

Crafting Quality Recommendations

The goal of recommendations is to provide principals with **CONCRETE** suggestions on things that they can do immediately to improve their school. To achieve this, please adhere to the following guidance:

1. Recommendations must be school specific. The recommendations should not apply to multiple schools we visit.
2. Recommendations must be in concrete terms. Avoid education-speak. When things are left open for interpretation (and mis-interpretation), the recommendation is bound to be unsuccessful.
3. For each recommendation, it should be apparent **WHO** the recommendation is for. Tenet 2 will most likely be for the school leader(s). Tenet 3 could be leadership and/or staff/coaches. Tenet 4 could be leadership and/or staff/coaches. Tenet 5 could be leadership and/or staff/student support staff. Tenet 6 could be leadership or staff. Know exactly **who** the recommendation is for when you write it.
4. The recommendation should address what you see as the best way for the school to advance in each Tenet. Most schools we visit may be at the beginning stages of development (Stage A or Stage B or Stage C). Your recommendation needs to take this into account. If the end stage is "Stage R," your recommendation should not be all of the activities needed for "Stage R," but rather what is needed to go from stage A to stage B to stage C, or from C to D to E.
5. Recommendations should be achievable. For them to be achievable, they should be based on the skill level of the staff and the time and money available to the staff. Broad, ambitious recommendations that cover all facets of the a tenet are going to be hard to achieve. Keep in mind throughout the development of the recommendation -- why hasn't the school done this already?
6. In most cases, the recommendations that the school will need to focus on will be in Tenet 2, 3 and 4. If you provide the school with an ambitious, overly complicated recommendation for 5 or 6, ask yourself if the time that will be spent to achieve that recommendation will impede the school's ability to achieve the recommendations in Tenet 2, 3 or 4.
7. It should be clear to the principal **HOW** the team expects each of the recommendations to happen. After you write your recommendation, see if there is any point where one might ask "**How will that happen?**" In many case there may be a need to drill down further. Similarly, parameters regarding **WHEN** things will happen will be particularly useful. Instead of saying "Meet with APs to review assessment data" say how often this should occur: "Meet weekly with APs to review assessment data."
8. Connected to number 7, DO NOT USE terms such as: "Ensure systems" or "Establish systems." You will need to drill down further to describe how that will occur. If you do use "ENSURE" make sure there are strategies associated with what is being ensured – for example: "Ensure that PBIS is implemented with fidelity **by**:"
9. DO NOT USE: "Provide PD" or "Provide training" unless you are thoroughly convinced that 1) there has never been training on this topic before AND 2) the reason it is not occurring is solely because the staff has never had training on this topic before AND 3) You are confident that if the staff had received training on this before they would definitely be doing what you want. In most cases, the chance that all three are true will be rare.

10. DO NOT USE: "stakeholders" (tell who you mean), "rigorous" (tell what you mean)

11. It is acceptable to include bullets within the recommendation. This may be the way to write in a manner that is clear and specific. For example, the team at one school decided that the instructional practices did little to promote students having discussions. Their recommendation described HOW the team felt they could get students to talk more. It read:

Ask students questions that:

- require group discussions
- allow for multiple correct answers
- require students to support their answers
- allow students adequate time to develop their answers

12. You may also find that using the term "such as" allows you to provide specific recommendations to describe what you mean without entirely endorsing an approach or program.

13. The Recommendations for Tenet 2 should come AFTER the recommendations for Tenets 3 to 6. Many of those recommendations will be for the school leader, so you will probably find it helpful to connect some aspects of those recommendations to the Tenet 2 recommendation.

14. On completion of your recommendations, read through them as if you are the principal of the school. Ask yourself: 1) Is it **clear** what I need to do as principal? 2) Is it **reasonable** what I need to do? Telling principals to model numerous lessons, attend an excessive amount of meetings, or do an excessive amount of preparation for meetings may be seen as unreasonable. If the principal thinks the recommendation is very unreasonable, chances are it will never be addressed.

15. A good recommendation could typically be easily monitored by an outsider. If it can be easily monitored, then it is getting at the level of concreteness needed. This is another reason why "establish systems" or "meet with parents" is not concrete enough. Be specific.