Creating and Implementing a 3–5 Year Plan

A campus or district without a plan for the future is significantly hindered in improving student achievement. It is impossible to respond in a targeted manner to the needs and changes at all levels of a district over time. Concentrated efforts with a mind toward improving student achievement have are critical to effecting cultural change. A 3–5 year plan is an important component for ensuring significant long-term success at all levels. The plan as well should be supported by an Annual Action Plan (AAP), as delineated in benchmarks 1, 4, and 7 of the T-STEM Blueprint. A guide to creating an AAP according to the T-STEM Blueprint follows in the second half of this short paper.

Mission Statement

If you do not have one already, choose a small team to craft a mission statement. The mission statement will drive your goals. The craft of a mission statement should involve input from all levels of staff and faculty, as well as any other relevant stakeholders, such as parents or local businesses. This mission statement should state your preliminary goals clearly and offer practical steps toward achieving them. If your campus or district already has a plan or a mission statement, take it into account in order to make your new plan take hold organically.

Key questions:
- Do we have a mission statement?
- Who should be involved in crafting it?
- Does it align to old goals as well as new ones?

T-STEM Benchmarks

With your mission statement in mind, work with the team to begin to identify and craft your long-term goals. The T-STEM Blueprint is an excellent document to help you frame the process of identification and support your progress towards implementation. You may also use your T-STEM Self Study and your designation application. The benchmarks in the T-STEM Blueprint are designed help your campus progress to Mature along the Continuum Growth Scale[1]:

- Mission and Vision
- Culture and Design
- Student Outreach, Recruitment, and Retention
- Teacher Selection, Development, and Retention
- Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- Strategic Alliances
- Advancement and Sustainability

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[1] See the T-STEM Blueprint for details.

Key questions:
- What are our needs?
- What specific changes would best optimize student outcomes in your campus or district?
- Where are we on the T-STEM Blueprint Continuum Growth Scale for each of the benchmarks?
- What goals are realistic within the scope of the plan?
- How do we track our progress?

Needs Assessment

A needs assessment should be created to identify specific needs around the goals. Data gathered for the needs assessment may focus on topics like student achievement, school culture, staff recruitment and retention, instructional design, and community involvement. NCLB has a blueprint for a comprehensive needs assessment which can be found [here](). The needs assessment should be periodic and not an isolated event at the beginning of the year, and the aggregation and disaggregation of the information gained should be as well. The task force should disseminate the data across the campus as well as share the findings of the discussions held in professional learning communities.

Key questions:
- How do we determine what kinds of data should be analyzed?
- What groups of stakeholders were involved in the needs assessment?
- What has the data found to be the areas in most critical need?
- How might we address the identified needs?

Implementation Task Force

When you have a mission statement and area of focus, it is time to start involving campus and district stakeholders in a more active manner. A task force involving every level of faculty and administration can assist with implementation and monitor progress toward a goal at every level. The task force should meet once a month to discuss progress and next steps. These meetings should not be simple informal discussions. In order to optimize time spent and make sure that all relevant information is brought to the fore, these meetings should follow a regular established protocol and agenda. These meetings should occur during school and work hours. Supporting an improvement plan is not "extra" work on top of regular job duties; the plan for improvement is as vital to campus and district improvement as its "regular" operation and should be part of the regular operation.

Key questions:
- Who are the key people who should help craft the goals?
- Do we need professional development to help us reach the goals?
- How will the goals be implemented?
- How will progress be monitored?

Resources

The task force should identify what relevant resources will have the most comprehensive effects for improving performance. The district office and task force should work together to coordinate the budget for such resources. Resources can come from all areas, such as regional service centers, T-STEM coaches and centers, universities, outside community efforts, etc. The implementation of these resources should be carefully monitored in order to ensure the greatest effect per dollar/hour spent.

Key questions:
- What resources are both available and feasible considering district funding and available time?
- Who will provide these resources?
- How can we make certain that these resources are not only provided to current employees, but also saved in order to effect change for new hires, reassignments, etc?

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Once the mission statement is written, the data from the needs assessment is in, and the blueprint focus areas are chosen, the task force should analyze the data and create goals for the 3–5 year plan along with yearly goals. When writing goals, be sure that they are "S.M.A.R.T." (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely). That is to say that a goal should not be so broad that it is difficult to break into action items, nor so simple that it does not need to be considered a long term goal. Decide how and when you will monitor your progress towards the goal. If progress slows or stops, initiatives can be crafted to correct the problem. Because comprehensive change at the campus- or district-level is extremely complicated, a plan should focus on only a few goals aimed at maximizing student outcomes. Take careful measure of your priorities in order to target your goals specifically and significantly toward the areas that require attention.

Crafting, Implementing, and Monitoring the 3–5 Year Plan and the Annual Action Plan (AAP)

With all of this information, your task force should be ready to create a comprehensive 3–5 year plan and then break it down into an AAP. The 3–5 Year Plan should take into account what changes the district or campus will incur over the course of implementation. Taking into account S.M.A.R.T. goals, the task force should work with outside community leaders and the district front office to craft a plan that communicates information in a clear and cohesive manner. It should address all areas of the T-STEM Blueprint. The plan should be readily available to all campus faculty, district office, parents, and business partners. Implementation will suffer greatly if these stakeholders cannot get on the same page. Campus and district culture depend on this unity of purpose. The plan should work as a living document, able to adjust in the inevitable change over the years covered by the plan.

Key questions:
- Are our goals and resources aligned clearly in the plan?
- Is the plan available to everyone involved?
- Is the plan designed to change as the campus and district changes?

Crafting an Annual Action Plan

Once the 3–5 Year Plan is created, the plan should be broken into yearly segments called the Annual Action Plan (AAP). Rather than creating AAPs for each year at the beginning of the process, the AAP should be created each year based on the previous year's data and address the S.M.A.R.T. goals listed in the 3–5 Year Plan.

The tables below list indicators in the T-STEM Blueprint that address items that should be included in the 3–5 Year Plan along with ways to address the milestones listed in the AAP. Use these indicators to set your task force, create the plan, implement it, and monitor it.

Set the Task Force

	Indicator	Connection to 3–5 Year Plan and AAP
1.1A	Develops a shared mission and vision, which is aligned with the T-STEM mission and vision and which reflects a consensus among superintendent, board members, design team, staff, students, parents, and community/business partners on how the Academy promotes STEM-literate graduates to support the Texas Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics Initiative.	The mission of the academy drives the content of the plan.
1.2A	Establishes a Design Team and defines the role the team plays in the planning and development of the T-STEM Academy prior to implementation.	The Design Team is the initial team that collaborates to set the big plan for the T-STEM Academy.
1.2B	Develops an Academy Leadership Team and identifies the internal role each member will play in the design, governance, operations, accountability, curriculum development, professional development, etc., as well as their external role in collaborating with the design team, outreach, and other key interest groups for continuous monitoring and improvement of the T-STEM Academy plan.	The Academy Leadership Team assists with the day-to-day, year-in–year-out work of the academy. It consists of campus-level stakeholders.
1.2C	Develops and demonstrates support from an Advisory Board consisting of representatives from the Academy, school board, district, community, higher education, and STEM businesses to support and guide facility requirements, resource acquisition, curriculum development, internships, externships, and student/community outreach to ensure a successful 6th-20th STEM academic and career pipeline.	The Advisory Board assists with the larger mission of the academy. It consists of internal and external stakeholders. Include the creation of the Advisory Board and how it will help carry out the mission of the academy in the 3–5 Year Plan.

Create the Plan

	Indicator	Connection to 3–5 Year Plan and AAP
1.1B	Develops and incorporates an *Annual Action Plan (AAP)* into the Campus/School Improvement Plan of goals and resources aligned to the Academy's mission and vision, the T-STEM Blueprint, and STEM-literacy; with the AAP regularly monitored and assessed.	The indicator provides a breakdown of the 3–5 Year Plan into an Annual Action Plan (AAP) that contains more detail than the 3–5 Year Plan.
1.2D	Incorporates Annual Action Plan goals for participation and leadership of students, teachers, parents, business and community partners, institutions of higher education, and T-STEM Coaches and Centers into Campus/School Improvement Plan.	This indicator lists the stakeholders that will participate in carrying out the AAP.
4.2A	Develops a PD plan for a sustained professional development model of continuous learning based on student results, teacher development, and the short- and long-term goals of the Academy.	Professional development (PD) should be specifically addressed in the 3–5 Year Plan as well as the AAP. This indicator includes specifics about PD.
4.3E	*Annual Action Plan* includes a creative teacher incentive plan that provides release time and other incentives, such as stipends or bonuses, for teachers to contribute to and lead T-STEM education efforts (journal articles, conference presentations, attend T-STEM trainings and cluster meetings, contribute to T-STEM newsletter, and populate Academy press releases).	The AAP specifically addresses teacher retention. Therefore teacher retention should be included in the 3–5 Year Plan.
7.1A	Develops a 3–5 year strategic plan that aligns Academy mission and vision to STEM Blueprint Program Requirements (budget, year-by-year rollout of grade levels to be served, STEM pathways, projected staffing needs, instructional technology and resources, and appropriate facilities allocation through full enrollment.)	This indicator contains a list of items that should be included in the 3–5 Year Plan.
7.1B	Develops strategic plan in collaboration with design team, T-STEM Centers, T-STEM Network, T-STEM, District Personnel, etc. Provides annual analysis, review, and revision of strategic plan and develops Annual Action Plan with key stakeholders.	This indicator shows how the different groups work together to create the AAP.
7.1D	Addresses sustainability in the strategic plan.	Sustainability of the mission is an integral part of the 3–5 Year Plan.
7.3B	Ensures that strategic plan and Annual Action Plan addresses the commitment of the Academy to continually invest in professional development for personnel (STEM pedagogy, best practices in teaching	Another indicator stresses the importance of the growth of teaching and learning in both the AAP and the 3–5 Year Plan.

	and learning, innovative course development, etc.).	
7.3C	Develops a plan for sustaining the Academy beyond the grant-funding period to include strategic pursuit of additional grant opportunities.	The 3–5 Year Plan specifically addresses grant funding.

Implement the Plan

	Indicator	**Connection to 3–5 Year Plan and AAP**
1.2G	Uses data to inform all leadership decisions and to annually review and revise the mission-driven T-STEM Academy Annual Action Plan (AAP).	The academy uses data to make ongoing decisions.
1.3A	Integrates and assesses the level of mission-driven and data-driven decision making evident in the daily work of the Academy.	The academy looks for evidence of mission- and data-driven decision making.
1.4A	Participates and collaborates with the T-STEM Centers and T-STEM Coaches to support the transformation of STEM teaching methods, teacher preparation, instruction and 6-12 alignment to support continuous development and the achievement of long-term T-STEM goals.	The academy uses with the T-STEM network to support the S.M.A.R.T goals.
4.2B	Adopts a systemic professional development model of continuous learning that addresses prioritized needs as informed and evaluated by multiple sets of quantitative and qualitative data (student assessment data, instructional/classroom evaluations, technological developments, workforce demands, demographic changes, and community/societal expectations and needs).	The academy uses a model of continuous learning that supports the S.M.A.R.T goals.
4.2C	Sustains a PLC by instituting job-embedded ongoing opportunities for continuous learning, peer coaching/mentoring, STEM externships, and participation in STEM teacher and leader cadres for teachers and administrators (research-based practices, content competence, new instructional strategies, technology integration, reflective inquiry, and student artifact analysis).	The academy uses a model of continuous learning that supports the S.M.A.R.T goals.
4.2D	Provides ongoing professional development for counselors, teachers, staff, and parents on strategies that support students to ensure success in a rigorous course of study, such as: IGP, interventions, and interpersonal and academic success strategies.	The academy uses a model of continuous learning that supports the S.M.A.R.T goals.

4.3C	Adopts and implements a plan for new teachers to include orientation, induction, acculturation, mentoring, professional development, and administrative support.	The academy works to bring new teachers up to speed in the plan for the academy.
4.3D	Provides opportunities for ongoing professional development to improve teachers' content knowledge, technology embedded instruction, integrative STEM pedagogy, college and career readiness standards, instructional strategies for ensuring a successful P-20 pipeline, and leadership capacity.	This indicator provides specificity in the PD needed to sustain an academy that should be addressed in the yearly plan that supports the 3–5 year plan.

Monitor the Plan

Indicator		Connection to 3–5 Year Plan and AAP
1.3B	Implements a process for program review and formative evaluation to achieve mission goals that includes metrics such as attendance, demographics, and student achievement.	A specific plan should be created to monitor progress toward the goals on the AAP and the 3–5 Year Plan.
7.1C	Provides annual analysis, review, and revision of strategic plan and develops Annual Action Plan with key stakeholders.	The AAP is developed each year based on data and the plans in the 3–5 Year Plan.
7.2A	Annually reviews strategic plan and Annual Action Plan to ensure Academy meets high expectations across a broad range of performance measures as indicated by Academy mission and vision, and STEM Blueprint Program Requirements.	Continuous monitoring includes annual review of performance.
7.2B	Annually reviews instructional and intervention plan to ensure continual growth on all of the required state accountability measures.	Continuous monitoring includes annual review of performance.
7.2C	Develops internal indicators and checklists unique to the Academy to measure continuous improvement towards student performance goals and the state of the Academy.	Continuous monitoring also includes continual review of performance.

Without the data to make a comprehensive plan, and without the plan itself, a campus and district can be paralyzed in an environment of change or will change with the newest initiative. A 3–5 Year Plan and the AAP that backs it up provide the circumstances in which a campus culture can flourish and increase student achievement. Properly implemented, a 3–5 Year Plan supported by targeted AAPs can empower a school or district for increased achievement at every level.