

Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA)
Professional Network Centres
Planning Guide

Revised June 2010

Ministry of Education
Education Statistics and Analysis Branch
777 Bay Street, 4th Floor, Suite 422
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

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) initiative. 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 professional 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.

The ministry provides up to \$230,000/year to each MISA Professional Network Centre to help offset the costs associated with the Centres' activities. Funding is for the period of April 1 to March 31 of the following year. 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 four component areas which must be addressed in the annual MISA PNC operational plan in order to be eligible for ministry funding. Individual MISA PNCs and their member boards will propose the activities that will be undertaken in each of the four areas in order to best meet the needs of the member boards and then submit the operational plan for ministry review and approval. MISA PNCs' operational plans should reflect the focus of 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/or 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 following three areas of responsibility of the Centre will be advanced:

- research and evaluation capacity (i.e., within/among school boards and regionally);
- professional learning (i.e., development of tools/resources and facilitation of professional learning); and,
- communications (e.g., to ensure the importance of evidence-informed decision making is understood at the school and classroom levels).

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. A Learning Community

Each MISA Professional Network Centre will include in its operational plan its strategy for building and sustaining its professional learning community. Categories of learning should align with the MISA core capacity areas (data management, human resources/training, and technology) and should be focused on creating and sharing effective practices and strategies, especially in the area of exemplary data management practices related to key student achievement indicators. The activities to be delivered by each Centre should reflect the needs of the member school boards as evidenced in their current MISA Local Capacity Building plans.

MISA PNC activities are to be clearly linked to key ministry priorities and should indicate how they are supporting boards to better utilize data and evidence to implement ministry 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.

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.

4. Communication

Each Centre will develop a communications 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., tools, training, and materials) of the MISA PNC are widely available to all, especially teachers and principals.

In addition, the communications strategy will include a description of how the Centre will regularly communicate with member school boards, other MISA PNCs, the ministry, and the research community. The strategy may also include reference to the meeting of the MISA PNC Executive Leads with the ministry on a monthly basis or more frequently as needed.

Outcomes/Indicators of Success

The operational plan is to describe the specific activities to be carried out in each of the four component areas outlined above as well as identifying who is responsible for each activity. In addition, the operational plan is to include a detailed description of the outcome measures/indicators linked to a ministry priority that the Centre will use for determining achievement of desired outcomes associated with each activity. It is the responsibility of each MISA PNC to select its own outcome measurement(s) for each activity it will undertake. These outcomes are 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 the ministry's key priorities.

In addition, for each activity the operational plan is to include a description of how the Centre intends to measure the success of the activity – i.e., the method of evaluation. Again, it is at the discretion of the MISA PNC to 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.

The anticipated impact of each activity on member boards' MISA Local Capacity Building goals and thus their ability to undertake activities related to key ministry priorities is an important consideration in the operational plan. Each activity proposed by a Centre must show an anticipated impact.

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 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. Submission deadlines are determined on an annual basis and will be communicated in the spring of each year. Note, the operational plan requires the endorsement of the director of education of each member board prior to its submission to the ministry.