Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA)

Professional Network Centres

Planning Guide

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Ministry of Education
Education Statistics and Analysis Branch
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Background

In 2005 seven MISA Professional Network Centres were established across Ontario to support the local capacity building component of the Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA) program. Six are English-language Centres, aligned with the ministry’s regional office boundaries. The seventh is a French-language Centre that includes all French-language school boards in the province.

The MISA Professional Network Centres (PNCs or Centres) function as linked networked learning communities and work collaboratively with the ministry, one another, and their member boards to develop professional learning resources, deliver professional learning events, share effective practices, and forge connections to the research community in support of improved student outcomes.

The activities of the MISA PNCs are aimed at increasing the capacity of board administrators, principals and teachers to utilize data and evidence to make informed decisions related to improved student achievement. Just as school boards are increasingly focused on enabling principals and teachers to access, manage and apply relevant evidence to improve student outcomes at the school and classroom levels, the MISA PNCs will be carrying out collaborative activities in support of this focus.

In 2005 the Council of Ontario Directors of Education worked with all school boards to identify lead boards for each of the seven Centres. Since that time, the leadership of many of the MISA Professional Network Centres has passed from the original lead boards as regional circumstances change. These leadership changes are accomplished through discussions of the member boards and the ministry.

Each MISA Professional Network Centre Executive Lead, in cooperation with the school boards to be served by the Centre (i.e., the member boards), is responsible for creating a detailed annual plan of operation for their MISA Professional Network Centre and submitting this operational plan to the ministry for review and approval.
Funding

In 2011-12, the ministry is providing up to $401,430 to each MISA Professional Network Centre to help offset the costs associated with the Centres’ activities. Funding is for the period of April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012. Note that plans are subject to review by the ministry prior to any transfer of funds. Each MISA Professional Network Centre Executive Lead is responsible for receiving and authorizing the expenditure of these funds, as per the ministry approved MISA Professional Network Centre operational plan.

Role of the MISA PNC Executive Lead

Each MISA PNC is led by a MISA PNC Executive Lead who is accountable for the operations of the Centre and liaison with its member boards, other MISA PNCs, and the ministry. The MISA PNC Executive Lead fosters communication and shared learning opportunities across the member boards. As primary liaison between the MISA PNC and the ministry, the MISA PNC Executive Lead addresses ministry inquiries in a timely manner and fully participates in ministry meetings, training sessions, surveys and events concerning MISA on behalf of their member boards. In addition, the MISA PNC Executive Lead invites other members of the PNC to attend provincial MISA PNC meetings, training sessions, and events as appropriate.

Each MISA PNC Executive Lead is responsible for receiving and authorizing the expenditure of the project funds, as per the ministry approved MISA PNC operational plan. Should circumstances require modifications to the approved operational plan, a MISA PNC Executive Lead must receive ministry approval of the changes prior to proceeding with the modifications.

Components of the MISA PNC Operational Plan

There are three general areas to be addressed in the annual MISA PNC operational plan. Individual MISA PNCs and their member boards will propose activities to be undertaken to best meet the priority needs of the member boards and then submit the operational plan for ministry review and approval. Activities included in the MISA PNCs’ operational plans should assist their member boards’ MISA Local Capacity Building efforts.

1. A Shared Vision

Documenting a shared vision is essential in order for the efforts and culture of the Centre to be collaborative. All participants in a MISA PNC should have a
collective understanding of the Centre’s purpose and make a commitment to support the stated purpose. The shared vision of a MISA PNC should emphasize communication, collaboration, and innovation as it identifies how the MISA PNC is building a collective understanding among member boards in promoting evidence informed decision making to improve student outcomes. The “shared vision” statement is to be reviewed regularly (at a minimum on an annual basis) and should be posted prominently on the MISA PNC’s publicly accessible website.

2. Method of Operation

Each MISA Professional Network Centre will develop its own framework of processes to promote the effective operation of the Centre. An Executive Lead will spearhead the administration of each Centre. While the Executive Lead will be responsible for administration of the MISA PNC, decision-making will be shared among all member school boards served by the Centre.

Each MISA PNC identifies and documents a governance structure they will follow to ensure all member school boards are involved in the decision making of the Centre. The governance structure should include reference to how the directors of education of the member school boards and other key senior decision makers of member school boards are involved in the planning, delivery, and communication of the Centre’s activities.

Each Centre’s Method of Operation should stress participation among its member school boards. Success will depend on the ability of each Centre to work collaboratively, gathering input from all members and drawing on the expert knowledge and support of individual staff from across the member boards relative to data management, data use, and training. Decisions about expenditures, activities and partnerships with other organizations should be determined by all. Implementation is the collective responsibility of all members. Decisions may be made by consensus, by majority rule, or by some other mutually agreed to means which is documented in the MISA PNC’s Method of Operation.

Each Centre’s Method of Operation should clearly indicate the method (e.g., committees, working groups, networks, etc.) by which the activities of the Centre will be undertaken.

Each MISA PNC will forge formal connections to the research community. This may include university and college research units, faculties of education, independent researchers, non-profit groups and government research centres. Each Centre should have formal connections to researchers who will provide advice and support to the Centre and its members as well as providing linkages to the research community.
Each Centre will develop a communications/knowledge mobilization strategy that describes how they are actively engaging a wide range of stakeholders from their member boards in the work of the MISA PNC. The strategy should include a description of how the MISA PNC intends to disseminate the resources of the Centre to teachers, principals, and board administrators with the objective of promoting enhancements in the use of information and evidence to improve student outcomes. As part of the communications strategy, each MISA PNC is required to have a publicly accessible web site to ensure the work (i.e., supports, resources and tools) of the MISA PNC are widely available to all, especially teachers and principals.

Self-evaluations should be performed by each MISA Professional Network Centre through feedback forms, region-wide surveys, and/or by other means. These self-evaluations should identify discrepancies between stated goals and outcomes. It is by undertaking this type of assessment that continuous improvement will result. The self-evaluations will supplement the periodic updates and reporting requirements of the ministry.

3. Activities

Each MISA Professional Network Centre will include in its operational plan its strategy for advancing and supporting member boards’ MISA Local Capacity Building efforts through the following:

- professional learning (i.e., development and sharing of supports and resources and facilitation of professional learning related to the appropriate use of evidence at the school board, school and classroom levels – especially linked to instructional practice);
- research and evaluation (i.e., building capacity within/among school boards and regionally – especially the use of research/evaluation evidence by principals and teachers); and,
- promoting knowledge mobilization of the supports, resources, and tools developed by all MISA PNCs for use across the province (e.g., to ensure the importance of evidence-informed decision making is understood at the school and classroom levels and also to ensure that principals and teachers are aware of the supports and resources available).

MISA PNC activities are to be clearly linked to key board and ministry priorities and should indicate how they are supporting boards to better utilize data and evidence to implement initiatives such as the school effectiveness framework, school and board improvement plans, student success, growing success, leadership strategy and the ministry’s research and evaluation strategy.
The operational plan is to describe the specific activities to be carried out as well as identifying participants to be engaged in the activity (i.e., brief description to include who is responsible for planning and carrying out each activity as well as the intended target audience). In addition, the operational plan is to include a detailed description of the anticipated outcomes which should include the linkage to a board and/or ministry priority and brief description of how the specific activity will contribute to the Local Capacity Building efforts of member boards. It is the responsibility of each MISA PNC to select its own evaluation measurement(s) for each activity it will undertake. Evaluation is essential for gauging the progress of the MISA PNC as well as to demonstrate how the MISA PNC is enabling the member boards to better achieve key board and ministry priorities. Each MISA PNC will determine the most appropriate method of evaluating an activity, but depending upon the activity, this could take the form of a survey, focus group discussion, or a more detailed evaluation.

Finally, the projected cost of each proposed activity must be included. The projected cost does not include in-kind resources provided by the member boards but instead represents the cost to the MISA PNC of carrying out the activity.

**Submission of the MISA PNC Operational Plan**

All member school boards are expected to contribute to the development of the operational plan for their Centre. It is the role of each MISA PNC Executive Lead to coordinate the input from all member boards and to submit the coordinated operational plan to the ministry by the submission deadline of September 23, 2011. Note, the operational plan requires the endorsement of the director of education of each member board prior to its submission to the ministry.