pathwaysTOresults

Review & Reflection

The Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) was established in 1989 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. OCCRL is affiliated with the Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership in the College of Education. Our mission is to use research and evaluation methods to improve policies, programs, and practices to enhance community college education and transition to college for diverse learners at the state, national, and international levels. Projects of this office are supported by state, federal, and private and not-for-profit organizations. The contents of publications do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of our sponsors or the University of Illinois. Comments or inquiries about our publications are welcome and should be directed to OCCRL@illinois.edu.

This module is part of a series of publications associated with the Pathways to Results initiative that is funded by a grant from the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB Grant Agreement Number 2014-00266).

Acknowledgement:

Staff of the Office of Community College Research and Leadership (OCCRL) thank the Illinois Community College Board for their persistent and gracious support of the Pathways to Results (PTR) initiative. We also express our thanks to the PTR team leaders and team members throughout the state who have piloted and implemented PTR since its inception. Finally, we thank Design House for their creative contributions to the design, production and editorial work on this publication.

Suggested Citation:

Bennett, S., Bragg, D., & Kirby, C. (2014). *Review and reflection.* (2nd ed.). Champaign, IL: Office of Community College Research and Leadership, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

pathwaysTOresults

Pathways to Results (PTR) is an outcomes-focused, equity-guided process to improve pathways and policies that support student transition to and through postsecondary education and employment. PTR focuses on addressing equity gaps between diverse learner groups and continuously improving processes critical to student success, including retention, completion of postsecondary credentials, and transition to employment.

The PTR process is most effective when it begins with a strong collaboration of team members and partners focusing on the critical problems that get in the way of student success. These problems are identified when the teams use student-level data to identify outcome and equity gaps in results between racial, gender, low-income and other underserved groups. Major processes are assessed to understand how contributing factors create the identified problems and impede student success. Implementation and evaluation plans are designed to create solutions that increase the impact of pathways immediately and over time. Team members reflect on what they have learned and share insights with one another, enabling them to sustain and scale the knowledge they have acquired with others.

> "An overarching goal and benefit of the PTR process is that it provides the opportunity to continuously improve pathways and programs that produce ever-more equitable student outcomes."

PTR provides the opportunity to continuously improve pathways and produce ever-more equitable student outcomes. When PTR is implemented fully, the opportunity to improve pathways never ends.

Overview

Review and Reflection is an integral component of the Pathways to Results (PTR) process. It focuses on capturing learning through reflection, assessing and enabling the sustainability of solutions and identifying benefits of the PTR process that can be extended to other programs and processes. Most importantly, Review and Reflection enables team members and partners to contemplate how activities and conversations culminate in shared learning that contributes to future improvements.

The process of reflection begins at the individual level. Team members engage in personal reflection that illustrates lessons learned, and they provide feedback on the team's project and the PTR process. Individual reflections focus on a defining moment or breakthrough that the individual experienced or witnessed during the PTR process. Part of the value of the reflective process is determining which experiences to share, so individuals choose what is most memorable or important to them. Surveys, interviews and focus groups are methods used to solicit information about how the project has been implemented, how the solutions can be sustained, and how the process can be expanded to other programs.

Teams benefit from holding a facilitated meeting where individual reflections are expressed and the group creates a team reflection that captures their shared learning through story telling. Common themes are condensed into a team reflection, and team members discuss lessons learned to help improve other programs of study in the future.

Appendix A presents the actual experience of a team engaged in Review and Reflection.

Purpose and Goals

The primary purpose of Review and Reflection is to give the team and stakeholders time to reflect on the work they have done throughout PTR and to examine outcomes of the process. It is important to use the collective energy of the partnership to implement solutions and ensure that positive changes are sustained. This is a time to celebrate achievements, discuss future challenges, and set plans into motion to sustain long-term improvements.

The goals of this process are to:

1. review and reflect on results of the PTR process;
2. document what individuals, the team and the stakeholders learned in the PTR process;
3. identify ways the PTR process can be extended to other pathways and programs;
4. develop plans that insure that improvements are sustained.

Outcomes and Equity

Review and Reflection allows the PTR partnership to reflect on whether or not the proposed solutions will produce equitable outcomes. This process provides the opportunity to discuss and plan how successful solutions can be sustained and expanded to other areas that encourage more equitable student outcomes.

Outputs

Materials available to support this process are:

- individual reflections,
- group reflection,
- results of data collection activities (e.g., questionnaire, interviews, focus groups), and
- plans to sustain the solutions and extend them to other pathways and programs.

Steps at a Glance

STEP 1: Complete the individual reflection and provide feedback.
Individuals think back on the PTR process and capture an important aspect of what they have learned by writing a brief reflection about a significant idea, experience, or other aspect of the process. Individuals may also complete a brief questionnaire or participate in an interview or focus group to share their thoughts on sustaining the solution(s).

STEP 2: Create a group reflection.
Individuals meet to reflect as a team on what they have learned as part of the PTR process. Each individual shares his or her personal reflection. The group then considers all of the individual reflections and creates a group reflection. The group also discusses results of data collection using questionnaires, interviews and/or focus groups to determine how solutions can and will be maintained and when possible, extended to other pathways or processes.

STEP 3: Creating shared understanding.
The team develops a shared understanding of what the PTR process has accomplished and reflects on the work that team members have accomplished by working together to improve pathway and enhance student outcomes and equity. Teams come together to celebrate their achievements and make plans to sustain long-term improvements.

Step 1: Individual Reflection

Step 2: Create Group Reflection

Step 3: Create Shared Understanding

Who Should be Involved?

It is important to have active participation in Review and Reflection by as many individuals as possible who have contributed to the PTR process. People who have indicated interest in PTR and who might step up to lead future PTR initiatives should be encouraged to participate. Team members and all stakeholders identified in the team's charter should be invited to provide feedback, write an individual reflection, provide input to the group reflection, and participate in discussions about strategies to sustain the PTR solutions and find ways to extend them to other programs and pathways.

Detailed Steps

Step 1: Complete the individual reflection and provide feedback.

The first step in the reflective process involves individuals a) preparing a personal reflection and b) providing feedback on the PTR process and recommendations for sustaining solutions and extending them to other pathways. Invitations to participate should be extended to everyone who has been involved in the PTR process. The more perspectives included in the reflective process, the more valuable the learning for everyone.

Each individual prepares a personal reflection that best illustrates one of the most important lessons he or she learned during the PTR process. These reflections should express a defining moment or breakthrough that the individual experienced or witnessed. Part of the value of the reflective process is determining which experiences to share, so individuals should have the latitude to choose what is most memorable or important to them. To help individuals prepare for the personal reflection, the team leader should provide team members with the *Individual Reflection Tool* (see Appendix B) to respond to questions and provide support.

At the same time, the team leader should collect data from each participant by using a questionnaire, by conducting interviews, or by hosting a focus group. Sending out questionnaires or conducting interviews and focus groups takes time, so it is important to give team members and partners adequate time to provide feedback so that the data can be analyzed and interpreted thoroughly by all partners. There should be no surprises if everyone's results are shared in a thoughtful and supportive way, noting the purpose of this activity is to encourage shared learning and future planning.

Step 2: Create a group reflection.

Team members and partners meet as a group to share individual reflections, with each individual reading or summarizing his or her reflection. The group works together to identify themes that stand out as important and create a team reflection that captures their shared learning. Details of this step follow:

Sharing individual reflections: Each individual orally shares his or her reflection and explains why the particular topic or issue was chosen. If the group is large (greater than 8–10), it may be helpful to conduct this portion of the meeting using a small-group format.

Contemplating others' reflections: After each reflection has been shared, individuals take a few minutes to consider what was read. Each person is asked to think about how each reflection addresses the following questions and records short phrases or words on the *Reflection Sharing Tool* in Appendix D.

The three questions for reflection are:

1. What did we learn?
2. How did we learn it?
3. How do we feel about what we learned?

After all of the individual reflections are shared, phrases or words are written on sticky notes and posted on flipchart sheets that are displayed so that everyone can see them.

Creating the team reflection: Group members develop a team reflection based on responses to the three reflective questions. The meeting facilitator creates an *Affinity Diagram* using the information recorded on the sticky notes. The group then organizes the ideas into themes that form the basis for the team reflection. The group has the opportunity to modify and add to the ideas as members work together to develop the themes and create the team reflection.

Sustainability and scalability conversation: Once the *Affinity Diagram* exercise has been completed, the group discusses the results of the questionnaire. The facilitator or an assigned recorder summarizes the group's input to answer the following questions:

- What do the questionnaire findings mean?
- How do these results help us determine our next steps to sustain the PTR solutions and extend them to other programs?

A *Sample Team Group Reflection Meeting Agenda* for Step 2 can be found in Appendix C.

Step 3: Create shared understanding.

The group develops a shared understanding of what the PTR process has accomplished and reflects on the work that team members have accomplished by working together to improve programs and pathways, and enhance student outcomes and equity. Teams come together to celebrate their achievements and make plans to sustain long-term improvements. This step ensures that the group's shared understanding of lessons learned and next steps are used to continue to grow and improve their programs and pathways. Plans made by teams should be captured in organizational and team-level vision, mission and goal statements that guide the future work of the team and any future teams.

Efforts should also be made to align these new ideas that emerge during the Review and Reflection process with plans to develop new pathways that involve an ever-wider group of organizations and partners. Fully integrating the Review and Reflection process into the on-going work of these groups ensures that PTR has a positive impact on student success well into the future.

Reflection Questions

1. What were the most salient aspects of the individual and group reflections?
2. How does the PTR process influence other dimensions of the partnership?
3. How will the PTR process improve student outcomes and equity?

References & Resources

Anne Arundel County Public Schools Development Office. (2005). *Introduction to project sustainability.* Retrieved from http://www.aacps.org/development/IntroToProjSustainability.ppt

Balanced Scorecard Institute. (2011). *Basic tools for process improvement: Affinity diagram*. Retrieved from http://www.balancedscorecard.org/Portals/0/PDF/affinity.pdf

Brown, J. S., Denning, S., Groh, K., & Prusak, L. (2001). *Storytelling: Passport to success in the 21st century*. Retrieved from http://www.creatingthe21stcentury.org/Intro0-table.html

Denning, S. (2001). *The springboard: How storytelling ignites action in knowledge-era organizations*. Boston, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Dillman, D., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2009). *Internet, mail and mixed methods surveys: The tailored design method*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Feldman, S. P. (1990). Stories as cultural creativity: On the relation between symbolism and politics in organizational change. *Human Relations*, *43*, 809-828. Retrieved from http://hum.sagepub.com/content/43/9/809.full.pdf+html

Harris, E. (2010). Six steps to successfully scale impact in the nonprofit sector. *The Evaluation Exchange*, *15*(1), 4-6. Retrieved from http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/current-issue-scaling-impact/six-steps-to-successfully-scale-impact-in-the-nonprofit-sector

McDrury, J., & Alterio, M. (2003). *Learning through storytelling in higher education.* London: Kogan Page.

MindTools. (2011). *Affinity diagrams: Organizing ideas into common themes.* Retrieved from http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_86.htm

National Storytelling Network. (n.d.) *What is Storytelling?* Retrieved from http://www.storynet.org/resources/whatisstorytelling.html

Tagg, J. (2007). Double-loop learning in higher education. *Change*, *39*, 36-41. Retrieved from http://scholar.google.com/scholar_url?hl=en&q=http://cmsprod.uis.kent.edu/about/administration/provost/fpdc/learning-and-teaching/students-as-scholars/upload/Double-Loop-Learning-in-Higher-Education.pdf&sa=X&scisig=AAGBfm2aNysjxHAO9OxJuQJh-HWI9O5G5Q&oi=scholarr

Thayer-Hart, N. (Ed.). (2007). *Facilitator tool kit: A guide for helping groups get results*. Madison, WI: Office of Quality Improvement, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Retrieved from http://oqi.wisc.edu/resourcelibrary/uploads/resources/Facilitator%20Tool%20Kit.pdf

Appendix A - Team Experience with Review & Reflection

Parkland College held its Review and Reflection team meeting with seven attendees, including representatives from all stakeholder groups. The team leader updated the team on work that had been completed since the last meeting, including questionnaire results from students and counselors. The team discussed some of the initial findings. One team member volunteered to share her personal reflection first and was followed by the rest of the team members. After each reflection was shared, team members took notes on what they heard.

Different perspectives of team members were evident in the individual reflections, and several common themes emerged. Team members transferred their notes to sticky notes and then to large flip-chart pages. They grouped around the first chart with the question, "What did we learn?" and moved the sticky notes into categories (consistent with the Affinity Diagram process).This process was duplicated for the remaining two questions. The team then summarized the categories into the three areas below:

What did we learn?

- We realized that PTR is a process that requires collaboration to be successful.
- An outcome of the process was learning more about programs and dual-credit.
- There are barriers in the transition from high school to Parkland College.

How did we learn it?

- Diagramming and mapping are an interactive means of visualizing our process.
- Gathering information through questionnaires, conferences, posters, and visiting best practice sites is valuable.
- Discussing and brainstorming helps other team members to hear different perspectives.

How do we feel about what we learned?

- We are confident that what we learned through the PTR process can be applied to other programs and pathways.
- We are hopeful that our findings can be implemented to produce the desired results.

Once the questions were completed, the team viewed results of the questionnaire and created the following points:

What are our reflections/observations of the questionnaire findings?

- This was a worthwhile process, but we had a slow start since it was our first time. We needed to break down attitudes and form the correct team.
- We changed our focus from the original problem statement.
- We need more stakeholder involvement.
- We need to focus on non-traditional students.

Appendix B
Individual Reflection Tool

As described in the Review and Reflection instructions, personal reflections are a useful way to reflect on everyday work because it is comfortable and natural to do in the course of a work day. In this process, we ask individuals to prepare a short personal reflection to share with others. Individuals should not put too much pressure on themselves when preparing this reflection. There is no "right" way to do it. Just look back on experiences with the PTR process and choose something that was engaging and that stands out. We recommend that individuals write their personal reflection down because it is easier to remember with notes. In thinking about what experiences to share, individuals should consider the following:

- an "aha" moment about the process,
- something most exciting about the process,
- something engaging about the process,
- something frustrating about the process, and
- something that improved as a result of the process.

Individuals should use the steps below to guide them in writing a brief reflection to share with others. Complete steps 1–3 prior to the meeting, and bring the completed reflection to the meeting.

The Steps:

1. Write your personal reflection. Keep in mind that these reflections should be kept fairly short, 2–3 brief paragraphs is plenty. It may be useful to start your reflection with, "As I reflect on the PTR process, something that stands out for me is............"

2. Once you have finished writing your reflection, read what you have just written and identify the following:

   - Who were the key players in your reflection?
   - What did you focus on in your reflection?
     Problems? Processes? Outcomes? Personnel? Students? Etc...
   - What were the significant events in your reflection?
   - What does your reflection reveal about what you learned?

3. Develop a title that best describes your reflection.

Appendix C
Sample Team Group Reflection Meeting

1:00 – 1:30	Sharing of individual reflections Each participant shares his or her personal reflection.
1:30 – 1:35	Silent reflection Each participant thinks about the reflections that have been shared.
1:35 – 2:05	Group reflection A group reflection is created by identifying shared themes and ideas that are common to members of the group.
2:05 – 2:30	Questionnaire results Individuals review results of the questionnaire, share their interpretations, and complete the group reflection.

Appendix D
Reflection Sharing Tool

Fill in this chart while listening to others' reflections.

Questions to consider	Word and phrases heard in reflections
What did we learn?	
How did we learn it?	
How do we feel about what we learned?	

pathwaysTOresults

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AT ILLINOIS

Office of Community College
Research and Leadership
University of Illinois
51 Gerty Drive, 129 CRC
Champaign, IL 61820
occrl@illinois.edu
http://occrl.illinois.edu
(217) 244-9390