

Rochester City School District

2013-2014



Office of Professional Learning

Professional Learning Methods

Action Research

Format for Learning Method



Description



Benefits



Roles



Norms



Implementation



Forms



Outcomes-Impact

Action Research

Description:

Action research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practices, systematically and carefully, using research techniques (Watts, 1985). Usually informal, action research can use the process of teachers analyzing behavior and various classroom situations to better understand their classroom environment. Participants identify topics important to their teaching e.g.: classroom performance, student needs, examines their own work; uses research techniques, or explore how to become more effective instructional leaders. The following processes of thinking, questioning, and researching leads to desired improved outcomes. Action research is an evolving form of inquiry that affects the researchers and the contexts in which they work. This professional experience is different from other forms of research as it is directed by individuals taking action as a result of the findings within the study.

Goals of Action Research:

1. To improve professional practice and enhance instruction.
2. To better understand a particular aspect of teaching or learning
3. To ultimately increase student achievement.
4. To promote greater equity

Benefits of Action Research:

1. Participants are able to investigate and research an area of interest, relating directly to their work.
 2. Participants focus on issues surrounding an educator's school, classroom, and/or students.
 3. Positively impacts change and improves teacher practice which ultimately will improve the quality of teaching and learning.
 4. Allows teachers to understand their own practice and the factors that affect what they do.
 5. It is a participant driven, reflective and collaborative process.
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Norms:

It is important that participants establish norms that are a consistent part of the process. Below is an example of possible norms. The group may decide on their own preferred set of norms. The norms may include being on time, remaining confidential, being prepared, etc.

Example of Possible Norms:

1. All group members must take time to reflect and talk about the work.
2. Action researchers must own the questions they are investigating (other group members must not try to solve the problem for them).
3. Group members reflect on the inquiry process
4. Group members help each other when they are stuck, cheer on the successes of their colleagues and care about the learning of all group members.

Roles:

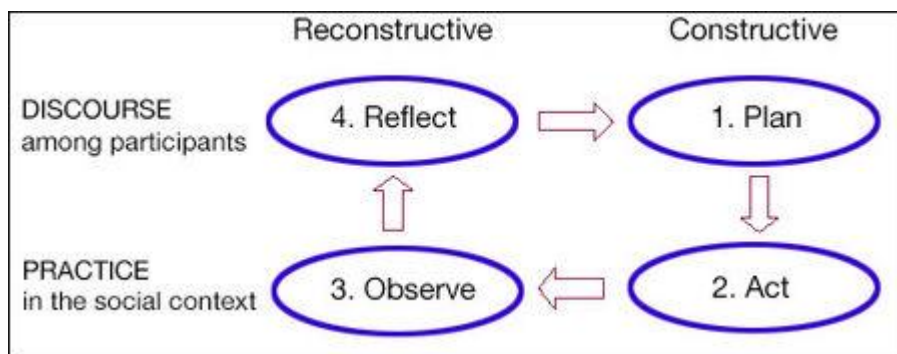
Facilitator: The facilitator's primary goal is to support the group's thinking and learning. He or she can listen and use strategic questions and comments to refocus the team's discussion. The facilitator is the person who may suggest protocols for the team to focus the work and to define clear steps to the team. The facilitator leads and ensures there is a thoughtful debriefing process. The role of facilitator may rotate among team members.

Scribe: The scribe is responsible for keeping records regarding the meeting, chart thoughts and ideas contributed, and document minutes, ideas, action plans, and other information. The scribe also keeps accurate records and fills out the required forms: Attendance/Participation Log, and Outcomes–Impact Report (See Forms A, B, C on pages 9-14).

Time Keeper: The time keeper ensures that the team completes their focus within the allocated time. It is essential that the group starts and ends on time, thus respecting all collegial circle members.

Critical friends: All participants bring meaningful contributions to the discussion. They are collaborative and supportive in their positive/critical feedback.

Implementation:



¹ Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming critical*. Lewes: Falmer Press

1. Plan

Decide if the research will be done independently or with a group of teachers.

Identify an Area of Focus:

- What concern do you have regarding your practice?
- Identify a problem and why it occurs.

2. Write an Action Plan to Guide the Inquiry Process (See page 7)

The plan will change and then the plan should change along the way. This is where the teachers' thinking should begin to change to identify themselves as researchers. Teachers begin to question what they want to know, why they want to know it and who can help them better understand.

3. Act

Begin to collect data – think broadly, deeply and about multiple perspectives. Collecting data from more than one source and from more than one point in time is ideal.

4. Observe

Continue to collect data and begin data analysis. Take out your highlighters, sticky notes and flags to mark your findings. Continue to write about what you are noticing. Identify themes in the data.

5. Report results and acquire feedback

Write about your findings. Share the results with colleagues or anyone else interested.

6. Reflect

Modify the plan/Develop a New Plan of Action

7. Repeat the cycle until the concern is resolved.

Getting Started

Participant (s):

Complete some of the following sentence starters to begin to develop an idea for your action research

I would really like to improve...	I am perplexed by...	Some people are unhappy about...
I am really curious about...	I want to learn more about...	An idea I would like to try in my class is...
Something I think would really make a difference is...	Something that I would like to change is...	Right now, some areas I am particularly interested in are...

Action Plan

Action Research Topic:

Question that I am exploring:

Steps that need to be taken:

	By when	Person(s) Responsible	Resources/ Support
A.			
B.			
C.			
D.			
E.			

Data Collection and Analysis

Process for Data Analysis

1. Read through all the data that you have collected making notes as you go. What did you notice?
2. Identify themes, patterns or big ideas. Put aside your preconceived notions and explore new thoughts. What key words are continually occurring?
3. Narrow down your themes to 3-5 major findings. These are typically the most interesting and thought provoking.
4. Revisit your data with the themes in mind. Make notes of any data that fits in the determined themes.
5. Analyze the coded data beneath each theme. Note any interesting findings, unusual comments or behaviors. This is the time to see new insights.
6. Identify the main points. Which themes are most important? Although it may be challenging to let some of the themes go, honing in on a few key ideas will guide your work.
7. Draw conclusions and implications for teaching and learning based on the information that you have collected.

Data Collection Tool (What data are you coding to identify themes?)	Purpose (How is this tool guiding your work?)	Perspective (Whose perspective is the data analysis occurring through?)	When will it take place?

Moving From Analysis to Action

What have you learned?
How do you feel about what you have learned?
How do your conclusions differ from what you thought that you would learn?
Do the conclusions seem believable?
What actions might you take based on your conclusions?
What new questions emerge for you from the data?
Who else might be interested in these conclusions?
What strategies can you use to share you conclusions with others?

Forms:

Form A: Action Research Participation Log

Please use the following attendance log or attach AVATAR attendance log.

Action Research Participation

Participants	Dates and Times of Meetings												PDI Hours
1.													
2.													
3.													
4.													
5.													
6.													
7.													
8.													

Form B: Action Research Meeting Log

Please Note: A log sheet must be filled out by the scribe for each session.

Action Research Meeting log

Facilitator: _____ **Date:** _____

Sign-In:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Main Purpose of Session:

Summary of Session:

Next Meeting (agenda items, action items): _____

Resources needed for next meeting:

Form C: Action Research Outcomes-Impact Report

Please Note: The following Final Report should be handed into the Office of Professional Learning and your School Based Planning Team.

Action Research Outcomes-Impact

Title of Study: _____

Beginning Date: _____ **End Date:** _____ **Number of Hours:** _____

Please attach copies of the following to this report:

- *Action Research Participation Log*
- *Action Research Meeting Record*
- *Log of Strategies Implemented*
- *Samples of implementation (e.g. strategies or student work samples)*
- *Data to support outcomes*
- *Final Report*

ACTION RESEARCH DESCRIPTION: What were the objectives?

FINAL OUTCOMES: Were the outcomes/goals of this Action Research met?

Explain. _____

How did the team assess whether the outcome was met?

How did your work within this research impact teaching/learning? Include implementation samples; student work samples, lesson plans, observations, peer reviews, etc.

Action Research

Provide evidence that as a result of this professional learning you have improved/enhanced your practice and more effectively addressed student learning.

Provide evidence that this experience has had an impact on student learning and achievement has increased.

Comments/additional information regarding the Action Research.
