{ NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION }

Best Practices Tool Kit

Newspaper
Association
of America
Foundation

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{ introduction }

This Tool Kit is designed to help local NIE professionals conduct a comprehensive self-audit that will compare the local program to benchmarks that have been established through research. The data referenced in this Tool Kit come from research that was commissioned by NAA Foundation.

Phase I of the NIE Research examined the scope and structure of NIE programs in the United States. The entire report, called Measuring Up, can be downloaded at *http://www.naa.org/artpage.cfm?AID=4913&SID=87*. Phase II examined the impact that NIE programs have on student performance on standardized tests. The report of that research, Measuring Success, is also available for download at *http://www.naa.org/artpage.cfm?AID=5027&SID=87*.

A task force of experienced NIE personnel developed a list of "Best Practices" based on the research listed above. These Best Practices are characteristics that are typically present in high quality NIE programs. They are not normative standards to be used for judging programs, but rather positive (measurable) guides to help NIE professionals make decisions about their own programs.

For a program to be effective there must be a real partnership between the newspaper and the schools. Thus the Best Practices proposed here, as well as the associated benchmarks, apply both to what the newspaper does and what the schools do to make the program effective. These Best Practices are what a quality NIE program looks like.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS ARE OBSERVED AND MEASURED CONSISTENTLY

To be meaningful, these characteristics must be defined in ways that they can be observed and measured consistently across programs. They must be translated into a set of benchmarks that have widespread applicability. Some of the methods proposed here for measuring the selected characteristics are very direct and straightforward, while others are indirect indicators of those practices; both types are useful.

"The primary purpose of 'Best Practices' is to provide some guidance to NIE decision-makers by providing a meaningful set of reference points."

Similarly, some measures allow for absolute judgment ("Am I meeting a certain threshold of quality?") while others are more appropriate to relative judgments ("How does my program compare to others?" or "How did my program do last year?"). Taken together, these benchmarks provide a blueprint for all NIE professionals in developing successful programs.

There is empirical evidence about what factors have a direct impact on student learning, and thus, the Best Practices proposed here are, in large part, based on empirical evidence. The aim is to have benchmarks with a factual basis for their importance and specifications, and thus do not simply represent the opinion of NAA Foundation or some other group.

Comparing your program to these Best Practices enables you to "tell your story" in a more coherent and effective way. Taken together, these Best Practices should make clear what NIE is all about. In so doing, they provide legitimacy to budget requests; they provide a credible foundation for promotional efforts; and they provide a foundation for both developing appropriate external partnerships and for strengthening partnerships with the schools and teachers who are the programs' customers.

Since the primary purpose for developing these Best Practices is to enhance decision-making by individual newspapers, the initial focus in using them should be to improve self-assessment:

- How well is our program doing?
- What are our strengths and weaknesses?
- Are we making the best use of our resources?
- Are we reaching as many students as we should?

The list of Best Practices is a tool that will help individual newspapers establish priorities, determine what information is needed, explain how to get the information (including how to involve schools and teachers in this process) and how to interpret the results. They also will show NIE professionals how to incorporate into their own programs' profiles the unique activities in which they are engaged and the unique constraints that they face.

These Best Practices will facilitate making comparisons, not only with other similar newspapers but also with a newspaper's own past. These Best Practices can be an important planning tool, enabling newspapers to develop longer-term strategies for growing and strengthening programs.

One reason for focusing on *self-use* of these benchmarks is that to successfully pursue them, a program (and the schools with whom it works) must embrace the values that underlie them. Using the tools in this kit will greatly aid that process. At the same time, it also should be noted that these benchmarks provide a meaningful way for a newspaper to get an outside review of its program when that seems appropriate. Being open to such a review is one indication that an organization has internalized the values imbedded in these Best Practices.

The Role of the NAA Foundation

This project is not intended to establish a new NAA Foundation policy or to mandate what NIE programs must look like. Moreover, the focus is on individual newspapers using these tools as they see fit. In this context, the role of the Foundation is three-fold:

1. Provide leadership in developing and disseminating these Best Practices;

2. Assist individual newspapers in using these Best Practices in whatever way fits that newspaper's needs;

3. Promote NIE Best Practices to the wider community to strengthen the credibility of programs with their various external constituencies.

The Best Practices enumerated here are broad statements about characteristics. These practices can have multiple dimensions or ways of manifesting themselves. Associated with each of the Best Practices is a set of benchmarks that represents important, observable manifestations of the practices. Among the important characteristics of these benchmarks are the following:

- All of the benchmarks can be observed and measured in ways that are meaningful both across NIE programs and over time.

- Every effort has been made to use specific, concrete measures that do not represent purely subjective judgment. Sometimes this results in the use of indirect or surrogate measures. Other times it means using binary (yes/no) variables rather than continuous ones.

- Some measures are expressed as continuous variables where more is assumed to be better. In these cases, the reported benchmark represents the magnitude of this characteristic. In other cases, the benchmarks represent a specific threshold and what is reported is the percent of newspapers reaching this threshold. For variables shown in the table as continuous measures, some newspapers may choose to reposition these measures as thresholds to provide more effective guidance.

- The approach here allows individual newspapers to set their own priorities. To do so, however, it is important to keep in mind that some measures are interrelated. It is also important to avoid the bias of giving more weight to what is easily measured.

- The benchmarks require data from schools and teachers. The benchmarks that require this data must be important to these newspaper partners.

The Best Practices are presented in a series of tables that also contains ways of measuring them, their current prevalence and evidence of their impact on student performance. Below is a more detailed description of what is in the tables.

Eight Columns Across Explained

Column 1. Practice (General/Specific): The first column lists the general practices. Below each general practice are listed the specific benchmarks that are related to it. The general practice makes clear what the benchmarks are attempting to measure.

Column 2. Phase I/II: The second column contains ways in which the given benchmark can be measured based on data available from the Phase I and Phase II studies.

Column 3. Other Possibilities: The third column lists other ways (suggested by the task force and others) in which the given benchmark might be measured.

Column 4: Impact on Student Performance: The fourth column presents the empirical results from the Phase I and Phase II studies regarding the relationship between the given standard and student performance on standardized tests.

Column 5. Large Newspapers/Top Five Percent: Based on the data from the Phase I and Phase II studies, this is what the "practice" of the top 5 percent of *large* newspapers looks like on the given benchmark. This is one way to benchmark "best" practice for this group of newspapers. "Large" refers to newspapers with more than 50,000 daily circulation. [Note: the "top 5 percent" is the group of newspapers with the best overall performance on these metrics and not the top 5 percent for each individual metric.]

Column 6. Large Newspapers/Median: Based on the data from the Phase I and Phase II studies, this is what the "practice" for the median *large* newspaper looks like on the given standard. This is one way to benchmark "the current norm."

Columns 7 and 8: Small Newspapers/Top Five Percent/Median: The seventh and eighth columns provide the same information as the fifth and sixth columns for s*mall* newspapers (fewer than 50,000 daily circulation).

Six Rows Down Explained

The rows of the Table present information for the individual practices. There are six general practices, each with three or four specific practices (benchmarks) related to it.

ROW 1. Get newspapers to students in a way that makes a difference: This is the starting point— without getting and being able to work with the newspaper on a consistent basis for an extended period of time, the program has little short-term or long-term benefit. The flip side of this point is that there is clear evidence that NIE programs can have significant educational impact when students do work with the newspaper on a regular, ongoing basis.

The evidence also is clear that the students who benefit the most from NIE programs are the ones who are often underserved: low-income and minority students at all grade levels.

High schools have often been a challenge for NIE directors, but good programs find ways to get them involved. These points lead to three specific benchmarks that support this general practice:

- **Deliver Sufficient Quantity**
  NIE works best when there is a newspaper for every student in the classroom. This is especially true for low income and minority students, where part of the benefit comes from being able to take the newspaper home.

- **Deliver with Sufficient Consistency**
  While it might be argued that more is always better, the empirical evidence suggests that once a week is a minimum to have a significant impact on students and for teachers to make NIE a regular part of their curriculum. Similarly, NIE professionals will accomplish more by focusing on longer-term (the entire school year or close to it) rather than short-term subscriptions.

"All of the benchmarks can be observed and measured in ways that are meaningful both across NIE programs and over time."

- **Deliver to All Types of Students**

  It is important that NIE programs serve a wide range of grade levels. It is also critical that a quality NIE program provides service to low-income and/or minority students for whom English is not their first language.

ROW 2. Ensure that teachers are *able* to use newspapers effectively in the classroom: Successful use of newspapers in the classroom does not just happen. It requires resources, training and support. The key is building a meaningful partnership and understanding how to help meet the needs of teachers as well as students. Building a real partnership requires effective and ongoing communication. These considerations lead to four distinct benchmarks:

- Provide adequate curriculum materials
- Provide teacher training workshops
- Be able to respond to teacher questions and concerns
- Regularly communicate with teachers

ROW 3. Ensure that teachers *actually use* the newspapers they receive: Most teachers are under considerable pressure, and even the most willing teacher may have difficulty implementing an NIE curriculum if it is a burden or does not help them meet state and/or national standards. A quality NIE program acts as a facilitator for teachers—making NIE an easy program to implement and a program that is easily incorporated in a teacher's existing curriculum. Quality programs also make it clear that a teacher seeing positive results is the best motivator.

These considerations lead to three specific benchmarks:

- Have regular lesson plans that use newspapers
- Have teachers attend workshops/meetings
- Have teachers evaluate NIE as a learning tool

ROW 4. Obtain sufficient information/feedback to address problems with program: Quality programs constantly monitor how well they are doing and are prepared to make adjustments when problems are identified. This requires obtaining the relevant information on a consistent and timely basis. It also requires that a newspaper have a clear definition of "success" and have the tools to measure whether or not it has achieved success. The assumption that if the teacher is satisfied, the program must be working is not always valid.

Having good measurement tools and getting feedback from multiple sources is not just a necessity. It also reflects the attitudes of NIE staff and sends signals to other stakeholders about what is important to the newspaper.

These considerations lead to three specific benchmarks:

- Gather/maintain data on program reach
- Gather/assess data on program impact/ effectiveness
- Get feedback from all stakeholders

ROW 5. Provide sufficient resources to ensure program is effective: It takes resources to run a quality NIE program. On the staff side, the newspaper needs someone for whom NIE is their top priority, someone who can be available when problems arise, and someone who can focus their efforts on making the program successful. In most cases, this means having someone who is full-time. Quality programs also require non-labor resources (e.g., curriculum and training materials)—here it is important to recognize that these resources need to grow as the number of students served grows, not just as the number of schools or teachers grows. Ensuring adequate growth over time is as important for most programs as how they compare to others.

Newspapers also need to keep in mind that it is not just a physical product (a newspaper) that they are providing to teachers and students; what matters is the content that is provided. In many cases, the information can be provided in a more timely and effective way through the newspaper's Web site. Understanding how to appropriately use this channel is important, recognizing that there may be no "circulation" benefit to doing so.

These considerations lead to three specific benchmarks:

- Sufficient staff is provided
- The newspaper commits sufficient resources to the NIE program
- NIE has an Internet site or a visible presence on the newspaper Web site

ROW 6. Effectively manage the program: Like every other department, the NIE program must be well managed to be successful. This does not mean simply being fiscally prudent or having management information and control systems. Quality NIE programs go beyond this and take a more strategic approach to management. The specific benchmarks proposed here are all manifestations of such strategic thinking:

- **NIE is an appropriate share of total circulation**
  NIE programs can get too big relative to the overall size of the newspaper. When this happens, their impact on circulation becomes such that current numbers must dominate decision-making. Consideration about the total "reach" of an NIE program should also be made in this context.

- **Have working relationship with editorial department**
  A good newspaper is one that reflects its community; and a good NIE program provides an important link by enabling students to use the newspaper to deal with issues that are important to that community in a timely way. Doing this effectively requires a joint effort with news.

- **Make appropriate use of third-party funding sources and partners**
  Individual newspapers face widely differing circumstances in the terms of the needs of the schools they serve. For some, other partners that can help both with funding and providing educational services can play an important role. However, these outside partners can also create challenges. The characteristic of a quality program here is not following one particular course of action. Rather, quality programs have a clear plan for involving outside partners rather than just letting the nature and size of their role simply happen.

- **Be efficient**
  Strategic efficiency is not just about lowering costs. It is about understanding the value, or benefit, of any given activity and the most cost-effective way of creating that value—for example, recognizing when the Internet is the appropriate way to deliver a particular body of information, or recognizing when an existing curriculum package will deliver almost the same benefit as a new, customized one. Being efficient means that you can document the value (or the expected value) of a given expenditure or use of staff.

"Evidence also is clear that the students who benefit the most from NIE programs are the ones who are often underserved: low-income and minority students at all grade levels."

Column 1	Column 2		Column 3	Column 4
Practice (general/specific)	Metric (how it is measured)			Impact on Student Performance
	Measured by Phase I/II	Other Possibilities		
BEST PRACTICE #1 Get newspapers to students in a way that makes a difference.				
• Deliver sufficient quantities	Newspapers/classroom delivery			High
• Deliver with sufficient consistency	Percent of schools served at least once a week for at least 35 wks/yr			High
• Deliver to all types of students (low income and minority students)	Percent of NIE students who are low income/minority compared to percent of all students in delivery area	Have substantial presence in classes for non-English speaking students		High
• Deliver to all types of students (High Schools)	Percent of high schools in delivery area served			Medium
BEST PRACTICE #2 Ensure that teachers are *able* to use newspapers effectively in the classroom.				
• Provide adequate curriculum materials	Make free materials available on a regular basis to all schools	Curriculum is easy to use and meets state standards		Medium
• Provide teacher training workshops	Number of workshops per year			Medium
• Able to respond to teacher questions	Have a help-line and/or staff available			Low
• Regularly communicate with teachers	N/A	Newsletter, Web site and/or regular newspaper space		N/A
BEST PRACTICE #3 Ensure that teachers *actually use* the newspapers they receive.				
• Have regular lesson plans that use newspapers	Collect data on whether teachers have plans	Annual survey of teachers (percent of teachers who have plans)		Medium
• Teachers attend workshops and meetings	Percent of NIE teachers who attend at least one training per year			Medium
• Teachers evaluate NIE as a learning tool	Percent of teachers who do formal evaluation of effectiveness			Medium
BEST PRACTICE #4 Obtain sufficient information/feedback to address problems with the program.				
• Gather/maintain data on program reach	Have a formal evaluation tool (Year to Year circulation data; teacher/student enrollment)			Low
• Gather/assess data on program impact/effectiveness (students)	Collect data on student performance			Medium
• Gather/assess data on program impact/effectiveness (teachers)	Collect data on teacher satisfaction			Medium
• Get feedback from all stakeholders	Collect data from non-teachers			Medium
BEST PRACTICE #5 Provide sufficient resources to ensure program is effective.				
• Staff	At least one full-time NIE staff			Medium
• Budget resources	Non-labor budget of $____ per student served per year			Medium
• Internet site	Have an Internet site			Low
BEST PRACTICE #6 Effectively manage the NIE program				
• NIE is an appropriate share of total circulation	NIE is between 2% and 3% of total circulation			Medium
• Have a working relationship with the editorial department	NIE is able to develop time-sensitive distribution and curriculum	Number of news-related special sections produced		Medium
• Make appropriate use of third-party funding sources and partners	Have a formal plan for how to use sponsorship – if at all			N/A
• Be efficient	Have a formal internal review process that is used at least yearly	Track turnover of NIE personnel		N/A

Column 1	Column 5	Column 6	Column 7	Column 8
Practice (general/specific)	**Current Practice**			
	Large Newspapers (Over 50,000 daily circulation)		Small Newspapers (Under 50,000 daily circulation)	
	Top 5%	Median	Top 5%	Median
BEST PRACTICE #1 Get newspapers to students in a way that makes a difference.				
• Deliver sufficient quantities	27 per delivery	15 per delivery	30 per delivery	16 per delivery
• Deliver with sufficient consistency	82% receive weekly delivery	52% receive weekly delivery	48% receive weekly delivery	48% receive weekly delivery
• Deliver to all types of students (low income and minority students)	0.7% of minority/low income students in district served	0.5% of minority/low income students in district served	0.8% of minority/low income students in district served	0.6% of minority/low income students in district served
• Deliver to all types of students (High Schools)	20% of high schools served	12% of high schools served	28% of high schools served	18% of high schools served
BEST PRACTICE #2 Ensure that teachers are *able* to use newspapers effectively in the classroom.				
• Provide adequate curriculum materials	100% provide free materials	84% provide free materials	100% provide free materials	70% provide free materials
• Provide teacher training workshops	2.5 workshops per year	1 workshop per year	2 workshops per year	<1 workshop per year
• Able to respond to teacher questions	100% able to respond quickly	70% able to respond quickly	100% able to respond quickly	50% able to respond quickly
• Regularly communicate with teachers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
BEST PRACTICE #3 Ensure that teachers *actually use* the newspapers they receive.				
• Have regular lesson plans that use newspapers	50% of teachers receive lesson plans	10% of teachers receive lesson plans	40% of teachers receive lesson plans	10% of teachers receive lesson plans
• Teachers attend workshops and meetings	50% of teachers attend at least one workshop per year	25% of teachers attend at least one workshop per year	60% of teachers attend at least one workshop per year	30% of teachers attend at least one workshop per year
• Teachers evaluate NIE as a learning tool	80% of teachers evaluate effectiveness	80% of teachers evaluate effectiveness	80% of teachers evaluate effectiveness	80% of teachers evaluate effectiveness
BEST PRACTICE #4 Obtain sufficient information/feedback to address problems with the program.				
• Gather/maintain data on program reach	90% maintain data on program reach	30% maintain data on program reach	70% maintain data on program reach	20% maintain data on program reach
• Gather/assess data on program impact/effectiveness (students)	40% maintain data on student performance	5% maintain data on student performance	15% maintain data on student performance	<1% maintain data on student performance
• Gather/assess data on program impact/effectiveness (teachers)	80% maintain data on teacher satisfaction	35% maintain data on teacher satisfaction	60% maintain data on teacher satisfaction	20% maintain data on teacher satisfaction
• Get feedback from all stakeholders	20% collect data from non-teachers	1% collect data from non-teachers	10% collect data from non-teachers	<1% collect data from non-teachers
BEST PRACTICE #5 Provide sufficient resources to ensure program is effective.				
• Staff	100% have at least one full-time NIE staff	90% have at least one full-time NIE staff	100% have at least one full-time NIE staff	40% have at least one full-time NIE staff
• Budget resources	$2.75 per student served per year	$.75 per student served per year	$3.50 per student served per year	$1.50 per student served per year
• Internet site	100% have an NIE Internet site	75% have an NIE Internet site	90% have an NIE Internet site	45% have an NIE Internet site
BEST PRACTICE #6 Effectively manage the NIE program				
• NIE is an appropriate share of total circulation	100% are between 2% and 3% of total circulation	60% are between 2% and 3% of total circulation	90% are between 2% and 3% of total circulation	44% are between 2% and 3% of total circulation
• Have a working relationship with the editorial department	75% demonstrate ability to work with the editorial dept.	25% demonstrate ability to work with the editorial dept.	90% demonstrate ability to work with the editorial dept.	44% demonstrate ability to work with the editorial dept.
• Make appropriate use of third-party funding sources and partners	90% use sponsorships	75% use sponsorships	75% use sponsorships	55% use sponsorships
• Be efficient	80% use a formal internal review process yearly	20% use a formal internal review process yearly	50% use a formal internal review process yearly	10% use a formal internal review process yearly

As noted in the introduction to this tool kit, Best Practices and benchmarks are intended to help NIE professionals make better decisions and more effectively communicate their "story" to their many constituencies. The purpose of this section is to provide direction to NIE professionals to enable them to develop a "performance" picture of their respective programs: What's going well? Where are there opportunities? What "needs" does the program have? In general, doing such an audit involves five distinct tasks.

Task I: Decide What Matters

The definition of "NIE Program" is very general and allows for a wide variety of approaches. Moreover, circumstances for each individual program vary widely.

1. Rank the Best Practices from one to six in priority order for your NIE program. Identify the top three or four as high priority and the bottom two or three as lower priority.

2. Within each Best Practices, rank the specific benchmarks.

3. Establish a cut-off for the number of metrics you will use for each Best Practice (as a general guideline, small programs and new programs should focus on no more than two benchmarks for each Best Practice, and large, established programs should focus on no more than three).

4. Pick a specific metric to be used for each benchmark. Again, the items in the table are intended as suggestions. If a program feels that there is a better way to measure a specific benchmark, it can do so provided that **a)** the new measure is objective and directly observable and **b)** can be used to make meaningful comparisons over time.

Task II: Collect Data

For each measure a program has decided to use, it must determine what data it needs to collect. The table here, *NIE Program Metrics: Sources and Calculations*, provides suggested sources and calculations (if any) for the metrics listed in the previous section. In general, all metrics should be generated annually.

Task III: Make Comparisons

Audits provide information on *relative* performance — how well are you doing compared to something. That "something" may be another newspaper or group of newspapers, or it may be your own past. The tools presented here offer two groups (based on size) as possible references. A program may decide, however, that its own unique situation makes neither of these groups a good fit and, thus, may choose to simply focus on "improving" its performance year over year. These comparisons should involve looking at both overall performance and performance on the individual measures you have chosen to monitor.

1. Identify your reference group(s). Data is presented for the top five percent and the median for a newspaper's size group.

   • For doing an overall comparison, you need to establish weights for each of the measures.

2. Compare your results on individual measures with those of the reference group(s) to develop a table of "strengths" and "weaknesses." As a general guide, "strengths" are items for which your result meets the benchmark for the top five percent in your circulation category, and "weaknesses" are items where your performance is below the median.

Task IV: Evaluate Results and Set Goals

The next task is to use the above results to develop a plan for moving forward. This involves having a good understanding of where you are at the time of your audit and why and where you want your program to be.

1. Evaluating the results of your comparisons means understanding why you do well on some measures and not so well on others. In developing this understanding, you should consider the following questions:

   • Were you surprised by any of the actual measures, your own performance, by the median or by top five percent?

   • How much of the outcomes that concern you involve (or depend on) others (e.g., teachers)?

   • Do you see any conflicts imbedded in the results?

   • Do the outcomes that concern you suggest a need for additional resources or for using existing resources differently?

   • For the things you do well, can you imagine doing them more efficiently?

   • How can you frame your weaknesses as opportunities?

2. Review your choice of measures. Ideally you should have a mix of strengths, weaknesses and measures on which you are in the middle. If all you have are strengths, you should go back to the first task and look for items on which you may not do so well (i.e., is there something you have been overlooking in the past that could improve your program?). Remember that initially you developed your list without regard to actual performance. That was to give you an honest picture of what you care about. Now is the time to review that list in terms of whether it is the "right" list or should you include other measures to better understand how your program compares to others.

"Audits provide information on *relative* performance — how well are you doing compared to something."

3. Set specific objectives and timeframes. The first priority should be to eliminate weaknesses. There are significant interdependencies among the various measures and, thus, one serious weakness has a much greater impact on overall performance than improving all of your strengths.

4. For those goals with multiyear timeframes, you need to establish a path to reaching your goals. In doing so, you should keep in mind that getting from your current situation to halfway is easier than going from halfway to fully attaining a specific goal. Any timetable should anticipate this fact. A good rule of thumb is that you should aim to achieve 60 percent of a two-year goal in year one and 40 percent of a three-year goal in year one. For a plan to impact current behavior, goals should not have more than a three-year timeframe.

Task V: Plan to Monitor Progress

Utilizing benchmarks as a tool to guide decision-making and communication is not a one-time activity, but rather an ongoing effort. To reach your definition of success, you need to have in place on-going mechanisms to collect and evaluate data, and to assess the effectiveness of actions you might take. That is, this monitoring effort must include not only continuing to monitor performance, but also to assess any actions you take to improve performance. You will need a written plan, one that has the support not only of the NIE department, but also of senior management. This plan should include the following elements:

1. **DATA COLLECTION:** Have you committed the resources to continue collecting the necessary data? Do you have a mechanism for getting teachers to collect the data they need? (Note: to work well, this mechanism/process must involve, and have the support of, the school principal). Where data collection depends on others, you may need to offer compensation.

2. **PROCESS FOR EVALUATING:** You will want to make the same comparisons each time in order to develop a picture of the progress you are (or are not) making. For items on which a newspaper is doing well, the focus should be on achieving a given level of performance.

3. **ACTION PLAN:** Some decisions about what actions a newspaper might take if a given outcome occurs need to be made ahead of time. At the very least, a list of options should be articulated. In developing this part of the plan, it is important to keep in mind that just as certain outcomes depend on the performance of others, so too do the effects of certain actions. For items on which a newspaper is not doing well, the focus should be on achieving a target rate of improvement.

"Utilizing benchmarks as a tool to guide decision-making and communication is not a one-time activity, but rather an ongoing effort."

Metric	Source	Calculation (if needed)
Newspapers/student/year	Distribution system; information on students from school/teacher survey	Number of newspapers delivered/number of delivery dates
Percent of schools served at least once a week for at least 35 wks/year	Distribution system	100 x (number of schools served at least once a week for at least 35 weeks)/(total number of schools served)
Demographic index	School district data (and/or school/teacher survey)	100 x (low-income or minority enrollment in schools served by NIE/all students in NIE schools)/(low-income or minority enrollment in all schools in service area/total enrollment in all schools in service area)
Percent of high schools served	Distribution system and school district data	100 x (number of high schools served)/(total number of high schools in service area)
Have substantial presence in ESL classes	School District Data/ Teacher Survey	100 x (Number of ESL classes served/total ESL classes in service area)
Make free materials available on a regular basis to all schools	Internal documents	Number should reflect maximum number of opportunities for any individual teacher
Number of workshops/year	Self-determined	Count of workshops offered per year – either calendar year or school year
Have helpline/staff available	Self-determined	Y/N – a "yes" should indicate that staff are available on a regular basis
Curriculum materials easy to use	School/teacher survey	Y/N – a "yes" should indicate that you both ask teachers this question and that you look at the results
Regular in-paper ad space	Insertion orders/tearsheets	Y/N – a "yes" should indicate at least monthly presence. Determine column inches used per year
Collect data on whether teachers have plans	Self-determined	Y/N – a "yes" indicates that most teachers find them easy to use
Percent of teachers who attend training	Attendance records from workshops; number of teachers served from school/teacher survey and/or circulation system	100 x (number who attend)/(total number of teachers served)
Percent of teachers who do formal evaluation	School/teacher survey	100 x (number of teachers who say they do formal evaluation)/(total number of teachers served)
Have formal evaluation tool	Self-determined	Y/N – a "yes" should indicate that you actually use the tool Y/N – this could include administrators and parents
Collect data on student performance	Self-determined	School records/teacher survey
Collect data on teacher satisfaction	Teacher survey	Y/N School/teacher survey
Collect data from non-teachers	Self-determined	Y/N – this could include administrators and parents
At least one full-time NIE staff	Personnel records	Y/N
Non-labor budget of $___/ student served per year	Internal budget documents and school/teacher survey	(Total non-labor expenditures)/(Total number of students served)
Have an Internet site	Self-determined	Y/N – a "yes" should indicate the site has information for teachers and students (and not simply that the newspaper a main Web site)
NIE between two percent and three percent of total circulation	Circulation records	100 x ("school copies")/(total daily circulation in the defined service area)

The information gained from using the metrics presented here as part of an "audit" of an individual NIE program can be used in two distinct contexts. The first is inside the newspaper itself, as a way to assess the performance of various elements of the program, to make better decisions regarding the allocation of resources for the program, and as a basis for requesting additional resources for the program (including additional cooperation from other units within the newspaper).

The second is to more effectively tell the program's story to various constituencies outside the newspaper, including current and potential customers (schools and teachers), current and potential partners (e.g., sponsors), and the community (including parents of school-aged children). Both of these are essentially communications tasks. For a program like this to be successful, the decision about with whom to share the results of the self-audit must be made by the NIE staff, and the NIE staff must understand why they are sharing the information.

Using Results Internally

Results can be used internally in two distinct ways.

1. Most NIE programs work with very limited budgets and very few staff. Success often requires the cooperation of other departments. Moreover, one of the most important resources many have is the newspapers donated by subscribers on vacation, and how these are allocated typically involves working with the circulation manager. The key here is to show the relationship between overall program performance and the individual metric(s) that is/are most relevant to a particular decision (e.g., allocating staff time to a training workshop, getting news to produce a special section, or allocating donated newspapers to a group of schools that may have little value to circulation). Remember that the argument can be made both in terms of a program's own data and in terms of the Table of Best Practices that shows the pattern for NIE programs overall.

2. Asking for additional resources to grow an NIE program requires strong justification. Indeed, it can be a challenge simply to maintain existing resources. It is not that most publishers oppose NIE, but rather that they need clear evidence to justify virtually any expenditure. This story needs to be two-fold: what has been accomplished to date and the potential to do even more in the future. The first half should highlight program strengths, while the second message should focus on the evidence that improving in specific areas will have a positive payoff. The written plan developed during the self-audit is be extremely valuable here.

USING RESULTS EXTERNALLY WITH EDUCATORS, SPONSORS, PARTNERS AND THE COMMUNITY

In this era of wanting accountability from this nation's elementary and secondary schools, being able to demonstrate that a program has met an externally-defined quality standard and being able to offer evidence that it works are two very valuable uses of these Best Practices. The key is tailoring the message imbedded in the data for each constituency. Here are key themes likely to be useful in such communications.

1. **Teachers (and Schools).** Clearly, these are the most important external constituents. They not only make the decision about whether to participate in the program, but they also play a key role in determining how successful it will be and how successful efforts to collect the data necessary to monitor the program will be. In using the results of a performance audit as part of conversations with teachers and schools (both current and prospective customers), there are three distinct messages you will want to develop.

   a. We have a quality program and a program that works. (Note that this message is especially important when teachers or schools are getting newspapers "free".) You should frame this message in terms of what teachers are trying to accomplish (to show how it dovetails with their objectives), and you should focus on those specific metrics that help make this point.

   b. Teachers themselves are an important part of making the program a quality one.

   c. It is important to be able to document how both the newspaper and teachers are doing, both to validate the joint investment and to help make improvements to the program.

3. **Community** (*This audience includes parents and might include other newspapers if you choose to share your results*). What you say publicly about your program is entirely up to you. These data provide a way to speak both generally and specifically, and to focus either on overall performance or on performance in specific areas. Communications related to good corporate citizenship will generally want to focus on overall performance. Note that communicating results is not a yes/no decision. You may choose to share any portion of your results.

"In this era of many competing requests for both time and money, having evidence to support claims about the value of your program and the quality of your program is important."