

Planning and Doing Your Action Plan

Exercise 1: Understanding Action Plans

Through your Take-Home Exercises and subsequent Pair and Share reflection discussions, you identified ways in which you want to incorporate technology literacy and 21st century teaching and learning skills and approaches in your classrooms. However, teachers can easily fall into familiar patterns and lose motivation and interest when the everyday pressures of life challenge the most well-intentioned plans. To help you become more successful in implementing your plans, spend time in Modules 11 and 12 creating action plans.

What is an action plan?

An action plan is a well-thought-out analysis of current practices and formal strategy to make positive change those practices. Action plans help teachers make significant changes in their instruction by asking them to identify the changes they want to make and describe how they want to go about making those changes. Effective action plans include tasks to be accomplished in chronological order.

How do action plans differ from unit plans?

Action plans detail the steps teachers intend to take to make positive changes to their current professional practices. In contrast, *unit plans* detail how teachers will deliver particular units of study to students. Your unit plan focuses on delivering information to students. Your action plan focuses on the personal changes you want to achieve as a teacher.

Why are action plans needed?

Research indicates that action plans serve three purposes in making changes happen:

- Action plans compel teachers to declare what they are trying to accomplish.

Research shows that people are more likely to make significant changes if they have specific, concrete goals. By putting a goal in writing, a person makes a commitment to an idea, and by sharing the goal with others, the person becomes accountable for achieving it.
- Action plans anticipate problems and identify resources.

While teaching, solving problems using new knowledge can be challenging, and going back to familiar methods might seem much easier. By predicting potential challenges, teachers can be proactive and create support systems that will help them when they need it.
- Listing the steps of a process of change can motivate teachers to continue as they check off both small and great accomplishments.

Success is a great motivator, and the feeling of accomplishment people get from small victories can inspire them to continue in the face of challenges.

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What should action plans include?

Action plans can vary greatly, but some components are common to all of them. Review the information in the following table to learn more.

| Components | Characteristics |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Goals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research suggests that individuals accomplish more when they set complex goals that challenge but do not overwhelm them. The best goals for teachers focus on teacher behavior and student achievement. Some teachers may want to break a large goal into subgoals that can be spread out over time. Generally, goals are broad and address important issues. Goal example: <i>The teacher will organize instruction so students become more independent learners.</i> |
| Instructional Strategies and Tasks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructional strategies are research-based teaching methods that have been proved to result in improved student achievement. Tasks are specific teaching and learning activities that show in concrete terms how the strategy will be applied. Instructional strategy example: <i>I will provide students with more choices of processes, products, and content in projects.</i> Task example: <i>I will allow students to make physical models or virtual models of a cell for their final projects.</i> |
| Challenges and Solutions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers know that even goals based on sound research may not be easy to implement. Environmental factors, such as room arrangement and furniture, can be modified, while others, such as room size, will just have to be worked around. Anticipating questions from administrators, colleagues, parents, and students about new methods can help a teacher be more successful. Challenge example: <i>Principal's usual response to new ideas is negative.</i> Solution example: <i>Meet with progressive administrator first to get support and then go to the principal to explain what I am going to be doing.</i> |

(continued)

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| Components | Characteristics |
|------------|--|
| Timeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Setting up a schedule for implementing the components of an action plan is essential for success.▪ A timeline should include, at a minimum, dates by which tasks will be implemented and times for meeting with peers.▪ A timeline could also include peer observations; video or audio taping; and conferences with administrators, students, and parents.▪ Transferring important dates to an electronic or paper calendar can help keep an action plan on track. |
| Resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Having a list of books, articles, and Web sites relevant to the subject of an action plan ready ahead of time can save scrambling to find them in the middle of the everyday stress of teaching.▪ Other useful resources are like-minded peers or colleagues who will listen to successes and failures and provide constructive feedback. |

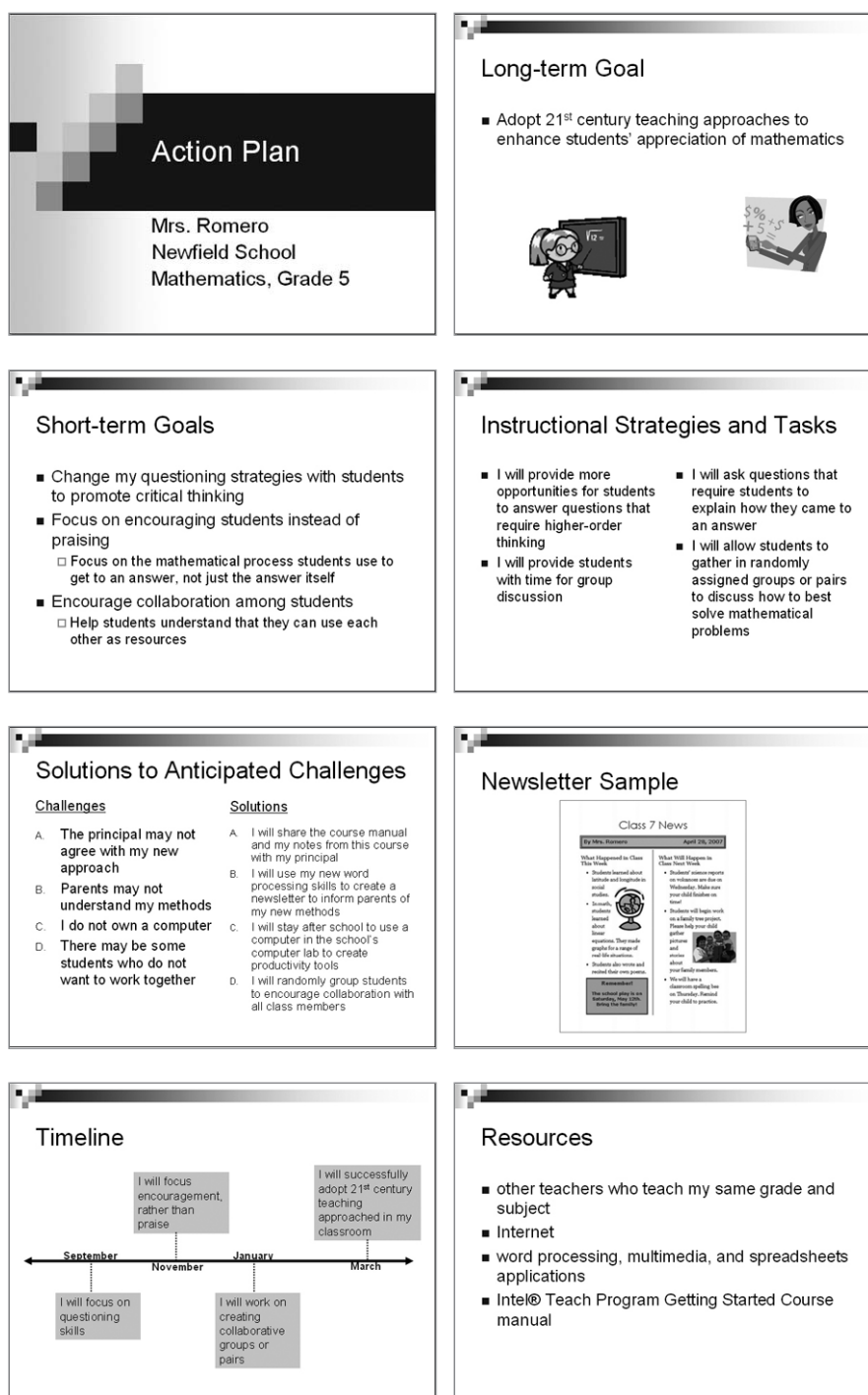
How are action plans made?

Action plans are personal and can be made in a number of ways. Make sure that when you develop your actions plans, they fit your teaching and learning styles. Some people like making long lists of detailed steps and checking them off daily. Others can accomplish more with brief descriptions. Remember that action plans should both motivate you and hold you accountable. So however you design your action plans, keep your tasks as specific and concrete as possible so accomplishments can be assessed objectively.

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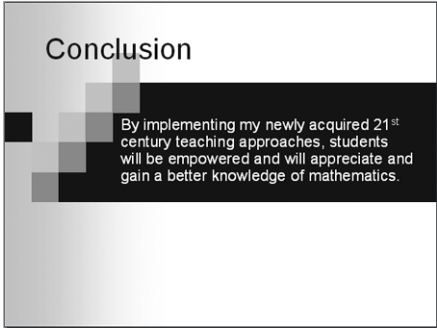
What does an action plan look like?

The following figure shows a sample action plan. The sample shows how one action plan was designed and may guide you as you begin forming your ideas. Keep in mind that your action plan should be customized to meet *your* goals and needs as a teacher. Therefore, your final action plan may look very different than the sample shown here.



Action Plan Example Slides 1-8

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Action Plan Example Slide 9

Exercise 2: Planning Your Action Plan

You will now work alone or with one or more of your colleagues to plan and do your action plan. During the final module, you will review and share your action plan. As part of sharing, you have approximately five minutes to present your action plan to your colleagues and invited guests. You also get to watch and listen to presentations by your colleagues. However, before you create your action plan, you must first begin by planning your action plan.

Step 1

Start by going back and reviewing your answers to the Take-Home Exercises and your notes for the Pair and Share reflections. Recall some of the ways in which you planned to apply the technology literacy and 21st century teaching and learning skills and approaches to enhance your productivity and professional practices in your classroom.

Step 2

Read the questions that follow. Work alone or with one or more of your colleagues to determine and record your answers.

- 1. What are your key goals?