Action Research Design

Action research is a learning design individuals, small groups, or a whole faculty can use to study problems of practice in their work.

PURPOSE To guide educators to engage in *action research*, a "continual disciplined inquiry conducted to inform and improve our practice as educators" (Calhoun, 2002, p. 18)

PRODUCT Share results of the inquiry, with the intention to use the findings to direct next steps.

PARTICIPANTS Any small group, grade-level team or department, or full faculty can identify a question to guide the action research.

MATERIALS Protocol and *lots* of data

TIME Conducting action research can vary from several weeks to a multiyear period (The length depends on the scope of the research question or questions, the availability of data, and the expected time to see results from the interventions).

PREPARATION This protocol is dependent on the development of a research question or questions and the collection of sufficient data.

PROCESS The process involves six phases. The following chart includes key actions to implement action research and the steps necessary to carry out the key actions.

Phase	Key Actions	Process Steps
Phase 1	Faculty, leadership team, study group, or teacher identifies an area of interest and prepares the guiding question or questions to focus the work.	1. Identify the area of interest or concern. 2. Use open-ended questions to help narrow the focus. 3. Look to other members of your research group to give you feedback. 4. Ask teachers outside your group the following: "What do you think of this issue? Is this a worthwhile issue to pursue? What suggestions can you offer to improve this issue?" 5. Refine if necessary.
Phase 2	Faculty, leadership team, study group, or teacher identifies data to collect.	1. Decide what kind of data sources you need (Data sources are the people, artifacts, resources, and so on, from which data are drawn. The data collection methods/tools determine what kinds of data, qualitative or quantitative, emerge from the collection.). 2. Collect data from at least three sources. 3. Keep a data log recording of when you collect all information, noting the collected data, time, and place. 4. Organize your data. Make the data presentable and understandable for a person unfamiliar with the project.
Phase 3	Faculty, leadership team, study group, or teacher collects data.	Collect data from multiple sources in multiple formats.
Phases 4–5	Faculty, leadership team, study group, or teacher organizes and interprets the data. Share the findings with partners. Compare results with desirable future outcomes.	1. Analyze data. 2. Compare current state with the desired state. 3. Report findings. 4. Interpret results. 5. Plan next actions.
Phase 6	Determine whether action is needed. If so, take short-term action immediately and plan long-term action.	Summarize results of the research, lessons learned for future practice, and ways to integrate the learning into future practice.

Reference

Caro-Bruce, C. (2000). Action research facilitator's handbook. Oxford, OH: National Staff Development Council.