



Information   Tools   Training

Positive results for students will come from changes in the knowledge, skill, and behavior of their teachers and parents. State policies and programs must provide the opportunity, support, incentive, and expectation for adults close to the lives of children to make wise decisions.

The Center on Innovation & Improvement helps regional comprehensive centers in their work with states to provide districts, schools, and families with the opportunity, information, and skills to make wise decisions on behalf of students.

The Center on Innovation & Improvement is administered by the Academic Development Institute (Lincoln, IL) in partnership with the Temple University Institute for Schools and Society (Philadelphia, PA) and Little Planet Learning (Nashville, TN).

*A national content center supported by the U. S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.*

*Award #S283B050057*

*The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position of the supporting agencies, and no official endorsement should be inferred.*

© 2008 Academic Development Institute. All rights reserved.

Design: Pam Sheley

## Part One

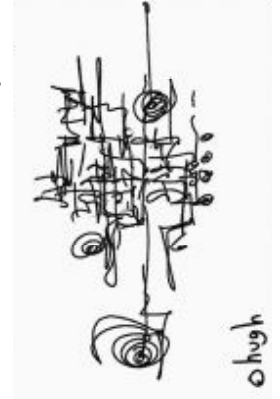
# Performance Positioning System

Results Don't Improve  
Unless Performance Improves

## A Complicated Pursuit. . .

There are few systems that are more complex than the public education system. Most state education systems have at least four levels to their structure—state, division/district, school, classroom—with dozens of layers in and around and connected to each level—federal government, state government, intermediate education agencies, local government, boards of education, PTAs, business roundtables, supplemental education service providers, advocacy groups, and student councils. To name a few.

Efforts to work hard and do the right thing at every level and within layers sometimes compete.



Lines get messy. Gridlock ensues.

Kids lose.

Too much effort, not too little, is often to blame—the result of well-intentioned people, absent common focus, shared vision, and clear understanding of their role.

But if that effort could be streamlined and channeled in the same direction, couldn't schools really get somewhere?

We think so.

## Simplified.

In 2007, the Center on Innovation & Improvement (CII) released its *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*. The *Handbook* was designed to provide states, districts/divisions, and schools with a synthesis of the research surrounding what works in school improvement. At the spring 2008 annual convention of the American Educational Research Association in New York City, AERA's Division H named the *Handbook* the "outstanding publication of the year."

CII turned the *Handbook's* research into Success Indicators—guideposts of successful improvement at both the district/division and school level.

These Success Indicators are the backbone of the Performance Positioning System (PPS).

### Examples of District- and School-Level Success Indicators

The district provides schools with technology, training, and support for integrated data collection, reporting, and analysis systems.

The district sets district, school, and student subgroup achievement targets.

The principal compiles reports from classroom observations, showing aggregate areas of strength and areas that need improvement without revealing the identity of individual teachers.

The Leadership Team reviews the principal's summary reports of classroom observations and takes them into account in planning professional development.



## Think Global Positioning System, Adapted.

The Performance Positioning System (PPS) is a web-based tool for planning and navigating improvement's sometimes broad and unsteady course. It unites people within and across systems, aligns them in effort, deploys them in partnership, and guides them to success.

PPS functions similar to a global positioning system (GPS) in that it uses the Success Indicators to:



Determine current position relative to the destination



Provide detailed routes for achieving it



Adjust to variations and even accommodate diversions along the way...



Without losing sight of the destination: systemic and lasting improvement in teaching and learning.

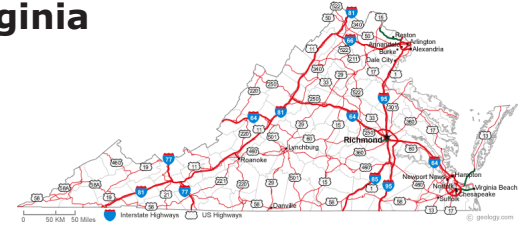
But results don't improve unless performance improves. In order for performance to improve, people must know what good performance looks like and have a clear path for achieving it. PPS provides the "what" but leaves the "how" to those that know best.

Part Two

## Positioning Virginia

Results Don't Improve  
Unless Performance Improves

## Positioning Virginia



### VDOE support for divisions in 2007-2008

The Virginia Department of Education selected twenty divisions with schools in restructuring or under state accreditation conditional status to use the Performance Positioning System in conjunction with a series of WebExes to catalyze improvement at the division level that would permeate into the schools. Each division assembled a team of three to five members.

Together with its partners, the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership, the Appalachian Regional Comprehensive Center, and the Center on Innovation & Improvement, the Virginia Department of Education selected twenty division-level Success Indicators from the PPS.

Eight active and retired superintendents and assistant superintendents were chosen as WebEx faculty to deliver seven training sessions and to assist the division teams in assessing themselves on the 20 indicators and developing and implementing plans to achieve the indicators.

The series of seven WebExes ran from January to June, 2008, and the division teams used the Performance Positioning System to guide their work with the 20 division indicators.

## Expanding Virginia's Position in 2008-2009

---

---

*The Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement* outlines three stages of an improvement-based relationship that builds between divisions, schools, and classrooms:

- ✦ Stage I: district or division context and the school restructuring (or improvement) plan
- ✦ Stage II: curriculum, assessment, and instructional planning
- ✦ Stage III: classroom instruction

In the first year of this project, VDOE catalyzed Stage I through its focus on division-level improvement. In the second year, it aims to maintain the momentum achieved in the first year and extend improvement into the schools and classrooms (Stages II and III).

This logical and methodical approach begins with vocabulary.

### A common vocabulary

Using common vocabulary when planning for and implementing division and school improvement is a critical element of success. The Virginia Department of Education uses the Success Indicators as common vocabulary throughout its Department and among the partners in its statewide system of support. In September 2008, CII oriented Department staff, coaches, auditors, and partners to the Success Indicators and their use as specific strategies for improvement.

### Differentiating the system

The Virginia Department of Education divided the original 20 divisions into two groups: 1) those that have had central office changes or continue to need assistance in establishing support by the LEA for the schools in improvement; and, 2) those demonstrating adequate progress in attaining division-level Success Indicators.

- ✦ Those divisions that have had central office changes or continue to need assistance will continue their division improvement work with the Performance Positioning System. The Virginia Department of Education will provide direct support to their schools most in need of improvement. (See Rapid Improvement Schools)

- ✦ Those divisions demonstrating progress in attaining the indicators will be trained on the school-level Performance Positioning System. This process is an extension of the division-level Performance Positioning System, focused on school-level Success Indicators. Divisions will support school teams in engaging with the Success Indicators

In addition, a new group of divisions will begin the Performance Positioning System process this year, as will schools in these divisions that are in greatest need of improvement.

### Two tracks for school improvement

The Performance Positioning System provides two tracks for school improvement. The division (or state) determines which track is most appropriate for a particular school, based on its current level of performance.

- ✦ Track 1—Rapid Improvement: Chronically low-performing schools requiring an immediate turnaround trajectory. A set of Rapid Improvement School Indicators is used to anchor the Rapid Improvement work of the school team. Additionally, the principal (Rapid Improvement Leader) is coached on coordinating a set of Rapid Improvement Leader Indicators.
- ✦ Track 2—Continuous Improvement: Schools making reasonable progress that will benefit from a comprehensive and incremental improvement process.

VDOE will provide direct support to approximately 50 schools in 2008-2009 within divisions focusing on the division-level Success Indicators through their work with the Performance Positioning System. These schools will follow the Rapid Improvement track described above.

School teams will assess their current position relative to each Success Indicator. Using the Performance Positioning System, schools will plan and execute improvement measures prompted by the Success Indicators.

## 2008-2009 Reinforcements

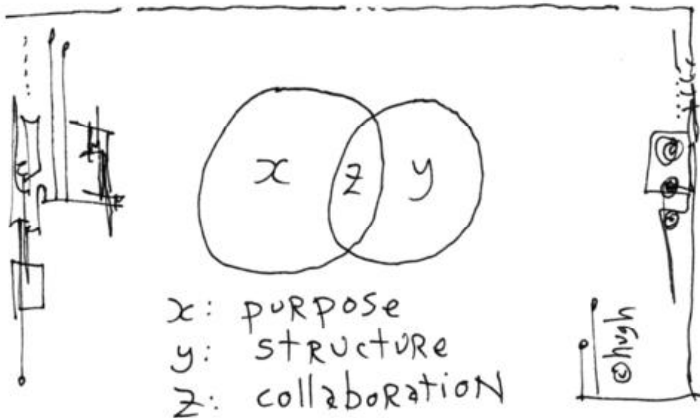
---

---

The Virginia Department of Education will also provide the following reinforcements to Rapid Improvement Schools engaged with the Performance Positioning System:

### Support from VDOE coaches and the division

Each school in the Rapid Improvement track will receive assistance from a coach assigned by the Virginia Department of Education. These coaches have been trained by the department and meet monthly as a group to discuss overall progress in their assigned schools. In addition, each school's improvement team includes the coach, division-level instructional staff, principal, teachers and in some instances, an outside expert. The team uses the Performance Positioning System to monitor progress relative to the indicators.



### Leadership training and support

Principals in Rapid Improvement Schools will receive coaching from Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership in transformational leadership. Breaking Ranks and related trainings will be delivered prior to the start of the 2008-2009 school year. Principals will also be mentored on the Rapid Improvement Leader Indicators by VDOE coaches.

### School-level improvement team training

The VDOE WebEx faculty will deliver four trainings to school-based teams in Rapid Improvement Schools on the Performance Positioning System and the Rapid Improvement School Indicators. The first training will be delivered in a full-day workshop in October; subsequent trainings will be delivered through WebEx.

### Training for principals and teacher team leaders

VDOE will provide four days of training for principals and teacher team leaders in Rapid Improvement Schools on effective teaming, collegial learning, instructional planning, and instructional delivery. CII will develop the content for the training and provide the training along with VDOE and ARCC.

### Classroom management for new teachers

VDOE will provide training to new teachers in Rapid Improvement Schools on effective classroom management strategies in September 2008.

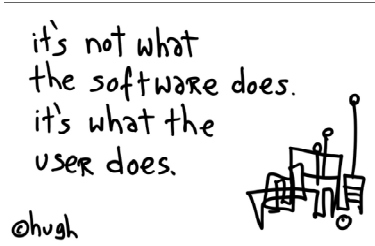
## In Summary

---

---

Change is made and sustained through focus, sequence, and shared accountability. The Performance Positioning System provides the focus and sequence while accommodating flexibility in approach. In other words, the Performance Positioning System provides the “what” but leaves the “how” to those who know best.

The Virginia Department of Education and its partners provide support for division and school improvement through WebEx instructors, coaches, and mentors. Everyone’s work is made coherent by the Performance Positioning System’s Success Indicators.



## Virginia Support for School Improvement

---

---

### Project Leadership Team

#### Virginia Department of Education

**Dr. Kathleen Smith**  
Director, Office of School Improvement  
Virginia Department of Education

**Dr. Yvonne Holloman**  
Division Level Coordinator

**Michael Hill**  
PASS Coordinator

**Mia Gomes**  
PASS Coordinator

#### Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership

**Dr. Randy Barrack**  
President of VFEL and Executive  
Director of the Virginia Association of  
Secondary School Principals

#### VFEL WebEx Faculty

**Dale Baird**  
St. Paul's College Adjunct Professor and  
Consultant to the Ministry of Education  
in Peru

**Dr. Ronald Carey**  
Executive Director for Elementary  
Education  
Richmond City Schools

**Dr. Carol Cash**  
VA Tech Adjunct Professor

**Dr. Brenda Cowlbeck**  
VCU Adjunct Professor

**Dr. Ann Harman**

Consultant to Virginia Department of  
Education

**Dr. Roger Jones**  
Director of the VASSP Regional Center  
for Educational Leadership

**Janice Koslowski**  
Principal  
Eagle Ridge Middle School (Loudoun  
County)

**John Porter**  
Assistant Superintendent  
Alexandria City Schools

**Damon Rasnick**  
Consultant to Virginia Department of  
Education

**John Toth**  
Consultant to Virginia Department of  
Education

#### Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center

**Dr. Keith Smith**  
Virginia State Liaison

#### Center on Innovation & Improvement

**Dr. Sam Redding**  
Director

**Nancy Protheroe**  
Scientific Council

**Stephen Schenck**  
Technical Advisor

**For more information contact:**

**Dr. Kathleen Smith**

Director, Office of School Improvement

Virginia Department of Education

PO Box 2120

Richmond, VA 23219

Phone: 804-786-5819

Fax: 804-786-9763

Email: [kathleen.smith@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:kathleen.smith@doe.virginia.gov)

**For resources on school improvement:**

[www.centerii.org](http://www.centerii.org)