

INTRODUCTION

Excellence by Design (Systems Version) is a protocol for self-study and accreditation that uses strategic planning as a vehicle for growth and improvement in student performance and in the school system's capacity to effect that growth. The protocol, developed by the Middle States Commission on Elementary and Secondary Schools (MSCESS) of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, links various planning and growth and improvement efforts. *Excellence by Design (SV)* leads the school system to establish objectives for improving student performance and organizational capacity based on its vision of a preferred future for its students. Therefore, *Excellence by Design (SV)* is a future-oriented and visionary process. In addition, the protocol provides for a *continuous* review of programs and services and of the results of student performance. It also allows diverse constituent groups to participate in charting the future of the school system.

The purpose of *Excellence by Design (SV)* is to provide a framework and process to guide the school system's efforts to achieve excellence in student performance and to achieve accreditation by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools—The Gold Standard.

Excellence by Design (SV) also provides the framework for formally aligning all the work of the school system to ensure that all of its efforts are coordinated and focused on achieving the school system's mission. It is expected that this framework will accomplish the following purposes:

- Development of a sense of community and common purpose among the school system's students and staff, and its community of stakeholders.
- A Plan for Growth and Improvement in student performance and the school system's capacity to produce the levels of student performance expected by the school system and its community of stakeholders.
- Greater cooperation between all of the school system's stakeholders in identifying and implementing practices that have been demonstrated to lead to excellence in student performance and the organization's capacity to produce the desired levels of student performance.

Most importantly, this framework intends to develop in the school system's community of stakeholders an understanding that the system it is part of a larger community of

learners and that this community has agreed upon, supports, and accepts responsibility for assisting the system in achieving its Mission, Profile of Graduates, and Plan for Growth and Improvement in student performance and organizational capacity. This learning community understands that, by working together to articulate and align its efforts, it can achieve higher levels of excellence in student performance.

In order to develop a culture of continuous growth and improvement, the system's leadership must keep the attention of the entire community of stakeholders focused on answering the five questions below. In the *Excellence by Design (SV)* process, the System Planning Team was guided to develop answers to the following questions:

- #1: By the time they have experienced our full educational program and services, what should our students know and how should they be able to use what they know? What content, skills, and work habits should be the priorities for learning? What attitudes, qualities or characteristics should our students demonstrate?
- #2: How well should students perform the desired outcomes, and what does excellent performance look like?
- #3: How will we measure and evaluate our students' performance in multiple ways?
- #4: How well do our students currently perform? What is the actual quality of their work?
- #5: What must we do to grow and improve our students' levels of performance?

In setting a course for continuous improvement in student and organizational performance, school systems and their communities must study not only what the existing data tell them about their students' present performance levels, but they must also set clear targets for what they want student performance to be in the future. Maintaining a focus on these five questions is essential to a successful continuous improvement process and is a "habit of mind" that must be cultivated and nurtured by the system's leaders and those leading the growth and improvement efforts. Too often school systems find themselves working on curriculum and instructional materials and engaging in professional development before they have clearly decided what their

students should know, how they should use their content knowledge, process skills, and work habits, and what the quality of their performance should be.

A core principle of the Middle States Association is that the Association would rather recognize and validate extant organizational and operational systems and plans that meet the Requirements for Accreditation than requiring the school system to create separate organizational and operational systems and plans just to meet the Middle States accreditation requirements.

Therefore, the process of being accredited by the Middle States Association using this systems version of the *Excellence by Design* self-study and accreditation protocol seeks to recognize and honor this principle by providing a Validation Audit by which a school system may seek to have existing plans, programs, and/or operation validated as meeting the requirements of the protocol.

The requirements for accreditation using the *Excellence by Design (SV)* protocol area;

Number	Requirement
1	The system has conducted a thorough and complete self-study that has involved appropriate stakeholders of the school system [See Chapter 2].
2	The system has and is using foundational documents that govern the manner in which the school system does its work, including a Mission, Core Values, and a Profile of Graduates [See Chapter 4].
3	<p>A Profile of the School System and Its Community, which consists of the following elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Profile of the School System that describes the system's current organization and staffs [See Chapter 5]. • A Profile of Student Performance that describes the levels of performance currently being achieved by the system's students using data from multiple assessments [See Chapter 6]; and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Results of an External Scan that describe the external educational, social, political, economic, and technological factors that are and will be affecting the system's ability to achieve its Mission and its student performance and organizational capacity goals [See Chapter 8].
4	A Profile of Organizational Capacity that describes the school system's capacity to produce the levels of its student performance and organizational capacity desired by its community of stakeholders and

Number	Requirement
	as expressed in the its Mission and Profile of Graduates [See Chapter 7].
5	Identified priorities for growth and improvement in student performance and the system's capacity to achieve the levels of student performance desired and expected [See Chapter 9].
6	A plan to grow and improve the priorities identified for growth and improvement that includes measurable objectives, multiple assessments to determine achievement of the objectives, and multi-year action plans to achieve the goals [See Chapters 10 and 11].

The Requirements 2, 3, 5, and 6 may be met through a Middle States Validation Audit. Requirements 1 and 4—the Self-Study and the Profile of Organizational Capacity cannot be met through the Validation Audit process.

If the school system that is the subject of this Self-Study Report sought and received validation for any of the requirements for accreditation through a Validation Audit, this fact is recorded in the Self-Study Report and the Visiting Team will not evaluate those requirements during its onsite visit. The Team may, however, include observations about and recommendations for improving the system's plans, programs, and/or operation pre-approved through an audit.

Plans, systems, and/or operations that have been validated are included in this Self-Study Report, as they are integral to the process of developing plans for growing and improving student performance and organizational capacity and must be considered when developing such plans.

Although it is possible that certain plans, systems, and/or operations may have been determined through the audit to meet the requirements for accreditation, the school system may conclude that changes to these documents may be necessary in order to increase the quality of their effect on the overall growth and improvement process. If any such changes have been made, they will be noted in the Self-Study Report.

ORGANIZATION FOR GROWTH AND IMPROVEMENT

In this section of the self-study process, the school system was asked to ensure it either has in place or has developed the organizational elements and processes that are necessary for the system to be successful in achieving its Plan for Growth and Improvement. The school system has or has developed the organizational elements and processes described below.

Leadership for Growth and Improvement

The primary role of the leadership and governing body of a school system—those in positions of authority and influence within the system—in the school improvement process is to serve as the “champions” for developing a planning ethic and a process for growing and improving the levels of student performance and the system's capacity to produce the levels of performance it says it desires and is expected of it. Strategic planning experts have long held that champions are extremely important to the success of planning for growth and improvement in any organization. Because the a major goal of the self-study and accreditation process is to ensure that the school system has a vision of a better future for its students and for the system and a plan to achieve that vision that is accepted and supported by all, leaders must communicate publicly, clearly, and often that:

- the strategic planning process is important for the future of the school system and its students, and
- they will provide the leadership, resources, and support needed to make the process and the plan successful.

This critical role for leaders also applies to the system's governing body. It, too, must “champion the cause.”

A. The Internal Coordinators

[Reference: Chapter 2, Phase I, Step 1, *Excellence by Design (Systems Version)*]

A required component of the protocol is the appointment of teams of Internal Coordinators. The primary functions of the Internal Coordinators are to:

- Coordinate the system's and component schools' planning process and development of a plan for growth in student performance and organizational capacity;
- Oversee planning and preparation for the Visiting Team's onsite visit; and
- Provide the energy, enthusiasm, and expertise to move the self-study and accreditation process to a successful conclusion.

A.1. System Internal Coordinators

A.1.a. The System Internal Coordinators for the self-study and accreditation process are:

Name	Role in the Institution
Kristen Lewis	Assistant to the Superintendent
Leah Christman	Acting Superintendent

A.1.b. How and why were the System Internal Coordinators selected?

Job qualifications

A.1.c. How did the System Internal Coordinators fulfill their role and responsibilities?

Organizing the Strategic Plan committees
Completing Strategic Plan mid-year review

A.1.d. What kinds of support and assistance were provided to the System Internal Coordinators by the school system to enable them to fulfill their responsibilities?

Time and resources necessary to complete tasks

A.2. Component School Internal Coordinators

A.2.a. The Component School Internal Coordinators for the self-study and accreditation process are:

Name	Component School
Christine Siegfried	Southern Lehigh High School
Edward Donahue	Southern Lehigh Middle School
Mary Farris	Southern Lehigh Intermediate School
Samuel Hafner	Liberty Bell Elementary School
Lori Limpar	Hopewell Elementary School
Carol Mickley	Lower Milford Elementary School

B. The Planning Teams¹

[Reference: Chapter 2, Phase I, Step 2, *Excellence by Design (Systems Version)*]

A major commitment the school system makes when seeking accreditation using *ExBD (SV)* is to include a broad spectrum of the school system's community of stakeholders in the process of continually defining a preferred vision for the system, in developing the means to get closer to that vision, and in implementing the plans developed to achieve the vision.

To represent the school system's community of stakeholders in the self-study and accreditation process, the *ExBD (SV)* protocol requires the system to establish planning teams that reflect the system's community of stakeholders at both the system and component school levels. It is expected that the Planning Teams will be given the authority, resources, and support to:

- Develop the vision for the school system by creating or reaffirming a statement of the system's Mission;

¹It is important to note that, although the *Excellence by Design (SV)* protocol calls this stakeholder group a Planning Team, what the school system calls this group is not important. Its purpose, composition, operation, and results are what are key. What the protocol requires for accreditation is that this group meets the letter and spirit of the requirements for a Planning Team without regard to what it is called. In many school systems, an improvement team already exists and includes the required stakeholders, so it makes sense for the system to continue that organization with any adjustments necessary to meet the requirements of the *ExBD (SV)* protocol. This same principle applies to all requirements of this protocol. It is less important what elements and products of the process are called than it is that the system meets the intentions and results of the requirements.

- Develop a set of Core Values to serve as the ethical code for the system;
- Develop a profile of the knowledge, skills, and qualities the system expects of its graduates;
- Identify the areas of student performance and organizational capacity that are the priorities for growth and improvement;
- Oversee development of the action plans to achieve the performance objectives;
- Monitor implementation of the action plans; and
- Conduct periodic reviews of the progress being made to achieving the objectives.

B.1. The System Planning Team

B.1.a. The members of the System Planning Team are:

Name	Role in the School System
Tammi Albenzi	Parent
Marie Arnold	Parent
Lisa Auteri	Former Board Member
Ellen Baca	Parent
Mike Baittinger	Parent
Roni Barna (resigned)	IST Teacher
Todd Bergey	Director of Support Services
Michelle Berosh (moved)	MS Teacher
Randy Bloch	Community Member
Teri Bohlsen	Teacher
Chris Bonsall	Elementary Teacher
Beth Boyle	Parent
Joseph Breisch	Technology Coach
Allison Brink	Parent
Kathryn Brink (graduated)	Student
Maggie Chiarella	Technology Facilitator
Leah Christman	Assistant Superintendent
Patricia Combs (retired)	HS Teacher
Michelle Conrad	Special Ed Teacher
Beverly Curtis	Parent
Mark Covelle	Dean of Students
Nathan Davidson	MS Assistant Principal
Judith Dell Alba	Community Member
Dawn DelPriore	Parent
Jacque DeMatos (graduated)	Student

Name	Role in the School System
David Diaz	MS Teacher
Lisa Dickinson	Parent
Sal DiGiovanni	Parent
Sandra DiSanto	Special Ed Teacher
Edward Donahue	Middle School Principal
Beth Dottery	HS Teacher
Kelly Dougherty	Elementary Teacher
Scot Engler	Director of Special Education
Karen Fairclough (resigned)	Special Education Teacher
Mary Farris	Intermediate School Principal
Robert Fluck	IS Teacher
Angela Fulmer	Teacher
Deborah Galle	Administrative Assistant
Jim Grabusky	Parent
Beth Graf	Teacher
Allan Griffin	Community Member
Corinne Gunkle	Board Member
Sam Hafner	LB Principal
Devon Hagy	Community Member
Stephanie Hess	Student
Cheryl Heurich	Parent
Phyllis Hsu	Parent
Jennifer Johnson	Parent/SLEF President
Allison Kaplan	Teacher
Brenda Keller (moved)	Technology Facilitator
Bill Kennedy	Human Resources Administrator
Ken Jordan	Technology Coordinator
Gary Lee (retired)	MS Teacher
Kristen Lewis	Director of Elementary Education
Joseph Liberati (deceased)	Superintendent
Lori Limpar	Elementary Principal
Joann Lindauer-Schneider	Teacher
Chuck Linden	Parent/Business Leader
Kim Lysakowski	IST Teacher
Susan MacIntyre	MS Teacher
Kate Mack	Teacher
Vince Mattiola (graduated)	Student
MaryLou McKee (retired)	Nurse
Brian McLaughlin	School Resource Officer

Name	Role in the School System
Carol Mickley	LM Principal
Diana Millman	Parent/Administrative Assistant
Bill Miracle	Board Member
Janet Miltenberger	Reading Specialist
Patty Mohr	Board Member
Yessenia Moreno (graduated)	Student
Samantha Moyer	Student
Bonnie Organski	HS Teacher
Mary Orlando	Teacher
Monica Ouly	Community Member
Zack Pandl (graduated)	Student
Kathie Parsons	Parent
Michael Pauling	Technology Coach
Jody Rennie	Former School Board Member
Corry Robbins	Librarian
Brooke Ruch	Teacher
Troy Ruch	HS Teacher
Karen Ryan	IS Teacher
Walter Sanders	Community Member
Denise Scozzafava	Parent/Business Leader
Barbara Smith-Schafer	Teacher
Sarah Schurkamp	Technology Facilitator
Chris Siegfried	High School Principal
Anne Sikorski-Schneider	HS Teacher
Patricia Smiley	HS Teacher
Colleen Smith	Elementary Teacher
Anne Snyder	Teacher
Beth Stelts	Board Member
Lisa Steirer	Parent
Cindy Sterrett	Teacher of the Gifted
Christopher Strobl	MS Teacher
Joan Takacs	Director of Secondary Education
Elizabeth Tate	Technology Facilitator
Heather Toto	MS Teacher
Patrice Turner (moved)	MS Assistant Principal
Isabela Uribe	Student
Joseph Volk (deceased)	Community Member
Tara Walter	Teacher
Fran Werkheiser (retired)	Elementary Teacher

Name	Role in the School System
Tamme Westbrooks	Guidance Counselor
John Zuk (resigned)	Assistant High School Principal

B.1.b. What charge was given to the System Planning Team? What authority was it given to oversee, monitor, and make decisions regarding the school system's planning for growth and improvement in student performance and organizational capacity?

The charge was to develop the Vision, Mission, Values, Goals, Strategies and Activities. They had full authority to make recommendations to the School Board.

B.1.d. How does the membership of the System Planning Team reflect the composition of the school system's community of stakeholders?

Representatives from all sectors were part of our team.

B.1.e. How were the members of the System Planning Team selected?

It was open to volunteers.

B.1.f. How does the System Planning Team function and make its decisions?

Through discussion led by the leader of the team, Leah Christman.

B.1.g. How often did the System Planning Team meet? (Provide a list of the Team's meetings and minutes for the meetings in the Team's workroom.)

2/3/11 – Meet to plan next steps

3/22/11 – Participants learned about the Strategic Plan Process and researched their sub-committee topics.

6/22/11 – Determine Strategic Plan final recommendations

B.1.h. What is the System Planning Team's relationship to any other groups in the school system, if any, responsible for planning for growth and improvement in student performance and organizational capacity?

Members are also part of the district's school board, administration, and staff.

B.1.i. What is the System Planning Team’s plan for rotating membership of the Team and identifying new members? What is the plan for training and orienting new members to the work of the Team?

Every three years we will open it up for membership.
New members will be trained by internal coordinators.

B.1.j. How will the System Planning Team function after the visit of the Visiting Team and during the implementation of the Plan for Growth and Improvement?

They will continue to guide any necessary adjustments and insure completion of goals.

B.2. The Component Schools Planning Teams

B.2.a. The members of the Component Schools' Planning Team's are:

Done as entire district with each building having representation.

B.2.b. What charge was given to the Component Schools Planning Teams? What role were they given regarding the school system's planning for growth and improvement in student performance and organizational capacity?

N/A

C. The Role of the School System’s Leadership and Governance

[Reference: Chapter 2, Phase I, Step 3, *Excellence by Design (Systems Version)*]

It is the school system's formal leaders—those in positions of authority and influence within the school system and its component schools—who should serve as the primary “champions” for the self-study and accreditation process and the planning for growth and improvement.

C.1. What role has the school system’s governance and leadership played in the self-study process and the planning for growth and improvement in student performance and organizational capacity?

They have been part of making decisions in moving the district forward with its Strategic Plan goals.

C.2. How has the governance and leadership provided support for the self-study and accreditation processes?

They have played an integral role in running committee meetings and providing feedback through the Strategic Planning process.

D. The Plan for Institutionalizing a Planning Ethic

[Reference: Chapter 2, Phase I, Step 4, *Excellence by Design (Systems Version)*]

A sound planning ethic is critical to achieving the school system's Mission, its objectives for growth and improvement in student performance and organizational capacity, and to its capacity to effect the intended growth. An effective planning ethic addresses the essential question: "Does the school system and its community of stakeholders have the capacity, the will, and the systematic structures and processes required to develop and implement its plan and achieve its objectives?" A fine plan full of great activities is only as strong as the ability and willingness of the school and its stakeholders to implement it.

The school system's plan for institutionalizing a planning ethic is:

The Southern Lehigh School District plan to ensure a continuous planning ethic is linked to our strategic planning process. We continually discuss our plan and look to revise the goals, strategies, and activities as needed. These discussions happen at administrative meetings, board education committee meetings, faculty meetings, data team meetings and parent group meetings.

Everyone is responsible for knowing and recording their professional activities in terms of our strategic plan goals. It is an integral part of everything that we do. Our Mission and Vision is also an integral part of our strategic plan goals and therefore, we are also constantly addressing these goals.

E. The Plan for Institutionalizing the Plan for Growth and Improvement

{Reference: Chapter 2, Phase I, Step 5, *Excellence by Design (Systems Version)*}

The System Planning Team must think about and determine how implementing, reviewing, and revising the Plan for Growth and Improvement will become a part of the culture of the system and how it will become a priority in the life of the system.

The school system's plan for institutionalizing the Plan for Growth and Improvement is:

The Southern Lehigh School District plan to ensure continuous growth and development is anchored in our strategic plan implementation. In order for our district as an organization to have continual growth, we must continually review our practices and make the necessary changes as the needs arise. As a result, the following items are a list of strategies that we currently have in place to ensure our success; it is not an exhaustive list and we expect it to continually change.

- Data teams at the building levels with time built into the schedule for them to meet regularly. Data teams review student assessments on a regular basis to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all students. These meetings are also a time when teachers look at overall performance of students so that they can see what strategies another teacher is using that is more effective. If one teacher has not had success in their assessment results, they will ask the others for advice.
- Principal meetings to discuss data team findings and develop guiding questions.
- Administrative team meetings that have a portion of the time devoted to strategic planning activities and to reflecting on what we are doing and how it relates to the strategic plan.
- Monthly board reports from the buildings that describe building level events and how they are tied to our strategic plan strategies and activities.
- Professional development activities are all reported using strategic plan goals, strategies and activities as a validation. Teachers utilize these goals regularly to report activities so that they are very familiar with them.
- Buildings develop action plans each year that directly relate to the strategic plan and our continuous growth model (based on the work of Douglas Reeves).
- Teachers set yearly goals for themselves that are directly related to our strategic plan and they reflect on those goals throughout the year in an ongoing dialogue with their building administrator.

F. A Plan for Communication and Awareness

{Reference: Chapter 2, Phase I, Step 6, *Excellence by Design (Systems Version)*}

An important factor in increasing the likelihood that a school system will achieve the goals it has set in its Plan for Growth and Improvement is to ensure broad ownership of the planning process and the Plan for Growth and Improvement across the entire system and its stakeholder community. This is accomplished by ensuring broad based knowledge and understanding of and support for the system performance objectives and the plans to achieve them. Therefore, an important element of the planning process is communicating with the system's staff, students, governing board, and other stakeholders to ensure they are aware of the requirements of the *Excellence by Design (SV)* protocol; the school system's planning process, Mission, Core Values, objectives, action plans and, eventually, its accomplishments as it implements its plan.

The Plan for Communication and Awareness is:

The Southern Lehigh School District communicates in a variety of ways with it's stakeholders. Our district website is extensive and we use it daily to communicate to a variety of groups. We also have an electronic communication system that allows for us to broadcast messages via voice, text and email to our parents. We also have a monthly newsletter that celebrates the accomplishments of our district. Our local newspaper is also highly involved in our school system and we communicate regularly with them. Additionally, the buildings have newsletters that go home to parents to communicate their activities. All these methods are used to continually remind our community of our strategic plan goals and what we are doing to accomplish them. As an organization we are continually looking for new ways to communicate and better ways to communicate with all of our stakeholders.

G. A Plan for Periodic Reviews of the Plan for Growth and Improvement

{Reference: Chapter 2, Phase I, Step 6, *Excellence by Design (Systems Version)*}

In order to institutionalize a planning ethic, continuous growth and improvement in student and organizational performance must become a way of life within the school system. It must be an ongoing, dynamic, and "evergreen" process. It is expected and

required that the Plan for Growth and Improvement that is developed and presented for accreditation will be implemented faithfully and reviewed/ revised over the length of the accreditation term. Therefore, the *Excellence by Design (SV)* protocol includes the requirement that the system conducts periodic formal reviews of the action plans and progress toward achieving the performance objectives.

The plan for periodic reviews of the Plan for Growth and Improvement is:

The Southern Lehigh School District's process for reviewing our plan for growth and improvement involves many of the same things listed in the previous paragraphs. As administrators we are constantly reviewing the strategic plan and planning our action plans around those strategies and activities. Likewise at the building level our data teams continually monitor student growth as it relates to our strategic plan goals. We also report to the school board monthly about our activities and how they relate to the strategic plan. All of these mechanisms assist us in monitoring our progress with our strategic plan.

Excellence by Design (SV) (2010)

Self-Study Report

Introduction and Organization for Growth and Improvement

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