

GAMEplan: A Project Monitoring and Evaluating Process

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A rather simple reporting method that has been shown to be effective is based on the acronym GAME. The four key components of an effective GAME Plan are:

GAMEplan

Goal: The goal or purpose of the program or project is stated in a clear, succinct manner.

Actions: The actions taken to reach the goal are briefly and clearly described. Note that there can be more than one action per goal.

Measures: The quantitative and/or qualitative measures used to assess progress towards the goal are briefly identified for each action. Note multiple measures can be used to evaluate each action.

Evaluation: The formative and /or summative evaluation of the progress made towards reaching the goal is stated.

Rationale for Using GAMEplan: Before using the above accountability method, it is important to consider why a particular initiative or project is being evaluated. Asking the following questions can help determine the purpose and nature of the evaluation.

- ✓ Why is this evaluation being initiated?
 - To monitor learning, report to superiors, evaluate whether a program should be maintained, or to share its success with the community? The focus of the GAMEplan evaluation will be quite different depending on its purpose.

- ✓ When will the evaluation be done and when is a report required?
 - The amount of time available and whether people have the time to work on it will also determine the nature of the evaluation process.
- ✓ Where will the evaluation take place at the cycle, department, school or board level?
 - Again, the purpose and focus of the evaluation will be largely determined by the answer to this question.
- ✓ Who will complete the evaluation? One person, an internal team, or an external committee?
 - If the focus of the evaluation is formative in nature, that is, the purpose is to identify a means to improve a program or project, then an internal team is often the best way to proceed. When the focus of the evaluation is summative in nature, then, quite often, an external committee may be involved.
- ✓ What types of decisions and recommendations are expected from the evaluation?
 - The GAMEplan evaluation process will also be affected by the type of decision that will be made at its conclusion. Clearly, the questions that will be asked and the measures that will be used will be determined by whether the focus is a formative or summative one.

Let us consider each of the four stages in the GAMEplan evaluation process:

Goal: The goal or purpose of the initiative is stated in a clear, succinct, manner.

- ✓ The initial key to success for any program or project is that it has a meaningful and relevant purpose that is related to the shared vision of the school. Thus, it is important to state clearly and succinctly the goal or goals of the project so that the progress that has been made towards reaching each goal can be evaluated in a fair and systematic way. For example, the goal of

a professional development session within a school to encourage the use of PowerPoint presentations by teachers might read: The purpose of this professional development initiative is to increase the use of PowerPoint presentations by interested teachers.

Actions: The actions taken to reach the goal are briefly and clearly described. Note that there can be more than one action per goal.

- ✓ In the above professional development initiative, two main actions were used:
 - **Demonstration and Practice Session:** A one hour hands-on session was held after school for interested teachers that included an initial PowerPoint introduction, with documentation, to facilitate the development of a straightforward PowerPoint presentation by each teacher on their personal laptop computer with individual encouragement and feedback from three support teachers.
 - **Follow-up Collegial Support:** Over a one month period, the above three support teachers were also available for individual support at the request of their colleagues.

Measures: The quantitative and/or qualitative measures used to assess progress towards the goal are briefly identified for each action. Note multiple measures can be used to evaluate each action.

- ✓ Quantitative and qualitative measures are commonly used to measure progress. Whenever possible and feasible, it is wise to use multiple measures. Multiple measures at different times also enhance the validity of the evaluation. There is a tendency to use quantitative measures but in many situations the use of qualitative measures are more effective and can “tell the story”

more efficiently, for example, the following are all potential qualitative measures that can be used effectively:

- Student projects, CDs, DVDs, Videos etc.
 - Teacher observations and pictures
 - Interviews with individuals or small groups
- ✓ The value and relevance of qualitative or quantitative measures can be enhanced when they are created specifically to measure progress on a specific action, intervention or program. Teams of teachers and administrators can create very appropriate measures by focusing carefully on the program effects and impact that they are attempting to achieve.
- ✓ In the above professional development example, different measures were used to evaluate the results of implementing the two actions:

- **Action 1: Demonstration and Practice Session:**

- Measure 1. Participant reaction survey immediately after session.
- Measure 2. Survey on the use of PowerPoint by teachers six weeks after demonstration and practice session.

- **Action 2: Follow-up Collegial Support**

- Measure 1. Participant reaction to collegial support
- Measure 2. Qualitative review of PowerPoint's voluntarily submitted by participating teachers.
- Measure 3. Semi-structured focus group interview with participating teachers to evaluate overall impact of the initiative on their students.

Each of the above five measures are designed to assess and potentially improve the quality of this type of professional development session. Thus, the focus of the questions, interviews and analysis of the samples collected are formative in nature. However, if the purpose of the evaluation was to make a decision on the results and impact

of the program and whether it should continue to be funded, then the measures that would be used would be much more summative in nature.

Evaluation: The formative and /or summative evaluation of the progress made towards reaching the goal, as assessed by the above measures, is clearly stated for each action or the group of actions with an indication of whether the goal will be continued, modified, or discontinued. Again the key point to note is that the nature of this final step in the GAMEplan evaluation process depends on the initial purpose of the initiative and the purpose of the evaluation of it.

- ✓ Given the fact that the above professional development initiative met with a great deal of success, the results from each of the four measures were very positive and that fact was reported in a written report on the project. Moreover, based on a careful analysis of the results of the survey and the key points made during the interviews, several very helpful “lessons learned” were generated on how even this highly successful professional development program could be improved.