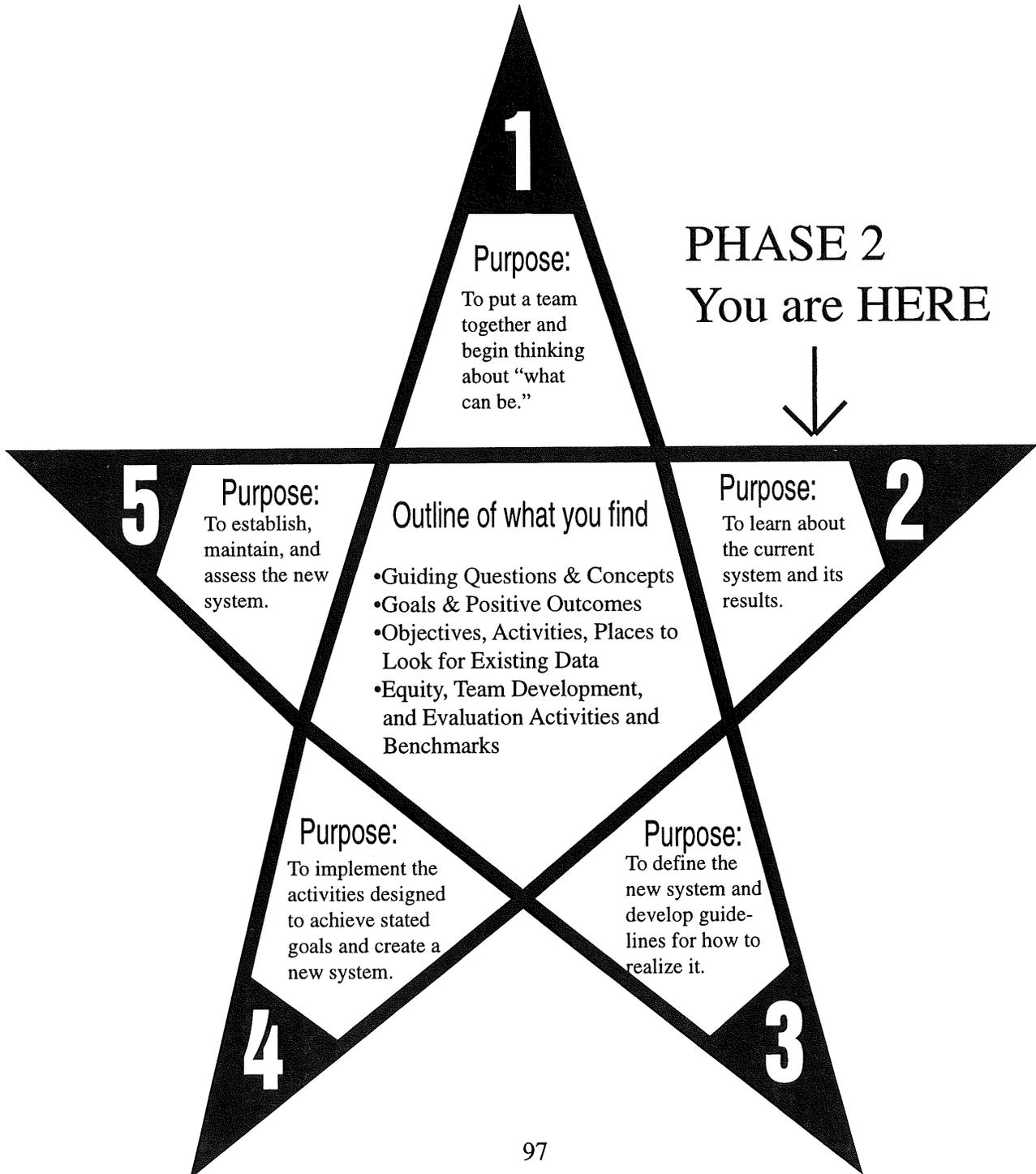


**Phase 2**  
**Taking Stock of the**  
**Target System**



# AN OVERVIEW of the phases





# Phase 2: Taking Stock of the Target System

## *Introduction*

In Phase 1, you formed a team and identified a target project on which to focus. In order to achieve the goals of that project, it will be necessary to determine *what is*. This will be accomplished in a variety of ways. They include: collecting data about the system, identifying factors that influence the interpretation of data, and looking for and listening to the messages of the system. As you proceed, you will discover the ways in which the system is already meeting the project goals. You will also discover the gaps, or dissonance, between your vision and the ways the system currently operates. These results will help you focus your energies for implementation and action.

## **Guiding Questions**

*These questions are designed to remind you that equity and diversity must be a focus of every educational initiative. They are reflective questions that will help you improve education in your school, while taking individual student needs into account. Find your team's answers to these questions.*

- In your school, do you provide the optimum environment for growing and learning?

To respond to this question, you will need to closely examine your school's programs, policies, and practices. Can you look at those elements objectively? Do they align with what you and researchers outside of your district have learned about the elements that help students learn? **Do they align with the kind of results you want?** Do they enable you to attain the results you want *in your community*?

- Do you offer the optimum environment for each student?



Phase 2



## Guiding Questions

This is where data collection about your school will tell you who is succeeding according to the standards that have been set. The patterns in the data will also tell you who is NOT meeting these same standards. (This information should help you identify changes necessary to get different/better results for those students.)

- Do you know *why* you are getting the results you get with students?
- Do you know *why* you are *not* getting the results you want?

Seven indicators of the degree of equity and access that may exist in a school are:

1. Fiscal and budgetary equity.
2. Opportunity to learn; detracking; equal and encouraged access to classes, programs, and schools.
3. Pedagogical equity (instructional techniques, classroom management, expectations).
4. Input equity (e.g., class size, quality of facilities, resources that include computers, books, library materials, etc.).
5. Output equity (e.g., student achievement, test scores, etc.).
6. Curricular equity (culturally inclusionary lessons, bias-free testing, etc.).
7. Attitudes and assumptions about equity.

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Below are questions to help address these indicators.

What are the major equity concerns at your school?

What kind of output (academic, behavioral, extracurricular) are you currently getting?

What are the inputs and what is their effect? (Curriculum, instruction/interaction, environment, community support, community makeup, etc.)

What is the culture of the school (refer to Glossary for a definition of culture)? Check the demographics here. Who is not

benefiting from your efforts? Why? What is happening that makes the environment better for some students?

What is your role in shaping the environment? What is your influence?

- What are major concerns at your school?

Choose the number of issues your team can reasonably address. This process will help you begin to address these concerns.

- What do we mean by “offering the students our best?” What is “our best?”
- What are the effects and outcomes when we don’t offer our best to each student?

Who is affected? How? Are these effects short- or long-term, or perhaps both? Are they isolated, or are they systemic?

- What would happen if the best were offered to each student?

How would your school look and feel? How would you know? What are the costs, either way—if you offer something more or different to each student? What are the costs to continue operating as you have been?





Quality Leadership emphasizes results by working on methods that solve process problems and lead to lasting educational improvements to the learning environment of the school.

*The Team Handbook  
for Educators*

“What gets measured gets done.”

*Thriving on Chaos*

## • Concepts

### • *Assessing What Is*

• Why should we be concerned about assessment? Our world is filled with constant assessment. Assessment often seems to be an issue when we are dissatisfied or want to improve something.

• Susan Loucks-Horsley and Leslie Hergert (1985) make the point that although we are convinced that too much emphasis and time are spent on assessment, we recognize the importance of knowing where we are at the start. “If you want to lose weight, you first find out how much you weigh, what is the recommended weight for your height, and what your real goal is for weight loss (to look good in a bathing suit? to increase your prospects of long life?).”

• So it is in education. We cannot know where we want to go until we find out where we currently are, and how we intend to get to our stated goal. Are there gaps in our successes? We must base teaching decisions on solid data rather than on assumptions. Mike Schmoker states that “Data are to goals what signposts are to travelers; data are not end points, but data are essential to reaching them—the signposts on the road to school improvement” (Schmoker, 1996, p. 30). Schmoker also points out that data make the invisible visible, revealing strengths and weaknesses that are easily concealed. Data promote certainty and precision, which increase teachers’ confidence in their abilities (p. 38).

• Data collection is crucial to assessment. What factors are to be considered when the decision is being made to collect data for an assessment? The key is to determine:

- why information is being collected;
- what forms of data to collect;
- what data are already collected and where they are stored, and;

- how the information will be used when collected.

Educators constantly gather data on individual students, but, as Schmoker points out, they rarely analyze the data in disaggregated form, separating results for groups of people in order to find better ways to address collective problems. Research by Lortie indicates that educators often do not seek to identify patterns of success and failure by their students, which can have broad and continuous benefits for greater numbers of children (Lortie, 1975). Analysis of patterns is essential when tracking results for students who may be identified as a group based on their sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, or other protected status. Data collection in terms of such cohorts is not inherently racist or sexist, as some might protest, but rather an attempt to find out whether a greater percentage of students within a particular group is not succeeding, as compared to the larger group of students. Assessment will reveal where, or if, improvement is needed. It will also benchmark progress toward goals.

Both educators and parents are often afraid of assessment. Assessment has been used incorrectly: it can be biased, it can be used to make “high stakes” decisions for students’ lives, and it can be used for the purpose of making employment decisions about teachers. It is very important to include teachers in both the development of criteria for data collection and in the analysis of data. Data can also illuminate the many success stories that unfold every day in schools; those successes should be broadcast widely and often.

What kind of data should you collect? First, the data that will help you determine what results you are getting. Victoria Bernhardt (1998) suggests that multiple measures are needed. She outlines four major types that overlap: demographics, perceptions, student learning, and school processes. The overlap of all four allows the prediction of actions, processes, and programs that best meet the needs of all students (See Supplemental Materials).





• Over time, interrelating demographic data indicate changes in the context of the school. These types of data give us information about groups of students and enrollment, attendance, dropout rates, ethnicity, gender, grade level, English language proficiency, and socioeconomic status, for example.

• Data on perceptions—of students and staff—enable the assessment of impact through perceptions of the learning environment, values and beliefs, attitudes, and observations. Over time, interrelated student data give information about student performance on different measures, including standardized tests, norm- or criterion-referenced tests, teacher observations, and authentic assessment.

• Data on school processes show, over time, how classrooms change. They include information on school programs, instructional processes, and school management processes.

• Overlapping data from all of the above areas tell us what works best for which group of students. Collection of data help us sort out the patterns for different groups, predict student success, and choose different processes for different types of students.

• In any group of people, a given group will be dominant at any given time, and sometimes one group will dominate over time. When that happens, other groups' needs are often not addressed, sometimes because their needs are just not seen, or perhaps because they are systematically ignored or repressed. A major purpose of Phase 2 is to determine what values are successfully sustained in your school and what student needs are not being met. In doing both, the needs of all groups will be illuminated.

• Some characteristics of groups of people are singled out in the law for "protection." In most state and sometimes by federal laws, those characteristics that are protected include sex, race, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, religion, marital or parental status, pregnancy, physical, mental, emotional, and learning ability.

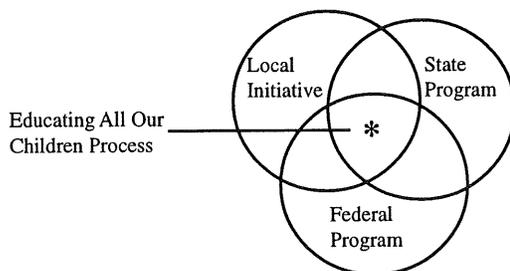
• **This effectively covers every student in every public school.** If all individuals and all groups are to be held accountable for success, they deserve the best school processes we can provide.

## Exploring the Disconnect

Once a team determines how its vision is to be articulated and where it is in relationship to meeting its vision, based on the current status of its "target system," the gap between what is and what might be forms the basis for specific goal-setting and for an action plan designed to close the gap. The plan you develop in Phase 3 will outline the program you can follow to progress from what exists to what you envision, how to get from "here" to "there." But first, you must take stock.

While you may find huge gaps between what exists at present and your desired future, you cannot make all changes at once. Your task will be to develop a plan that includes goals that can be achieved fairly quickly, as well as long-term goals and activities--some that will depend on completion of immediate steps and some that may require years of work to change. The best planning includes some activities that can be completed early, in order to achieve early success.

A critical part of any plan that holds the promise of completion is to make sure you include many constituencies in your plan development and implementation. Throughout this process, we have encouraged you to be inclusionary and to merge your work with other initiatives in your school or district. As we stated in the introduction, organizational change theory points out that making changes in isolation, in "silos," results in changes made in a vacuum, or in separate silos, not a cohesive integrated whole that has the potential for affecting the entire system.



REMINDER: "Target system" refers to that problem or issue you decide to address in this process, plus all the attendant and ancillary policies, practices, processes, and people who make it work. All of those things make the issue a system, albeit one which may operate within one or many other systems. Examples: the system that makes the truancy policy work; the system that maintains a particular curriculum.



## Goal I

### DEFINING THE TARGET SYSTEM

REMINDER: Only the names of the activities are listed here. The complete set of activities is found at the end of the phase.

## Goals and Objectives

Goal I. To define and describe the target system.

### Positive Outcomes:

- Team members will realize that each person's personal lens affects the interpretation of data.
- Team members will develop a model that details the demographics of the target system.
- Members of the team will identify indicators of success for the target system.
- Using these indicators, the team will document the current results of the target system.
- The team will identify the key processes of the target system that influence results.

**Objective I.1:** To identify factors that influence the interpretation of data.

*Activity:* Can It Be Prejudice?

*Activity:* Challenging Prejudgments

*Activity:* Acknowledging One's Personal Cultural History

*Activity:* Discovering Diversity Profile

*Evaluation:* Are members of the team learning about their own cultures and the values and expectations of those cultures? Are team members recognizing that individuals have differing values and expectations? Can members begin to illuminate the values that affect collection and analysis of data?

**Objective I.2.** To identify the *demographics* of the school population.

- Activity:* How Do We Look?  
*Activity:* Guess What, Our Dentist Is a Woman!  
*Activity:* Who's Who in Our School  
*Activity:* Setting the Stage for Data  
*Activity:* Collecting Information About the Target System

- Evaluation:* What did you learn from the data you collected?
- What data are collected in your school on a regular basis? For what purpose?
  - Data collection is a time-consuming task. How did you divide the work load?
  - What methods did you employ to assure confidentiality?
  - What do the results imply about diversity within the system? How is the system diverse? Name several ways.
  - What demographic data may be unknown in a school (E.g., religious affiliation, if it does not have an impact on one's participation in school activities; sexual orientation.)? Would any of these unknown demographics have a bearing on a person's interaction with the system?
  - Did any of your own personal demographics have an impact on your school experience?

**Objective I.3.** To identify *results* current in the school population.  
(E.g., SAT scores, Wisconsin Student Assessment System results, graduation rates, disciplinary records and data, retention and drop-out rates, scholarship awards, awards of recognition (athletic, academic



**Demographics:** the description of statistics of life as illustrative of a community.

**Tip:** The *total* school population includes others in addition to students, teachers, and administrators. Others to consider include: classroom support staff, aides and volunteers, counselors, social workers, nurses, psychologists, secretaries, bus drivers, food service staff, custodians, and community and business partners.



achievement, citizenship), attendance records, class rankings, student government, student clubs, and extracurricular activity participation, etc.)

*Activity:* What Is Success?  
*Activity:* What's Your Recipe for Success?

*Evaluation:* What did the data tell you?

- Who's doing well, based on ACT, SAT, and state student assessment system results? Who's not? Is there a pattern based on student demographics?
- Is there equal representation of all demographic groups in school-sponsored programs?
- What do the records of attendance, graduation, class ranking, and discipline indicate about the diversity within the system? Is there equity among and across populations? Where are the disparities?
- Why are you getting disparities? What is the school's role in the disparities?

**Objective I.4.** To identify all *programs or initiatives*—federal, state and local--current in the district and the intended purpose of each.

(E.g., School to Work; free and reduced-cost lunch programs; Goals 2000; Programs for Gifted and Talented, Special Needs, At-risk; Teach Initiative; ESL; SAGE; P5; Title VI; Title IV; Eisenhower; Title I; Impact Aid, Title IX (Indian Education); Johnson O'Malley Act; Carl D. Perkins Vocational Educa-

tion and Applied Technology Act.)  
*Activity:* What's Going On Here?

- Evaluation:*
- Whom did you interview to learn about the various school initiatives? Who, in the system, is involved in implementing these initiatives?
  - Are the initiatives impacting those for whom they are truly intended? Who, in the system, is benefiting the most? Why?
  - Who is being missed, over-looked, bypassed, discarded, or dealt out? Any ideas why? What would be necessary for these populations to benefit from the school's initiatives?
  - In regards to service programs (i.e., Gifted and Talented, Special Needs), which populations receive services? Is there equity among and across populations? Are there disparities?

**Objective I.5.** To identify those *equity efforts* in which the district is (or has been) engaged and its plan for continuing the effort to address equity.

(E.g., pupil non-discrimination self-evaluation; development and implementation of a district equity plan; participation in various school initiatives; programs to build awareness, both staff and student-focused; efforts to address the needs of each student.)

*Activity:* I Remember When . . . (Questionnaire)

- Evaluation:*
- What is the system's commitment to equity, based on your findings? Do most populations within the system have an understanding and appreciation for equity?



Concepts



Do they have the skills to address equity and diversity in a meaningful, productive way?

- When researching this issue, did you take into account the seven indicators of equity and access (referenced in the Guiding Questions section)? What were your findings?
- Has your own personal understanding of educational equity changed as a result of your research? If so, how?

**Objective I.6.** To explore and identify the *messages* that show what the system values (the cause of the outcomes).

(Areas to explore include the physical environment, such as hallways, bulletin boards, posters, trophy cases; and also things such as school newspapers and newsletters; attitudes and philosophical messages, both overt and subtle; school mascot and logo, etc.)

*Activity:* Looking for Messages

*Activity:* What Is the Bias Here?

*Activity:* Uncovering Attitudes (include *Valuing Diversity Climate Survey*)

*Activity:* Stop and Look Carefully

*Activity:* Listen Carefully

*Evaluation:* What messages are evident within the system's physical environment? What are the subtle messages? How do such messages impact or influence the system? Who might they impact the most? What do the messages say about diversity within the system? What do they say about who or what the system strives to be? If a stranger to the system came to visit, what would she or he see, hear, think about the system and its values? Are all members of the system represented in its messages? Are they respected

and valued?  
**Goal II.** To identify the dissonance between what is and what might be (the vision).

**Positive Outcomes:**

- Team members will generate a document or visual that shows the successes and strengths within the system.
- Members will identify ways the system is already realizing its vision.
- Members will recognize and document the gaps between current practice and the system vision.

**Objective II.1.** To document the ways in which the system is realizing its vision.

*Activity:* Recognizing Our Strengths

*Evaluation:* What are the strengths and successes of the system? How do (will) these support the vision developed through this project? How does the diversity within the system complement the vision? Do the strengths identified help to address the concerns that were identified at the beginning of this phase? In what ways?  
As a member of the system, what positive contributions have you made that help to meet the vision?

**Objective II.2.** To identify the gaps or the areas in which the vision is not being met.

*Activity:* Acknowledging the Dissonance

*Evaluation:* • Of the seven indicators of equity and access, listed in the Guiding Questions, Phase 2, which is the target system most “diligent” at addressing? Which does the system need to address most? Why? What





- kinds of changes might likely occur if this were addressed?
- Where are the greatest disparities? What relationship do they have to diversity *within the system*? How do the members of the system contribute to this dissonance?

## *Before You Move On . . .*

### **Reflective Questions**

- Can you see the ways in which your environment is contributing to the outcomes you're getting?
  - What types of policies, procedures, and practices contribute to outcomes you don't want?
  - Are you getting ideas about how to change current practice in order to produce better outcomes?
  
- Are you getting ideas about how you might work with others in your school or district in order to have a more connected and focused approach?
  
- What size team do you have? Does everyone continue to attend meetings? Do members interact well with each other?
  
- How well is your team functioning?
  - Do you need to return to some of the activities in Phase 1 to learn to work together better?
  
- Did the Phase 2 objectives help you recognize what you need to do to get where you want to go?
  - What kind of results did you get?
  - What worked, what didn't work?
  
- Did you meet any personal goals?
  
- In what ways has your knowledge about culture, equity, and diversity changed? What are you more aware of regarding equity and culture?

Please complete the Linking Worksheet at the end of this section.

- Are you ready for the next phase?



**STOP** here . . .



## Summary Chart 2

### Phase 2: Taking Stock of the Target System

Goal I: To define and describe the target system.

#### Positive Outcomes

- Team members will realize that each person's personal lens affects the interpretation of data.
- Team members will develop a model that details the demographics of the target system.
- Team members will identify indicators of success for the target system.
- Using indicators, the team will document the current results of the target system.
- The team will identify the key processes of the target system that influence results.

Objectives	Activities	Evaluation
I.1 To identify factors which influence the interpretation of data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can It Be Prejudice?</li> <li>• Challenging Prejudgments</li> <li>• Acknowledging One's Personal Cultural History</li> <li>• Discovering Diversity Profile</li> </ul>	<p>Team members recognize that their experiences, abilities, and interests may influence how they interpret data.</p>
I.2 To identify the demographics of the school population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How Do We Look?</li> <li>• Guess What, Our Dentist Is a Woman!</li> <li>• Who's Who In Our School</li> <li>• Setting the Stage for Data</li> <li>• Collecting Information About the Target System</li> </ul>	<p>Team members divided the data collection tasks. Data indicate diversity within the target system based on many factors, not just on one, such as race or ethnicity.</p>
I.3 To identify <i>results</i> current in the school population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What Is Success?</li> <li>• What's Your Recipe?</li> </ul>	<p>Data indicate that not all students are doing well. Team members know how to look for patterns in data.</p>
I.4 To identify all school <i>initiatives</i> current in the district and the intended purpose of each.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What's Going On Here?</li> </ul>	<p>Team realizes that there are many programs and initiatives that have equity implications; other teams may want to work with this team.</p>
I.5 To identify the <i>equity efforts</i> in which the district is engaged and its plan for continuing efforts to address equity and diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I Remember When . . .</li> </ul>	<p>Team finds several equity initiatives, but also may find that many people do not understand the meaning of equity or misinterpret its importance.</p>
I.6 To explore and identify the <i>messages</i> that show what the system values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking For Messages</li> <li>• What Is the Bias Here?</li> <li>• Uncovering Attitudes</li> <li>• Stop and Look Carefully</li> <li>• Listen Carefully</li> </ul>	<p>The activities reveal subtle and overt messages about what the system values, as perceived by others. Dissonance may begin to be seen between the team's vision and what is happening now.</p>

Goal II: To identify the dissonance between what is and what might be (the vision)

**Positive Outcomes:**

- Members generate a document that shows the success and strengths within the system.
- Members identify ways in which the system is already meeting its vision.
- Members recognize and document the gaps between current practice and the system vision.

Objectives	Activities	Evaluation
II.1 To document the ways in which the system is realizing the vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing Our Strengths</li> </ul>	The team finds many ways in which the target system has met or attempted to meet the vision. The experience of the rest of the system can help this team avoid mistakes.
II.2. To identify the gaps or the areas in which the vision is not being met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledging the Dissonance</li> </ul>	Patterns emerge that help the team make plans for bridging the gap between the vision and current reality.