

## Activity for Superintendents - Developing Strategic and Meaningful “Quick Wins” - FULL PROTOCOL

Activity	Questions for Participants	Materials	Outcomes
<p>1. <b>Considering the importance of quick wins</b> in the context of district and school (turnaround, rapid improvement, redesign)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide a brief overview of the importance of quick wins.</li> <li>- Invite participants to consider the listed questions.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why are quick wins important?</li> <li>2. What are some of the characteristics of quick wins?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One page overview of definitions, rationale, quotes re: quick wins (Sheet A)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Shared understanding of quick wins;</b> understanding of the importance and characteristics quick wins.</p>
<p>2. <b>Setting criteria for quick wins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building upon Activity #1, ask participants to brainstorm a listing of <b>quick wins</b> that they have used in the past, or that they have seen used by schools.</li> <li>- Question: What made these strategies quick wins? Leading to a discussion about and listing of initial criteria of effective and useful <b>quick wins</b>.</li> <li>- Share listing of criteria, from the research.</li> <li>- Ask principals to discuss and revise criteria, based on their own and the research-based list.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. What are the characteristics of “strategic” quick wins?</li> <li>4. What makes for a positive and useful quick win?</li> <li>5. What are the various purposes and potential outcomes of quick wins?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large post it notes for group criteria</li> <li>- One page listing of criteria (Sheet B).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Individual or group generated criteria for effective and strategic quick wins;</b> shared understanding of criteria.</p>
<p>3. <b>Generating potential quick wins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Building upon the criteria and the brainstormed listing of quick wins (from Activity #2), ask:</li> <li>- Considering the needs of your Level 4 schools and the context of your district, what are some potential <b>quick wins</b> that meet the purpose and criteria that we have developed?</li> <li>- Ask participants to consider how these quick wins meet the criteria, as developed by the group.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Considering the needs of your Level 4 schools and the context of your district, what are some potential <b>quick wins</b> that meet the purpose and criteria that we have developed?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual notes OR</li> <li>- Worksheet that provides space to list the quick wins and link the quick wins with criteria (Sheet C)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Participant generated quick wins;</b> owned by the participants.</p>
<p>4. <b>Refinement of potential quick wins</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide principals with the research based listing of quick wins (examples, types....)</li> <li>- Ask principals to refine their listing of potential quick wins, using the provided template.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. How will each quick win contribute to the schools’ redesign efforts?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listing of research based quick wins (academic and nonacademic) (Sheet D)</li> <li>- Template (Sheet C)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Revised set of quick wins,</b> merging of individually developed and research based examples.</p>

## Overview of Quick Win Activity

Activity	Questions for Participants
<p>1. <b>Considering the importance of quick wins</b> in the context of district and school (turnaround, rapid improvement, redesign)</p>	<p>1. Why are quick wins important? 2. What are some of the characteristics of quick wins?</p>
<p>2. <b>Setting criteria for quick wins</b></p>	<p>3. What are the characteristics of “strategic” quick wins? 4. What makes for a positive and useful quick win? 5. What are the various purposes and potential outcomes of quick wins?</p>
<p>3. <b>Generating potential quick wins</b></p>	<p>6. Considering the needs of your Level 4 schools and the context of your district, what are some potential <b>quick wins</b> that meet the purpose and criteria that we have developed?</p>
<p>4. <b>Refinement of potential quick wins</b></p>	<p>7. How will each quick win contribute to the schools’ redesign efforts?</p>

## Sheet A: Quick Wins - What researchers are saying

Short-term success, even “purposeful impatience,” sustains the essential interest and energy to persevere. Not to mention that short-term, incremental gains in learning are eminently achievable.

Michael Fullan

Locating and starting at once with the gains that can be achieved quickly, and then using those first successes as stepping-stones to increasingly ambitious gain.

Mike Schmoker<sup>1</sup>

Focus on a Few Early Wins: Successful turnaround leaders choose a few high-priority goals with visible payoffs and use early success to gain momentum. While these “wins” are limited in scope, they are high-priority, not peripheral, elements of organization performance. Early wins are critical for motivating staff and disempowering naysayers.

Emily Ayscue Hassel and Bryan Hassel<sup>2</sup>

Successful turnaround leaders first concentrate on a very limited number of changes to achieve early, visible wins for the organization. They do this to achieve success in an important area, to motivate staff for further change, and to reduce resistance by those who oppose change. Silencing critics with quick, visible results reduces leader time spent addressing “politics” and increases time spent managing for results.

Center on Innovation and Improvement, School Turnarounds: Actions and Results

Quick wins (visible improvements early in the turnaround process) can rally staff around the effort and overcome resistance and inertia.<sup>97</sup> Certain outcomes that matter to the school can result from changes made quickly at the administrative level without needing teacher buy-in or approval from the district. Although these initial changes may not improve student achievement immediately, they can set the tone for change. A short-term focus on quick wins can establish a climate for long-term change.

IES Practice Guide, Turning Around Chronically Low Performing Schools

---

<sup>1</sup> Schmoker, M. (1999) Results: the Key to Continuous School Improvement, 2nd edition. Associations for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

<sup>2</sup> Hassel and Hassel, The Big U-Turn: How to bring schools back from the bring of doom to stellar success, [Education Next](#), Winter, 2009  
Developed for Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education  
Brett Lane, INSTLL, LLC

## Sheet B: Sample Criteria based on case studies and exemplars of schools using quick wins

### Quick Wins - The Overview

- Quick and short term wins are created through deliberate planning and action.
- Quick wins that are not strategic will backfire.
- Some quick wins are intended to be visible and meaningful to the broader school community and to signify positive movement and change.
- Some quick wins are meant to build internal support and belief that change is possible - collective efficacy.
- Quick wins are just the start of the turnaround effort.

### Quick Wins - The Specifics

Quick and short term wins:

- May be academic or nonacademic and should fit the context and setting of the school.
- May involve a relatively small, simple change.
- Are focused on accomplishing one or two narrow goals that can be achieved quickly.
- Are doable, in that they do not require (significant) additional resources or authority.
- Should contribute to long-term goals.
- Must be meaningful to stakeholders and make visible improvement.

## Sheet C - Template for Listing Quick Wins

Potential Quick Wins (List your potential quick wins)	This quick win addresses (redesign components; essential conditions)	This quick win will contribute to redesign efforts by:

Criteria (from the research)	Participant generated criteria

## Sheet D - Listing of Research Based Quick Wins (Page 1)

Frequently used and useful strategies and quick wins	This strategy contributes to redesign efforts by...
<p><b>1. Use of time, focusing on how teachers and administrators use time for instruction and professional learning</b></p>	
<p><i>Revise the school schedule to provide for increased planning time</i> for content area teams, data teams, grade-level teams, or learning communities</p>	<p>Providing the school and its teachers with dedicated time and space to focus on student data, goals, and related instructional strategies</p>
<p><i>Change the school schedule to maximize instructional time or to address particular school needs</i> - specific strategies include: (1) creating teams (e.g., houses) of homogeneously grouped students and teachers; (2) scheduling uninterrupted blocks of instructional time; (3) enhancing home room or advisory time; or (4) minimizing disruptive passing times or before or after school periods that are not working.</p>	<p>Addressing a specific need that will provide students with additional and more targeted instructional time as well as minimize disruptive activities that may be detrimental to the success of overall redesign efforts.</p>
<p><b>2. Improving the look and feel of the school, the physical conditions (physical plant)</b></p>	
<p><i>Internal improvements</i>, such as painting hallways and classrooms remove old displays and put up new ones, display student work, replace or repair broken furniture</p> <p><i>External improvements</i>, such as painting, having students paint a mural, planting trees, flower beds..</p>	<p>Providing students, faculty, and parents with a visible and positive change in their learning environment, potentially addressing seemingly small issues (such as broken chairs) that influence the perception and mindset of the entire school community.</p>

## Sheet D - Listing of Research Based Quick Wins (Page 2)

Frequently used and useful strategies and quick wins	This strategy contributes to redesign efforts by...
<b>3. Improve safety and discipline</b> , and addressing any latent discipline or behavior issues.	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Increase the visibility of teachers before and after school, in the lunchroom, at recess</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Reduce transitions between classes</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Implement a positive behavior system</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Directly attending to safety and discipline issues that may be a barrier to teaching and learning.</p>
<p><i>Implement targeted strategies to address specific school safety and discipline issues, such as:</i> (1) a new alarm system, (2) uniforms, (3) changing how lockers are used, (4) minimizing interactions between older and younger students (e.g. a freshman academy), (5) creating an open or closed campus, (6) increasing or decreasing student freedom/movement within the school, or (7) creating targeted alternative programs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Providing visible and tangible changes that will immediately impact the behavior of teachers and students.</p>
<b>4. Proactive outreach and marketing</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Increased public outreach and renewed use of the school building for public use</i> (e.g., forums for parents, data nights, state of the school days).</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Signifying to the community that the school is undergoing change.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Conducting principal or teacher visits to all incoming students</i> in the summer; personalized letter inviting parents.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Communicating clear expectations, changing the culture and relationships among learners.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Increased visibility outside the school building, meeting and greeting all teachers and students on a daily basis</i> with a handshake and a formal welcome statement AND formally saying goodbye to students at the end of the day.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Establishing a positive routine and signifying to parents and the community that efforts are being made to improve.</p>
<b>5. Enhanced resources</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Accessing and providing new resources</i>, such as textbooks and materials, if feasible</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Creating a dedicated teacher or a student resource center</i>, for teachers and students to have access to materials and a workspace.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Showing teachers and students that they are important and that resources will be made available to assist in the improvement effort.</p>

