No Child Left Behind Program Series

NCLB
Comprehensive Needs Assessment

No Child Left Behind Comprehensive Needs Assessment

People without information cannot act. People with information cannot help but act. Ken Blanchard

State and federal law both outline the requirement for schools to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) as part of the planning and decision-making process. Texas Education Code (TEC) Sections 11.252(a)(1-2) and 11.253 related to campus planning state that "the plan must include provisions for a comprehensive needs assessment addressing student performance on the *student achievement* indicators, and other appropriate measures of performance…Campus-level committees must assess the academic achievement for each student in the school using the *student achievement* indicator system."

Likewise, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) – Public Law 107-110, Section 1114 (b) (1) (A) requires that a Title I schoolwide program include a comprehensive needs assessment of the entire school, including the needs of migrant students, based on information that includes how students are meeting the state's challenging academic content and achievement standards. For targeted assistance programs, Section 1115 (A) and (B) states that a school operating a targeted assistance program may only use Title I funds for programs that provide services to eligible children and defines eligible children as those "identified by the school as failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet the state's challenging student academic achievement standards on the basis of multiple, educationally related, objective criteria established by the local educational agency and supplemented by the school, except that children from preschool through grade 2 shall be selected solely on the basis of such criteria as teacher judgment, interviews with parents, and developmentally appropriate measures." Therefore, in a targeted assistance school, the needs assessment process is also critical to determine, based on data, which students are most in need of Title I services and the types of services which will provide the greatest impact. The process must be objective and include multiple measures to identify students most in need and establish a priority list for services. Targeted assistance schools are also expected to be able to document the student selection process and evaluate student progress as part of the needs assessment for the subsequent year.

Thus, the purpose of a CNA is to examine multiple sources of data to identify the priority needs and direction for the school. This critical process is the prework to the development of the district and campus improvement plans and decisions regarding the justification for use of NCLB and other funds. The data helps schools monitor and assess the impact of programs, instruction, and other resources related to student achievement by developing a school profile. When conducted thoroughly, the CNA tool provides schools with identified strengths and weaknesses and specifies priorities for addressing student achievement and meeting challenging academic and performance standards. Conducting a CNA is a process,

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not an event. While there may be specific times during the school year when targeted data analysis occurs, the data collection and analysis process is ongoing to ensure that progress toward the school's objectives, goals, mission and vision are being realized.

This NCLB CNA tool focuses on several areas:

- demographics;
- student achievement;
- school culture and climate;
- staff quality, recruitment and retention;
- curriculum, instruction and assessment;
- family and community involvement;
- school organization; and
- technology.

To facilitate the process and ensure buy-in from stakeholders, it is recommended that the district/school organize all staff and other potential members into committees, each focused on gathering data for their assigned category area. The committees ideally are comprised of members that are required under NCLB to carry out the campus plan: parents and other members of the community, teachers, principals, administrators (including administrators of NCLB programs), and if appropriate, pupil services personnel, technical assistance providers, school staff, and if the plan relates to a secondary school, students from such a school.

Data analysis should not be just about gathering data. It is very easy to get "analysis paralysis" by spending time pulling data together and not spending time using the data. Victoria L. Bernhardt

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The committees determine which data should be collected to provide the most information regarding the strengths and needs of the district/school. The team must be purposeful about gathering sufficient key data sources to assess the strengths and needs of the system without gathering so much data that it becomes difficult to facilitate the process. Informed decisions and decision-making regarding the school profile are, therefore, based on data, rather than assumptions or perceptions.

The school profile begins with collecting baseline information (or comparison data when baseline data already exists) so the committees can identify "statements of need" for each respective area. The data is easier to interpret and analyze when it is presented in varied formats, including graphs, charts, tables, and other user-friendly versions. Data should be disaggregated based on applicable groups, and may be examined longitudinally (across multiple years), by grade levels, classrooms, or schools to identify patterns, trends, strengths,

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and needs. Once the data is reviewed by each committee, members may determine whether additional data should be collected and analyzed. Varied sources and types of information from each area will yield the most accurate assessment of the needs. By using multiple data sources to compare the data, priority needs should emerge to support informed decisions for continuous improvement, the development of the district/campus improvement plan, and justify decisions regarding how NCLB funds will be used to ensure that all students meet challenging academic and performance standards.

A Checklist for Creating a School Profile

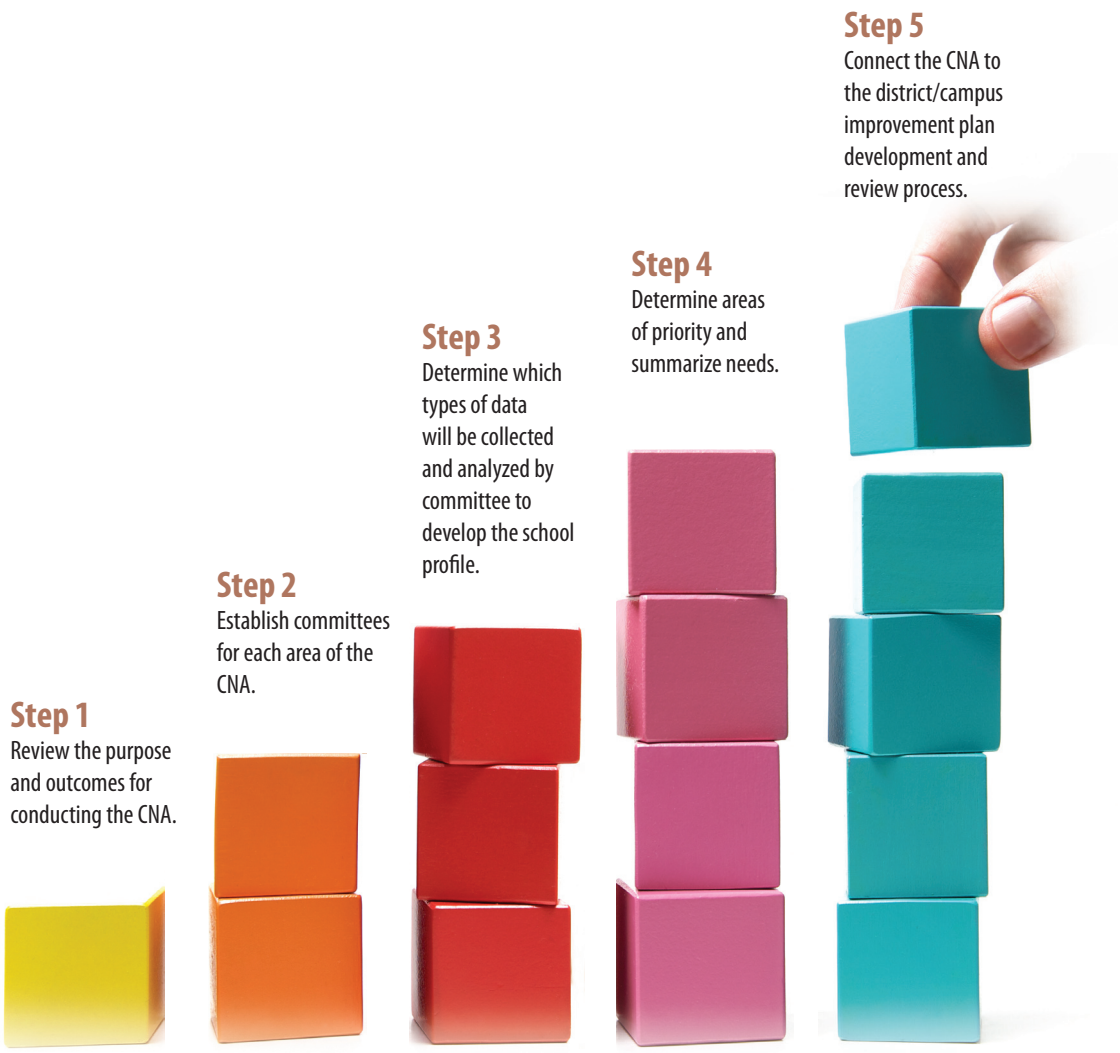
- ☑ Decide what you want to measure and report.
- ☑ Determine who will be responsible for organizing, developing, and updating the profile.
- ☑ Develop a management system for collecting and organizing the data in the profile.
- ☑ Be selective about the type and amount of data to collect.
- ☑ Take a baseline assessment of the data available in each area of focus.
- ☑ Determine any additional information that is needed and the procedures for collecting it.
- ☑ Write a narrative to support the story the data present; use varied formats for illustrating the narrative with charts, graphs, and tables.

Source: Victoria L. Bernhardt

Comprehensive Needs Assessment Process

A 5-Step Process

The NCLB CNA includes this 5-step process—which ultimately links the CNA to the review and development of the district and campus improvement plans. Provide copies of this CNA booklet to each committee member to ensure they have a full picture of the CNA process.



Step 1: Review the purpose and outcomes for conducting the CNA.

- What do we want to accomplish with this process?
- How will we ensure that it's a process, not an event?
- How will we get multiple stakeholders involved in the process?
- How will we share the purpose and outcomes with those involved?
- What are the short-and long-term timelines?

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Step 2: Establish committees for each area of the CNA. (Areas: Demographic, student achievement, etc.)

- Is there a committee or team with expertise in any of the areas?
- If not, which staff members will make the greatest impact on the committee or team?
- How will team members be recruited, selected, and potentially replaced?
- How do we ensure there is diversity on each team to challenge assumptions and stretch the group?
- Which team member is best suited to lead and facilitate individual teams? How do we ensure that the team member is skilled in group facilitation, consensus building, leading conversations regarding data/analysis, collaboration, and others?
- How will coordination among committees occur?

Step 3: Determine which types of data will be collected and analyzed by the committee to develop the school profile.

- What data will we collect?
- Does the data need to be reorganized in charts, graphs, tables, etc., to facilitate analysis?
- Do data collection tools need to be developed?
- How do we ensure that certain types of data are kept confidential and FERPA is not violated?
- How do we ensure that committees follow the process and refrain from identifying solutions?

Step 4: Determine areas of priority and summarize needs.

- What are the strengths and needs of our district/school and its representative groups?
- What evidence supports the strengths and needs?
- What are the priorities?
- What are we learning about our district/school, and what connections are we making?

Step 5: Connect the CNA to the district/campus improvement plan development and review process.

- What are the findings in the CNA?
- How are the findings reflected in summary statements?
- How are the CNA strengths addressed in the district/campus improvement plans as strategies and activities which will be continued and sustained to build on these strengths?
- How are the CNA needs addressed in the district/campus improvement plans through strategies and activities designed to improve student outcomes?
- How do priorities and needs correlate with justifications for NCLB program expenditures?

Probing Questions

Each area of the CNA tool is noted below, along with probing questions to facilitate dialogue about the data; determine strengths and needs; and develop priority and summary statements for each area. There may be other critical district-and campus-specific questions which are not reflected below. Committee members may generate a list of additional questions based on 'what do we want to know,' 'why do we want to know' and 'what data do we have or need to address the questions'?

We want to gather and analyze data that will help us understand the system that produces the results we are getting. We also want to move our district continuous improvement efforts from random acts of improvement to focused improvement that centers on our ultimate purpose—improving learning for all students.
Victoria Bernhardt

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Demographics

Demographic data are very important for us to understand as they are part of our educational system over which we have no control, but from which we can observe trends and learn for purposes of prediction and planning. Victoria Bernhardt

1. What do enrollment numbers indicate?

2. What is the breakdown by ethnicity, gender, or other category?

3. How has the enrollment changed over the past three years?

4. What is the number of students in each special program? How do these program numbers look broken up by ethnicity, gender, or other category? Are we over- or underrepresented in certain groups? Why?

5. What is the data for special programs over time?

6. What does the data reflect regarding students who exit from special programs? How many? Who are they? What trend or pattern do we see?

7. Who are our at-risk students? What is their at-risk category?

8. Who are our Migrant students?

9. What is the mobility rate for this campus? What is the stability rate? How are these numbers represented for Migrant students?

10. What area of the community do these students come from?

11. What are the staff demographics?

12. What are the teacher/student ratios? How do these ratios compare to performance?

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Student Achievement

We want to gather and analyze data that will help us understand the system that produces the results we are getting. We also want to move our district continuous improvement efforts from random acts of improvement to focused improvement that centers on our ultimate purpose—improving learning for all students.
Victoria Bernhardt

1. How is student achievement data disaggregated?

2. How does student achievement data compare from one data source to another?

3. What does the data indicate when disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, special program, or other category?

4. In which areas are we showing growth? At what rate? Compared to which standard of achievement?

5. Which students are making progress? Why?

6. What impact are intervention programs having on student achievement? Which students are benefiting or not? Why?

7. What does the longitudinal student achievement data indicate?

8. What does the data reflect within and among content areas?

9. What does the date indicate when disaggregated at various levels of depth?

10. Which students are making annual progress? Which ones are making projected growth? Who are these students? How does this data compare across programs, content areas, subgroups, etc.?

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School Culture and Climate

Culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that builds up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools. Author Unknown

1. How do students describe the school climate? How does this compare to staff?

2. What evidence is there that students and staff are collectively aligned with the vision and mission of the school?

3. How do students and staff describe attitudes, respect, relationships, belonging, support, etc.? How does this data compare across groups? Which groups respond in which manner?

4. What does the data reflect regarding student behaviors, discipline, etc.?

5. To what degree do students and staff feel physically safe?

6. What do students and staff indicate about expectations: academic, behavioral, social, extracurricular, etc.?

7. Which students are most satisfied with the school's culture and climate? How does this compare to the students' attendance, tardies, and other behaviors?

8. What does the data indicate regarding classroom management and organization? How does this compare to classroom student achievement data?

9. What does the data reflect regarding gang, substance abuse, weapons, and other safe schools areas? Who are the students involved? What do we know about these students? What services have these students received?

10. What students are involved in extracurricular activities, clubs, and other areas? Who are these students? What does student achievement reflect about these students versus others who are not involved?

11. What are the students' and staffs' perceptions of facilities and the physical environments? What is the impact of the facilities on culture and climate?

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Staff Quality, Recruitment and Retention

(Note confidentiality requirements regarding specific teacher appraisal and observation data)

An empowered organization is one in which individuals have the knowledge, skill, desire, and opportunity to personally succeed in a way that leads to collective organizational success. Stephen Covey

1. What are the teacher qualifications, certifications, etc.? Paraprofessionals?
2. What does the general data reflect regarding teacher quality on the campus?
3. How are follow-up data regarding teacher performance provided to teachers?
4. How are we recruiting highly qualified and effective staff?
5. What is our staff attendance rate? Retention rate? Turnover rate?
6. How is highly effective staff assigned to work with the highest need students?
7. What is the impact/effect of our teacher mentor program?
8. How is new staff supported? What feedback do they provide?
9. What systems are in place to build capacity and support the notion of continuous improvement?
10. How are we using data to determine professional development for staff?
11. How are collective and individual decisions regarding professional development determined?
12. What types of professional development has staff attended? How is implementation monitored? What impact has it had on performance? What is the follow-up?

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Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

There are three kinds of curricula; they must be considered together and improved together: written curriculum, taught curriculum, and tested curriculum.
Fenwick English

1. What evidence exists to determine that the curriculum is clearly linked to the TEKS and other standards for student learning?

2. How is data used to inform curriculum, instruction, and assessment decisions?

3. What does the data reflect about how curriculum, instruction, and assessment are aligned? How are they focused on supporting and challenging all students?

4. How are curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned with 21st Century Learning Skills?

5. What evidence is there that there is a process for monitoring, evaluating and renewing the curriculum to meet the needs of all learners?

6. How are instructional strategies and activities aligned with student learning needs and expected outcomes for achievement? How consistent is this across the district/school? What is the impact on specific student groups?

7. What evidence supports the implementation of high impact/high yield additional interventions for students who need assistance beyond primary classroom instruction? Which students need this type of instruction? What has the effect been over time?

8. How does instructional design and delivery maximize student engagement, a positive learning climate, higher order thinking skills, problem solving, critical thinking, etc.?

9. Is there evidence that assessments are aligned with clearly specified and appropriate achievement expectations? How are they developed and linked to measure the effect of curriculum and instruction?

10. How do we know assessments are designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner that eliminates biases? How do students perceive these assessments?

11. How does the scope of assessments provide a comprehensive and representative sampling of student performance that allows for confident conclusions about achievement?

Family and Community Involvement

The family is changing, not disappearing. We have to broaden our understanding of it, look for the new metaphors. Mary Catherine Bateson

1. What evidence exists that families and community members are involved in meaningful activities that support students' learning? What are the activities? Which parents and community members are involved? What trends and patterns do we observe?

2. How are families and the community members involved in school decisions?

3. What types of services are available to support families, community members, and students to encourage healthy family relationships?

4. If families speak languages other than English, what are these languages? How does the school communicate in those languages?

5. What types of services are available to support students in special programs? What are the results?

6. What types of community partnerships exist to support families and students?

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School Context and Organization

Create the kind of climate in your organization where personal growth is expected, recognized and rewarded. Author Unknown

1. To what degree does the district/school support the organization and how?

2. What does the data reflect about classes, schedules, and student/staff teams?

3. How is adequate time devoted to subjects in which students perform poorly?

4. How do teachers have a voice in decision making and school policies?

5. What role do teachers have in deciding what assessments will be used to evaluate individual students or the program as a whole?

6. Do school committees and decision making bodies make it easy for teachers, parents, paraprofessionals, support staff, and students to be heard and, in turn, for all groups to be part of solutions to identified problems?

7. What are the students', parents' and community perceptions of the school?

8. What do school expectations reveal?

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Technology

The traditional way we "do school" will change as students have more access to the world around them. If we are producing globally competitive students, we have to adapt to the world they will encounter. Superintendent

1. What technology do we have?

2. What is the technology proficiency for staff and students?

3. How does staff feel about technology?

4. What are some barriers that potentially prevent effective use of technology? When it's working, why is that so? When it's not working, why not?

5. What types of technology professional development have we provided? What was the impact for staff and students?

6. In which content areas are we using technology and how? What is the effect?

7. How does the design of the network provide for the users it supports?

8. How is technology utilized to support curriculum, instruction, and assessment integration and implementation?

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Committee Self-Assessment/Reflection

CNA committee members use this document to reflect on the process.

Date: _____

1. Given the goals and outcomes of the CNA process, what was most beneficial and why?

2. What might we improve and how?

3. How is our organization better as a result of this process?

Committee Area:

❒ Demographics
❒ Student Achievement
❒ School Culture and Climate
❒ Staff Quality, Recruitment, and Retention
❒ Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
❒ Family and Community Involvement
❒ School Context and Organization
❒ Technology

Name	Signature	Position

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