Southwest Comprehensive Center at WestEd

A Guide for Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Prepared for the Colorado Department of Education by RMC Research Corporation, a subcontractor to the Southwest Comprehensive Center at WestEd

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What Is a Needs Assessment?

The phrase “needs assessment” is used rather loosely in the educational vernacular. As currently implemented, a needs assessment can mean anything from asking individuals connected with education what they need to close the gap between current status and some desired state, such as all students reaching proficiency, to conducting a comprehensive research project, complete with a specified set of procedures such as statistical analysis, case studies, and student focus groups. In both cases, *there is an attempt to assess or measure a perceived or actual need by collecting data to document a challenge that exists.* For federal programs, typically this means that local staff must collect data that help illuminate the path to improvement.

Various funding programs within the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) *Act* have specific requirements for conducting a needs assessment. The requirements are presented in the Appendix. Generally, the requirements are as follows:

Title I, Part A (basic programs for students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds) staff with schoolwide programs must conduct *annual* comprehensive needs assessments that include analyses of student achievement data relative to proficiency expectations and involve

parents and community members, teachers, principals, administrators (including those from other Title I programs), and if appropriate, pupil services personnel, technical assistance providers, school staff, and students, if for a secondary school. The overall purpose of the comprehensive needs assessment is to “identify gaps between the current status of the school and its vision of where it wants to be, relative to key indicators or focus areas” (Nonregulatory Guidance, p. 14). The guidance suggests using a needs assessment process that includes establishing a schoolwide planning team, clarifying the vision of school reform to identify school strengths and weaknesses, creating the school profile, identifying data sources for the needs assessment, and analyzing the collected data. The section on creating a school profile (Nonregulatory Guidance, pp. 10-13) contains a number of questions that might be used on a comprehensive needs assessment. Schools with targeted assistance programs are also to conduct a needs assessment to determine those children with the greatest need to be served. In these schools, if health, nutrition, and other social services to address needs (such as basic medical equipment—eyeglasses and hearing aids, a program coordinator, or professional development about identifying and meeting these children’s needs) are identified by a comprehensive needs assessment, some funds can be used to fill these needs through a collaborative partnership with local service providers.

Title I, Part C (migrant education) programs must identify the special educational needs of migratory children as part of their comprehensive planning process. The state education agency (SEA) often takes the lead and plans a needs assessment in conjunction with local and state programs that receive federal funds.

Title II (high quality teachers (HQTs) and principals) programs are to conduct needs assessments to determine the knowledge and skills needed by teachers and the instructional leadership skills required of principals to ensure that students meet standards. Teachers at individual schools must be involved in the needs assessment process. While no specific types of data are required, the law suggests that the needs assessment include:

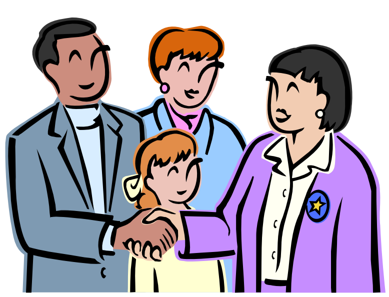
- Student achievement data;
- Information on national and state initiatives;
- Anticipated professional development needs of core subject area teachers;
- Anticipated teacher supply and demand;
- Student enrollment data;
- Results of program evaluations; and
- Input from community and business.

Funds are to be used to target those activities most likely to improve instruction and student achievement.

Title III programs (English language learners [ELL] and immigrant students) must include a description of the need for their programs in their applications. The needs assessment must include numbers of students who are designated as being limited English proficient (LEP) in the school district to be served and information on the students' characteristics including their native language, their proficiency in English and in their native language, achievement data in reading/language arts and mathematics, a comparison of achievement data for ELL and non-ELL students, and a summary of the previous schooling experiences of the children. The assessment also should reflect the professional development needs of the instructional personnel who will provide services to the ELL students.

Title V also specifies that needs assessments for programs that receive character education funds, the needs of gifted/talented students, and local needs for innovative programs are to be determined.

Why Conduct a Needs Assessment?



The requirements for program-level needs assessments are connected to the purpose of the program. For example, since Title I exists to help students to reach proficiency and close the achievement gap, the needs assessment requirements are there to discover the challenges related to goals. In this case, the research shows that attendance; parent involvement; school climate; leadership; and students being on grade level on assessments of reading, language arts, and mathematics are all related to students doing well on summative tests such as the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP). Measuring these predictors of test scores shows where some of the needs may lie.

A needs assessment also:

- Provides direction for programs, projects, and activities;

- Allows staff to determine priorities and allocate limited resources to activities that will have the greatest impact;

- Creates cohesion through the alignment of goals, strategies, professional development, and desired outcomes;

- Enables benchmarking and monitoring of implementation and impact; and

- Assists with continuous improvement activities by helping staff identify change, which instructional and other practices are working, and the strategies associated with the greatest success.

Dimensions of a Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Components

There is no single best way to conduct a needs assessment. Rather, the components in a needs assessment should be determined by local context. The state of Massachusetts (2008) has identified some common or suggested components or characteristics of a needs assessment:

- Considers a range of needs or issues;

- Includes information gathered from a variety of sources;

- Employs the use of valid and reliable data to the maximum extent possible;

- Meaningfully involves many individuals representing a range of knowledge, skills and expertise;

- Results in the development of goals and action plans;

- Used as the basis for resource allocation; and

- Includes regular follow up and evaluation of plans and strategies.

Focus

Assessment of needs should focus on those factors that have the potential to impact the achievement of students. At a minimum, needs assessments should address: test score results in the aggregate and for subgroups, dropout rates, student mobility, attendance rates, and graduation rates. Curriculum and instruction issues should also be examined, including alignment with Colorado Model Content Standards and assessment frameworks. Professional development needs should also be assessed including teacher qualifications, the nature of professional development, and planning time for teachers. Family and community involvement should be explored and should involve communication with parents about student achievement, their involvement in decisions, supports provided to families, and/or business partnerships. School and district organization provide contextual information that is important for framing needs. Vision, mission, decision-making structures, central office support, and budgetary issues are some contextual factors to consider.

Information Gathering

Information in a comprehensive needs assessment is gathered from a variety of sources. Quantitative data sources include CSAP scores, CSAP Alternate (CSAPA) scores, Colorado English Language Acquisition (CELA) scores, Colorado ACT results, adequate yearly progress (AYP) status and School Accountability Report (SAR) status and information. Graduation rates, attendance rates, and demographics should also be included. If schools use other standardized formative or summative assessments, they should be addressed. Qualitative data, such as that collected through focus groups, interviews, written surveys, or classroom observations, are also helpful.

Planning Teams

A formal planning team is a critical part of a comprehensive needs assessment. A comprehensive needs assessment should include stakeholders that represent all parts of the system. Superintendents, central office staff, principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, school office staff, parents/guardians, community members, and students all have important information about the system.

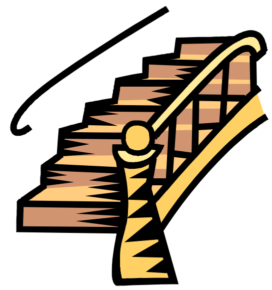
Use of Results

A comprehensive needs assessment results in the development of goals and action plans. After the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data is completed, goals should be identified, and action plans should emerge from those goals. For example, performance targets should be set for meeting AYP, and strategies for meeting those performance targets should be clearly articulated with action steps.

Comprehensive needs assessment can be a powerful resource allocation tool. Often schools and school systems are operating with limited resources. Results from a comprehensive needs assessment are a useful tool for prioritizing how resources will be used.

To determine whether resources have been allocated in the proper fashion and the strategies used to meet needs are effective, it is important to monitor whether needs, or the gap between what is and what should be, have been impacted. If gaps are not being reduced, evaluation can help determine whether strategies are being executed properly, or whether other strategies should be attempted.

Planning for Comprehensive Needs Assessment



A series of steps to plan a comprehensive needs assessment includes:

1. **Constitute a needs assessment committee.**

   The formation of a needs assessment committee (NAC) is a powerful, efficient strategy for task completion. Larger groups are helpful for advising on or reacting to documents, but the dynamics of these larger groups are not always conducive to efficient decision making. A core NAC group may consist of five to seven people. Larger committees are helpful for reacting to drafts of reports. Subcommittees are an alternative if the committee is large. It is helpful to have committee members with expertise in collecting and analyzing data. Constituencies within the district should also be included on the committee, and organizational leadership should be part of the committee structure.

2. **Who needs to be involved in data gathering?**

   A comprehensive needs assessment involves collecting data from multiple sources and audiences. While it is not necessary to include all stakeholders in every single needs assessment, a plan that is broad enough in scope, yet detailed enough to collect sufficient information, is important. There will always be cost-benefit tradeoffs, but a good mixture of breadth and depth will provide the most comprehensive picture of needs. It is important to have administrators and staff involved in the needs assessment process in order to maintain the kind of momentum necessary to ensure that results are used.

a. Key district and school personnel

Depending on the size of the school district, a number of persons are essential to the process of conducting a comprehensive needs assessment. Accountability and assessment staff at the district level have a wealth of information, as do personnel in budgeting offices and planning divisions; curriculum and instruction; administrators of federal programs; and support staff. It is important to conduct an internal scan of the district's resources and staff skill sets so that key personnel can be involved.

b. External stakeholders

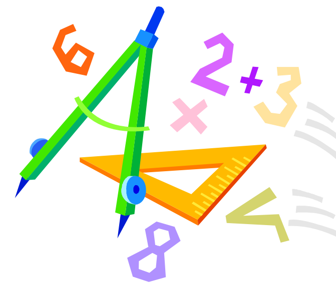
In federal programs, there are a number of external stakeholders to consider, including parents and guardians and the community. Depending on the circumstances, it might be wise to include business leaders, members of the Chamber of Commerce, leaders of community organizations, providers of services to families and children, or other public agencies. Many times, these external stakeholder groups will have conducted needs assessments of their own, and those data can be extremely helpful. Moreover, including them in the needs assessment process contributes to stakeholder engagement later in the process.

3. Prepare management plan.

Comprehensive needs assessments can be lengthy endeavors, so it is important to have a management plan to guide efforts and keep the assessment on track. It is also important to consider when results of needs assessment will be made available so that they can be used effectively. Results from a needs assessment are no longer reliable or valid if too much time has passed.

4. Identify issues and concerns.

Using the expertise of the NAC, it is possible to quickly identify major issues and concerns through any number of brainstorming activities. Issues and concerns can be organized by goal areas and then priorities for assessment can be established.



5. **Identify measures.**

The most common measure used in needs assessments are surveys. Surveys are powerful, efficient, and reliable tools for collecting data. However, a *comprehensive* needs assessment does not rely upon surveys alone. A comprehensive needs assessment uses multiple sources of data that are *triangulated*. Triangulation refers to using three or more sources or types of data to establish the validity of a finding. For example, parents, paraprofessionals, and teachers may all be asked about the reading needs in a school. If their reports essentially agree, then the NAC can be relatively sure that the findings are reliable and valid. However, if there is a divergence of opinion, further investigation is warranted.

6. **Decide preliminary priorities.**

After needs have been identified, it is time to make preliminary decisions about priorities. Does the NAC have all of the information it needs? Does the NAC have to collect new information? From whom? At what cost? How long will it take? Who should be involved? Answering these kinds of questions will make it easier to decide what really needs to be done.

7. **Designing a comprehensive needs assessment.**

A comprehensive needs assessment addresses multiple education issues. For example, schools with migrant students could assess the special needs for migrant education by talking with teachers, administrators, district personnel, parents, and the migrant students themselves. The NAC should also examine student achievement disaggregated by migrant status to look for gaps and to pinpoint problems.

For Title II, the NAC should explore needs related to the shortage of (HQTs). Interviews with or surveys of HQTs could reveal some important patterns. Interviews, focus groups, or surveys of teacher training institutions, such as Colleges of Education, might reveal important information about providers of professional development. Principals in school buildings and administrators at the district level who work with teachers can also provide insight.

8. **Identify measures to use.**

A comprehensive needs assessment involves collection of data from multiple sources. While surveys are the most common measure used, there are many other valuable sources of data that already exist in schools and districts. Table 1 displays some of the more common sources of data that may be used in a comprehensive needs assessment.

Table 1. Common Sources of Data for Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Source	Comments
Surveys	Surveys are efficient, easy to administer and provide accessible data.
Interviews	Interviews are an excellent way to explore issues that are not well understood, or to gain critical information from key stakeholders. They provide opportunity for follow-up questions or to allow interviewees to elaborate on issues important to the school or district.
Focus Groups	Focus groups are an efficient way to test ideas with groups and to generate novel thinking and solutions to problems. When participants interact with one another, novel ideas or solutions often emerge.
Observations	Observations of classrooms, after-school programs, summer programs, staff meetings, and community meetings provide excellent information about the functioning of organizations supporting the education of children.
Document Analysis	A wide variety of documents have the potential for contributing to the needs assessment process. These documents include, school improvement plans, district improvement plans, annual reports, budgets, meeting minutes, local media coverage, and school board agendas.
Program Evaluations	Many projects funded internally or externally by the district, state, the federal government, or foundations often require evaluations of their efforts. These evaluations are powerful sources of information for needs assessment. Not only do these reports identify problems being addressed, they also make data-based recommendations for project improvement and the effectiveness of projects and programs.
Budgets	Budgetary documents are an excellent source of information about what the school, district, or organization thinks is important. For example, the percentage of funding allocated to professional development is a good indicator of priorities.
Strategic Planning Documents	Schools, districts, local businesses, public agencies, or community organizations that have engaged in a strategic planning process often have valuable documentation to share. Strategic plans typically look at internal capacity, changing external circumstances, and identify gaps in ways that are particularly informative with regard to the needs assessment process.
Environmental Scans	Environmental scans, or those efforts to locate the important new educational developments, provide valuable information about internal capacity and external conditions relevant to schools, districts, and stakeholders.
Proposals	Many funders require those responding to Request for Proposals (RFPs) to use a data-based approach to identification of needs to be addressed. Quite often, these needs assessments are specific to a particular effort, but can provide valuable information for a more comprehensive approach.
Research Reports	Research reports produced about the school or district are excellent sources of information, particularly if they are contextualized. Many research reports review current literature that pertain to studies conducted locally and can serve as a source of scientifically based research (SBR) related to the schools and districts if they are rigorous.
Census Data	Census data population estimates, monitoring of trends, and tracking of other demographic information are a valuable source of information for determining school or district needs. The Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) program produces annual estimates of income and poverty for school districts.
Suggestion Boxes	When internal and external stakeholders are provided the opportunity to suggest improvements, many needs may emerge.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis consists of three parts: collecting existing data, collecting new data to address the gaps not covered by existing data, and analyzing data to identify needs. Each of these activities will be covered in some detail.

Gathering Existing Data

School districts typically have plenty of data that will inform a comprehensive needs assessment. Some of the most useful sources of existing data will be described here. It is important to remember, however, that data have time value—they are sometimes no longer relevant after a certain period of time. Efforts should be made to collect and use the most recent forms of data available for comprehensive needs assessment.

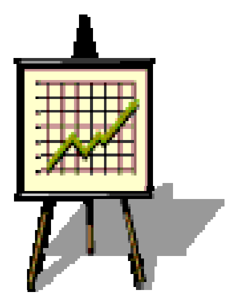
Student Demographics

Changing student demographics is one of the biggest challenges schools face. As neighborhoods

change, mature, and are reborn, the populations of students served by schools shift in important ways. The most prominent shifts relate to socioeconomic status and language spoken at home. Family structure is also an important consideration. For example, it is important for schools to know the number and percentage of single parent households. The number of births during the year in a community helps school districts forecast and plan for resource needs into the future. Families and households without children are also important, because extra effort will be needed to ensure that school bond elections are supported when numerous residents in the community do not have children in school.

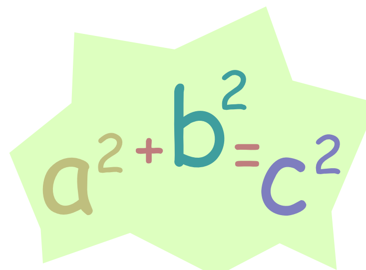
Student Achievement Data

There are many types of student achievement data collected in schools, and some are more appropriate than others for conducting comprehensive needs assessments. Formative assessment measures are typically collected to improve a program or activity, while summative measures are typically used to compare program approaches to one another, or to make ultimate judgments about an effort's effectiveness. In the classroom, formative assessments are typically used to inform teachers how well their students are doing in terms of strengths and weaknesses. Formative assessments might be administered several times a year. If formative assessment information is made available to teachers in a timely fashion, they have a powerful tool that can help them identify needs. Formative assessments are also an excellent tool for identifying building and district needs since they can reveal patterns of learning strengths and challenges.



Summative assessments, such as the CSAP, provide data that are used to determine AYP. While this is their primary purpose, they can also be used as another source of information for identifying gaps or needs areas if processed correctly. It is important that results from tests like the CSAP be used with caution. Some of these tests have very specific purposes, and it is risky to use them for other purposes without understanding the pitfalls involved. Your district assessment director should be able to provide more information about the use of tests for needs assessment.

Data become more powerful when they are disaggregated. Disaggregation categories required by NCLB include race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, migrant status, English proficiency, and status as economically disadvantaged. When formative student achievement data from these subgroups are analyzed, gaps in performance can be discovered. With formative assessments, teachers and administrators can identify strategies to address the gaps, and make data-based judgments about which strategies seem to work best with which groups.



Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and instruction are at the core of the schooling process. Some questions that might be asked about curriculum include:

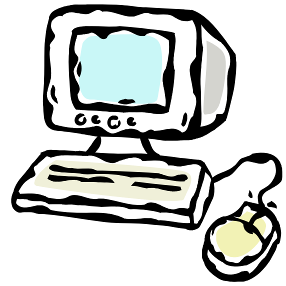
- Is the curriculum aligned with state frameworks and assessments?
- What kinds of instructional approaches are used most often?
- How effective is instruction for all groups of students?
- How are different types of instruction related to student achievement, and under what circumstances?

Curriculum audits have been around for some time and more recently, instructional audits are being performed in many sites. These audits can provide valuable needs assessment data.

Professional Development

When identifying needs, professional development offerings, professional development ratings, and the overall coherence of professional development offered by a school district are important characteristics to examine. Teacher surveys are the most common way to identify perceived needs for professional development offerings. However, professional development needs should always be linked to achievement goals and reflect the priorities of the school district. If disaggregated data analysis reveals that there are achievement gaps between groups, professional development needs assessment should be targeted to understand the reason for those achievement gaps. If students are not achieving at uniformly high levels across the school district, additional inquiry might be warranted to determine exactly why.

Technology



Technology needs should be carefully identified, and plans for meeting those needs should be grounded in firm needs assessment data. Colorado has teacher and administrator standards for technology. The purchase of major technologies should align with school or district vision, mission, and goals, and technology needs should be directly linked to student achievement.

Family/Community Involvement Measures

Children who have parents or guardians involved in their education are more likely to be successful. Parent involvement in schooling can take on many forms, and these forms all contribute to the success of students. Epstein (2008) identified six types of parent involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community.

- **Parenting** refers to helping families establish supportive home environments for children as students.
- **Communicating** is the design of effective forums for communicating about children's progress and school programs.
- **Volunteering** can be described as recruiting and organizing parent support and help.
- **Learning at home** involves providing information and ideas for helping students at home with homework, planning, decisions, and other curriculum-related activities.
- **Decision making** is the inclusion of parents in school decisions, and the development of parent leaders and representatives.
- **Collaborating** with community occurs through the identification and integration of community resources and services for strengthening school programs, student learning and development, family practices, and school programs.

A number of measures are appropriate for needs sensing activities with parents or guardians. For example, asking them how many books they have in the home for children to read, how often they read to their children, and how often their children read to them are all useful questions for understanding family literacy patterns. Parents and guardians can also be asked about how much television their children watch, how much time they spend playing video games, how much time they spend on the Internet, how much time they spend engaged in independent reading, or how much time they spend each night on homework. With some careful thought, parents and guardians can be an excellent source of information about needs. They can also be an excellent sounding board for exploring new ideas about programmatic offerings.

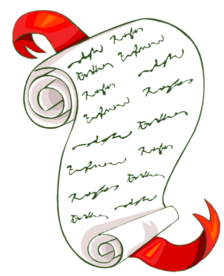
Early Childhood Assessment Data

Data from early childhood assessments are becoming increasingly available. Indicators of early childhood development are useful for documenting school readiness. However, these indicators should be used with some caution, because variability in performance of very young children can be quite large. While overall patterns may emerge with groups of students, it is not wise to use these data to document individual student needs.

Gathering New Data

A determination of data needed to be collected for the comprehensive needs assessment can be made after a compilation of existing sources of information is reviewed. This activity helps identify where essential information is missing and serves as a guide for future data collection.

Data Collection Logistics



After a listing of data needed is created, decisions about who, what, when, where, why and how can be made. Developing a detailed plan or a roadmap of sorts is a helpful strategy before collecting new data. Using a matrix is often a helpful approach to organizing new data collection activities, with targets listed as columns, and measures used listed as rows, for example. A calendar or timeline should also be developed, that takes data collection opportunities into account.

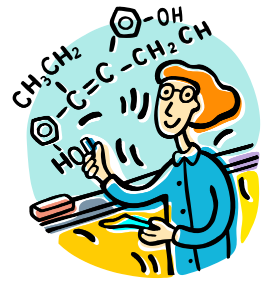
While it is always better to have objective, uninvolved parties administer surveys, hold interviews, or conduct focus groups, this is not always possible. The needs assessment committee should be aware of the kinds of bias that might be introduced through a self-assessment convenience sample. For example, although surveying the parents who show up at "back-to-school" night might be easy, this approach will not capture those parents who do not attend evening meetings at school for any number of reasons.

Collecting Valid and Reliable Data

Collecting valid and reliable data is a concern in comprehensive needs assessment. Some practices that contribute to reliability include the use of consistently worded survey items, development of focus group scripts that are followed carefully, and using trained interviewers who do not intentionally introduce bias into the data collection process. The use of surveys with pre-established reliability and validity should be considered whenever possible. A number of good measurement tools exist, and many are easily accessible. Also, collecting data from multiple sources and including multiple stakeholders in the analysis process contribute to the reliability and validity of the data that are collected.

Data Analysis

Once data are collected there are a number of statistical strategies that can be used for analysis. For example when investigating how migrant students are doing in comparison to their peers, the NAC may administer a survey for all students to complete in a certain set of schools, then add a question about whether the students participated in the migrant program. That item can be used to create two groups and to look at differences statistically. Some very simple statistics, such as the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with an item, can be calculated and compared for two groups using statistical tests, like a *z* test for proportions. If there are more than two groups of students, techniques such as Chi-square tests can be used. For the mean or average responses on items rated on a 5-point scale, the *t* test for independent groups can be used for two groups. If there are more than two groups, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) can be used, with post-hoc *t* tests if results are statistically significant. One word of caution is warranted here, however. These statistical tests have complex assumptions, and it is easy to misuse them. When in doubt about the use of these statistical techniques, always seek advice from colleagues in the central office who have the appropriate expertise.



Prioritize Needs

Once needs assessment data are collected and analyzed, it is important to follow through with the results of needs assessments and determine which are the most important.

Simple approaches entail procedures such as rank ordering the needs, without any particular formal procedure. This approach is used in situations that are not complex. The *multiple criteria approach* is used when needs are more complex and are judged against criteria that address importance and feasibility. Weighted total priority scores can then be created. *Disaggregated prioritization* involves rank ordering the criteria to be used. Then a need is judged by each of the criteria, beginning with the highest-ranked criteria first. This technique simplifies the prioritization process, because criteria are addressed one at a time. *Risk assessment* is done by examination of the needs relative to the risk of not addressing them. This is particularly useful in situations where not addressing a need is related to a risk of major importance, such as child abuse.

Identify Root Causes

Identification and analysis of root causes is not a simple task. Using the expertise of the NAC, it is possible to employ a number of techniques, such as the "6 Whys" to discover root causes. The idea behind the technique is to ask "why" several times, until the cause of a problem is identified. For example, consider the high school drop-out problem.

Why are students dropping out? Because they are not accumulating enough credits to graduate.
Why? Because they are failing their classes.
Why? Because they report that going to class is boring, so they do not attend class.
Why? Because teachers lecture too much.
Why? Because no one has shown teachers how to make their subject matter more interesting.
Why? Because the district has not provided the supports necessary to help teachers develop new skills for working with adolescent learners.

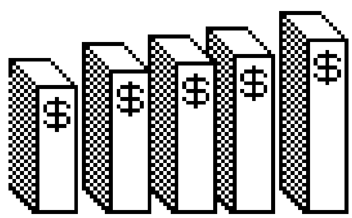
While this is a contrived example, it does help us understand how the NAC can get at root causes once they have identified an issue.

Summarize Findings

A summary of findings is a useful tool for disseminating results and for generating action plans. Brief summaries are easy to digest and make for excellent talking points when presented in bulleted or numbered form. A one-page executive summary can be useful for communicating with the media, parents, superintendents, school boards, or funding agencies.

Making Decisions

When districts use a variety of data sources to make focused decisions that have implications for student achievement, student performance improves. Comprehensive needs assessment is a form of this structured decision making that allows for allocating limited resources in ways where they will have the most impact. Processing the data collected, communicating the results found, and using what is learned for planning and taking action will be detailed in this section.



Reporting Needs Assessment Results

Needs assessment results can be reported in a number of ways, depending largely on why the needs assessment was conducted in the first place and the audiences for the reports. When discussing tools used, it is often useful to provide a general description of what they were designed to measure. It is also important to explain how they were administered, and how many people responded to them out of the targeted population. If sampling techniques were used, they should be documented. If convenience samples were used (parents at a back-to-school night, for example), that should be noted too. Descriptions of focus group and interview results should include information about who participated, their roles, how many participated, and how long the activities were. Student assessment information should be described with careful mention of grade levels, subject areas, and years of testing administration. External documents should be referenced. No student names should ever be used in reports.

Comprehensive Planning

Two steps are essential for comprehensive planning: articulation of measurable goals, and devising strategies to meet those goals. Strategies for both have already been covered. A good comprehensive needs assessment should easily be usable as a basis for comprehensive planning. The "what" has been decided, and the planning process leads us through the "how", or the devising of strategies to meet needs. Strategies to meet needs are identified, priorities for meeting needs are identified, and the best strategies to meet the needs are selected.

Unified School Improvement Planning

Unified planning is a strategy being promoted by the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to make better use of limited resources. Success is more likely when district improvement strategies are in alignment and school improvement efforts are reflective of district strategies. The SEA reports that the quickest way to acquire consolidated grant and schoolwide resources is to engage in planning that is clearly connected to a needs assessment and needs analysis using SMART goals.

As a review, SMART means:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable
- Realistic
- Timely

Here is an example of a SMART goal:

> *During the 2006-2007 school year, students at Arroyo Middle School will improve their math computation skills as measured by an increase in the percentage of students scoring in the "proficient" and "advanced" levels on the CSAP math computation assessment.* (Adapted from: http://quality.cr.k12.ia.us/documents/SMART%20Goal%20samples/math_Goals.doc)

This goal is specific because it addresses math computation skills. It is measurable because it uses the percentage of students scoring proficient and advanced. It is likely attainable because there is room for improvement. It is realistic because if the school focuses on it and helps students improve their computation skills, it is likely that achievement scores will improve. It is timely because it will happen during one school year.

To measure the attainment of this goal, two pieces of information are needed. First, a baseline must be established. It is most reasonable to collect the numbers of students who scored "proficient" and "advanced" on the CSAP math computation subtest in 2005-2006. Second, data must be available to determine how this same group of students did in 2006-2007. To examine goal attainment, compare the percentage of “proficient” and “advanced” students in 2005-2006 to the percentage of “proficient” and “advanced” students in 2006-2007. If there is an increase, this goal has been met.

What strategies can be used to meet this goal? The school could provide instruction and practice through an after-school program. Students who did not score proficient along with those who just barely scored proficient might be asked to participate in these after-school activities. After a beginning of the course “pre-test” the instructors might discover that some of these students know their math facts, but do not know how to apply them to a variety of contexts, and they have particular difficulty with story problems.

During this after-school program, students who are having difficulty might be asked to use their computation skills in a number of diverse settings. Hands-on games where teams of students compete with one another might be used. The use of manipulatives such as unifix cubes might be employed. Students could be asked to solve story problems, and then enact the answers through role-playing activities. Throughout the program, frequent formative assessments would help instructors determine whether students are making progress as a result of the strategies being used. When there is success, it is important to celebrate with the students and instructors. Progress in these kinds of interventions may take a long time to demonstrate, so incremental, authentic progress should be rewarded.

District Improvement Planning

CDE supports a process for district improvement known as Comprehensive Appraisals for District Improvement (CADI) that can be used as part of a comprehensive needs assessment. A district may contract with CDE to have an external team appraise the district on nine different standards related to improvement, or a district may choose to complete an appraisal themselves if they have sufficient resources. A typical appraisal may take 2 weeks and may involve up to 10 or more reviewers, depending on the size of the district. The district is then given rubric-based feedback in the following areas:

- Curriculum;
- Evaluation/assessment;
- Instruction;
- District culture;
- Student, family, and community support;
- Professional development, professional growth, and evaluation;
- Leadership;
- Organizational structure and resources; and
- Comprehensive and effective planning.

Over 100 research-based rubrics drive the process. A number of these rubrics focus specifically on using information to make good decisions. These categories provide a useful framework for reporting needs assessment results.

Taking Action

Now that needs have been identified and prioritized, and that strategies have been devised to meet the needs, it is time to take action. First strategies to meet needs are implemented. The implementation of these strategies needs to be monitored in order to ensure that they are working. If they are not, they should be modified, or different strategies should be implemented after the results have been evaluated. It is also critical to celebrate successes. Improving schools and districts is hard work. It takes sustained, focused efforts to be successful. Stakeholders in the process can easily become discouraged if successes are not acknowledged and celebrated along the way.

This guidebook has presented a lot of complex information, and it may be challenging to see how the pieces may fit together. One tool that may help organize the process has been placed in the Appendix. The Needs Assessment Checklist is helpful for organizing efforts. Two examples have also been provided here to help with understanding the comprehensive needs assessment process. The first is an example designed to address low achievement in reading. The second is an example that relates to retaining HQTs in schools.

Implementing Strategies to Meet Needs

After needs have been identified and prioritized, it is time to take action. Far too many needs assessment reports sit on shelves after so much meticulous effort has been made to determine what should be done.

Where do we go to find strategies to address the needs? Altschuld and Witkin (2000) identified four approaches to selecting solutions that may apply to educational settings.

- **Reviewing the literature.** The relevant research-based literature can be examined to identify strategies that may address the need. Generalization across contexts may not be possible, so readers need to compare their settings with those in the studies.

- **Benchmarking**. Benchmarking refers to directly examining how similar organizations or groups have implemented solutions to handle comparable needs. This involves direct observations of strategies as they are being implemented and discussions with people who are experienced in their implementation. This approach may be costly due to site visits, and the solutions may not always be generalizable.

- **Multi-Attribute Utility Technique (MAUT)**. This technique involves the development of criteria against which each solution strategy is rated. It results in a summary of ratings for each solution strategy, which is then translated into a list of those with the highest potential for addressing the need. This approach compels the NAC to identify the criteria that are most important.

- **Quality Function Deployment**. Quality Function Deployment is used to identify the essential or key components of program design features and determine the likelihood that they will resolve the needs that have been identified. It results in a determination of which design features might be emphasized that are summarized on a one-page figure or chart. This also allows for displaying positives and negatives in one place.

Example Needs Assessment: Low Achievement in Reading

Need: Low achievement in reading

The Arroyo School District has been notified that it has failed to make AYP in reading for 2 consecutive years at the elementary school level. While some of the schools in the district are successful, others are not. A Comprehensive Needs Assessment process was undertaken to examine the gap between AYP targets and students' current reading performance.

A NAC was formed to explore the issue. It consisted of elementary school teachers, principals, and parents from schools in the district. The reading issue was explored at length. The NAC identified the possible reasons for the gap in reading performance in the school district. Through several brainstorming activities, interviews, focus groups, examination of documents including teacher evaluation reports, curriculum guides, district policies, professional development agendas, surveys of teachers and parents, visits to successful elementary schools serving the same kinds of students, and classroom visits, the NAC identified the following reasons for the gap in reading performance:

- Reading curriculum was not coordinated across grade levels;
- Instructional quality varied considerably between classrooms;
- Outdated curriculum materials did not reflect current thinking and practice; and
- Parents did not read to children at home.

Since the NAC carefully identified these needs, it was a relatively straightforward matter to generate possible solutions to the problem and address the gap:

- **Consistency.** Instructional quality will be consistently monitored across classrooms, grade levels and buildings to ensure that research-based practices are being implemented.
- **Curriculum guidelines.** A district level committee with representatives from all grade levels and all school buildings will be formed to revise curriculum guidelines to be coherent and clear. Benchmarks will be established at each grade level, and progress will be monitored.

- **Adopt new reading series.** Based upon current thinking and practice in the district, a new reading series will be adopted. It will also be aligned with the revised curriculum guidelines, and supporting materials will be made available to all elementary teachers in the district. Instructional audits will be conducted to verify the appropriate use of the materials.

- **Professional development.** All of the elementary school teachers in the district will be trained in the implementation of the new curriculum and the use of the new reading series. The impact of this professional development will be carefully monitored, and follow up will be provided as necessary to ensure that teachers have developed the necessary skills to become successful.

- **Take home a book program.** The district will take steps to ensure that appropriate reading materials are made available to all families in the school district. At the beginning of each quarter, every student will be provided with leveled reading selections to keep. Information about how to read with children will be provided to parents and guardians. Parents and guardians will be surveyed to determine how reading materials are used in the home.

- **Family reading nights.** Across the school district, family reading nights will be conducted once every month while school is in session. Parents and guardians will be instructed in how to effectively read to their children, and will also be given hints and tips for providing feedback to their children when they read to the adults. These practices will be modeled, and coaches will be available to help participants understand the process. Logs will be kept to track the number of minutes per week that children are read to, and the number of minutes per week that children read to their parents or guardians. Silent reading by children will also be logged, and parents and guardians will be surveyed about their participation in the program.

Needs Assessment Activity: Needs Assessment for Use of Title II, Part A Funds

Your colleagues in the Arroyo School District need your help. They are considering applying for Title II, Part A funding as part of their consolidated application to the CDE. They know they are required to do a needs assessment but are not sure where to begin. Below is a description of the information they already have.

The Arroyo School District has 100% HQTs in all but one of its middle school buildings. This school, in which only 85% of teachers are highly qualified loses approximately 40% of its teachers within 5 years of hiring. Paraprofessionals are another story. Across the district, only 65% have met the requirements for being highly qualified. One school in the district, Pine, Elementary School, has not made AYP for 2 consecutive years in reading. Coincidentally, the school has had a recent large influx of ELL students and has the largest average class size in the district.

General Questions:

- Identify district staff to participate in the needs assessment. What is the rationale for selecting these individuals?

- Identify sources of information. From which data sources and individuals will you collect data? For each source or person, what is the rationale for your choice?

- Select methods to collect information (e.g., student achievement data, evaluations of teacher performance, evaluations of principal performance, etc.). How will you use each of these methods in your needs assessment? What is your rationale for selecting these methods?

- Imagine that the district has now collected and analyzed data. What means will you use to rank-order the various needs you have identified? What is your rationale for prioritizing this way?

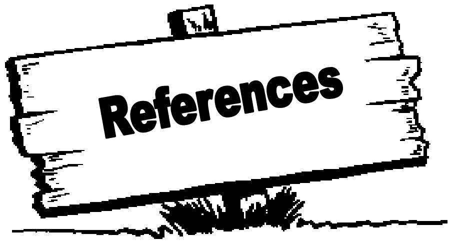
- Based on the previous description of the Arroyo School District and its *apparent* needs, brainstorm recruitment, professional development, retention, and class size reduction strategies that could address these needs. What is your rationale for selecting these strategies?

Recruitment

Professional Development

Retention

Class Size Reduction



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Appendices

Checklist of Essential Needs Assessment Steps
Federal Legislation Summaries
Consolidated Application Needs Assessment Requirements

Checklist of Essential Needs Assessment Steps

For your needs assessment, have you:

____ Determined what data you need to collect?

- What is the question you need to answer regarding student needs?
- For whom is the evaluation being conducted?
- What is the purpose of the needs assessment?
- What information must you get? What is the minimum required by your stakeholders or your program?
- Who can help you determine where to find the information you need?
- Don't forget to document special needs and available resources.

____ Chosen several key questions that your needs assessment will evaluate?

____ Decided on your data collection methods?

- How will you get the information you need to answer your question? What collection methods will you use?
- Are you collecting enough OBJECTIVE data?
- Is it worth writing your own assessment measure?
- Who will you need to talk to regarding needs? Who will be your data sources?
- Are there any assessment measures you can use that fit your needs?
- How often will you need to collect data to get a representative picture?

____ Decided how you will organize your data?

- Can your collected data answer the questions you asked?
- Is there any missing data?

____ Decided how you will analyze your data?

- Can you define needed services?
- Can the information help you develop reasonable and appropriate program goals?

(Kubinski, 1999, ND, Region VI CC)

Federal Legislation Summaries

Title I
Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged

The purpose of Title I is to "ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments" (Section 1001).

Title I, Part A
Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Education Agencies
Subpart 1—Basic Program Requirements

Sec. 1114. Schoolwide Programs. One required component of a schoolwide program under this subpart is a comprehensive needs assessment. This needs assessment must cover the entire school population, including migrant children. It must include information on student achievement compared to state academic content and academic achievement standards. Schoolwide programs allow the LEA to consolidate funding from Title I Part A with other federal, state, and local sources of funds. These moneys must be used to address needs of an eligible school in which not less that 40% of the children are from low-income families.

The results of this comprehensive needs assessment become part of the Schoolwide Comprehensive Plan for reforming the total instructional program of the school. In general, as this plan is written yearly, the comprehensive needs assessment must also be conducted yearly. Those involved in the comprehensive needs assessment would be the same as those involved in creating the plan: parents and community members, teachers, principals, administrators (including those from other Title I programs), and, if appropriate, pupil services personnel, technical assistance providers, school staff, and, for a secondary school, students.

Sec. 1115. Targeted Assistance Schools. Schools that are not eligible to operate schoolwide programs or that choose not to do so may use Title I Part 1 funds only for programs providing services to eligible children identified as being at greatest need for special assistance. In these schools, if health, nutrition, and other social services to address needs (such as basic medical equipment—eyeglasses and hearing aids; a program coordinator; or professional development about identifying and meeting these children's needs) are identified by a comprehensive needs assessment, some funds can be used to fill these needs through a collaborative partnership with local service providers [Subsection e(2)].

Sec. 1118. Parental Involvement. This section implies that parents at both schoolwide program schools and targeted assistance schools should be involved in the comprehensive needs assessments used to create school improvement plans.

Sec. 1118. Participation of Children Enrolled in Private Schools. LEAs shall provide services to eligible children in private elementary and secondary schools that are secular, neutral, nonideological, and equitable. Planning for participation of children enrolled in private schools is done in consultation with the officials of these schools, and implies a needs assessment of their pupils [Subsection b(1)].

Title I, Part A—Non-Regulatory Guidance

From *Designing Schoolwide Programs* (March 2006):

All schools operating schoolwide programs are required to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that "identifies the school's strengths and challenges in key areas that affect student achievement" (p. 5) and guides the development of the school's Comprehensive Schoolwide Plan. The overall purpose of the comprehensive needs assessment is to "identify gaps between the current status of the school and its vision of where it wants to be, relative to key indicators or focus areas" (p. 14).

This needs assessment process is performed annually, and is part of the plan updating process (p. 7), since the needs assessment also suggests benchmarks for evaluating the success of the plan. A five-step process is outlined on pages 7-14 that includes: establishing a schoolwide planning team; clarifying the vision of school reform to identify school strengths and weaknesses; creating the school profile; identifying data sources for the needs assessment; and analyzing the collected data. The section on creating a school profile (pp. 10-13) contains a number of questions that might be used on a comprehensive needs assessment.

It is intended that all stakeholder groups be included in the needs assessment process. These groups include: "teachers, principals and administrators, pupil services personnel, guidance counselors, and also cafeteria workers, transportation staff, health services providers, technical assistance providers, and students (if the school is a secondary school)" (p. 15).

From *Parental Involvement: Title I, Part A* (April 23, 2004):

D-4. Parents must be involved in an "organized, ongoing, and timely way, in the planning . . . of Title I, Part A programs, including . . . the joint development of any schoolwide program plan under Section 114(b)(2)." This includes the required comprehensive needs assessment (p. 23).

Title I, Part C
Education of Migratory Children

According to the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, states and districts must identify the special educational needs of migratory children as part of their comprehensive planning process. However, the state has majority of responsibility for comprehensive needs assessment under Title I, Part C.

Section 1306 (a)(1). Comprehensive needs assessment and service-delivery plan.

1) Each state that receives assistance under this part must ensure that the state and its local operating agencies identify and address the special educational needs of migratory children in accordance with a comprehensive state plan that is integrated with other programs, as appropriate; is the product of joint planning among such local, state, and federal programs, including programs under Title I, Part A, early childhood programs, and language instruction educational programs under Title III-A or Title III-B; and provides for the integration of services available under this part with services provided by other programs.

Additionally, the Code of Federal Regulations spells out the responsibilities of states to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment for migrant education programs.

34 CFR 200.83(a)(2). Responsibilities of SEAs to implement projects through a comprehensive needs assessment and a comprehensive state plan for service delivery.

A SEA that receives a grant of migrant education program funds must develop and update a written comprehensive state plan (based on a current statewide needs assessment) that, at a minimum, includes the identification and assessment of:

(i) The unique educational needs of migratory children that result from the children's migratory lifestyle; and

(ii) Other needs of migratory students that must be met in order for migratory children to participate effectively in school.

Title I, Part D
Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk

According to the CDE, Title I, Part D programs are generally included in consolidated state and local applications for Title I funds so any comprehensive needs assessment requirements would be found in the consolidated application. Authority for LEAs to submit consolidated applications to SEAs is found in the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, Title IX, Part C, Section 9305.

Sec. 9305. Consolidated local plans or applications. A LEA receiving funds under more than one covered program may submit plans or applications to the SEA under those programs on a consolidated basis. The SEA shall require only descriptions, information, assurances, and other material that are absolutely necessary for the consideration of the LEA plan or application.

The majority of Title I, Part D pertains to state agencies, such as correctional facilities, that are applying to the SEA for funding or that are receiving funds from the SEA.

Sec. 1401(a)(1). Purpose and Program Authorization. The purpose of Title I, Part D is to improve educational services for children and youth in local and state institutions for neglected or delinquent children so that they have the opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic content and achievement standards that all children in the state are expected to meet.

Sec. 1416(1) and (2). Institution-Wide Projects. State agencies applying for funding to educate children and youth in an institution for neglected and delinquent children must, as a part of the application process, conduct a comprehensive assessment of the educational needs of all children and youth in the institution or program serving juveniles.

However, needs assessments by LEAs seem to be *implied* rather than *required* as shown in Sec. 1423(5) and (6) and Sec. 1424(4):

Sec. 1423. Local Agency Applications. LEAs desiring assistance under this subpart shall submit an application to the SEA that contains such information as the SEA may require. Each such application shall include:

5) A description of the characteristics (including learning difficulties, substance abuse problems, and other special needs) of the children and youth who will be returning from correctional facilities and, as appropriate, other at-risk children and youth expected to be served by the program, and a description of how the school will coordinate existing educational programs to meet the unique educational needs of such children and youth; and

6) As appropriate, a description of how schools will coordinate with existing social, health, and other services to meet the needs of students returning from correctional facilities, at-risk children or youth, and other participating children or youth, including prenatal health care and nutrition services related to the health of the parent and the child or youth,

parenting and child development classes, child care, targeted reentry and outreach programs, referrals to community resources, and scheduling flexibility.

Sec. 1424(4). Uses of Funds. Funds provided to LEAs under this subpart may be used for special programs to meet the unique academic needs of participating children and youth, including vocational and technical education, special education, career counseling, curriculum-based youth entrepreneurship education, and assistance in securing student loans or grants for postsecondary education.

Program requirements for correctional facilities entering into agreements with LEAs to provide services to children and youth under Title I, Part D include a provision that may imply conducting a needs assessment.

Sec. 1425(2). Program Requirements For Correctional Facilities Receiving Funds Under This Section. Each correctional facility entering into an agreement with an LEA under section 1423(2) to provide services to children and youth shall notify the local school of the need for any special education services indentified for a child or youth from that school while in the correctional facility.

Title I, Part D Non-Regulatory Guidance

O-2. Uses of Funds. An LEA may target funds it receives from the SEA to a particular category of at-risk youth, such as children with LEP or immigrant youth, rather than other categories of youth, without documenting that those children have the greatest need. However, depending on SEA application requirements, an LEA might be required to explain its rationale for choosing to serve a particular category of children who are at risk.

Title II
Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals

Part A—Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund

Sec. 2101. Purpose. The purpose of Title II, Part A is to provide funding to SEAs, LEAs, higher education institutions, and eligible partnerships to increase student achievement by improving teacher and principal quality and increasing the number of HQTs and principals in schools.

LEAs are eligible for Title II, Part A subgrants from SEAs. LEAs must conduct a needs assessment and must use funds for particular purposes.

Sec. 2122. Local applications and needs assessment. LEAs applying for Title I, Part A funds must base their applications on a needs assessment. The needs assessment must involve teachers, including those participating in Title I, and should address the knowledge and skills needed by teachers and the instructional leadership skills needed by principals to promote students' ability to meet challenging state and local standards.

Title II, Part A—Non-Regulatory Guidance

The Non-Regulatory Guidance provides information about how agencies including LEAs can "effectively and correctly use Title II, Part A funds" (introduction p. 3) to ensure optimal teacher and principal quality. The following section presents highlights from the guidance on needs assessments.

Needs Assessment

D-11. The purpose of the needs assessment is to identify the qualifications and professional development required by local educators in order to help students meet challenging state and local standards. Needs assessments should consider both the knowledge and skills needed by teachers and the instructional leadership skills required of principals to ensure that students meet standards. If LEAs have teachers who are not highly qualified, the needs assessment must address this area.

D-12 and D-16. LEAs must involve teachers at individual schools in the needs assessment process.

D-13. The law does not require that the needs assessment process include particular types of data. Types of data suggested in the guidance include student achievement data, information on national and state initiatives, anticipated professional development needs of core subject area teachers, scientifically based research, anticipated teacher supply and demand, student enrollment data, results of program evaluations, and input from community and business.

D-15. LEAs are not required to use funds to address all needs identified in the assessment. Instead, use of Title II, Part A funds must focus on activities most likely to produce positive results in terms of instruction and student achievement.

D-17. The guidance recommends that LEAs use needs assessment data to identify hiring and professional development activities that will help close achievement gaps.

Title III
Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students

Part B—Improving Language Instruction Educational Programs

Subpart I—Program Development and Enhancement

Sec. 3211. Financial Assistance for Language Instruction Education Programs. The purpose of Title III, Part B—Subpart I is to provide grants to assist LEAs, institutions of higher education, and community-based organizations to develop and enhance their capacity to provide high-quality instruction through language instruction educational programs or special alternative instruction programs to LEP children. The goal is to help these children develop English proficiency and, to the extent possible, proficiency in their native language, and to help them meet the same challenging state academic content and student achievement standards as all children are expected to meet under Section 1111(b)(1).

While the legislative language in Title III, Part B does not use the term, "comprehensive needs assessment," the application requirements found in Sec. 3214(g)(1)(A)(i-iii) and Sec. 3214(g)(1)(B) seem to imply that some type of needs assessment be conducted.

Sec. 3214(g)(1)(A)(i-iii) and (g)(1)(B). Applications. LEA's applying for grants under this subpart must include the following in their applications:

(A) A description of the need for the proposed program, including:

- (i) Data on the number of limited English proficient children in school district to be served.
- (ii) Information on the characteristics of the children, including:
  - (I) their native language;
  - (II) the proficiency of the children in English and their native language;
  - (III) achievement data (current as of the date of submission of the application) for the limited English proficient children in reading or language arts (in English and in the native language, if applicable) and mathematics;
  - (IV) a comparison of that data for limited English proficient children with that data for their English proficient peers; and
  - (V) the previous schooling experiences of the children.
- (iii) The professional development needs of the instruction personnel who will provide services for the limited English proficient children under the proposed program.

(B) A description of the program to be implemented and how the program's design relates to the linguistic and academic needs of the limited English proficient children to be served.

Sec. 3214(h)(2)(A). Approval of Applications. Eligible entities such as LEAs must demonstrate that they have consulted with private school officials about the needs of LEP children in private schools in order for their application to be approved.

Subpart 3—Professional Development

Sec. 3231(d)(2)(B). Professional Development Grants. Applications from LEAs for professional development grants must include a section on how they assessed the needs of public and private schools serving LEP children to demonstrate the need for professional development grant funds.

Title V
Promoting Informed Parental Choice and Innovative Programs

This document contains no reference to "comprehensive needs assessment" or to "needs assessment." However, student and program needs are discussed in several contexts. Therefore, it is instructive to examine the implications contained in this document for the construction of a truly comprehensive needs assessment.

Part A—Innovative Programs

Sec. 5101. Purpose. The purposes of Title V, Part A are to support LEA reforms consistent with statewide reform efforts; to fund promising scientifically based reform and school improvement programs and innovative efforts, including professional development and class size reduction; and to meet the educational needs of all students, including those at risk. It is the intent that the work of this Part be carried out at the LEA level rather than the state level, since district and school staff "have the most direct contact with students and are most likely to be able to design programs to meet the educational needs of students in their own school districts" [Section 5101(b)].

Subpart 3—Local Innovative Education Programs

Sec. 5133 (a)(1) and (d)(2). "Locally identified needs" are mentioned in these sections, which implies that certain needs related to Title V might appropriately be addressed through a comprehensive needs assessment process.

Part D— Fund for the Improvement of Education

Subpart 2—Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Programs

Sec. 5421(b)(2)(A). A description of the "particular counseling needs" of the targeted population is required in grant applications under this subpart, which implies another category for use in the comprehensive needs assessment.

Sec. 5421(c)(2)(A) and 5421(c)(2)(F). The "counseling and educational needs of all students" are mentioned here as well although these needs are generally documented in educational literature.

Subpart 3—Partnerships in Character Education

Sec. 5431(2)(E)(ii)). Annual reports must identify "unmet and future information needs in the field of character education," which again has implications for a comprehensive needs assessment should the LEA decide to pursue funding under this subpart.

Subpart 6—Gifted and Talented Students

Sections 5131(a)(7), 5462, and 5464(a)(1). The "educational needs of gifted and talented children" have been well documented in the special education literature, and questions on these needs most likely will not be part of the local comprehensive needs assessment.

Subpart 16—Parental Assistance and Local Information Centers

Sec. 5563(b)(6) and (12). This subpart mentions the "unique training, information, and support needs of parents of children enrolled in elementary schools and secondary schools, particularly such parents who are educationally or economically disadvantaged." Although these needs are documented in education literature, since this target population varies quite widely, it might be helpful to include this area in the comprehensive needs assessment.

Subpart 17—Combatting Domestic Violence

Sec. 5571(c)(2). The "unique cultural and language needs" of particular targeted student subpopulations may best be determined through a comprehensive needs assessment specific to each LEA.

Sec. 5571(c)(4). The "needs of elementary school and secondary school students and personnel who are faced with the issue of domestic violence" are documented in social science literature and may not require inclusion in a comprehensive needs assessment process.

Subpart 21—Women's Educational Equity Act

Secs. 5611(b)(3)(D), 5615(a)(2)(A), and 5615(b)(3)(E). The needs of "pregnant and parenting teenagers," those of "women and girls of color and women and girls with disabilities," and the "educational needs of women and girls who suffer multiple or compound discrimination based on sex and on race, ethnic origin, disability, or age," are all documented in social science literature and probably do not require inclusion in a comprehensive needs assessment process.

Consolidated Application Needs Assessment Requirements

A number of Title programs are covered by CDE's Consolidated Federal Programs Application Process. This means they provide the structure for how needs assessment results are reported. Several of these Titles have very specific needs assessment language associated with them in the Consolidated Federal Programs Application Process. They require needs assessment data about disaggregated student achievement in reading and mathematics, HQTs, LEP students, homelessness, socioeconomic status, disabilities and special learning needs, immigrant status, violence, drug use, risk factors, parental choice, and geographic location of schools. This is a nontrivial amount of needs information that should be collected, but it is also not the definitive list. Following are excerpts:

Title I, Part A—Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies

Identify the district's needs for Title I, Part A reading and/or math. Use FY 2007 AYP data disaggregated by gender, racial/ethnic groups, socio-economic status, students with disabilities, migrant status, and English language proficiency and other current assessment data. [Section 1112(b)(1)(A)(iv)]

Example: *Based on CSAP and DIBELS data, the following needs for the 2008-2009 Title I program were identified:*

Identify any additional needs that should be a focus in order to increase proficiency in reading and/or math such as parent involvement, teacher quality, adult basic education, family literacy, and other factors that may have an impact on the academic success of children. [Section 1112(1)(A)(ii,iii)]

An LEA receiving Title I, Part A funds must include in its local plan a description of how the plan is coordinated with the McKinney-Vento Act. The local plan must describe services provided to homeless children, if applicable, particularly in non-Title I schools.

Title II, Part A—Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund

Identify Your Needs: The LEA is expected to conduct an assessment of local needs for professional development and hiring on an annual basis (NCLB, section 2122). Based upon this needs assessment, identify the needs that will be addressed with Title II-A funds.

Even if funds are not allocated, provide a description of how the district is ensuring that poor and minority children are not taught at higher rates than other children by inexperienced, unqualified or out-of-field teachers. (NCLB, section 1111 (b) (8) (C)).

All core content teachers and Title I paraprofessional should meet Colorado's definition of highly qualified. Even if funds are not allocated, include the district's policy for ensuring that all core content teachers and Title I paraprofessionals are highly qualified. If the district still has teachers or paraprofessionals that are not highly qualified, include an improvement plan that specifically addresses issues that prevented the LEA from meeting its HQ targets.

Identify any additional professional development, recruitment and/or retention needs that will address student achievement—particularly achievement for students with disabilities, special learning needs and styles, and students with LEP.

Title III, Part A—English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act

Based on the number and percentage of ELLs that have been identified by the LEA (please include in district and/or in BOCES member districts); identify any needs that the LEA requires in order to appropriately and equitably serve their ELL population in language instructional educational programs.

Identify any additional needs that should be a focus in order to increase English language proficiency and any other factors that may have an impact on academic success of ELL students.

Title III, Part A—15% Set-Asides

Based on the number and percentage of Immigrant Students that have been identified by the LEA (please include in district and/or in BOCES member districts); identify any needs that the LEA requires in order to appropriately and equitably serve their Immigrant Student population in language instructional educational programs.

Identify any additional needs that should be a focus in order to increase English language proficiency and any other factors that may have an impact on academic success of Immigrant Students.

Title IV, Part A—Safe and Drug-Free Schools

State the district's/BOCES' need, based on:

a. an assessment of objective data regarding the incidence of violence and illegal drug use among students in the elementary schools and secondary schools and communities to be served including an objective analysis of the current conditions and consequences regarding violence and illegal drug use, including delinquency and serious discipline problems, (including private school students who participate in the drug and violence prevention program) that is based on ongoing local assessment or evaluation activities, and

b. an analysis of the data reasonably available at the time, of the prevalence of risk factors, including high or increasing rates of reported cases of child abuse and domestic violence; protective factors, buffers, assets; and other variables in schools and communities in the state identified through scientifically based research.

Please cite the sources of data analyzed and the years included in the analysis. Focus on the conclusion of the analysis, i.e. what specific behaviors have increased or decreased, conditions that have changed, etc.

Title V, Part A—Promoting Parental Choice and Innovative Programs

Identify your need relative to the purpose of Title V and goals of NCLB. Ensure that these needs properly align with one or more of the 27 allowable Title V activities.

Title VI, Part B—Rural, Low-Income School Program

Based on an assessment of student achievement and behavioral data, and input from teachers, parents, and community members, state the identified needs to be addressed with RLI funds. For districts that have not made AYP. Mention which specific academic achievement target(s) are being missed (or other conditions and criteria if not targets), that prevent the district from making AYP. Mention which populations, at what grade levels, and in which content areas the district is experiencing the widest achievement gaps.