



The Superintendent's Strategic Analysis Process

CHALLENGE: Competing initiatives, being too close to or too far from 'the problem', multiple plans, internal politics, external pressures, communication challenges, supporters and saboteurs, uncovered and unaligned resources, a system of schools vs. a school system, strategic plans that have not yet come to life.

SOLUTION: The Strategic Analysis Process.

Superintendents, especially if they are new in the district, or are launching a major improvement initiative, need information, feedback, and a second set of eyes, often unavailable from internal sources. The Strategic Analysis Process (SAP) provides that resource and is the intense study of a district, its schools, and the community it serves. Particularly valued by Superintendents and School Boards, the SAP provides both insight and information to key decision makers on the balance between policy, practice and results. The SAP is an intensive qualitative and quantitative study of a school system at a "moment in time." It takes the pulse of a District and its schools and rubs that against the documents of vision, mission, plans, and data to create a lens with which to view further work.

PURPOSE:

1. Provides the District with a second set of eyes to review policy, practice, and results
2. Investigates the balance between stated mission, goals, targets, and other expectations and make observations regarding what is working and why and what is still a challenge because of specific barriers
3. Brings research-based best practices to existing district practices as recommendations/considerations for improved practices

The SAP is a hallmark service of **GMS Partners, Inc.** GMS Partners, Inc. was established in 1987; by partnering with schools, businesses, and community organizations that understand the critical relationships between schools, community development, and issues surrounding youth, GMS has been able to make a positive difference in school systems in over 32 states for more than 22 years. The SAP requires intensive pre-work on the part of the GMS team as they work with a district to identify the essential questions that need to be answered. Each SAP is district-specific. Each includes a preparatory focus on document examination, interview question development, and the development of preliminary assumptions and wonderings as they relate to the District's stated mission and targets. The document and electronic files analysis provides both a historical view and a projection window into the District's progress as evidenced by a variety of data sets. The off-site work is accompanied by an on-site visit of approximately four days with two GMS team members. The site visits which include interviews and focus groups, respects that the process allows, a sample of time and current thinking – it is not the sum of all the parts that make a successful or challenged school or district. The difference between the SAP and other sanctioned, accreditation, or required reporting is that the specific purpose of the SAP is to serve not as a document but as a process that blends policy and practice for the purpose of the District's commitment to *continuous improvement*. Although conducted by externs, the goal is to capture the District's own voice and provide school leaders with evidence and recommendations for next steps. The result is a detailed document, recommendations, and a platform for discussion and strategic planning.

For more information on The Strategic Analysis Process please contact Grace Sammon, GMS' president at gmsammon@gmail.com or 301-649-6354. For more information on GMS Partners, please refer to gmspartnersinc.org. Referring Superintendents earn consulting days for their district.

For a Superintendents' perspective please contact Dr. Gary Norris, Superintendent Waterloo Community Schools, IA: norrisg@waterloo.k12.ia.us or Mike Lannon, Superintendent, St. Lucie County Schools, Florida: lannonM@stlucie.k12.fl.us.