

“Plan for a CBA” Overview

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Introduction to “Plan for a CBA”

Why We Plan

Planning is an essential process in a results-based system. It includes activities such as goal setting, developing action steps into a coherent plan, implementing the plan and monitoring progress, taking corrective action when needed, evaluating the results of implementing the plan and using the results to improve subsequent planning processes. As we learned in our review of the research supporting a CBA, our ability to successfully complete these planning-related activities is central to our metacognitive and executive skill functions.

Definition of Planning

- Planning is an intentional act of identifying and organizing steps and resources to achieve expected results within a specified period of time
- Plans can be formal (part of a management process with short and long term implications) or ad hoc (in response to an immediate need) or situation
- School counselors use both formal and ad hoc planning processes

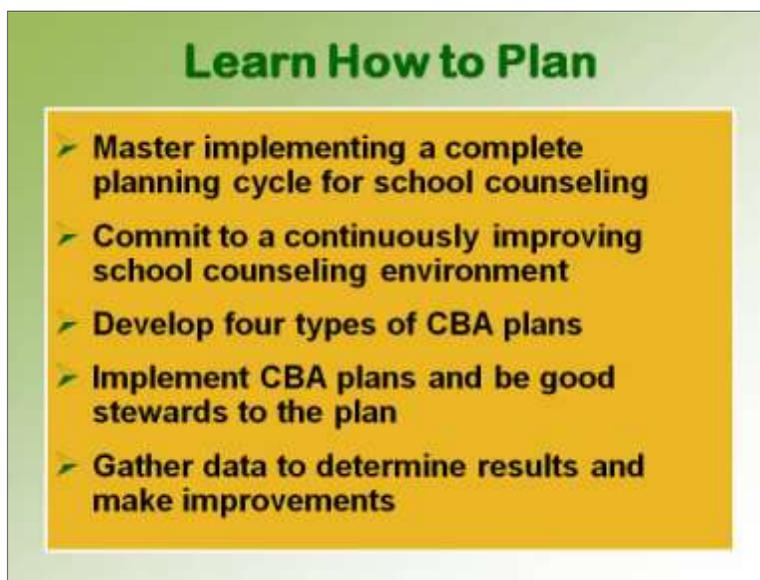
Planning is a process that organizes ideas, addresses needs, sets goals to be achieved, delineates specific actions that need to be taken, and measures that determine the extent to which expected results have been achieved. Both organizational and personal planning is required to successfully develop, deliver and evaluate school counseling programs. This section will discuss key aspects of planning for a CBA and provide sample plans and planning templates to help you plan your counseling program more effectively.

Failure to take planning seriously can lead to disastrous results. Ensuring that plans are thoughtfully developed and stewardship to the plan is consistent and focused can lead to a CBA school counseling program that has significant potential for making a difference in students' learning and lives, and in the quality of the counseling program and school community.

When we fail to plan effectively, we lack a clear sense of the results we expect to achieve and how to achieve them, critical activities fall through the cracks and are never implemented, we are tyrannized by continuous crisis management, and we lack the ability to assess the impact of what we are doing that contributes to student success.

Planning, therefore, is a critical function in the role of school counselors. We plan to make sure that we are fully prepared to fulfill our responsibilities as school counselors, identify and maximize our potential for contributing to student success, determine how to actualize our vision for school counseling in our daily practice, and demonstrate to others that school counselors are a vital and integral part of school improvement.

School counselors need to become proficient planners. To accomplish this they need to learn how to plan. Counselors should become proficient in the following key planning areas.



A Complete CBA Planning Cycle

A Four Phase Process

A complete planning cycle for school counseling is a four-phase process. Planning is not confined to simply developing a bunch of result statements, documenting them and then setting the plan aside and not using it to guide the implementation process. Rather, the CBA planning cycle involves all steps in the process from establishing need to evaluating results and using the results to refine the plan. The four-phases of a complete cycle are displayed in the graphic below.



A complete planning cycle involves four basic activities (light green boxes) that produce results through the interaction of two critical processes (orange boxes). It is an iterative process that allows for effective planning for and continuous improvement of the CBA.

Establish Need

All four phases are critical to effective planning. Phase 1 begins with defining what the program needs to be fully functional. “Need” is established by determining the current level of functioning in various components of the program by comparing it with standards of excellence for the component (how it would function if it operated perfectly).

The output of a needs assessment is articulated as “needs statements.” For example, a needs assessment related to the delivery of school counseling curriculum activities in the scope and sequence might determine that key activities related to social-emotional learning (SEL) were not delivered in grade 9. Or, an analysis of school counselor participation in school-wide committees of which they are supposed to be a member (e.g., RTI) was inconsistent. In these examples, what was expected (delivering of key curriculum activities and consistent participation on an important committee) were not being fulfilled to the extent that was expected. These determinations established needs that required attention in order to improve them.

Develop Plans

Phase 2 is to develop plans to address the needs. Plans have three main components that must be defined. The first is result statements which define outcomes to be achieved. Second are action steps that are capable of achieving the results. Third are measures that will allow counselors to know when they have successfully achieved the results. Results statements are a rephrasing of need statements. Using our example, a result statement related to the non-delivery of required SEL curriculum activities could be phrased as: “Social-emotional curriculum activities identified in the scope and sequence will all be delivered in grade 9.” Or, a need statement related to lack of participation in an RTI committee can be rephrased as: “School counselors assigned to the RTI committee will attend all meetings or arrange for a substitute to represent the school counseling department.”

Action steps are then defined for each result statement. An action plan consists of basic strategies and steps that must be taken to achieve the results, in short to get from where they currently are to where they need to be. Action steps can involve people, actions, resources and a timetable. Critical data elements to be incorporated into every action plan are discussed later in this section. The action plan also requires measures to determine success. The result statements, action steps and measures should all be defined at the beginning of the planning process. Templates provided at the end of this section are designed to help you identify, organize and document in a cogent fashion the steps you will need to successfully complete to achieve each result.

Implement Plans

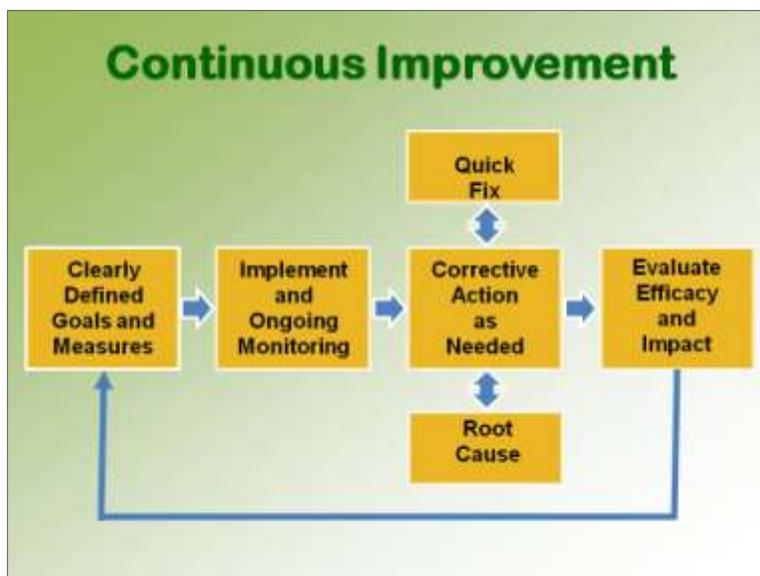
In Phase 3, the plan is implemented and progress monitored, taking corrective action as needed throughout the process. The plan identifies primary responsibilities for the successful completion of each step and a timeframe within which the results are to be achieved. Ongoing progress monitoring is essential to delivering the highest-quality CBA program and ensuring that the program is implemented with fidelity. Formative assessments are used throughout Phase 3 to determine whether the plan is being executed as designed and in a timely fashion. School counselors are responsible for being good stewards to the plan and adjusting the plan as needed to ensure that the expected results are fully achieved.

Evaluate Results

Phase 4 is an annual summative assessment that takes a close look at the accomplishments and challenges of the current school year and generates information that can be used to update plans and/or create new plans. The results of the evaluation should be documented and distributed to those who need the information to make informed decisions and prepare plans for the upcoming school year. The “Evaluate a CBA” section of the website (see link in Sidebar) provides information and tools to help you conduct meaningful intervention and program evaluations.

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement principles are incorporated into the plan to ensure ongoing monitoring of progress toward the plan’s expected results and timely adjustments to implementation activities to resolve immediate issues. The graphic below displays the continuous improvement process. The process begins, as in planning, with clearly defined and measurable results. Ongoing monitoring of the implementation is conducted throughout the implementation phase.



The basic idea behind continuous improvement is that if we know the results to be achieved and develop a plan consisting of action steps and measures, and if we watch what occurs when the plan is being implemented, then it is possible to identify problems in a timely fashion and take corrective action to resolve them. It is only because there is a clear sense of what is expected (requirements for success) and by when it should be achieved that school counselors can look at current practices, identify problems and take corrective action. Continuous improvement principles should be consistently applied to all CBA activities.

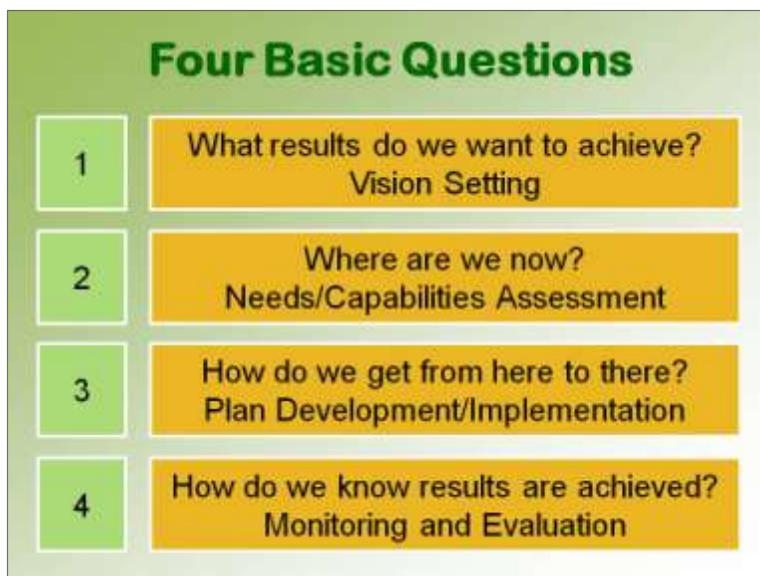
Two primary types of adjustments are identified in the graphic: quick fixes and root causes. Quick fixes are needed to address emerging needs and get them resolved so as to not disrupt the efficient flow of implementation activities. Root causes, on the other hand, are more systemic in nature and take a longer time to understand and address. Many times the cause of problems requiring quick fixes are due to root causes that keep reoccurring. A two-fold approach, including both quick fixes and root causes, is needed to ensure the least disruptive implementation of the plan.

Planning Answers Four Basic Questions

Critical CBA Planning Questions

Planning can be viewed as answers to questions such as: What can be done to improve this process? What can we do to fix this problem? How do we go about improving learner outcomes? What are evidence-based practices we should be using? How are we going to measure our successes? The answers to all these questions require results statements, action plans and measures to determine and implement the right solution.

A CBA uses four basic questions, displayed in the graphic below, to generate information needed to successfully complete a planning cycle for CBA school counseling programs.



What Results do We Want to Achieve?

A CBA is results based. The first step in planning for a CBA is to clearly define the results that can be expected from implementing the program. School counselors need to engage in dialog about their vision of student excellence and how to help students achieve what is expected of them.

Where are We Now

Once the results have been clearly defined, the next question looks at the current counseling program in relation to the expected results (Where we want to be?). It is important for school counselors to conduct both needs and capability assessments to determine the gap between the current and ideal programs and to determine the school's capacity for implementing a CBA to eliminate the gap.

How do We Get from Here to There?

Once the gap has been defined, the next question involves how to get from the current to the ideal program. This is where plan development is a key process in the successful implementation of a CBA. School counselors need to be proficient at developing action plans for achieving the expected results when implementing a CBA. In addition, counselors need to embrace their personal role in fulfilling the mission of the program.

How do We Know Results are Achieved?

This is one of the most important questions that can be asked about a CBA program, as the intent of a CBA is to make a difference in the learning and lives of the students served by school counselors. It is impossible to know the impact of a CBA without effective measures. Without data on the impact of the program, it is difficult to maximize counselors' potential for helping students become proficient learners and achieve what is expected of them. The answers to this question are especially critical to our ability to continuously improve what we offer to students.

Four Types of CBA Plans

Four CBA Plans

The planning process requires clearly defined results to be achieved, the action steps needed to achieve them, and the measures that will demonstrate progress toward and achievement of the specified results. Well-developed front-end plans help sustain a constant focus on the results to be achieved, the steps to be taken and the timetable for when specific actions need to be successfully completed. It reduces the risk of critical tasks not being completed on time or at all. Effective planning also helps maintain a focus on how implementation of the plan is progressing so that corrective action can be applied as it is needed. There is no continuous improvement without a self-correcting planning process. Four types of plans are essential to a CBA.



Strategic Plan

Strategic plans are developed at the district level and articulate the vision and strategic direction of the CBA school counseling program. They define what the program seeks to achieve through clearly defined and measurable results statements. Strategic plans are generally for at least a three-year period and establish the long-term future direction for the program. The strategic plan should be aligned with the district's plan and state's educational requirements.

Annual Implementation Plan

An annual implementation plan is a more detailed school-based plan that contains specific action steps that will be taken during the current or upcoming school year. Action steps are related to specific results to be achieved. The action plan must specify who is primarily responsible for the successful completion of what steps and what measures will be used to determine success. Ideally, an annual implementation plan is developed and approved prior to the first day of the school year for which it is being developed. In this way, the plan can be used to guide the implementation of the action steps from the beginning of the year. This will help ensure that

required actions are not missed. Periodic status reports should be provided to building leadership on the progress toward achieving the agreed upon results.

Counselor-Supervisor Collaborative Plan

A third type of plan is a counselor-supervisor agreement. This plan is developed collaboratively by the school counselor(s) and the building principal and/or counselor supervisor. It is designed to ensure that the counselors and building administration have achieved consensus on the role and responsibilities of the school counselors and how their performance will be assessed. This plan also gives counselors a way to inform the principal of what they are doing and the contribution they are making to student achievement and the quality of the school community.

School Counselor Personal Plan

Individual counselors should also develop a plan for what they personally hope to achieve in relation to the CBA during the school year. Their plans should be aligned with what is stated in the counselor-supervisor agreement, the school-based implementation plan and the district’s strategic plan. Individual counselors and counselor supervisors develop plans for personal growth to enhance their professionalism and practice, and build capacity for effecting positive change.

CBA Planning Categories and Data Elements

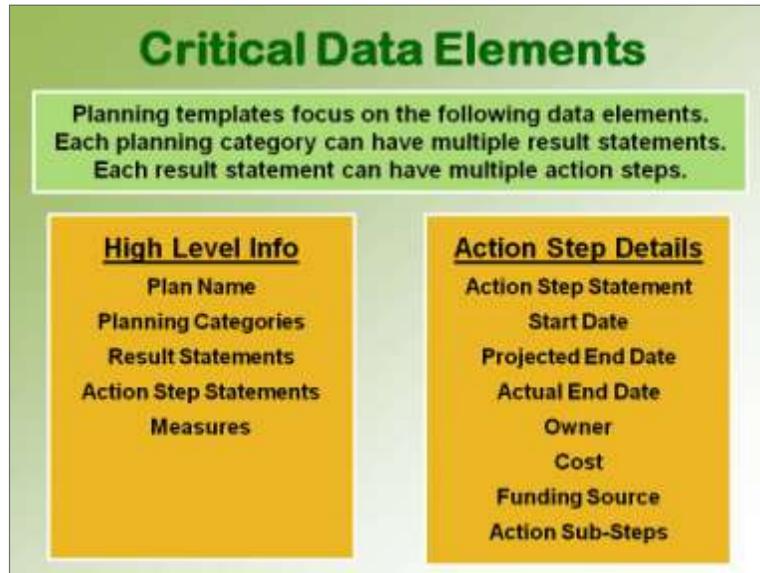
Planning Categories

It is helpful in planning to group similar action steps into a small number of planning categories to help you organize your ideas in a coherent fashion. The table below displays one organizational scheme you may wish to use. There are three high-level categories: a) program quality, b) organizational support and c) school community. Each of these planning categories contains multiple subcategories for which results statements and action plans need to be developed.



Critical Data Elements

Carefully constructed plans use critical data elements to capture information that allows you to develop and implement your plans. Critical data elements are displayed in the graphic below.



It will be obvious from the sample CBA plans provided below how these data elements are incorporated into the planning process.

Links to CBA Planning Templates

Several templates are provided to help you plan for a CBA. A “pdf” file containing Instructions, and a MS Word file (docx) for you to input your information, are provided for each Template. Follow the links below to access the Instruction and Template files.

[NOTE: The following hyperlinks will not work once the “pdf” version of this webpage has been downloaded. To access the Templates and Instructions, logon to the CBA Website. The quickest way is to go to the “Free Resources” module, click on “Templates and Instructions” in the Sidebar, and then click on the desired link.]

Planning Proficiency Survey

This survey assesses your ability to conduct effective planning. Deficient areas are translated into results statements that need to be achieved in order to improve the planning process.

[Planning Proficiency Survey Instructions](#)

[Planning Proficiency Survey Template](#)

Gathering and Organizing Data

Critical data must be identified, gathered and organized before it can be placed into a cogent plan. This template enables you to document and organize vital information you will incorporate into your plan. Action steps are organized within planning categories.

[Gathering and Organizing Data Instructions](#)
[Gathering and Organizing Data Template](#)

Counselor-Supervisor Agreement

This template allows you to collaborate with your supervisor/principal to identify the specific results school counselors are expected to achieve, basic strategies and action steps to achieve them, and how success will be measured.

[Counselor-Supervisor Agreement Instructions](#)
[Counselor-Supervisor Agreement Template](#)

Personal Plan for Results Template

This template allows you to develop a plan for achieving the results you personally want to achieve during the school year as a professional school counselor.

[Personal Plan for Results Instructions](#)
[Personal Plan for Results Template](#)

Strategic and Annual Implementation Plans

Our Book, CBA Toolkit and Website are intended to help you develop and deliver a CBA as part of your school counseling program. A sample CBA Strategic Plan is provided to guide you in developing a plan to accomplish the transition to a construct-based approach to school counseling in your school and district. These templates enable you to develop three-year strategic plans for school counseling and also an annual implementation plan for the current or upcoming school year.

[Strategic Plan Instructions](#)
[Strategic Plan Template](#)