

Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together

CURRICULUM GUIDE

SECTION 3: Action Research Cycle

Introduction



developed by
Helen Beattie, Ed.D.
Bruce G. Perlow
Mary Schell Whalen

in partnership with
many wise youth and adult guides



YOUTH AND **A**DULTS **T**RANSFORMING **S**CHOOLS **T**OGETHER

CURRICULUM GUIDE

SECTION 2

HOW will we do our work?

MODULE D • Introduction

Developed by Helen Beattie Ed.D.

in partnership with many wise
youth and adult guides.

JUNE 2011

Copyright©YATST 2011

SECTION 2: HOW Will We Do Our Work?

<i>Introduction</i>	4
<i>Module A. How will our Team Work Together?</i>	4
<i>ACTIVITY 1:</i>	<i>Deep Dive</i>
6	
<i>ACTIVITY 2: Community Commitment</i>	9
<i>ACTIVITY 3: Compass Points Personal Styles Exploration</i>	14
<i>ACTIVITY 4: Comfort Zone</i>	19
<i>ACTIVITY 5: Up-Chuck</i>	23
<i>ACTIVITY 6: Warp Speed</i>	24
<i>ACTIVITY 7: The Marshmallow Challenge</i>	25
<i>Module B. What is an authentic Youth-Adult Partnership?</i>	
<i>Why does it matter?</i>	4
<i>ACTIVITY 1: Ladder of Student Involvement Introduction & Skits</i>	6
<i>ACTIVITY 2: Youth-Adult Partnership Journey</i>	9
<i>ACTIVITY 3: Youth-Adult Stereotypes Activity</i>	12
<i>ACTIVITY 4: Building a Youth-Adult Partnership Bridge Activity</i>	13
<i>ACTIVITY 5: What Works in the Classroom? Ask the Students</i>	15
<i>Module C. Why take a Strengths Based Approach?</i>	4
<i>ACTIVITY 1: Why Strengths-Based? Cartoon Activity</i>	6
<i>ACTIVITY 2: Stephen Covey's Circle of Influence</i>	14
<i>Module D. What is the ACTION Research Cycle?</i>	
<i>Introduction to the Action Research Cycle</i>	4
<i>ACTIVITY 1:</i>	<i>Action Research: Graphic Overview</i>
6	
<i>ACTIVITY 2: Action Research YATST Example</i>	9
<i>ACTIVITY 3: YATST Time Capsule</i>	15
<i>STEP 1: Gather Information</i>	4
<i>Survey Development Overview</i>	5
<i>Sample Teacher-Student Survey Question</i>	6
<i>Steps for Developing a Written Questionnaire</i>	11
<i>Tips for Developing Good Survey Questions</i>	12
<i>When Developing Response Options</i>	

<i>Technology Factors to Consider</i>	16
<i>Strategies for Creating Interest & Buy-In</i>	17
<i>Survey Implementation: Logistical Checklist</i>	18
 <i>One School’s Story: Hazen Union</i>	 21
STEP 2: Analyze Information	4
 <i>Sample Agenda of Data Analysis Retreat</i>	 6
.....	
<i>Detailed Facilitator Agenda for this same 4 hour retreat</i>	7
<i>When You Look at Your Survey Instructions</i>	12
<i>Making Decisions About Your Survey Data</i>	13
 <i>Sample Data Summary: Comparing student and teacher responses</i>	 14
<i>Sample Data Analysis Summary</i>	15
 <i>Sample “T” Chart to Summarize Analysis</i>	 16
 <i>Sample of 4 Rs Data Analysis Results</i>	 17
 <i>Sample Root Cause Analysis</i>	 18
 <i>Sample YATST Survey Executive Summary</i>	 19
<i>Voting Sheet</i>	20
 <i>One School’s Story: Harwood Union</i>	 23
STEP 3: Share Information	4
 <i>Sample Faculty Data Analysis In-Service Agenda</i>	 6
 <i>Data Analysis Chalktalk Directions</i>	 11
<i>Checklist of Ideas for Sharing the Data with the Student Body</i>	14
<i>Dialogue Night Ideas</i>	15
<i>One School’s Story: Peoples Academy</i>	16
STEP 4: Take Action	4
 <i>Investigate Your Issue</i>	 5
<i>ACTION Options Extravaganza</i>	6
<i>Checklist for Choosing an ACTION</i>	7
<i>Power Analysis</i>	8
<i>The Change Process</i>	13
<i>ACTIVITY 1: Change Process Cartoon Activity</i>	14

<i>ACTIVITY 2: Recipe for Change</i>	18
<i>Creating an ACTION Plan</i>	21
STEP 5: Reflect	4
ACTIVITY 1: Stages of Group Development	6
ACTIVITY 2: Reflection Marketplace (or Chalktalk)	8
ACTIVITY 3: ACTION Research Phases Line-Up	9
ACTIVITY 4: Comfort Zone Stories	10
ACTIVITY 5: Web of Appreciation	11
ACTIVITY 6: Artistic Reflections	12
ACTIVITY 7: Public Exhibition or Showcasing of Accomplishments	13

MODULE D

Action Research Cycle

“Motivation to engage wholeheartedly in a task is reinforced when people feel they have had some choice in selecting the task/and or understand its rationale. Children, as well as adults, are more likely to resist an activity that holds little meaning or relevance for them or they feel was arbitrarily imposed. It has been my experience that if most members of a school community perceive that they have limited input into what transpires in that community, the motivation to teach and to learn will be compromised.”

— Robert Brooks, December 2003

Introduction:

ACTION RESEARCH is a powerful process to mobilize the community in the transformation process. Through research and dialogue, teachers, fellow students and community members become motivated to change because what they are engaged in **is** highly relevant and meaningful - **AND** because they were asked! After all, “There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about” (Margaret Wheatley). Few issues pull on a community’s caring heartstrings more than the well-being of its youth.

In YATST, we use ACTION Research in a deliberate and purposeful way to understand issues that we care about from multiple perspectives. Importantly, it is a way to gather insight and ideas from others that are interested in the same issue, inviting them to participate in what we care about (often called Participatory Action Research).

There is a great temptation for groups to jump to solutions, rather than pace through the ACTION Research cycle. When the process is rushed, decisions are based on the inspiration of a small group, who then attempt to impose their will on the larger (often un-inspired) greater community. As Robert Brooks highlights above, this rarely leads to systemic change. In contrast, it will more often than not result in resistance.

YATST utilizes ACTION research to solicit the thoughts and ideas regarding transformation from the entire community. Data-based decision-making validates the worth of all stakeholders and engenders buy-in from students, teachers, administrators and community members. It builds community-wide credibility in the actions taken, informed by this widespread input. Quite simply, ACTION research assures the integrity of our efforts. An added benefit of ACTION research is that the process of gathering

information from others in the school community has an immediate impact on school transformation, setting the stage for change.

This module walks you through each phase of the ACTION research cycle, providing basic training tools and prototypes (sample agendas, videos examples, etc.) of each step in the process.

Enduring Understandings:

- your power as “agents of change” will come from your ability to speak on behalf of the community as a whole.
- people are more willing to consider change when their thoughts and ideas have been solicited.
- the best decisions come from including many different viewpoints.
- people and institutions, in large part, have an “in-born” tendency to resist change.
- the more we know about the change process, the more we can be strategic about how we initiate change....and the more successful we will be in transforming our school.

Essential Questions:

- What is ACTION research?
- Why is change so hard?
- What do we do with people who refuse to change?
- Why start with strengths?

Know and Do:

Participants will be able to....

- Describe key steps and guidelines for creating a well-designed quantitative survey.
- Manage all technical aspects of a school-wide quantitative survey process.
- Design a creative YATST marketing/public education process.
- Explain how they discerned the most pertinent data from the survey results.
- Design and facilitate engaging and effective faculty and community dialogue sessions to review and analyze the data findings.
- Research alternative transformation efforts around the country (and world).
- Create a thoughtful and thorough ACTION plan, after analyzing power structures and systems factors relating to their goal(s).
- Successfully implement their ACTION plan, assessing the impact of their efforts.
- Reflect upon and glean key lessons from their work to help inform their own future leadership and the future actions of the team.



ACTIVITY 1:

Action Research - Graphic Overview

Time: 30 minutes

Materials:

Copy of Graphic Overview of Action Research for each participant (page 8)

Purpose: The key to understanding ACTION research is to understand that we all do action research on a regular basis whenever we make decisions: gathering, analyzing and sharing information, and acting and reflecting on our choices. This activity focuses on first giving meaning to this model by relating it to a personal, real-life decision.

Step 1: Briefly explain the five steps in the Action Research model in the handout.

Step 2: Provide the following cell phone example of a decision made through an ACTION research process. Engage participants in defining what happens in each phase:

“Gathering Information” involves researching what phones have your desired features - what are the options. This might include going to the store and seeing what is available in your price range. Research would also likely include talking to friends about what they like and don't like about their phones, talking to the sales people in stores and doing internet searches.

“Analyzing Information” requires pulling together all that you have learned to help you decide what factors will most influence your choice, based on what you now know. You may discover that you actually need to go back and research a bit more.

“Sharing Information” may include talking your decision over with your friends to explain your reasons and seeking any last minute thoughts which might inform your choice. Consider who might influence or be affected by your decision. For example, you might talk this over with your parents given the cost implications of different choices! They are more likely to support your choice when they are included and learn of your thoughtful decision making process. This step addresses the need to act and build support based on others' experience and interest in your action. It potentially builds allies.

“Act” is when you move to action. You purchase your new cell phone.

“Reflect” step will happen as you uncover both the joys and disappointments of your purchase. Did you make the right choice? Is paying that monthly fee worth it? Will you write a review on a consumer website to share your reflections? What will you be looking for when your contract on this phone is expired?

Step 3: Ask participants to consider a decision they made that has personal relevance to them. Invite them to brainstorm the five steps in action research as it relates to this decision and share this with one other person. Solicit a few additional examples for the class.

Reflection Questions:

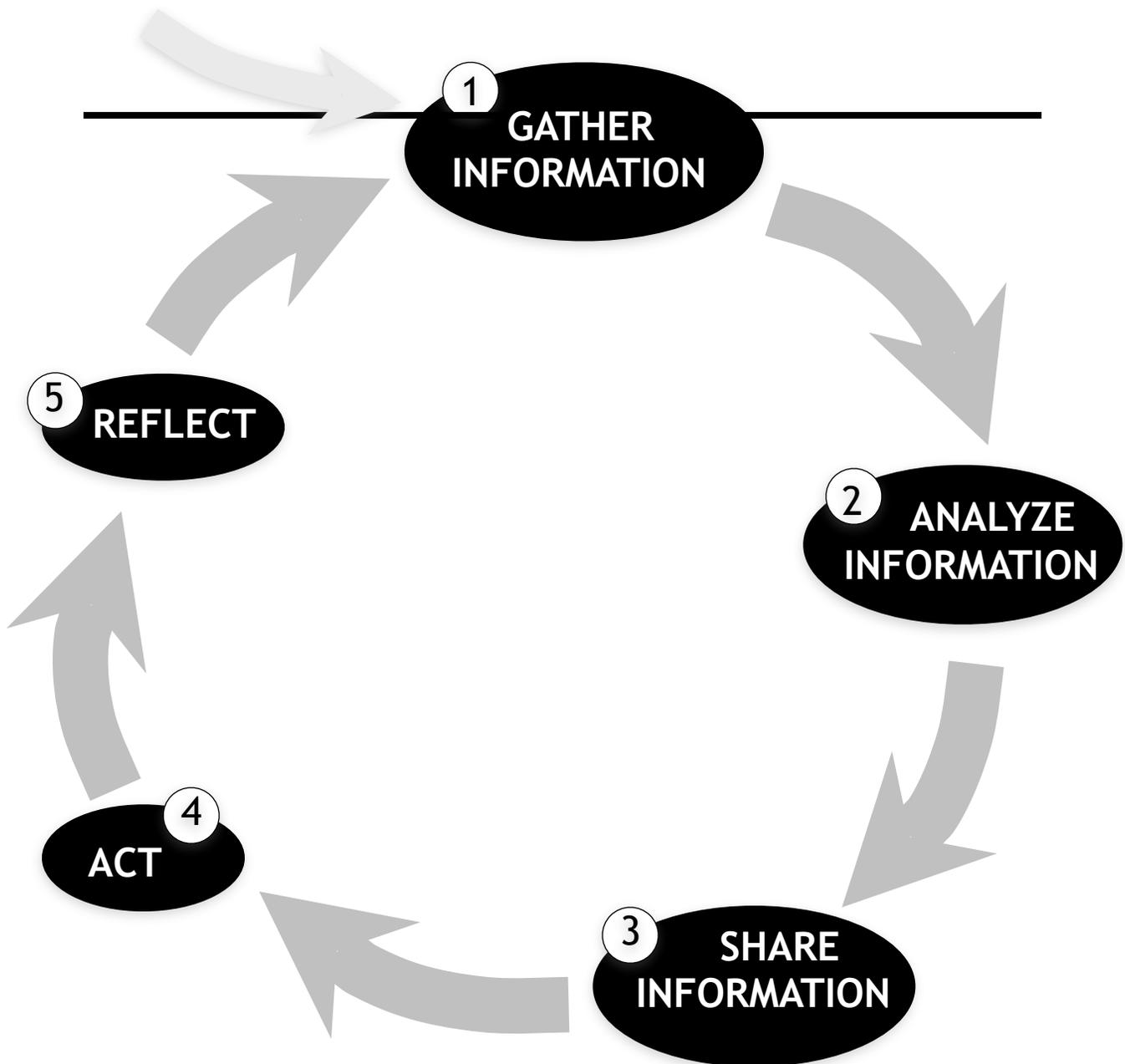
- What other examples can you think of when you, a friend, or a family member have used action research to make a life decision?
What were those steps?
- Why is each of these steps important? What purpose do they serve?
- What might be the consequence when you skip any one of these steps?
Examples?



Action Research Cycle

“Action research involves gathering information about an issue or problem, analyzing the findings, and developing practical plans for affecting positive change....Change is expected to happen as a result of the research.”

— Matthew Goldwasser Ph.D.



ACTIVITY 2:

Action Research YATST Example

Materials:

- Copy of “A True Action Research Story” for each participant
- Copy of “To Do Lists Clipboards” Cut up. Hand out five lists per group of five participants.
- Copy of “You Be The Judge...Does it make the cut”? for each person

Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: Activity 1 should have helped establish a clear understanding of action research on a personal and practical level. This activity applies this model to YATST work.

Step 1: Separate into groups of 5. Hand out the *To Do List Clipboards (one clipboard list per participant)*. Make sure that each group has five different clipboard headings (Gather Information, Analyze Information, Share Information, Act, Reflect).

Step 2: Hand out a copy of “A True Action Research Story” for each participant. Ask the groups to read each section aloud. They should discuss what actions were required for each step in the action plan and then write down each task separately on the appropriate “To Do Clipboard.” Encourage the students to read between the lines. In order to give a written survey, they would have to make a decision about when, where, who, etc. For example, perhaps they would need to make an appointment with an administrator at school beforehand or arrange an information session with students and teachers prior to giving a survey. Be ready to have additional “To do” lists or invite students to write on the back of the sheet.

Step 3: After students have completed and discussed their “To Do” lists, invite each group to fill out the “You Be The Judge...” handout. Introduce the “You Be the Judge” handout, explaining that these four categories reflect YATST priorities. They define the work of YATST groups. Each group checks how well this school’s work was aligned with YATST priorities. Review the groups’ responses to the “You be the Judge” checklist.

Step 4: The groups report out, step-by-step. Record a fully compiled “To Do” List on the board for each section of the Action Research Cycle.

Reflection Questions:

- What do you think the students learned from the process?
 - What do you think the teachers learned from the process?
 - How did the students create “a buzz” around their actions?
-

- What would you do differently if you wanted the same outcome as described below.

A True Action Research Story

A YATST school surveyed both teachers and students about how engaged students were in learning and how much voice students had in decision making. They used a written survey, and conducted small group interviews.

The team then organized a retreat to analyze the data. They identified a number of key findings. One area of interest surfaced when comparing student and teacher surveys. Teachers reported that 90% of the time they “check in with students frequently about their learning and change their teaching accordingly”. Students reported that teachers “check in with students frequently about their learning and change their teaching accordingly “ only 33% of the time. They shared this information with teachers at a faculty meeting and asked what questions arose for them and what actions they could suggest to close this gap and assure that students felt heard.

The YATST team researched ways students had input into the classroom at other schools. A student group at one nearby school had just created a system where students gave teachers feedback about their classroom experience half way through the semester. This gave the teacher an opportunity to change classroom practices for the remainder of the semester, and every student had a chance to share how the class was going for him or her.

The YATST team talked with the creators of this mid-semester feedback system and tailored it to meet the particular needs of their school. Teachers were asked for input. They incorporated a class follow-up session where teachers shared the survey results with the class, noting both strengths and areas that could be changed to better meet the needs of students. They also included questions in the survey that asked students to

reflect on their role as learners (are you being timely on assignments, seeking help when needed, etc.).

The YATST youth members made a video for students to watch prior to completing the mid-semester survey. The video explained the intention and importance of the survey and was spiced up with humor. Teacher and student feedback was gathered after the first round of using the survey and changes were once again made based on this research, continually improving how much students were engaged in learning and how much voice students had in decision making..

YOU be the JUDGE....

Does it make the cut??

Is this example of student voice in decision making...

YES

NO

<p>Changing something important in the ways students learn in the classroom, specifically improving rigor, relevance, student-teacher relationships or shared responsibility?</p>		
<p>Changing policies or practices on a school-wide level that will make this a more democratic school by including students in decision-making in new ways?</p>		
<p>Addressing an equity issue, making sure ALL students feel their voice and their abilities as capable learners and decision makers are honored.</p>		
<p>Total Score</p>		

Scoring: 1 point for each “yes” check



ACTIVITY 3: YATST “Time Capsule”

This activity is referenced in Section 1, page 25. If you have not done this activity, this is an opportune time to facilitate it as a means to introduce ACTION Research and make the work in each phase much more concrete.