



selecting an

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM

A useful instructional improvement system integrates a range of online modules offering rapid and flexible access to instructional planning, assessment, intervention, and reporting tools. Districts that desire to utilize these tools in their decision making and management processes can use the following information to evaluate, select, and implement an effective instructional improvement system.

1 Identify Stakeholders and Roles

An instructional improvement system will impact, in unique ways, the many different members of the educational community. Making sure the perspectives of administrators, IT staff, curriculum teams, teachers, principals, governing board members, parents and students are included in choosing a system will make it easier to implement the system.

KEY TO SUCCESS: Clarify stakeholders' assignments regarding evaluating systems and make sure all involved understand the path from input and recommendation to the final decision. This is important when the final selection process may involve just a few members of the team who will have the responsibility of weighing various criteria.

questions to ask

- How will input from stakeholders be gathered and taken into consideration?
- How will stakeholders become informed of the options available?
- Will there be a formal review committee or will administrators seek stakeholder input?

2 Determine District Goals

Framing the priorities of the district in terms of both short and long term priorities will help make decisions now that will provide long term returns. The best systems provide flexibility as district goals progress.

KEY TO SUCCESS: Goal setting now will make it easier to prioritize criteria and evaluate appropriate technology. Be specific in choosing the main objectives for implementation. For instance, if measuring progress towards mastery of standards is important, a top criterion might be the inclusion of items reflecting the most up-to-date state academic standards.

questions to ask

- What are the overall goals of the district in using an instructional improvement system, benchmark testing, formative testing, instructional planning and/or intervention?
- What are the district goals related to data and standardized tests?
- What are the district goals for reporting assessment data?
- What are the goals for using the system to record grades and produce report cards?
- What are the goals related to providing and monitoring curriculum implementation?

3 Develop Criteria

This step involves translating the district goals from Step 2 into a list of system requirements.

KEY TO SUCCESS: School districts are faced with many choices in software for educational management. The diversity of needs among schools, and the range of solutions can challenge the most astute educational leadership.

topics for consideration

- Assessment capabilities
- Automatic scoring
- Reporting capabilities
- Accommodation of electronic learning communities
- Flexibility both in system implementation options and adaptability to changes in standards and government requirements.
- Instructional tools
- Security measures
- Data management features
- Technical requirements

Detailed technical information concerning the psychometric analyses conducted to ensure the reliability and validity of assessment tools included in Galileo K-12 Online can be found in *Benchmark Assessment Development in the Galileo Educational Management System*. View it online at www.ati-online.com/pdfs/researchK12/K12TechManual.pdf

4 Establish Timelines and Determine Selection Process

Target implementation dates will impact the evaluation process. Working backwards from the district's desired implementation date, plan a realistic timeline for the comparison and selection process. Communicating this timeline to district staff involved in the process, such as purchasing departments and to outside vendors under consideration, will help to identify and solve any potential delays ahead of time.

questions to ask

- Will the selection process require an RFP?
- How much time is needed to review RFP responses?
- How long will it take to move the RFP through district channels?
- If an RFP is not required, what selection process will be used?
- How much time is needed for the decision making process?
- When are members of the selection team available?
- How will the governing board be included in the process and how will their role impact the timeline?
- What post-selection tasks and customization might impact the timeline? Example: Selecting which performance objectives to include in various benchmark tests.

KEY TO SUCCESS: Vendors can be helpful by providing timetables for system setup and professional development. For instance, ATI's *Partnership Model* includes free technical assistance for implementation planning. Topics of preliminary planning sessions include using district goals to develop tasks and timelines for addressing:

- Setup and Support Protocols
- Benchmark Testing Logistics
- Curriculum Aligned Test Needs
- Data Importation
- Test Administration: Online/Offline
- Customization (such as forms and standardized sets)
- Professional Development

5 Compare Technology Solutions

This stage will be dictated by the timeline above. Steps may occur quickly and/or simultaneously to stay on track. Use each step as an opportunity to further narrow the list.

steps to take

- Gather product information and materials: Request information, like background research and referrals, from vendors.
- Speak with vendors: Interview vendors and ask for an online walk-through. This will allow the district to preview systems and create a short list for presentations at the district.
- Conduct on-site presentations: Vendors should be ready to provide a demonstration that meets the district's needs. Make sure decision makers are present to evaluate the system firsthand.
- Request passwords and practice time: Ask for access to the system and assign qualified staff to "try out" the system. Since the trial is pre-training, encourage the "tester(s)" to work directly with the vendor and ask plenty of questions.
- Review written proposals and cost estimates: This step is an important final cut. Review proposals carefully against your criteria. This is a good time to ask additional questions of the vendor and schedule a demonstration of the top systems, if not done already.
- Collect references from other districts: Talk to schools that use the software in consideration.

6 Move from Decision Making to Planning for Implementation

Meet with the vendors to create a custom implementation plan. Components of this plan can come from the work already completed to determine district goals and establish target timelines. Open communication with the selected vendor from the beginning will enable a smooth implementation.

KEY TO SUCCESS: Start discussing professional development schedules to guarantee that district requested dates will be available.