public projects, an amount equal to $100,000 per Senator in the FSM Congress in order to fund projects in each of the Senators' home states. The bill detailed the projects that would be funded in each FSM state.

President Mori vetoed that bill saying that there were other more pressing needs in

See "FSM flooding" on page 14

Pohnpei resolution says that FSM actions jeopardize the continued existence of the Federation

By Bill Jaynes
The Kaselehlie Press

Pohnpei, FSM – On February 24 the Seventh Pohnpei Legislature passed a resolution that expressed their view that "the national government of the Federated states of Micronesia is not seen to be fairly representing the interests of all of the people of the Federation, and is, thereby, jeopardizing the continued existence of the Federation."

The resolution was passed because of the Legislature's concerns over the FSM Congress's passage of the Social Security bill on its second reading which ultimately reduces Social Security benefits and raises taxes in an effort to bail out the ailing Social Security Administration.

The bill became law without President Mori's signature. President Mori said in a letter to Congress's Speaker Isaac Figir that he was washing his hands of the bill by letting it become law without his signature.

The letter said that perhaps a better, "cleaner" solution would be to provide an initial subsidy of $2 million to the Social Security Administration and an annual appropriation of $1.5 million per year for the following four years.

The harshly worded four page letter is being recalled by the President's office for redrafting but not before its intended recipients had read the letter. The letter was drafted by the Justice Department and wasn't sufficiently reviewed before it was signed by the President.

The original Social Security bill was a work product of the Executive Branch rather than of Congress.

Like Pohnpei Legislature's resolution the letter says that at a time when other governments like the United States are putting together stimulus packages to try to stimu-

See "Resolution" on page 8

Fallen FSM soldier given full military honors in Pohnpei

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Building the Pwihn Keisu Community Hall

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Micronesian Ambassador visits Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Some examples of mission statements are given below. Some are short and to the point. Others are more detailed. All are compelling and inspirational.

Our school aims to provide, in partnership with the parents, ***a quality education so that all pupils are able to reach their full potential*** *within a caring, secure environment.*

Our vision is that children will leave school with:
Values -honesty, integrity and good judgment.
Basic skills -linguistic, mathematical, scientific, artistic, physical and social.
Attitudes -An enquiring and discriminating mind and a desire for knowledge, self-esteem and high personal expectation, tolerance and respect for others.

We students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community will meet high expectations for professional behaviors, community involvement, and academic achievement to promote productive, contributing members of our society. Our students will reach their full potential and experience excellence and enjoyment in the classroom.

Chapter Four
How good is our school?

This chapter is about finding out how good the school is by using data.

In order to begin the process of school improvement, it is necessary to know how good the school is now so that improvement can be planned and measured in the future.

How good the school is can be measured by collecting and analyzing all the available data. This process is known as school self-assessment.

The most valuable data in school self-assessment is student achievement or performance data. Student achievement data includes test scores and item analysis of NST and COMET. This type of data is available from the testing and evaluation division of the State Department of Education.

NST and COMET data is useful because these are objective, standardized tests that are consistent from year to year.

Teacher assessments are also important, but these may be less objective than standardized test data as scores often depend on the individual teacher's judgment.

Student achievement data from current and previous years can show trends such as improvements or declines in student achievement.

Student achievement data is important in goal setting and in monitoring and evaluation of the impact of school improvement activities.

Objective data

Objective data is factual information that can be counted or is quantifiable.

Student performance data in the form of test results is a common type of objective data. Objective data is usually very reliable. In other words, it is usually accurate and true.

Although student performance data is central to school improvement planning, it is important to consider other data because it impacts upon student performance.

For example, the number of days a student attends school has an impact on their learning. If the student is often absent, they will probably perform poorly. If they attend every day, it is likely that they will do well.

Objective data includes such things as:

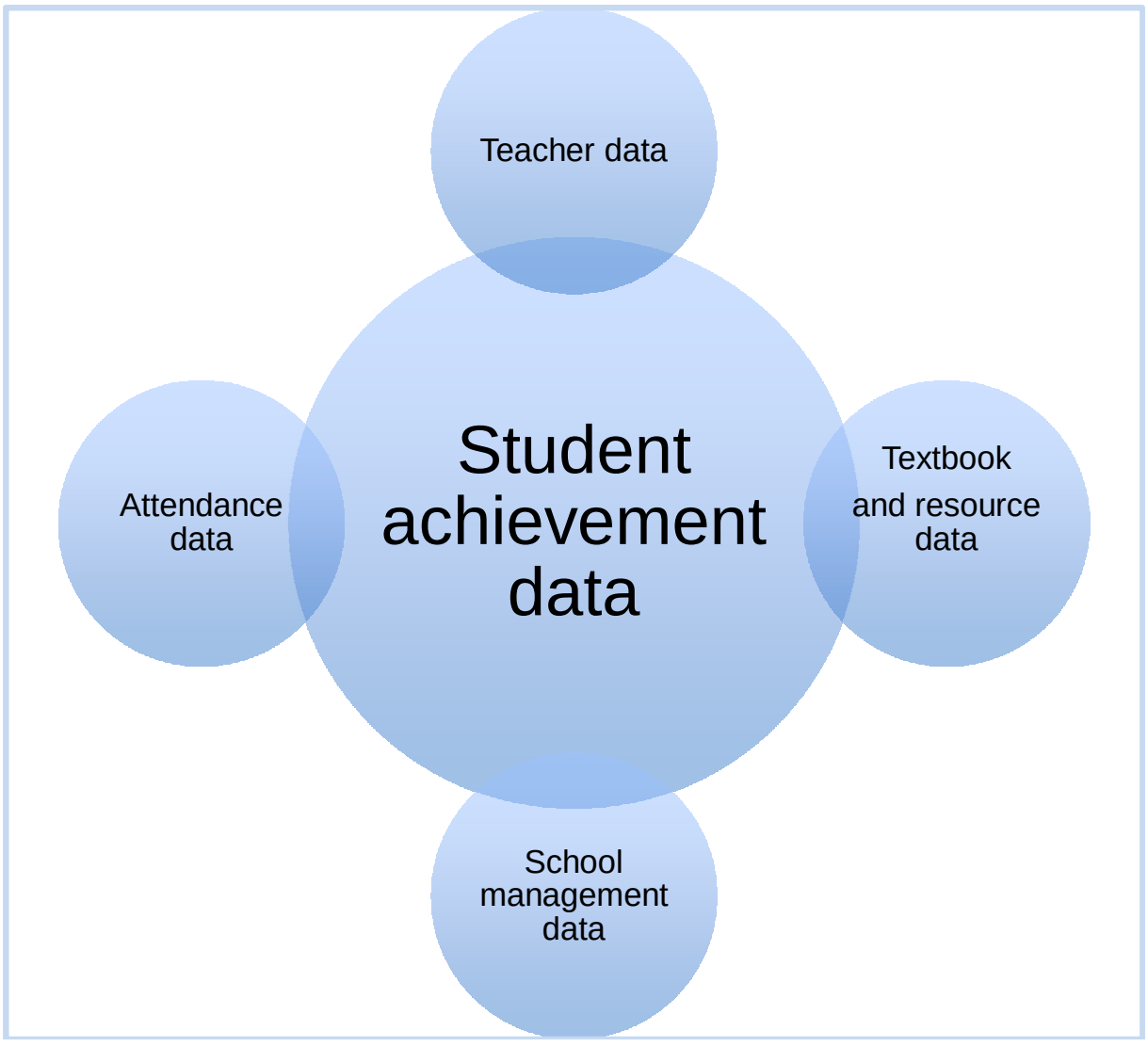
- The number and length of school days per year
- Access to textbooks and other learning materials
- Number of subjects in the curriculum
- How often certain teaching and learning styles are used in the classroom
- How often homework is set and marked
- Classroom assessment.

In this guidance booklet, related data is collected into data sets. The diagram on the following page shows data sets and how they relate to student achievement.

The diagram below shows that student achievement data is central to data analysis. All the other data sets impact on student achievement.

For example, if attendance data shows low levels of teacher attendance, it is likely that, as a result, student achievement will be low.

Student achievement and school performance data



Data Sets

Each of the data sets contains data of a different type from different sources. Details of each data set are shown in the table below.

	Teacher Data •Number of teachers and their deployment •Teacher Qualifications •Teacher Certification (Degree and NSTT) •Teacher training needs	
Attendance data •Staff and teacher attendance •Student attendance •Number of school days per year (minimum 180) •Length of school day •Number of subjects taught	**Student Performance Data** •National Standardized Tests •State Standardized Tests •School Assessments •Teacher observations	**Textbook and resource data** •Number of textbooks per student •Number of Vernacular Language materials for ECE-Grade 3 •Number of textbooks for children with special needs •Supplementary texts •Practical materials for Math, Science and other subjects
	School Management Data •Teacher recruitment •School Board •PTA •Curriculum •Use of school data •Budget •Registration and drop-out policy •School policy on children with special needs •School rules and regulations	

Activity Five

Student achievement data analysis

In this activity, workshop participants or members of the SIT will conduct an analysis on all the available student achievement data.

Before you begin the activity, collect all the available student achievement data for the last four of five years for your school. If you are running a workshop, use examples of data from local schools. The data set should include NST, COMET, state and school-based assessment data. Samples of students' work, matched with curriculum benchmarks, could also be included.

Your state testing and evaluation division should be able to provide NST Proficiency Summaries for all schools, as well as individual school Performance Expectations showing student performance in each test item.

State and school-based data includes state standardized tests and school tests including portfolios or samples of students' work.

Next you should prepare enough copies of the data so that small groups can work on it.

Distribute the data and give an explanation of some of the terms used, such as Proficiency Levels, items and Performance Expectations. Explain that in Performance Expectations data, the % given is the percentage of students in the class who answered the items correctly.

When your participants have a good understanding of the data, ask them to begin an analysis, working in small groups of three or four.

Make copies of the question tables below, or copy the tables onto a flipchart. Ask participants to use the questions to guide their analysis.

Student achievement data analysis		
Question	**Observation**	**Evidence**
Is student achievement better, worse or about the same as you expected?		
Is student achievement improving over time or declining?		
In what areas are the students performing well?		
In what areas are the students performing poorly?		
Are school-based assessments consistent with standardized test results?		
Is there evidence of any groups of students performing poorly compared to others? For example, do boys perform as well as girls?		
How well do students with special needs perform?		
How does achievement compare with similar schools to yours in your		

state or in other states?		

When your small groups have had enough time to analyze the data, ask them to report their findings to the whole group.

Next, ask the whole group to identify the most serious areas of poor student achievement. Encourage participants to be specific in their identification. For example, 'Math' is not specific but 'Problem-solving in Math' is specific. This type of detail can be found in data on Performance Expectations.

Write the areas of poor student achievement the group identifies on a flipchart.

Next ask the group to prioritize, in rank order, the areas of poor achievement, placing the most serious and urgent at the top of the list. This can be done by discussion and negotiation or by voting with a show of hands.

Areas of poor achievement will later become the focus of the goals to be developed later in the school improvement planning process.

School performance data

School performance data includes data from the four outer circles shown in the diagram on page 25. This includes data on teachers, attendance, school management and textbooks and resources.

School performance data has a direct influence on student achievement. Therefore, in order to find the strengths and weaknesses of the school, the SIT should collect and analyze School Performance Data.

The tables on the following page can be used to collect and analyze School Performance data.

Teacher Data		**Analysis**
Number of teachers and their deployment	This data includes the total number of teachers at the school and how the classes or duties that are assigned to them.	Are there too many or too few teachers? Is the school teacher:student ratio between 20-30? Are all class sizes equal? Are all teachers assigned a full timetable?
Teacher Qualifications	This data includes the Degrees, subject knowledge and experience of the teachers.	Are teachers using their qualifications and skills? For example, are teachers with college credits in Math teaching Math?
Teacher Certification (Degree and NSTT)	This data includes the number of certified and un-certified teachers.	Are uncertified teachers needed at the school? Can uncertified teachers be replaced?
Teacher training needs	This data includes professional development needs as well as certification needs.	What recent professional development training has taken place? What courses have teachers attended? What teaching methodology training is needed? Do any teachers require College courses to get degrees?

Attendance data		**Analysis**
Staff and teacher attendance	This data includes daily staff and teacher absence and instances of late-coming.	Is there a high frequency of absence and late-coming?
Student attendance	This data includes daily, weekly and monthly attendance rate data.	What is the average attendance rate for each student? This can be calculated weekly, monthly or yearly. **Weekly**: Count the number of days the student attended / divide by 5 days / multiply by 100. **Monthly**: Count the number of days the student attended / divide by the number of days the school was open each month / multiply by 100). **Yearly:** Count the number of days the student attended / divide by 180 / multiply by 100). What is the average attendance rate for the school? (Add all student average attendance rates and divide by the number of students).
Number of school days per year (minimum 180)	This data includes the actual number of days the school was open and operating each year. Also included are unplanned closures.	The minimum number of operating days is 180. What are the reasons for unplanned closure days? What arrangements are there for making up for unplanned closures?
Length of school day	This data includes the number of hours of instruction per day for each class.	What is the length of the school day? Is there sufficient time for instruction to cover the curriculum?
Number of subjects taught	What subjects are taught? Are subjects appropriate? How much time is given to each subject in each week?	Are all curriculum subjects covered? Is the curriculum balanced or does it focus on core subjects? Ate technical subjects taught? Do subjects include PE, Music, Art and other practical subjects?

Textbook and resource data		Analysis
Number of textbooks per student	This data includes the total number of textbooks in each core subject (Vernacular Language Arts, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies) in each Grade related to the number of students.	Are the adequate textbooks for each subject in each Grade? What textbooks are being used? Are they appropriate for the class?
Number of Vernacular Language materials for ECE-Grade 3	This data includes the number of textbooks for Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies available in Vernacular Language for each class from ECE to Grade 3.	Vernacular language is the language of instruction for ECE-Grade 3. This data will demonstrate the extent to which these classes are properly resourced.
Number of textbooks for children with special needs	This data includes the number of adapted textbooks for special needs, such as large print, Braille or remedial texts.	Are children with special needs receiving the standard of resource provision they need to make progress and keep up with their peers?
Supplementary texts	This data includes the number of texts in the library as well as software for use with computers.	Are the enough supplementary texts to enrich the curriculum and engage students in research and further study?
Practical materials for Math, Science and other subjects	This data includes all equipment, materials and facilities for practical work, investigation, measuring and technical skills.	Is there enough practical equipment to allow students to learn through activity? Is there enough specialist equipment for science? Is there enough equipment for technical subjects?

School Management Data		Analysis
Teacher recruitment	This data includes information on are recruitment, vacancy advertising, selection criteria and conditions of employment.	Are vacant posts widely advertised? Are posts filled by application and interview? Who selects new teachers? What contracts are issued to new teachers?
School Board	This data includes information on the legal mandate, role and activities of the School Board.	What is the role of the School Board? How are Board members selected? Is the Board carrying out its legal mandate?
PTA	This data includes information on the role and activities of the PTA.	What is the role of the PTA? What activities does the PTA conduct? How effective is the PTA?
Curriculum	This data includes information on the school curriculum.	Does the school follow the National and State curriculum? Are all subjects taught according to the curriculum guidelines?
Use of school data	This data includes how information is analysed and used in decision-making.	Is data analysed to identify problems and guide decision-making? Is data made public?
Budget	This data includes information on the school budget and how it is used.	Does the school have a budget? How is the budget developed? What is the Per Pupil Expenditure for the school? (Per Pupil Expenditure can be found in the JEMCO indicators on the NDOE website). Does the school receive value for money in the services it receives from the State Department of Education?
Registration and drop-out policy	This data includes information on student registration, dropout and transfers.	Are all students in the community registered at school? Does the school have a policy to prevent drop-out? Does the school track transferring students?
School policy on children with special needs	This data includes information on special needs provision.	How many students have IDPs? Are the IDPs properly implemented?
School rules and regulations	This data includes information on school policies, rules and regulations.	Are policies, rules and regulations in the best interests of students? Are they enforced fairly and consistently?

Subjective data

Subjective data includes what students, community members and stakeholders think about the school. This type of data is more to do with opinion rather than fact. However, it is important to know what people think about the school.

Subjective data can help the SIT to:

- Determine the level of satisfaction students, community members and stakeholders have with the schools' performance,
- Identify strengths and weaknesses,
- identify issues and problems.

Principals and SIT members can gather subjective data by talking to small representative groups of students, community members and stakeholders.

Small representative groups are sometimes called focus groups. Focus groups represent members of the whole school community who have a particular focus or interest. For example, the particular focus of students might be school rules and discipline.

Activity Six

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions involve a facilitator or group of facilitators conducting a discussion with a focus group of five to eight members and collecting information from the group. The discussion can be managed using a list of planned questions. The length of a focus group discussion should not exceed thirty minutes.

The questions used in focus group discussions should be open-ended and non-judgmental or neutral, such as,

'Tell me about . . . . . .'
'What do you think about . . . . . .?'
'What is your opinion about . . . . . .?'

Open-ended questions allow focus group members to provide information and opinion from their own perspective. Non-judgmental questions ensure that the focus groups give their honest opinion without fear of criticism.

Very general open-ended questions should be used at the start of the focus group session. As the session continues, more specific questions should be used to get more detailed information about specific issues, such as,

'Can you give me some examples of this issue?'
'Can you explain why this issue is important?'
'What do you think we should do about this issue?'
'How do you think we should address this issue?'

Supplementary or unplanned questions may become necessary if a topic of great interest emerges during the session.
Closed or yes/no questions should be avoided as they inhibit discussion.
Why questions should be rarely used because participants may tend to give an answer they think you want to hear.

The benefits of focus group discussions

Focus group discussions can provide valuable information to guide the school improvement process. They can;

- identify issues and problems.
- confirm that suspected issues and problems are real.
- help identify which issues or problems are more important than others.
- identify factors that may contribute to issues and problems.
- provide a baseline assessment of where the school is now in relation to an issue or problem.
- give the whole school community an opportunity to participate in the school improvement planning and so generate a sense of ownership and commitment to the process of school improvement.
- provide information on progress through monitoring the implementation of the school improvement plan.

Whole school community surveys

Whole school community surveys can be conducted as part of the school self-assessment process.

Surveys are conducted by issuing survey forms. These can be developed by the SIT. The forms may be developed or adapted for a certain group within the whole school community, such as Grade 6 students or parents of Grade 8 students.

Survey forms should be short and simple. They can focus on one or two aspects of school performance, such as student achievement, teaching methods or school management.

Survey forms can be administered during a school improvement planning or PTA meeting or any other occasion when community members come together.

The survey should be confidential so that respondents will feel free to make honest or critical comments.

Some examples of school surveys are shown on the following page.

School self-assessment		
Grade 6 students NST Math Survey		
1	What do you like most about Math lessons?	
2	What do you dislike most about math lessons?	
3	How well do you think you did in the NST?	
4	What questions did you find most difficult?	
5	How did you prepare for the NST?	
6	How can your school help you do better in Math?	

Parent Survey Form on school management	Yes/ No
1. Does the school have a written mission statement?	
2. Is the mission statement shared and understood by students, parents, teachers, principal, and community members?	
3. Does the school have clear standards of academic success that are known by teachers, students, and community members?	
4. Does the school have clear rules and regulations that are shared and understood by teachers, principal, students and parents?	
5. Are the rules and regulations consistently and fairly applied to everyone?	
6. Did the Principal, teachers, and school board explain the school vision, mission and goals to parents and students?	
7. Is school time managed to have maximum time for learning, with at least 180 days of instruction per year?	
8. Are classes are held on all days, consistent with the school calendar, with no half-day or unscheduled closures?	
9. Do classes start on time, with teachers present and prepared for the lesson?	

Chapter Five
Setting Priorities for School Improvement

This chapter is about identifying and prioritizing the problems that effect student performance.

Student performance data is the most important indicator of problems. If student performance data shows that most students are scoring highly in the NST, then the school is a high performing school and is doing well.

Most of the students in a high performing school should be scoring in the Proficient and Advanced categories.

If student performance data shows that most students are scoring in the 'Below Basic' and 'Basic" categories in the NST, then the school is not doing a good job and student performance is a problem.

Analysis of other data, including focus group discussions and surveys, can be used to identify problems that impact on student performance.

For example, analysis of attendance data may show that the school has a problem with student attendance.

Analysis of surveys may show that parents are concerned about frequent school closures, which are causing a problem.

The role of the SIT is to list the problems identified by the data analysis activities. The problems could be listed on a Problems Chart on a large sheet of poster paper, similar to the one shown on the following page. The examples are for illustration only.

Problems Chart: **Problems identified by data analysis**	
Problem	Data evidence
1.Poor student performance in Grade 6 NST Math	*87% of students scored 'Below Basic'.*
2.Low student attendance	*Student attendance data shows that on average, students missed 5 days of instruction every month.*
3.Low levels of homework completion	*Parents report that they do not know how to help students with homework.*
4. Three teachers are unqualified.	*Staff qualification records show three teachers do not have AA/AS degrees*
5. There are not enough textbooks	*School textbook inventory shows 2 textbooks per student*

Prioritizing Problems

The final stage in this chapter is the prioritization of problems.

Not all problems can be tackled in one school improvement plan, so it is important to prioritize and work to solve the most urgent and important problems first. Later, less important problems can be tackled.

In order to prioritize the most urgent and important problems, a democratic process can be used by the SIT. A democratic process makes sure that everyone has a say in which problems are tackled first.

Criteria for prioritization may include:

- **Deciding which problems are causing most students to fail.**
- **Deciding which problems are the underlying causes of other problems.**
- **Deciding which problems can be tackled by the school with the available resources.**
- **Deciding which problems are the most urgent.**
- **Deciding which problems can be solved in ways other than through the School Improvement Plan.**

One method of prioritization is to give each member of the SIT three votes.

These might be ‘Post-it’ notes or squares of tape.

The facilitator should display the Problems Chart on the wall and invite each SIT member to decide where they will place their three votes. They might vote three times for one problem or vote once for three different problems.

When all SIT members have voted, you should count how many votes each problem has received and write the final scores on the chart. The problems with the highest scores are the most urgent and important.

In this example, the SIT has voted that problems 1, 2 and 4 are the most urgent and important.

Problems Chart **Problems identified by data analysis**	
Problem	Data evidence
1.Poor student performance in Grade 6 NST Math ■■■■■■■■■■ ***10 votes***	*87% of students scored 'Below Basic'.*
2.Low student attendance ■■■■■■ ***6 votes***	*Student attendance data shows that on average, students missed 5 days of instruction every month.*
3.Low levels of homework completion ■■■ ***3 votes***	*Parents report that they do not know how to help students with homework.*
4. Three teachers are unqualified. ■■■■■■***6 votes***	*Staff qualification records*
5. There are not enough textbooks ■■■■■ ***5 votes***	*School textbook inventory shows 2 books per student*

Chapter Six
Problem Tree Analysis

In Chapter Three, 'How good is our school?' the SIT was asked to examine and analyze all the available data to determine how effective the school is. This analysis should have identified problems. Chapter Four showed how these problems could be prioritized to identify those that the school improvement plan will address.

When problems are identified, it is a good idea to find out all about them before rushing to a solution.

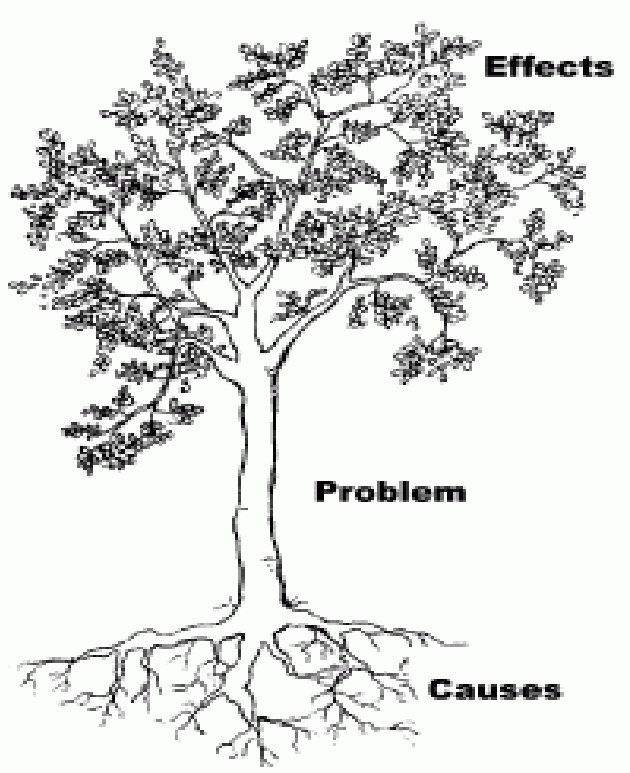
Problem tree analysis is a way to find out more information about problems. The more is known about a problem, the more effectively it can be tackled.

As the name implies, the activity resembles a tree.

The problem is represented by the trunk of the tree.

The roots of the tree represent the causes of the problem.

The tree branches represent the effects or outcomes of the problem.



Activity Seven

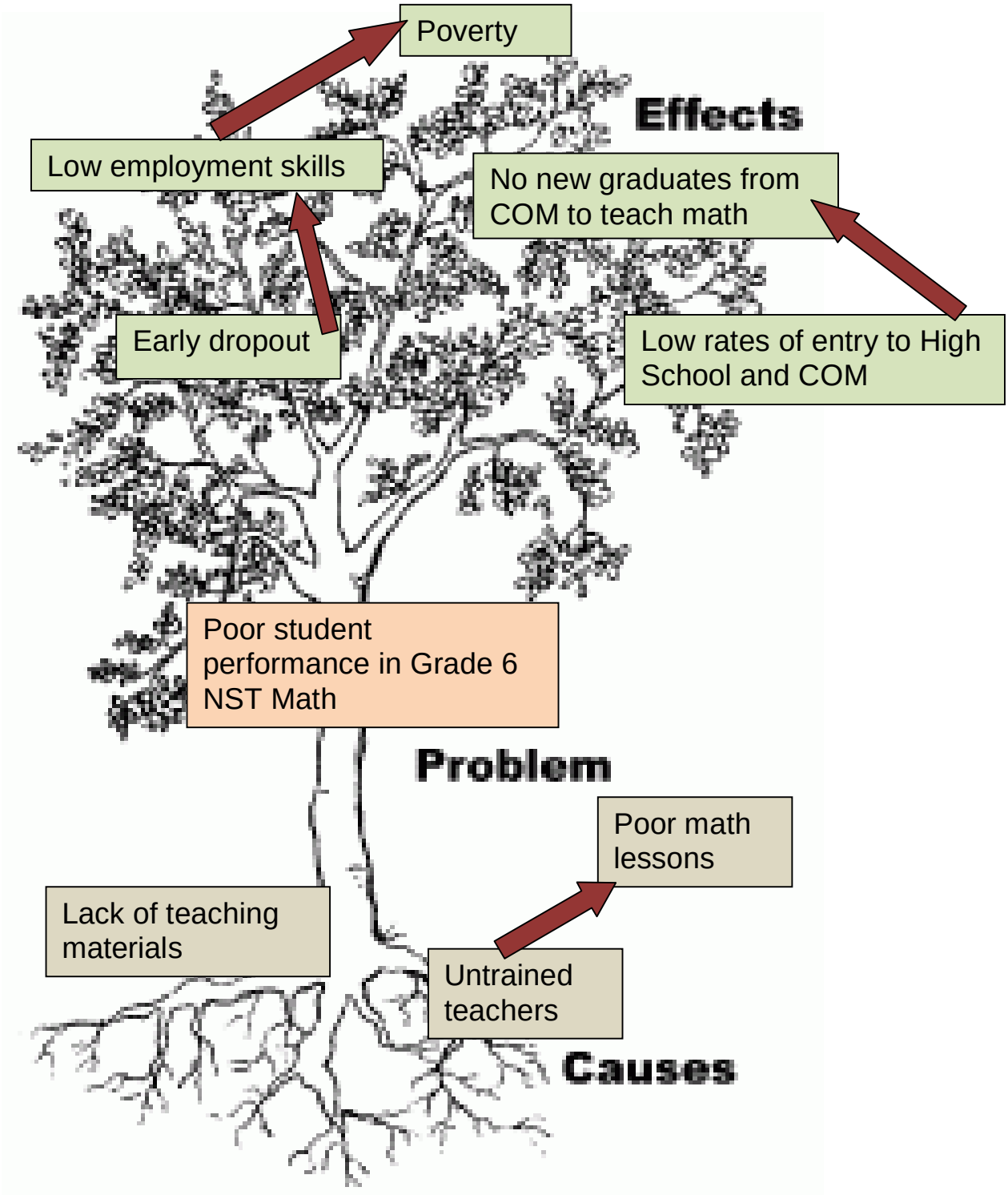
Problem tree analysis

This activity can be conducted by a trainer with a group of participants or by a SIT as part of the school improvement process. Principals or trainers should act as facilitators.

The table below shows the process laid out step by step.

Step	Who	Activity
1	**Facilitator and participants**	Start by reviewing the problems that have been identified through data analysis and Focus Group Discussions and Activities. Write each problem on a post-it, ¼ A4 paper or card. Problems should be written as a negative, such as 'High rate of absenteeism' or 'Poor examination results'.
2	**Facilitator and participants**	Select one problem for problem tree analysis by each group. Use voting to select the problem. Allocate the problem to a group of 4 to 6 stakeholders who have some knowledge of or expertise related to the problem. Other problems can be allocated to other groups or analysed later.
3	**Participants**	Place the selected problem on the 'trunk' of a blank problem tree diagram. Brainstorm the causes of the problem and write them on similar cards. Place the causes where the roots of the tree should be.
4	**Participants**	Brainstorm the direct effects of the problem and write them on similar cards. Place the effects where the branches of the tree should be.
7	**Participants**	Double check that all the causes and effects have been analysed. Display the tree and invite other stakeholders to comment on it.
8	**Facilitator**	Make a copy of the problem tree to be included in the school improvement plan.

The problem tree analysis might look like the example below.



In the example, some causes and effects are joined with arrows. This is to show that there is a relationship between them. For example, math lessons are poor because teachers are untrained and early dropout results in low employment skills which in turn results in poverty.

If you are conducting training, ask your groups to analyze the problem below:

Poor student achievement in the Problem Solving questions in Grade 6 NST Math

Distribute a large sheet of paper and some smaller sheets for each group. Give each group some marker pens and glue or tape. Ask each group to draw a problem tree. Ask them to write the problem on a small sheet of paper and paste it onto the trunk of the tree. Next ask them to write the causes and effects.

Next ask participants to arrange the causes and effects. Ask them to join related causes and related effects using arrows.

When each group has had enough time to complete the task, ask them to display their tree and present their findings.

If you are using this activity with a School Improvement Team, ask them to identify and analyze a real problem they have identified from the data analysis activities they conducted in Chapter Three,

Activity Eight

Goals, Objectives and Outcomes Tree

This activity can be conducted by a trainer with a group of participants or by a SIT as part of the school improvement process. Principals or trainers should act as facilitators.

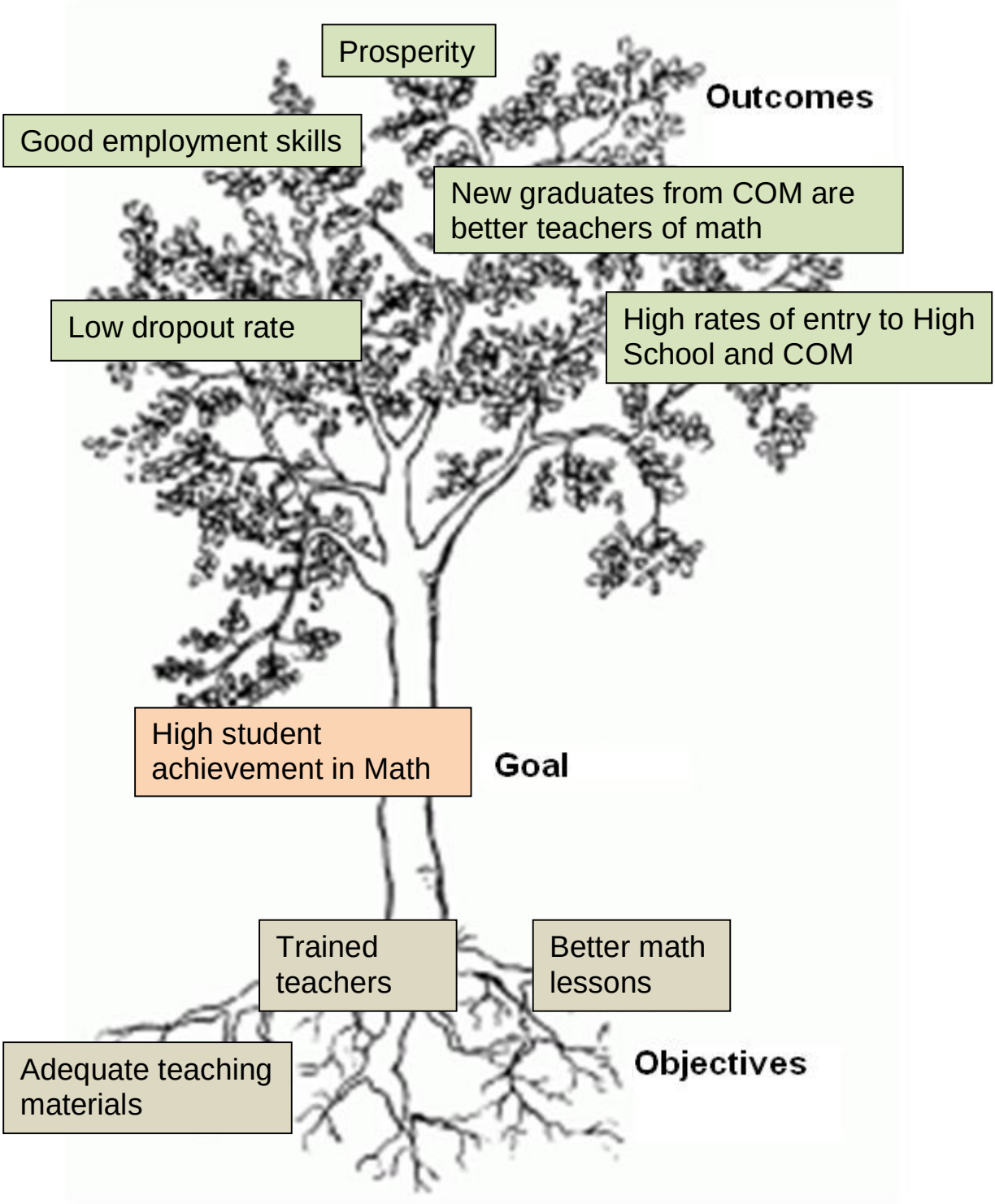
In this activity, participants will convert the problem, causes and effects of the problem tree into a goal, objectives and outcomes. The goal is what the SIT wants to achieve. Objectives are what they will do to achieve the goal. Outcomes are what will happen as a result of achieving the goal.

Ask each group to work with their problem tree from Activity Seven. Working from the top of the tree, ask them to convert the negative statements to positive ones. Their finished tree might look like the example on the following page.

When each group has had sufficient time to complete the task, ask them to display and present their problem tree and their Goals, Objectives and Outcomes tree side by side.

Explain that, later in the School Improvement Process, groups will refine their Goal, Objectives and Outcomes as they continue to develop their School Improvement Plan.

Goal, Objectives and Outcomes tree.



All Goals are Student Achievement Goals

In School Improvement Planning, all goals should be Student Achievement Goals. This is because the mission of schools is to facilitate and support student achievement.

Student Achievement Goals are usually related to achievement in academic subjects. However, some Student Achievement Goals may be about achievement in some other area, such as cultural awareness or healthy habits.

A common error in School Improvement Planning is forming goals that are not expressed in terms of student achievement.

In the example shown on the following pages, an SIT has analyzed the following problem.

> 50% of teachers are uncertified

The SIT has developed a Goals, Objectives and Outcomes tree. The problem has been converted into the following goal.

> All teachers are certified

However, this cannot be a School Improvement Planning goal as it does not refer directly to student achievement.

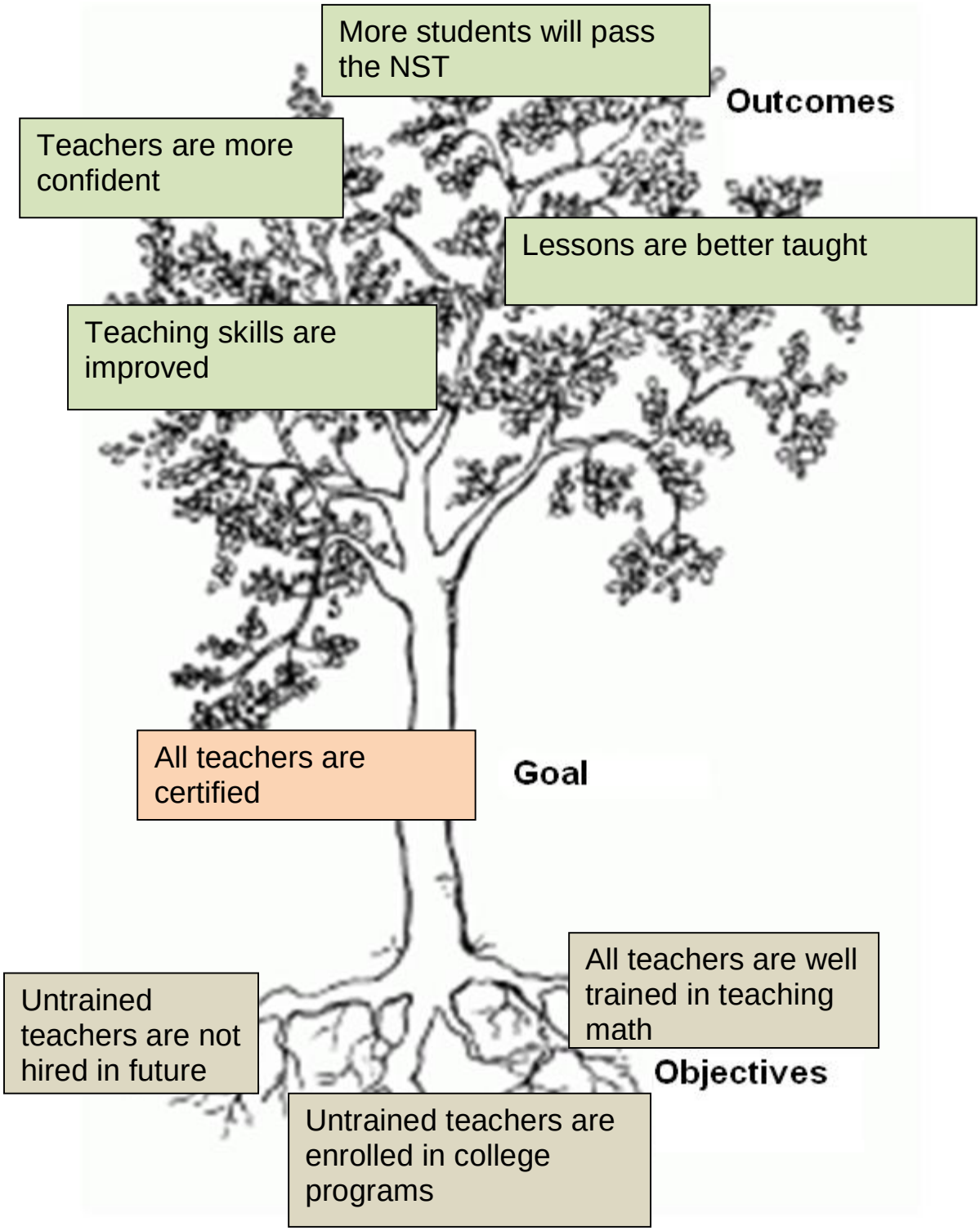
The SIT must look further up the Problem Tree to find an outcome that refers directly to student performance. This is:

> More students will pass the NST

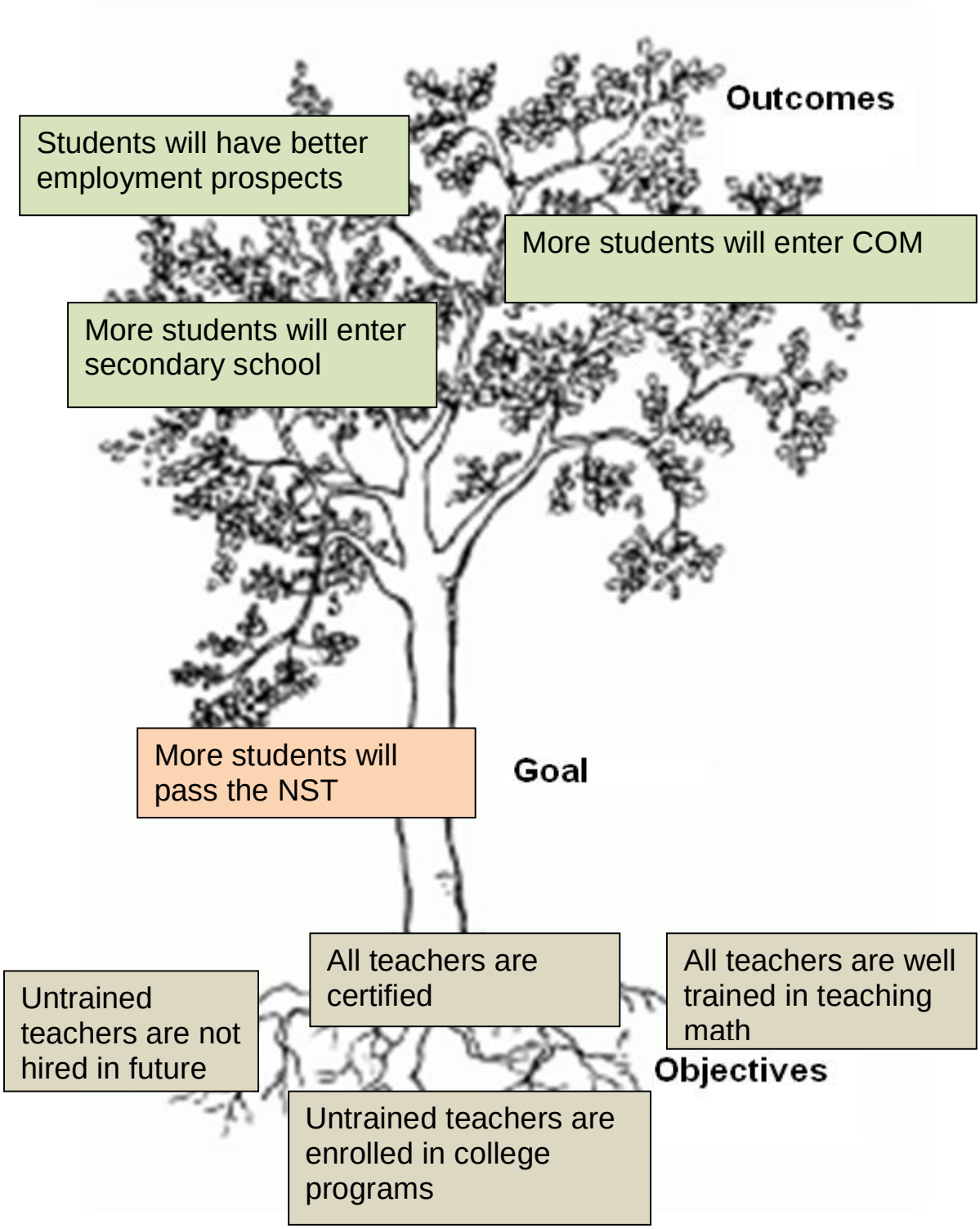
This outcome becomes the Student Achievement Goal and 'All Teachers are Qualified' becomes an objective that leads to the attainment of the Student Achievement Goal.

New Outcomes that are a result of more students passing the NST are written.

In this example of a problem tree, the Goal does not refer directly to student achievement.



Now an outcome that refers to student achievement has become the Goal. The previous goal has become an objective. New Outcomes have been written.



Conducting the problem tree analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to show facilitators or School Principals how to guide workshop participants or SIT members through the process of Problem Tree Analysis.

If you are a trainer working with a group at a workshop, your group should now be able to go back to their state or school and be able to conduct problem tree analysis themselves, or train others how to conduct problem tree analysis.

If you are facilitating the work of an SIT, the SIT should now also be able to conduct problem tree analysis for themselves.

The SIT should now look back at the Problems Chart they developed in Chapter Three. Working in groups, the SIT should conduct problem tree analysis for each of the problems listed on their Problems Chart.

This analysis may take some time, but it is important that the SIT conduct a thorough analysis so that they have a good understanding of all the problems that impact on student performance.

Chapter Seven
Refining Goals and Objectives

In Chapter Four, your participants or SIT were asked to analyze problems to identify causes and effects. They then converted the problems, causes and effects into Goals, Objectives and Outcomes.

In this chapter, your participants or SIT will refine the goals and objectives. This will involve making the Goals and Objectives SMART.

SMART stands for:

Simple

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time-bound.

Simple means that the goals and objectives should be straightforward and easy for everyone to understand.

Measurable means that the goals and objectives can be measured and assessed using some sort of baseline and target.

Achievable means that the goals and objectives are within reach.

Relevant means that the goals and objectives are significant and important to the students.

Time-bound means that the goals and objectives have a time frame with completion dates or deadlines.

Making Goals and Objectives SMART

In Chapter Five, this Student Achievement Goal was used as an example.

> More students will pass the NST

At this stage the goal is not SMART.

The table below shows how to make the goal SMART.

1	Make it Specific	Focus on Grade 6 Math
2	Make it Measurable	20% of students will pass NST Math. A pass will be above the category 'Below Basic' or 69%
3	Make it Achievable	13% passed last year so 20% is achievable two years from now
4	Make it Relevant	It is important for students to do well in Math
5	Make it Time-bound	The goal will be achieved in two years

The Student Achievement Goal can be re-written as:

> 20% of Grade 6 students will pass the NST Math, scoring over 69%, two years from now.

Objectives can also be made SMART.

> Better math lessons

> By the beginning of the next quarter, at least 50% of Grade 5 and 6 Math lessons on measurement and geometry, observed by the Principal, will include practical work.

Activity Nine

Making Goals and Objectives SMART

This activity can be conducted by a trainer with a group of participants or by a SIT as part of the school improvement process. Principals or trainers should act as facilitators.

Photocopy the goals and objectives below and cut them up to make four or five sets of cards. Distribute one set of cards to each group. Ask each group to sort the cards into three categories:

1. SMART Student Achievement Goals.
2. SMART Objectives.
3. Neither SMART Student Achievement Goals nor SMART Objectives.

If you do not have a photocopier, write the cards on a flipchart.

1. All teachers will be certified by the end of next year.	2. All classrooms will have one desk and chair for every student by September next year.	3. Average student attendance will climb from 85% per month now to 90% by next January.
4. All students will pass the NST.	5. All students will achieve Advanced level in Grade 6 NST Math next year.	6. Student achievement in Grade 8 NST Math will improve from 4% at Proficient level now to 10% at Proficient level two years from now.
7. 50% of Grade 5 students will show an appreciation for their culture by participating in a traditional dance on culture day.	8. At least 50% of parents in ECE will read a story book to their children each week during the month of May.	9. Starting next year, all classrooms will be swept clean each morning.

Use the answer guide on the next page to discuss the group activity.

Making Goals and Objectives SMART

Answer Guide

Card	Category	Description
1. All teachers will be certified by the end of next year.	2	This is a SMART objective. It is not a Student Achievement Goal but it is likely to result in improving student achievement.
2. Classrooms will have desks and chairs by September next year.	3	This is an objective but it is not SMART as it does not specify how many desks and chairs each classroom should have.
3. Average student attendance will climb from 85% per month now to 90% per month by next January.	2	This is a SMART objective. It is not a Student Achievement Goal but it is likely to result in improving student achievement.
4. All students will pass the NST.	3	This is a Student Achievement Goal but it is not SMART as it is unrealistic and not time-bound.
5. All students will achieve Advanced level in Grade 6 NST Math next year compared to 5% last year.	3	This is a Student Achievement Goal but it is not SMART as it is unrealistic to expect all students to achieve Advanced level if only 5% achieved this level last year.
6. Student achievement in Grade 8 NST Math will improve from 4% at Proficient level now to 10% at Proficient level two years from now.	1	This is a SMART Student Achievement Goal. It is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound,
7. 50% of Grade 5 students will show an appreciation for their culture by participating in a traditional dance on culture day.	1	This is a SMART Student Achievement Goal, although it is not an academic goal. It is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound,
8. At least 50% of parents in ECE will read a story book to their children each week during the month of May.	2	This is a SMART objective. It is not a Student Achievement Goal but could result in improving student achievement.
9. Starting next year, classrooms will be swept clean.	3	This is not a SMART objective. It is not measurable and it is unlikely to result in improving student achievement.

Chapter Eight
Goals, Objectives and Activities

When the SIT has developed SMART Student Achievement Goals and SMART Objectives that are likely to result in improving student achievement, it is time to start planning a program of Activities.

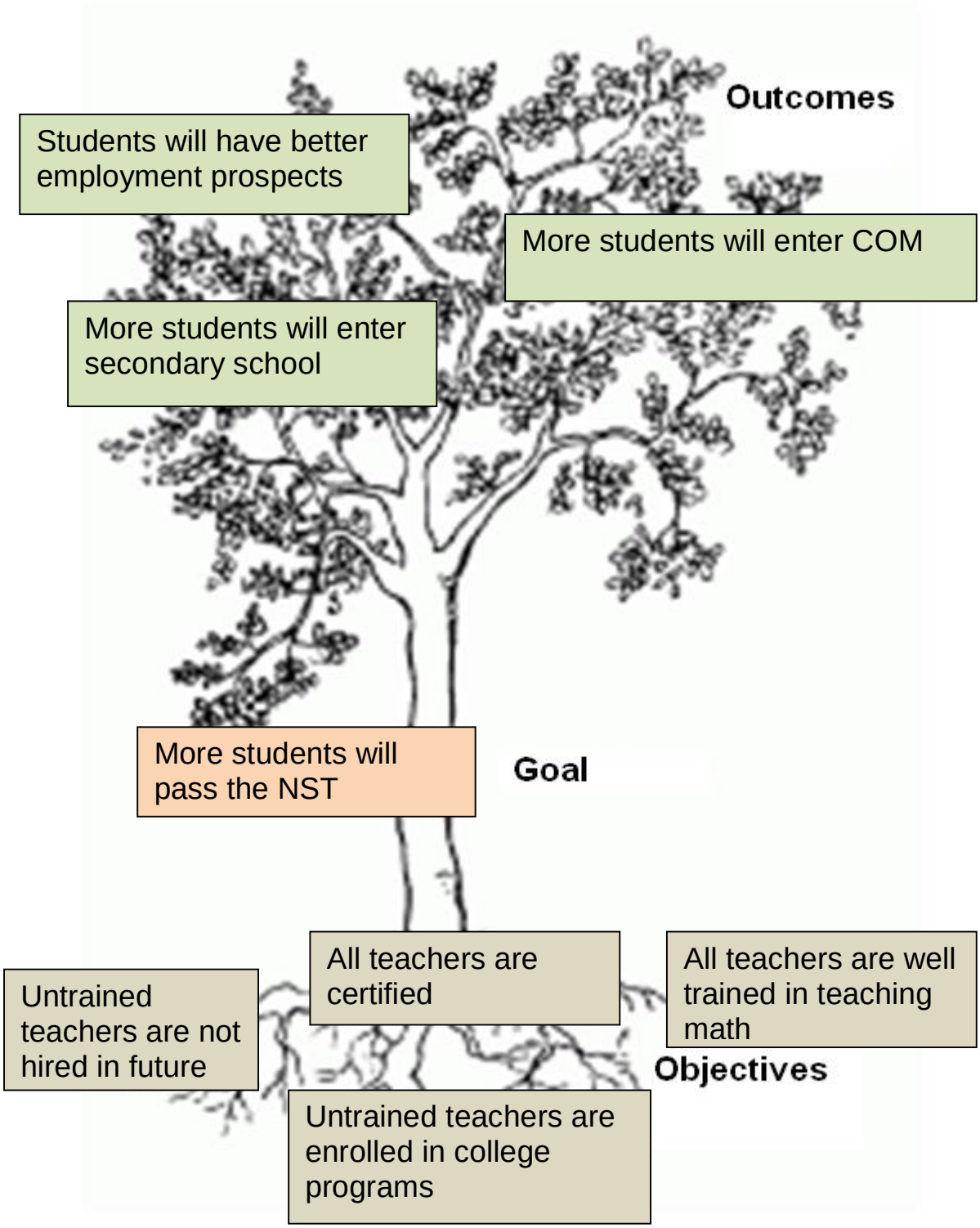
Goals, Objectives and Activities are the most important parts of the School Improvement plan because they describe what the school wants to achieve and how it is going to achieve it.

The relationship between Goals, Objectives and Activities is described in the diagram below.

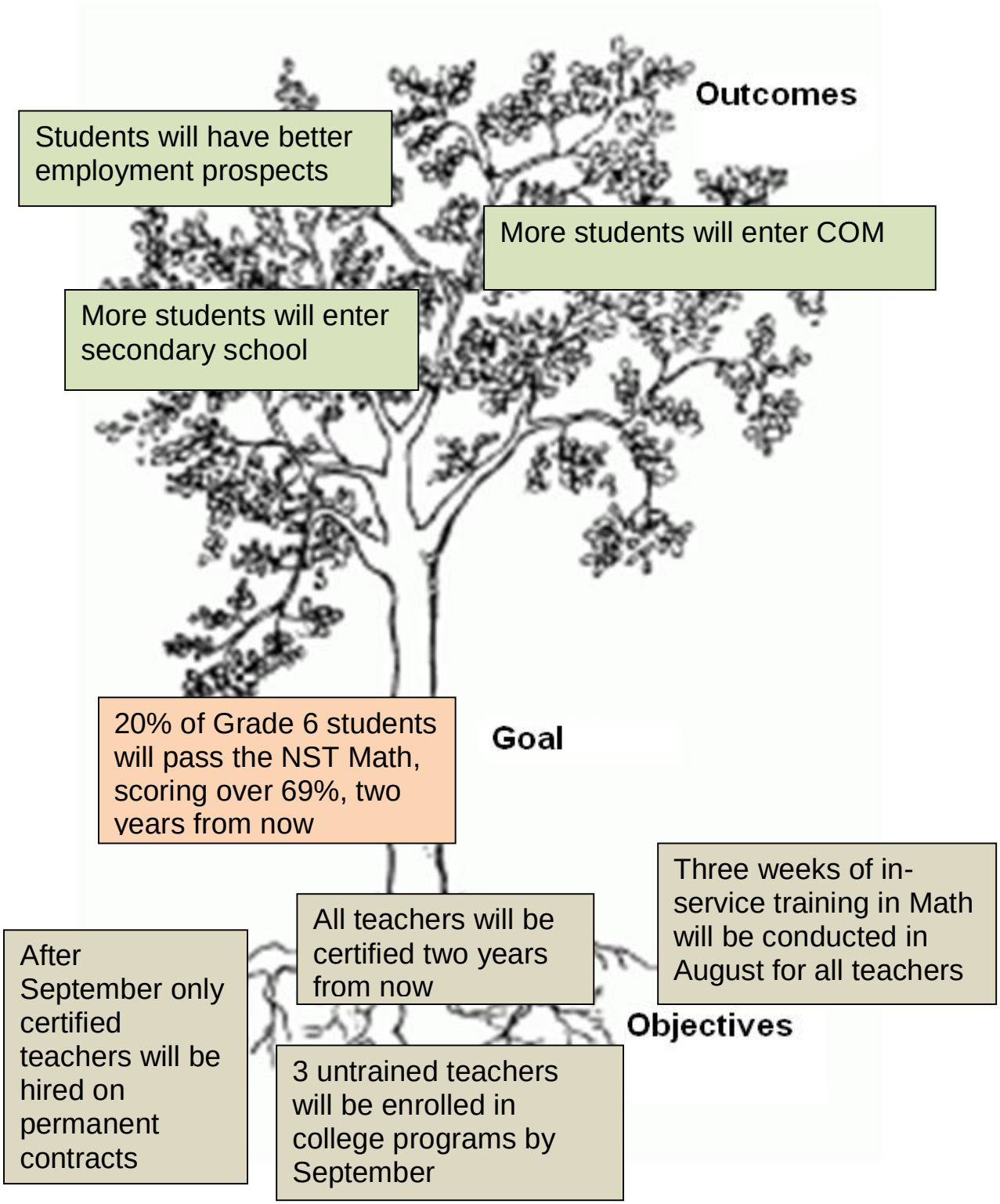
Each Goal is achieved through a number of Objectives.
Each Objective is achieved through a number of activities.

Goal			
Objective 1	**Objective 2**	**Objective 3**	**Objective 4**
Activity 1	*Activity 1*	*Activity 1*	*Activity 1*
Activity 2	*Activity 2*	*Activity 2*	*Activity 2*
Activity 3	*Activity 3*	*Activity 3*	*Activity 3*
Activity 4	*Activity 4*	*Activity 4*	*Activity 4*
Activity 5	*Activity 5*		*Activity 5*
Activity 6			*Activity 6*
Activity 7			

In Chapter Five we looked at the Problem Tree below. We have since learned how to make the Goals and Objectives SMART.



The same tree with SMART Goals and Objectives looks like this.



The next step is for the SIT to copy the Goals and Objectives onto a Goals, Objectives and Activities Planning Matrix like the one shown below.

Goals, Objectives and Activities Planning Matrix			
Student Achievement Goal 20% of Grade 6 students will pass the NST Math, scoring over 69%, two years from now.			
Objective 1 After September only certified teachers will be hired on permanent contracts	**Objective 2** All teachers will be certified two years from now.	**Objective 3** 3 untrained teachers will be enrolled in college programs by September	**Objective 4** Three weeks of in-service training in Math will be conducted in August for all teachers
Activities	**Activities**	**Activities**	**Activities**

After that, the activities can be developed. The activities are all the things that need to be done to achieve the objectives. Activities are usually sequenced in a logical order.

Student Achievement Goal 20% of Grade 6 students will pass the NST Math, scoring over 69%, two years from now.			
Objective 1 After September only certified teachers will be hired on permanent contracts	**Objective 2** Two years from now, all teachers will be certified.	**Objective 3** 3 untrained teachers will be enrolled in college programs by September	**Objective 4** Three weeks of in-service training in Math will be conducted in August for all teachers
Activities	**Activities**	**Activities**	**Activities**
Get the agreement of the State Director and school supervisors	*Arrange tutorials for teachers to ensure they all pass the NSTT*	*Confirm that 3 untrained teachers wish to attend COM*	*Request assistance from the Math specialist at the Education Department*
Meet with the school board to agree a policy on hiring of teachers	*Arrange for all teachers to sit the NSTT*	*Ask the Education Department to enrol 3 untrained teachers at COM*	*Observe Math lessons to determine training needs*
Write a new teacher hiring policy	*Send copies of teachers' certificates to the Director of Education*	*Combine the classes of the 3 teachers at COM to make multi-grade classes*	*Design a training program*
Insert the policy into the school policy booklet and send a copy to the Director of Education	*Ask the Director of Education to submit teachers' details for Certification*	*Train teachers in multi-grade teaching*	*Schedule training*
Evaluate the policy	*Evaluate the activities against the objective.*	*Hire 3 temporary classroom assistants to help multi-grade teachers*	*Prepare venue and materials for training*
		Evaluate the activities against the objective	*Facilitate training*
			Monitor and evaluate changes in teaching methods by classroom observation

Effective activities for school improvement

It is important that the SIT choose the most effective activities for their school improvement plan. Effective activities bring about improvements to key aspects of the school.

Key aspects of the school are:

- **Curriculum**
- **Teaching**
- **Learning**
- **The learning Environment**
- **Community Participation.**

Activities related to the **Curriculum** include ensuring that all teachers have copies of curriculum documents and that they understand and follow them in their lesson planning. The curriculum should include core subjects and the school timetable should allow enough time for students to master the curriculum content.

Activities related to **Teaching** include ensuring that all teachers have high expectations for their students and are certified and properly trained to teach using methodologies appropriate to the curriculum and the age and experience of the children. Professional Development and training are important activities to improve teaching.

Activities related to **Learning** include providing appropriate and relevant learning opportunities and experiences in classrooms and the local environment. These should include creative and practical learning activities and problem-solving.

Activities related to **The Learning Environment** include making sure that the physical and social environment supports high-quality learning. This means providing learning materials, textbooks and other facilities. The social learning environment should be safe, free of violence, supportive and inclusive of all students, including those with special needs.

Activities related to **Community Participation** include encouraging parental support for education in the classroom and at home. This may mean inviting parents to assist in the classroom or offering classes to parents to show them how to help their children at home with reading or homework.

Activity Ten

Designing Activities

This activity can be conducted by a trainer with a group of participants or by a SIT as part of the school improvement process. Principals or trainers should act as facilitators.

In this activity, participants will work in groups of two or three.

Photocopy enough copies of the table on the following page. If you do not have a photocopier, make a copy on flipchart paper and ask each group to copy it.

Read through the Goal and Objectives and the activities for Objective 1.
Next, ask each group to develop activities for the other Objectives and write them on the table.

Give enough time for each group to complete the task.
When all groups have completed their table, ask them to give feedback.

Student Achievement Goal Improve student scores in NST Grade 6 Math so that by next year, at least 10% of students are performing at proficient level compared to 2% now.			
Objective 1 All grades will have one math textbook per student by the beginning of the next school year	**Objective 2** All teachers will attend 20 hours of professional development training in the next school year	**Objective 3** By the beginning of the next school year, all Math lessons will include problem solving	**Objective 4** By the beginning of the next school year, all Math lessons will include practical activities
Conduct inventory.			
Determine needs.			
Identify best textbooks			
Order textbooks			
Prepare a textbook management policy			
Distribute textbooks to students			
All teachers use textbooks effectively in lessons			
Monitoring and evaluation			

The table below can be used as a guide by the facilitator. It shows an example of some possible activities for each objective.

Goal Improve student scores in NST Grade 6 Math so that by next year, at least 10% of students are performing at proficient level compared to 2% now.			
Objective 1 All grades will have one math textbook per student by the beginning of the next school year	**Objective 2** All teachers will attend 20 hours of professional development training in the next school year	**Objective 3** By the beginning of the next school year, all Math lessons will include problem solving	**Objective 4** By the beginning of the next school year, all Math lessons will include practical activities
Conduct inventory.	*Identify teacher needs by analysing performance expectations*	*Establish a team of teachers to research problem solving on the internet*	*Identify equipment required by studying textbooks*
Determine needs.	*Locate training materials*	*Research team identifies problem solving skills*	*Establish a team to make equipment from local materials*
Identify best textbooks	*Obtain training assistance from DOE*	*Research team conducts school-based staff development*	*Place order for equipment that cannot be made locally*
Order textbooks	*Conduct weekly training*	*Develop school policy on problem solving*	*Provide each class with equipment pack in a secure box*
Prepare a textbook management policy	*Principal conducts weekly classroom observation to monitor implementation of training in classroom*	*Establish teacher teams for lesson planning*	*All math lessons to include practical activity*
Distribute textbooks to students		*All math lesson plans to include problem solving*	*Monitoring and evaluation*
All teachers use textbooks effectively in lessons		*Monitoring and evaluation*	
Monitoring and evaluation			

Developing activities

The next stage is for the SIT to carefully plan each activity by adding more detail. Each activity needs to have the following detail added.

- **Inputs**
- **Timeline**
- **Outputs**
- **Outcomes**

Inputs include the resources that are required for the activity to be completed. Resources include human resources and physical resources. Human resources are the people who will lead the activity and those who will help to implement the activity. Physical resources include existing facilities funds and materials as well as new ones.

The **timeline** shows when the activity will begin, how long it will last or when it will be completed.

Outputs include the physical or measurable things that will arise as a result of the activity.

Outcomes are the non-physical things that will arise as a result of the activity. Outputs include changes in behavior, attitudes, knowledge and awareness. Outputs should ultimately result in the attainment of the Student Achievement Goal.

An Activity Planning Matrix can be used to write out all the activities for each Objective. This activity matrix should then become a part of the School Improvement Plan.

An example of an Activity Planning Matrix is shown on the following page.

Activity Planning Matrix					
Goal					
Improve student scores in NST Grade 6 Math so that by next year, at least 10% of students are performing at proficient level compared to 2% now.					
Objective 1					
All grades will have one math textbook per student by the beginning of the next school year					
Activities	**Inputs**	**Timeline**	**Outputs**	**Outcomes**	**Monitoring**
Conduct inventory.	*Principal and teachers*	*By end of April*	*Inventory of math textbooks*	*Better textbook management*	
Determine needs.	*Principal and teachers*	*By middle of May*	*List of needs*	*Better textbook management*	
Identify best textbooks	*Principal, teachers and DOE*	*By end of May*	*Score sheet for three potential textbooks*	*Better textbook/ curriculum match*	
Order textbooks	*Principal and DOE*	*By June 5th*	*Order acknowledgement from publisher*	*Better student access to textbooks*	
Prepare a textbook management policy	*Principal teachers DOE and parents*	*Before first week of term*	*Parents sign agreement form for policy*	*Wide support for textbook policy*	
Training for teachers in effective textbook use	*DOE*	*In summer holidays*	*All teachers attend 5 days of training*	*Teachers make effective use of textbooks*	
Distribute textbooks to students	*Teachers*	*First week of term*	*All students have a textbook*	*Better student access to textbooks*	
All teachers use textbooks effectively	*Teachers*	*First week of term*	*Better quality teaching*	*Improved student achievement in math*	
Monitoring and evaluation	*Principal*	*First three months of term*	*Monitoring data and report*	*Improved student learning and achievement in math.*	

Activity Eleven

The Activity Planning Matrix

This activity can be conducted by a trainer with a group of participants or by a SIT as part of the school improvement process. Principals or trainers should act as facilitators.

In this activity, participants will work in groups of two or three.

Photocopy enough copies of the Activity Planning Matrix shown on the following page. If you do not have a photocopier, make a copy on flipchart paper and ask each group to copy it.

The Activity Planning Matrix is for the next Objective of the Goal used in the previous activity. The first row of the Activity Planning Matrix has been completed. Ask participants to work in groups to complete the rest of the matrix.

Give enough time for each group to complete the task. When all the groups have finished, ask them to give feedback in turn.

Activity Planning Matrix					
Goal Improve student scores in NST Grade 6 Math so that by next year, at least 10% of students are performing at proficient level compared to 2% now.					
Objective 2 All teachers will attend 20 hours of professional development training in the next school year					
Activities	**Inputs**	**Timeline**	**Outputs**	**Outcomes**	**Monitoring**
Identify teacher needs by analysing performance expectations	*DOE testing specialist, Principal and teachers*	*By end of January*	*List of areas where students showed low performance*	*Awareness of teaching and learning weaknesses*	
Locate training materials					
Obtain training assistance from DOE					
Conduct weekly training					
Principal conducts weekly classroom observation to monitor implementation of training in classroom					

Chapter Nine
Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring is the process of observing and keeping track of the activities for each objective and goal of the School Improvement Plan.

Evaluation is the process of determining whether the activities have been successful in achieving the Objectives and Goals.

The SIT is responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the School Improvement Plan.

The first step in the monitoring process is checking to ensure that the School Improvement Plan contains all the essential elements and that it has been developed with the participation of the whole school community.

The checklist on the following page can be used as a monitoring tool for the School Improvement Plan.

School Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool		
1	**Does the school Improvement Plan contain each of the following essential elements?**	
1.1	School profile	Yes / No
1.2	Mission and Vision	Yes / No
1.3	Student achievement data and analysis	Yes / No
1.4	School performance data and analysis	Yes / No
1.5	Objective data and analysis	Yes / No
1.6	Problems charts and problem prioritization	Yes / No
1.7	Problem tree analysis for priority problems	Yes / No
1.8	Goals and objectives trees	Yes / No
1.9	SMART Student Achievement Goals and Objectives	Yes / No
1.10	Effective activities for school improvement	Yes / No
1.11	Activity Planning Matrices for all Student Achievement Goals and Objectives	Yes / No
2	**Does the School Improvement Team include the following members?**	
2.1	School Principal	Yes / No
2.2	Teachers	Yes / No
2.3	Parents	Yes / No
2.4	Community members	Yes / No
3	**Was the School Improvement Plan developed by informing, consulting and with the participation of the whole school community?**	
3.1	Informing	Yes / No
3.2	Consulting	Yes / No
3.3	With Participation	Yes / No

Activity Monitoring

Activity monitoring may be overseen by the SIT and performed by the SIT or the Principal. The State and National Department of Education may also monitor the School Improvement Plan activities.

Monitoring is already built in to the planning process because each Goal and Objective is SMART and the Activity Planning Matrix has a Timeline, Output and Monitoring box for each activity.

Regular, ongoing monitoring through the life of the School Improvement Plan implementation period will enable the SIT to tell whether the planned activities are being carried out effectively, efficiently and on time.

Regular ongoing monitoring will alert the SIT to problems when they arise and enable the SIT to deal with these problems quickly and efficiently.

Evaluation

Evaluation can be conducted during the implementation of the School Improvement Plan and at the end of the school year when NST data on Student Achievement becomes available. This NST data will show whether the Student Achievement Goals have been attained.

At the end of the School Improvement Plan year, the SIT should write an Evaluation Report on the year's activities and make the report available to the school community, perhaps through a public meeting at the school.

The Evaluation Report will inform the SIT about how successful the School Improvement Plan has been.

The Evaluation Report will be a valuable piece of data to include in the next cycle of School Improvement Planning.

Notes:

Section Two: Further Reading

MICHIGAN Department of Education

WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

In Relation to Academic Achievement

Where Children Spend Their Time

- School age children spend 70% of their waking hours (including weekends and holidays) outside of school.[1]

When Parents Should Get Involved

- The earlier in a child's educational process parent involvement begins, the more powerful the effects.[2]
- The most effective forms of parent involvement are those, which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities at home.[3]

Impact

- 86% of the general public believes that support from parents is the most important way to improve the schools.[4]
- Lack of parental involvement is the biggest problem facing public schools.[5]
- Decades of research show that when parents are involved students have[6]:
  - Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
  - Better school attendance
  - Increased motivation, better self-esteem
  - Lower rates of suspension
  - Decreased use of drugs and alcohol
  - Fewer instances of violent behavior
- Family participation in education was *twice* as predictive of students' academic success as family socioeconomic status. Some of the more intensive programs had effects that were *10 times* greater than other factors.[7]
- The more intensely parents are involved, the more beneficial the achievement effects.[8]
- The more parents participate in schooling, in a sustained way, at every level -- in advocacy, decision-making and oversight roles, as fund-raisers and boosters, as volunteers and para-professionals, and as home teachers -- the better for student achievement.[9]

Parent Expectations and Student Achievement

- The most consistent predictors of children's academic achievement and social adjustment are parent expectations of the child's academic attainment and satisfaction with their child's education at school.[10]
- Parents of high-achieving students set higher standards for their children's educational activities than parents of low-achieving students.[11]

Major Factors of Parent Involvement

- Three major factors of parental involvement in the education of their children[12]:
  1. Parents' beliefs about what is important, necessary and permissible for them to do with and on behalf of their children;
  2. The extent to which parents believe that they can have a positive influence on their children's education; and
  3. Parents' perceptions that their children and school want them to be involved.

Type of Involvement

- Although most parents do not know how to help their children with their education, with guidance and support, they may become increasingly involved in home learning activities and find themselves with opportunities to teach, to be models for and to guide their children.[13]
- When schools encourage children to practice reading at home with parents, the children make significant gains in reading achievement compared to those who only practice at school.[14]
- Parents, who read to their children, have books available, take trips, guide TV watching, and provide stimulating experiences contribute to student achievement.[15]

Photocopiable Forms

Student achievement data analysis		
Question	**Observation**	**Evidence**
Is student achievement better, worse or about the same as you expected?		
Is student achievement improving over time or declining?		
In what areas are the students performing well?		
In what areas are the students performing poorly?		
Are school-based assessments consistent with standardized test results?		
Is there evidence of any groups of students performing poorly compared to others? For example, do boys perform as well as girls?		
How well do students with special needs perform?		
How does achievement compare with similar schools to yours in your state or in other states?		

School self-assessment		
Grade 6 students NST Math Survey		
1	What do you like most about Math lessons?	
2	What do you dislike most about math lessons?	
3	How well do you think you did in the NST?	
4	What questions did you find most difficult?	
5	How did you prepare for the NST?	
6	How can your school help you do better in Math?	

Parent Survey Form on school management	Yes/ No
2. Does the school have a written mission statement?	
2. Is the mission statement shared and understood by students, parents, teachers, principal, and community members?	
3. Does the school have clear standards of academic success that are known by teachers, students, and community members?	
4. Does the school have clear rules and regulations that are shared and understood by teachers, principal, students and parents?	
5. Are the rules and regulations consistently and fairly applied to everyone?	
6. Did the Principal, teachers, and school board explain the school vision, mission and goals to parents and students?	
7. Is school time managed to have maximum time for learning, with at least 180 days of instruction per year?	
8. Are classes are held on all days, consistent with the school calendar, with no half-day or unscheduled closures?	
9. Do classes start on time, with teachers present and prepared for the lesson?	

Goals, Objectives and Activities Planning Matrix			
Student Achievement Goal			
Objective 1	**Objective 2**	**Objective 3**	**Objective 4**
Activities	**Activities**	**Activities**	**Activities**

Activity Planning Matrix					
Goal					
Objective					
Activities	**Inputs**	**Timeline**	**Outputs**	**Outcomes**	**Monitoring**

Additional Resources are available on the CD-ROM ‘School Improvement Planning’ available from National and State Departments of Education.