

UNIT 5:

Evaluating Your Current Computer System

5



Before you can decide the future direction of your school's computer system, it is vital to have a complete understanding of its current state. This unit will help you collect information about your school's computer system and effective use, which you will use to help guide your planning process.

What computer resources are at our school, and what is the condition of these resources?

Before you can prepare a plan to sustain and maintain your school's computer system, it is essential to have a detailed list of what computer equipment, software, and related computer resources the school owns, the age of this equipment, and its operational condition. To collect this information, a sub-team from the SPT should carry out a detailed assessment of the school's computer system. Some schools may have an existing inventory of their school's computer equipment and software. Even if your school has such an inventory, we strongly recommend that you carry out an updated assessment using the Toolkit's **Computer System Status Assessment form** found at the end of the Toolkit and on the accompanying CD.

What information should we collect about our school's computer resources?

You will want to collect a mix of quantitative and qualitative information about all computer resources at the school. The Toolkit's **Computer System Status Assessment form** will help you carry out this assessment.

What should we do with the data from our school's computer system assessment?

After the assessment team has used the Toolkit's **Computer System Status Assessment form** to collect data on your school's computer system, it will need to create a summary report for the SPT and the larger school community. It is important that the data sheets and the report present an accurate picture of the status of your school's current computer system. Schools often have a heterogeneous computer system with a diverse mix of equipment and software. It is also common for some of their computer equipment not to be working or working only partly. Some schools may even have more computers that are not working than those that are operational. Some school staff may feel embarrassed about the status of their computer system and may want to modify the report and only discuss functioning equipment. It is critically important, however, that the assessment team present an accurate status report of the entire computer system since it is impossible to develop an effective CSS plan if it is based on inaccurate information and an incomplete report.

Some in the school community may become upset when they learn the truth about the status of the computer system, and fear of

this may discourage the principal, teachers, or others from producing an accurate report or not distributing the report to the whole school and the surrounding community. Experience shows, however, that most members of a school's community are more willing to support improvements in the computer system if they know the truth about the status of the current system and what the school is doing to improve it. An honest approach to communicating the system status helps build the credibility of the SPT and ensures meaningful improvements.

The following sample of an assessment report will assist the assessment team in preparing your school's summary report. You can use this sample report and the **Computer System Status Assessment Report** template, found at the end of the Toolkit and on the CD, to prepare your report. Because each school's computer system is unique, each assessment team must use its best judgment in modifying the Toolkit's School's Computer System Assessment Report template to summarize the status of its school's computer system effectively.

How do we, the school administrators, teachers, students, and others, use our school's computer resources?

In addition to assessing the status of the school's computer system, it is important to assess how different members of the school community use the computers. Some of the main goals of your school's CSS plan is to enable the school to improve how computers are used, ensure that all teachers and students make optimum use of these resources, and make it possible for other members of the school community to benefit from the computer system. To achieve those goals, it is important to have a

clear understanding of how members of the school's community, especially teachers and students, use the school's computer system.

You can learn how members of your school's community use the school's computers by surveying how people use the computers. A sample **Computer Usage Survey** for students, staff, and community members is included in the Annex and on the CD. Members of the SPT should review and modify this sample survey so it is appropriate for your school and answers all of your questions about how members of your school's community uses computers.

It can be very time consuming to have every member of the school's community complete the survey. It is much better to select a sample of people from across the community, made up of administrative staff, teachers, students, parents and other from outside of the school. The following suggested list of who should take the survey includes a sample method for choosing individuals from each of these groups to create the survey sample.

- Since the school administrative staff is likely small, **every member of the staff** should complete the survey.
- Similarly, **every teacher** should complete the survey.
- Not all students need to complete the survey; **10 percent of the students in each grade** should be sufficient. To select these students, have each student in each grade print his or her name on a strip of paper and place them in a box. Each box should include only the names of students in the same grade. Then, after the strips of paper are mixed up, select 10 percent of the strips from each box. These students will complete the survey.

Sample:

Computer System Status Assessment Report

March 15, 2010

REPORT SUMMARY

Our school has a total of 23 computers and two printers. Two of the computers are located in the school's offices one in the Director's office and one in the Accountant's office. Both of these computers are working. One of the printers is in the Director's office and it is working. One of the computers is in the teachers' room. Unfortunately, the computer in the teachers' room is not presently working and has not been working for at least six months. The remaining 20 computers are in the school's computer lab. Of these 20 computers, only 12 are working properly. The 8 computers that are not working have not been working for at least six months. We believe that these 8 computers have a mix of problems from burned out power supplies and hard disk drives that are not working. All of the 12 computers that are working have problems with computer viruses. The second printer, which is in the computer lab, is not working. When turned on, the lights on the printer would glow but it was not responsive to the computer that was connected to the printer. We could not determine why the printer wasn't working. The school is connected to the electric grid. Periodic power outages and brownouts appear to cause some of the problems that the computers suffer from.

The computer lab was dirty and disorganized.

All of the computers that were working were running Microsoft Windows 98. Each of the computers also had a copy of Microsoft Office that includes MS Word, MS Excel and MS PowerPoint. The copies of Microsoft Office were not purchased.

None of the school computers were connected to the Internet. Internet access is available in our town and the school could pay for an account if there was a desire to get connected to the Internet.

The school's computer teacher, who is a part-time employee, is responsible for the school's computer lab. He provides some limited maintenance and technical support in an effort to keep the computers running.

PURPOSE OF COMPUTER SYSTEM ASSESSMENT REPORT

This report is designed to provide the SPT with an accurate assessment of the numbers of computers and other equipment in the school and the status of this equipment. The report provides a base-line understanding of the status of the school's computer system for the SPT to develop a sustainability plan.

COMPUTER SYSTEM ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

The Assessment Committee of the SPT was responsible for planning and carrying out the assessment of our school's computer system. We used the attached Computer System Assessment form to record data. The school's computer teacher, who was a member of this committee, provided the technical skills to complete the assessment forms for the different computers in the school. We visited the rooms in which computers were located. Each computer and piece of equipment was turned on and used by members of the committee.

HELPFUL HINT



Download a fully customizable version of this sample on the accompanying CD-ROM.

ASSESSMENT FINDING

| ITEM/EQUIPMENT BRAND NAME & LOCATION | TYPE OF HARDWARE, SOFTWARE, OR OTHER RESOURCES | AGE (months) | QTY | OPERATIONAL CONDITION (good, fair, poor, not working) | OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION (is it being used? Description of any problems, type of power source) |
|--|--|--------------|-----|--|---|
| Orion desk top computer, LCD monitor, keyboard and mouse - Director's office | Computer, MS 98, MS Office | 4 m | 1 | Good | This computer seemed to have problems with viruses. |
| HP Inkjet Printer - Director's office | Printer | 4 m | 1 | Good | |
| Unnamed desktop computer, TV like monitor, keyboard and mouse - Accountant's office | Computer MS 98, MS Office | 12 m | 1 | Fair | The computer runs slowly. This may be caused by viruses. |
| Unnamed desktop computer, TV like monitor, keyboard and mouse – Teachers' room | Not known | 24 m | 1 | Not working | Has not been working for at least 6 months. The IT teacher thinks that the power supply was burned out. |
| Compaq desktop computers, TV like monitor, keyboard and mouse (with covers) – Computer lab | Computers, MS 98, MS Office | Over 24 m | 20 | 12 in fair condition 8 not working (4 would not turn on, 4 would turn on but would not operate) The 12 computers that work appeared to have viruses. The IT teacher thinks that the power supply and hard drive failures are the cause of failure. The non-working computers have been this way for at least a year. | |
| HP InkJet Printer – Computer lab | Printer | 12 m | 1 | Not working | The lights would come on but it would not print. |
| Internet | | | | | The school does not have access to the Internet, but access is available in our community. |

ANY OTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL'S COMPUTER SYSTEM:

- The SPT can use the remaining strips of paper in the box to select parents who will complete the survey. **For parents, only five** names should be selected from each box. To ensure that an equal number of mothers and fathers complete the survey, the SPT members responsible for carrying out this assessment can assign mothers to every other name selected.
- The SPT members responsible for carrying out the survey should ask the people taking the survey not to discuss it with others until everyone has completed the survey.

After the surveys have been completed, the SPT members responsible for this task should compile the responses using the **Survey Data Entry Sheet**, similar to the one provided on the CD that is part of the Toolkit. If you modified the sample survey, you will also need to modify the spreadsheet to incorporate responses to any new questions included in the survey.

To speed up the process of compiling the responses, and to enhance learning at the school, the SPT may want to work with a math teacher and teams of students in the highest grade to convert text responses to numerical data in the spreadsheet. To do this, each team of students should be given a copy of the spreadsheet and an equal number of survey forms. The teams of students also will need instruction on how to use the survey form and the **Computer**



Jing “How to!” Videos

The CD at the end of the Toolkit includes a set of Jing¹ “How to!” videos designed to help you and the members of the SPT learn to use this **Survey Data Entry Sheet** and other tools. This and other Jing “How to!” videos provide step-by-step instructions that show how the tool is used. You will see the actual template being used as a narrator walks you through the process of using the tool. In the case of the **Survey Data Entry Sheet**, you do not need to know how to use Excel. The video will provide you with sufficient instructions to use the tool.

¹ Jing is a tool that enables users to create screenshots and screencasts on their computer. It can be downloaded at <http://www.techsmith.com/jing/>.

Usage Survey Scoring Sheet (also available on the Toolkit’s CD) to convert survey responses that are in words into numbers and to record these numbers in the correct place in the spreadsheet. The Toolkit’s spreadsheet includes all of the formulas needed to calculate results from the survey, which will help the SPT interpret the results.

After each student team has completed converting the survey information to numeric data, the spreadsheets should be copied into one workbook so the totals from each question on each worksheet can be added together on a summary sheet. A report on the survey findings can then be prepared and submitted to the full SPT and distributed to the larger school community.

