# CSSI

## CHARTER SCHOOL SUPPORT INITIATIVE

# Resource Handbook

# STANDARD 1:
# Academic Performance – Curriculum

## 1.1a   The curriculum is aligned with the Colorado Model Content Standards, grade level expectations, and assessment frameworks.

### *Definitions: What is a rigorous and aligned curriculum?*

A **rigorous** curriculum is one that has high expectations for student achievement at each grade level. All students are expected to attain proficiency regardless of their background. Students learn content that prepares them for postsecondary education even if they choose not to pursue this option. Teachers instruct for understanding and not just memorization.

An **aligned** curriculum is one that addresses all of the state content standards at each grade level. Aligned curriculum specifies in student friendly language what students should know and be able to do at each grade level and how they must demonstrate their knowledge and skills (assessments). Content that corresponds to state/district standards is just one aspect of an aligned curriculum. According to some researchers, a strong curriculum recommends appropriate teaching methods and assessments.

### *What the Research Says*

- Rigorous curriculum is associated with greater gains in achievement, even for those in the lowest quartiles (Education Trust, 2005).

- A "guaranteed and viable curriculum" is the school level factor with the greatest impact on student achievement (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollack, 2003).

- A study of 4,000 third grade students found that curriculum alignment to the state test and standards made a significant difference in students' mathematics test scores (Mitchell, Hawkins, Jakwerth, Stancavage, & Dossey, 1999).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Create a curriculum map.** To determine whether a school's curriculum is aligned to state standards, it is helpful to create a curriculum map. The map is a matrix that contains state standards and benchmarks and the school's curriculum and teaching practices. The map enables teachers and administrators to know whether the school is meeting all of the standards.

2. **Prepare for the process.** Create an action plan for conducting the alignment project. Decide on a process to use. Since many are available in print and online, consult research and visit other schools to see how they have aligned their curriculum. Determine who will be engaged in the process. Create a timeline and discuss if the committee needs professional development to ensure it has the skills and knowledge to undertake the alignment. Facilitators are available. Set aside time and funds needed to complete the task.

3. **Engage in the alignment process.** Begin by creating a preliminary map. List the standards and benchmarks for each content area (e.g., reading/language arts, mathematics, science) by grade level. Note the curriculum and instructional practices currently used to teach each standard.

4. **Review the map.** Teachers and administrators should examine the map together to ensure accuracy, identify gaps and redundancies, and determine what changes are needed to better align the curriculum to the standards. The group should consider not only the "what" is taught but the "when" to ensure proper sequencing and spiraling. The group should also discuss what skills and knowledge should receive greater emphasis. Areas where students are struggling could indicate a need for more emphasis or a gap in the curriculum. Teachers can find additional gaps by engaging in vertical (between grade levels) and horizontal (between subjects) discussions and by examining patterns in testing data.

5. **Implement an action plan.** Make necessary instructional, scheduling, and resource changes to align curriculum to the standards. Engage in professional development as needed.

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### 1.1b    School leadership initiates and facilitates articulation of curriculum standards across all levels and programs within the school.

*Definitions: What is facilitation and articulation of curriculum?*

**Facilitation** means assisting and guiding the staff in the process of curriculum articulation. Under the leadership's direction, the faculty actively engages with the curriculum and takes ownership of it.

**Articulation** means translating the curriculum into learning goals and objectives based on state standards and school priorities, sequencing and organizing curricular objectives into units or lessons, constructing timelines or pacing guides, and identifying materials, resources and instructional strategies.

*What the Research Says*

- The National Research Council (1999) found that students learn more when ideas and skills are presented in a coherent and connected manner. A coherent curriculum provides students with a logical and developmentally appropriate experience with important ideas and skills. The curriculum shows how the content is connected and has mechanisms to assess student comprehension to determine next steps.

- Effective curricula focus teachers' attention on a relatively small number of content standards or learning objectives, enabling them to teach all students a common core. (Hill & Celio, 1998).

- Leaders' willingness to provide input on classroom practices was one of the characteristics most valued by teachers (Stein & D'Amico, 2000).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Determine the approach.** Administrators and faculty should decide whether to approach subjects primarily through single content areas or through integrated instruction. Many schools choose to integrate some content areas and conduct single subject lessons in others.

2. **Develop and prioritize learning goals based on Colorado State Content Standards.** Determine what students need to know and be able to do by examining the standards for each content area at each grade level. Determine which learning goals have priority.

3. **Sequence and organize the curriculum.** With the leader's help, the faculty at each grade level should decide what will be taught and when. Adjacent grade level teams should compare their sequencing in order to fill gaps and ensure continuous student growth.

4. **Develop unit or lesson plans.** Plans should state learning objectives, the state standard to which they correspond, needed resources, instructional and remediation strategies, practice activities, and associated assessments.

5. **Arrange daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly activities on a calendar to guide instructional planning and to ensure that resources are available.** The calendars can be used by teachers and leaders for monitoring, pacing, and planning of supplemental activities such as field trips.

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6. **Review the curriculum to ensure coherence and depth of each content area.** Teams can have other teams review their articulation to make sure that the lessons or units reflect appropriate expectations for student learning and that there is coherence within and across grade levels.

7. **Revisit the curriculum articulation annually to ensure that it is effective.** Leaders should facilitate discussions about effectiveness of curriculum delivery and help faculty modify units or lessons as needed.

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**1.1c    School leadership initiates and facilitates articulation of curriculum standards with other schools with an intentional focus on key transition points.**

*Definitions: What are key transition points?*

A **key transition point** is a moment within a progressive system when the participant experiences a significant change. In the K-16 education system, transitions from preschool to elementary school, from elementary school to middle school, from middle to high school, and from high school to career or postsecondary education present emotional and intellectual challenges.

**Curriculum articulation** ensures smooth transitions and continuity by coordinating academic expectations between sending and receiving schools. By ensuring students are prepared for the next step in the K-16 education process before they enter it, schools maximize resources and minimize student frustration.

*What the Research Says*

- Research by Akos and Galassi (2004) indicated that for the transition into middle school, parents and students were most worried about the amount of homework while teachers were most concerned about social adjustment issues. For the transition into high school, parents, students, and teachers were concerned about academic performance (e.g., homework, hard classes, pressure to do well) (p. 215).

- In an Ohio study, respondents "identified curriculum alignment as the single greatest factor in achieving improved test results. It was reported most frequently and during the Delphi portion of the study it was ranked first in importance" (Kercheval & Newbill, 2002, p. 8).

- The research of Hayward, Jones, McGuiness, and Timar (2004) in California found that "lack of academic preparation of many students entering the community colleges…reduces the output of the colleges, thereby reducing their capacity" (p. 4). "The link between what goes on in high school and what is expected of college students is…woefully inadequate in a number of cases" (p. 17).

- The Bridge Project (Venezia, Krist, & Antonio 2003) determined that, in too many instances, states have created barriers between high school completion and college entrance that undermine student aspirations to attend postsecondary education. Coursework on the same content is often not articulated between the high school level and the college level. Bueschel (2003) credited "remediation and the lack of preparation of students coming out of high school" with calling attention to "the lack of alignment between the systems regarding the standard for college level work" (p. 8).

- Mizelle and Irvin's survey of research and practice literature (2000) recognized that the middle school to high school transition alignment requires the efforts of both middle and high school educators to "create a mutual understanding of curriculum requirements at both levels and of the young adolescent learner" (p. 4). Providing a more challenging middle school curriculum eases the transition to high school curriculum.

- West Virginia's (2004) high performing schools organized and managed the curriculum to ensure continuity from grade to grade. Content is sequenced, prioritized, mapped, and benchmarked.

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- Research into transitions by Akos and Galassi (2004) suggested vertical teaming between teachers from sending and receiving schools to align curricular expectations.

- The Aspiras Wausau (WI) Hospital Youth Apprenticeship program, winner of the 2005 Exemplary Worksite Learning Award, features a curriculum written by high school and postsecondary educators under the supervision of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. Industry based competency checklists ensure that tasks and activities performed at the worksite parallel the written curriculum (National Tech Prep Network, 2005).

- The multiyear Wisconsin Curriculum Alignment Project for K-16 (Alexson & Kemnitz, 2003) found "it is not the curriculum, but that student expectations, the teacher expectations, and the professor expectations appear to be misaligned."

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Prepare for the process.** Decide which of the available transition alignment processes will best meet the school's needs and budget and time constraints.

2. **Identify stakeholders on both sides of the transition point who will need to be part of the alignment discussion.** Clearly communicate the roles of and the benefits to all participants in the alignment process. Support broader integration of goals, services, and practices between the two sides of the transition point.

3. **Hold regular meetings for participants in articulation discussion groups.** Typically, these groups meet monthly during the school year. Share an agenda before each meeting and minutes afterward.

4. **Consider student experiences of the transition.** This includes carefully examining documents related to curriculum at both levels as well as soliciting student input through interviews, focus groups, or surveys.

5. **Identify policies that may affect the alignment process or its outcomes.** At higher levels of the education system, these often involve receipt of articulated credit for particular coursework.

6. **Align all content areas.** Choose an appropriate curriculum alignment process and work on one content area at a time. Be sure to establish whether alignment is course-to-course, course-to-courses, or courses-to-course.

7. **Remove barriers to student transition.** For students to successfully transition through the system, each must be adequately prepared for the next step and be able to schedule necessary classes.

8. **Review alignment regularly.** Since programs change, establish a review process and schedule to maintain the alignment of all transition elements.

9. **Evaluate the articulation.** Collect student level data to be used for evaluating the outcomes of the articulation project.

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## Standard 1: Academic Performance – Curriculum

### 1.1d    The curriculum provides specific links to post-secondary education, life, and/or career options.

### *Definitions: What are curricular units for continuing education, life, and career options?*

**Curricular units for continuing education, life, and career options** communicate with students about workplace attitudes, such as completing work on time, conscientiousness, cooperation, and self-discipline, and workplace skills such as problem solving, decision making, collaboration, and communication. Continuing education curriculum helps young people develop a positive attitude toward learning and become motivated to continue their education. The curriculum helps students see a pathway to the future and acquire study skills and learning strategies to cope with new academic challenges. Lifelong learning skills emphasize what students will need to succeed in the workplace, become competent citizens, and relate well to others.

### *What the Research Says*

- About half of recent high school graduates attending colleges or universities reported they were not well prepared or were only somewhat prepared for success in postsecondary education. About 58% of those who went directly to the workforce reported that they were not prepared or only somewhat prepared (Hart Research Associates, 2005).

- High school students are more likely to succeed when they are in small, personalized learning environments that motivate them academically while simultaneously preparing them for postsecondary education, career, and citizenship (Huebner & Corbett, 2004).

- A challenging high school curriculum is the best predictor of college completion, especially for black and Hispanic students (Adelman, 2006).

- Schools in the Chicago area that increased college attendance for all students, particularly those who were considered at-risk, had the following factors in common: They continuously monitored student progress, focused on positive results, used an aligned curriculum, placed an emphasis on college readiness for all, and provided academic support, career exploration, and career training programs (ACT, Inc., 2006).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Communicate the importance of acquiring skills for postsecondary education, career, and life.** Often students have an orientation to the present rather than the future. Teachers can motivate students to acquire skills important for adulthood if they link the acquisition of such skills to future earning power and satisfaction with life.

2. **Provide opportunities to foster the development of important attitudes and skills.** Develop activities that help students learn and practice dependability, positive attitudes toward tasks, and other related life and workplace skills.

3. **Choose workplace problems for students to solve.** This type of activity gives students time to learn more about problem solving, decision making, and seeking alternative solutions to problems.

4. **Give students opportunities to work in the community and share the experiences in class.** This type of activity can result in shared learning and a more realistic sense of workplace expectations.

5. **Provide instruction in communication, conflict management, and collaboration skills.** These skills will be beneficial no matter what future path students pursue.

6. **Encourage self-directed learning.** Show students how to plan and complete projects on time.

7. **Cultivate resilience skills.** Acquiring these skills will help students develop the confidence and competence to persist in future endeavors.

8. **Explore implementation of dual enrollment opportunities between high schools and postsecondary institutions, Tech Prep programs, or college access programs.** Each of these strategies helps students, particularly those at risk of high school failure, to complete high school and continue to postsecondary education.

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**1.1e  The curriculum provides access to a common, challenging academic core for all students.**

### Definitions: What is a common academic core?

An **academic core curriculum** helps students prepare for college level work by the time they graduate from high school. Courses are rigorous and closely aligned with academic standards. Although it was once assumed that only the most capable and motivated students could master a college preparatory curriculum, research shows that all students benefit from exposure to a challenging academic core. EdTrust (2003) describes an academic core curriculum as providing:

- Four years of English;
- Three years of mathematics, including Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2, and often one or more years of mathematics beyond Algebra 2 (e.g., Trigonometry, Calculus);
- Three years of natural science, including laboratory sciences such as biology, chemistry and physics;
- Three years of social studies; and
- Two years of a language other than English.

A **common curriculum** is one that has the same outcome expectations for all students including, but not limited to, students identified for special education and students who are English language learners. The intent is to achieve more equitable outcomes for all students. A common curriculum defines a core of essential skills and knowledge each student is expected to attain. It does not mean that all students will master the content at the same speed or same depth. Since the curriculum provides common expectations for the performance of all students, teachers are more easily able to maintain a consistent high level of instruction.

### What the Research Says

- "The knowledge and skills that prepare students for college are also those that prepare students for work" (Barth, 2003).

- Mathematics and reading skills needed for success in the first year of college were the same as those in 90% of the workforce training programs for jobs that offered potential career advancement and sufficient salary to support a family of four (Pathways to College Network, 2006).

- College professors estimate that 42% of recent high school graduates are not prepared for college level work (Achieve, 2006). Fifty-three percent of college students need to take at least one remedial English or mathematics class (American Diploma Project, 2004).

- Employers say that high school graduates do not have the basic skills to succeed in today's world of work, estimating that 45% of these students are unprepared for jobs beyond the entry level (Achieve 2006). One study estimated the cost of remedial training in reading, writing, and mathematics to a single state's employer at nearly $40 million per year (American Diploma Project, 2004).

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- As of December 2005, five states (CA, IN, NE, NY, and WY) had connected high school exit standards with college and workplace expectations and 30 other states planned to do so (Achieve, 2006).

- Barth (2003) cited research showing a "positive relationship between taking Algebra 2 in high school and later earnings." This was true whether or not the algebra skills were directly linked to the specific job. The benefit seemed to come from exposure to discipline and rigor.

- The curriculum "traditionally thought of as college preparatory is in fact good for all students, whether they go to college or not," and "previously low-performing students benefit the most" from the common academic core (Barth, 2003).

- Students are "more likely to pass high level courses than low-level ones" even when the comparison is among the lowest achievers (Barth, 2003).

- Urban schools in the 'High Schools That Work' network that have made the most progress toward raising student achievement are those in which more students complete the high level academic core curriculum (Bottoms, Han, & Presson, 2006).

- Of students taking a common academic core curriculum "students in the lowest quartile and those in vocational tracks" showed the greatest gains (Barth, 2003).

- The common theme among 10 successful minority, low-SES high schools analyzed by Schmeiser & Haycock (2003) was that qualified teachers taught coursework with "high-level content" focused on the skills needed for college and work.

- Taking a rigorous course in "trigonometry, calculus, or physics is positively related to college success, regardless of students' previous grades in high school" (Noble, 2001).

- An analysis of ACT Mathematics and Science Reasoning tests between 1995 and 2000 showed that students who took a core curriculum outperformed students who did not (Harmston & Pliska, 2001).

- Illinois students who followed an academic core curriculum outscored their peers who had not experienced that type of curriculum (Illinois State Board of Education, 2004).

- After implementing a core academic curriculum as a requirement for graduation, the San Jose (CA) Unified School District saw the test scores of black and Hispanic students increase 200% to 700% over the state average (Barth, 2003).

- After recommending a sequence of college preparatory classes for all students, the Houston (TX) school district noted that the percentage of high school graduates completing this sequence rose from 22% to 73% (Barth, 2003).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Believe all students can learn.** It is important that all staff, including administrators, teachers, special education professionals, and other support staff, hold this belief. It is not possible to support

a common academic core curriculum in a setting in which the adults do not believe in the learning capacity of all students.

2. **Read background literature before designing the curriculum.** Teachers, special education professionals, and administrators should become familiar with the background literature and research available on the design and results of enacting a common academic core curriculum.

3. **Identify curriculum standards and expectations in all content areas.** Build a common core by compiling the course expectations (and their corresponding standards) that all students will be expected to transition to in the next grade or graduate. Examine the total curriculum to ensure that all standards are adequately addressed and that all students will have the opportunity to meet the expectations of the common academic core. If not, determine whether to modify existing course descriptions or add additional course selections to the curriculum.

4. **Communicate content area standards and course outcome expectations to students in each course.** Students need to know how courses enable them to make progress toward mastering the common academic core. This information can be distributed in a course syllabus, posted in the classroom, and discussed at the beginning of each unit, lesson, or activity.

5. **Address the learning needs of all students by offering adequate course selection.** Although courses will differ in the manner and pace by which content is taught, teachers of all courses should maintain high expectations for student performance.

6. **Require problem solving and higher order thinking of all students.** Some students may require more time to master basic level skills and information. It is not appropriate to withhold practice in problem solving and higher order thinking until they have achieved this mastery. Instead, these skills should be embedded in coursework at all proficiency levels.

7. **Encourage use of instructional practices that motivate all students to increase their academic achievement.** Teachers should be aware of individual student learning needs and choose appropriate strategies and practices.

8. **Consider making achievement of the common academic core curriculum a requirement for high school graduation.**

9. **Review the curriculum using disaggregated student data and make revisions.** Be sure all students have access to challenging coursework that addresses the common academic core.

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## Standard 1: Academic Performance – Curriculum

**1.1f      Information literacy is integrated into content curricula.**

*Definitions: What is information literacy?*

**Information literacy** includes select skills related to the use of information. Students learn to identify what information is needed to solve a problem, how to find it, and how to recognize accuracy and value. Information literacy also includes the ability to evaluate and use information from a variety of sources appropriately and ethically.

*What the Research Says*

- A random assignment study of integrated information skills instruction showed a "positive impact on students' abilities to identify information-handling strategies to solve their information needs..." (Todd, 1995).

- An ETS study of information literacy among high school seniors preparing to enter college and first year students in two-year and four-year colleges found only 13% of students to be information literate as assessed by scores on a new ETS test, the ICT [information and communication technology] Literacy Assessment Core Level (Foster, 2006).

- Lou and Macgregor's (2004) mixed methods matched comparison group study of fifth graders found several instructional features that "enhanced students' free recall and application of acquired knowledge." These included task scaffolding and Web site features that supported "students' ability to locate, extract, and apply information."

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Clearly define expectations for information literacy at each grade level.** Students and teachers should know what it means to have information literacy appropriate to their grade level.

2. **Communicate the importance of addressing information literacy learning needs to parents, board members, and other stakeholders.** The community can provide support to schools as they integrate information literacy into their content area curricula.

3. **Facilitate incorporation of information literacy into lesson plans for content areas at all grade levels.** Conduct professional development on integration of information literacy into content area teaching.

4. **Support students' growth in information literacy with appropriate use of classroom instructional techniques and materials.** Specific instructional strategies and teaching tools have been shown to increase students' ability to apply information literacy skills in content area classes.

5. **Evaluate growth of student information literacy**. Use pre- and post-testing to ascertain what students have learned.

6. **Ensure that all groups of students are improving their levels of information literacy**. Disaggregate assessment data to determine whether all subpopulations, including students in

## Standard 1: Academic Performance – Curriculum

special education and ELL programs, are improving their skill levels. Make instructional changes to correct gaps.

7. **Evaluate the school's approach to and implementation of the integration of information literacy into content area curricula**. At the end of the school year, use student data and information from teachers to review the school's program, and plan for refinement in the following year.

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# STANDARD 2:
# Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

## 2.1a    Classroom assessments of student learning are frequent, rigorous and aligned with district and/or state content standards.

### *Definitions: What are rigorous classroom assessments aligned to standards?*

**Classroom assessments** are tools to measure what students have learned. Like classroom instruction, assessments should be **aligned** with state standards. A **rigorous** assessment is one that reflects high expectations for performance and evaluates students understanding and attainment of knowledge and skills. There are two primary assessment approaches: 1) formal assessments that objectively measure skills and knowledge and provide information for screening, progress monitoring, diagnosis, and evaluation; and 2) informal assessments based on observations and inferences of student abilities in different contexts.

### *What the Research Says*

- Continuous assessment of student progress leads to improvement in student performance (Cotton, 2000).

- Regular assessment and dialogue about results increased the percentage of students scoring in the top quartile from 27% to 50% (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004).

- A school's commitment to improving students' writing skills through classroom assessments was related to an increase in students' scores on writing performance tests (Heck & Crislip, 2001).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Define what students are expected to learn.** Use the curriculum map and articulation procedures to identify achievement expectations for units and lesson plans. Translate the expectations into student friendly terms to share with students.

2. **Translate expectations into assessments.** Develop a variety of age appropriate, challenging assessments including selected response, essays, performances, visualizations, interviews, and other assessment forms. Include questions that assess higher order thinking skills as well as information attainment. Teachers may create or adapt assessment tools in collaboration with other teachers.

3. **Give students clear and timely feedback.** By grading assessments soon after they are completed, a teacher can assess students' strengths and weaknesses, make instructional changes, and provide the student with clear direction in his or her learning.

## Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

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## Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

### 2.1b Teachers collaborate in the design or selection of assessment tasks aligned with core content subject matter.

*Definitions: What is teacher collaboration on the design and selection of assessment tasks?*

**Teacher collaboration** brings together teachers within grade levels, between grade levels or even between schools to collectively design and select assessments. Teachers discuss standards, instructional techniques, and assessments to determine their alignment. They adopt or adapt these assessments or design customized assessments that best measure student mastery of the content.

**Tasks** are the projects, questions, problems, applications, and exercises through which students show what they know and can do with the content knowledge and skills. Good assessment tasks provide useful diagnostic information and a learning experience for students.

### What the Research Says

- Productive collaboration includes openly sharing failures and mistakes, demonstrating respect for each other, and constructively analyzing and criticizing practices (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

- Curriculum embedded assessments can be linked to achievement gains of one-half to two standard deviations with the largest gains made by low-achieving students (Meisels, 2003).

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Engage in professional development**. Teachers should engage in professional development to build skills in designing assessment tasks, learn how to develop valid assessments (those that measure what students are supposed to learn), acquire a versatile tool kit of assessment task templates, formal and informal assessments, performance measures, and rubrics.

2. **Align assessment tasks with the curriculum**. Assessments should be planned along with instruction. Writing a clear statement of goals and objectives guides in the development or selection of assessment tasks. Align the assessment tasks with criteria or indicators of proficiency established by Colorado Model Content Standards.

3. **Evaluate the type of assessment choices**. Match the assessment task with the skill or knowledge to be assessed. A multiple choice or short response assessment may be a more efficient way to measure the attainment of factual knowledge. A performance assessment may be the most effective way to assess reasoning or communication skills.

4. **Determine the criteria for success**. A right answer may not be sufficient to be proficient in a content standard. Students may have to justify their responses or use a skill in a different situation. In addition to determining the grade, assessment data enables teachers to make strategic instructional adjustments.

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**Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment**

**2.1c     Students can articulate the academic expectations in each class and know what is required to be proficient.**

*Definitions: What is proficiency on academic expectations?*

**Academic expectations** reflect the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn as proscribed by the Colorado Model Content Standards. Students should understand the learning objectives, their own level of attainment, and specific steps to improve.

**Proficiency** is the performance level students need to demonstrate mastery of the content. It indicates what students must know and be able to do for that grade level.

*What the Research Says*

- Students who can identify what they are learning significantly outscore those who cannot (Marzano, 2005).

- Criterion referenced feedback tells students where they stand relative to a specific learning target. Criterion referenced feedback has a more powerful effect on student learning than norm referenced feedback (Crooks, 1988).

- Low achievement is often the result of students failing to understand what teachers require of them (Black & William, 1998).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Communicate the learning target in a clear and understandable manner.** Share the learning targets before beginning instruction so student can know what they are responsible for mastering and at what level.

2. **Consider providing a scoring guide to define quality work.** A student friendly scoring guide helps students know if they have reached proficiency. Scoring guidelines are particularly useful for performance assessments.

3. **Provide students with examples of strong and poor work.** Students are more likely to understand feedback and evaluations when they are shown examples that translate the proficiency standards into specific, concrete, and understandable terms.

4. **Teach students to self assess.** Ongoing descriptive feedback on student performance teaches students how to assess their own work. As students develop this skill, provide them an opportunity to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their work before offering feedback. Students' self-assessments help them understand the material and internalize expectations. Peer assessment should focus on improvement not grading.

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## Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

**2.1d     Tests and assessment results are used by staff to obtain information on student  learning, identify achievement and curricular gaps, and to refine instruction.**

### Definitions: What are achievement and curricular gaps?

The **achievement gap** in education refers to the disparity in academic performance between groups of students. It is often used to describe performance gaps between ethnicities or gaps between students of different socio-economic levels. Achievement gaps may be reflected in grades, standardized test scores, course selections, dropout rates, and secondary and postsecondary education completion rates.

A **curricular gap** exists when there is limited or no alignment between the opportunities to learn, course offerings, standards, requirements, instructional materials, and learner needs. In many instances, the curriculum gap can be narrowed by systematically linking expectations, opportunities and needs.

### What the Research Says

- Evidence shows that almost all students can achieve at high levels if they are taught at high levels (Haycock, 2001).

- In a review of high performing schools, Shannon & Bylsma (2003) found that 21 studies identified the efficacy of using test and assessment results for improvement.

- Assessments that inform teachers about student learning can help them provide better feedback to students and foster improvement (Pellegrino, 2001).

- Testing experts caution that tests should be used only for the purposes for which they have been designed and validated (Kober, 2001).

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Prior to looking at the data.** Engage appropriate constituent groups (e.g., staff, parents, school boards, students, administrators) in a dialogue about attitudes, achievement, and the curriculum. To help in this dialogue, use questions to help reveal assumptions, expectations, and predictions.

2. **Analyze the data.** Examine student assessment data to look for trends and patterns. Sort and summarize the data using colored markers or special software. Look for common themes or trends. Note what appears to be surprising or unexpected.

3. **Identify possible explanations.** Data can be used to verify assumptions and discourage the exploration of other plausible explanations. To avoid this, identify many possible explanations and examine other data sources.

4. **Identify action steps.** Identify instructional and scheduling changes, a timetable, staff members who will be responsible for implementation, and how stakeholders will be engaged and informed.

5. **Monitor and adapt instructional changes.** Establish a process to monitor the implementation, collect data and make additional changes.

## Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

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## Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

**2.1e    Students have varied opportunities to demonstrate proficiency and receive meaningful feedback on their learning.**

### Definitions: What is feedback on multiple assessments?

**Feedback** is the information teachers give students about what they are doing correctly and what they still need to learn. Feedback should be provided in a timely manner continuously throughout the learning process.

**Multiple assessments** are the various ways teachers assess the knowledge and skills of students including response/short answer, essay, performance assessments, and oral communication. Multiple assessments give students the opportunity to show what they know and can do in a variety of situations.

### What the Research Says

- Feedback is the most powerful single modification that enhances achievement (Hattie, 1992).

- Formative assessments improve learning. The gains in achievement appear to be quite considerable and amongst the largest ever reported for an educational intervention (Black & William, 1998).

- One assessment or one type of assessment should not be the sole measure of student achievement (Koelsch, Estrin, & Farr, 1995).

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Define the purpose of the assessment.** Assessments can be used as an instructional tool and to make decisions about students' progress.

2. **Collect, adapt, or design assessments that match the assessment purpose.** Multiple choice and short answer assessments can be used to assess content knowledge, some kinds of reasoning in isolation, and simple procedural knowledge. Essays can serve to assess student mastery of complex content or procedural knowledge and reasoning. Oral communication can be used to assess all of the achievement target areas.

3. **Specify the performance standards.** Write clear, specific descriptions of the performance standards expected of student work. Provide examples of student work to articulate the precise definitions of each level.

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## Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

### 2.1f    Proficiency standards and performance level descriptions are clearly communicated, evident in classrooms and observable in student work.

### *Definition: What is a performance standard?*

**Performance standards** specify what students must know and be able to do to be considered proficient. The standards usually define the evidence required to demonstrate attainment (e.g., holding a debate on a current event topic to show understanding of interacting social factors) and levels of proficiency such as basic, proficient, and advanced. Performance standards set a floor (minimum acceptable achievement) not a ceiling, and should not limit the performance of high-achieving students. Using performance standards for assessment in the form of rubrics enables teachers to remain objective in grading.

The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) provides individual student scores in reading, writing, mathematics, and science. It uses performance standards for reporting results at four levels: unsatisfactory, partially proficient, proficient, and advanced. The purpose of the performance standards is to inform teachers, students, and parents what students should be able to do with their knowledge at each grade. (Linn, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002).

### *What the Research Says*

- Providing recognition and praise for the successful attainment of specific performance standards enhances intrinsic motivation (Cameron & Pierce, 1994).

- Black and William (1998) reviewed research studies and concluded that students who experience "improved formative assessment" during classroom instruction outscore other students by a half to a full standard deviation on high stakes tests.

- Stiggins (2002) interpreted the gain in student achievement attributable to using performance standards for classroom assessment in more concrete terms. He found improvement in scores of "more than 30 percentile points, two grade-equivalents, or 100 points on the SAT scale."

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Determine how the performance standard will be articulated**. Schools can use the state standards for proficiency or they can develop their own performance standards. A performance standard can be written in generalized terms to be used with multiple assessments or in specific terms as it relates to each assessment.

2. **Use clear language when writing performance standards**. Limit the number of performance criteria and express them in terms of observable behaviors or product characteristics. The differences between achievement levels should be clear and aligned with CSAP expectations. If the performance standards will be used by multiple teachers, ensure they will be interpreted consistently.

3. **Post the performance standards in the classroom**. Students should know what is expected of them and how they will be evaluated. Showing students examples of acceptable and unacceptable work will help them to understand what is expected.

## Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

4. **Communicate the performance standards to parents**. Parental support of classroom learning improves when parents know the assessment expectations for student tasks.

5. **Develop grading rubrics based on performance standards.** A generalized rubric allows students to self assess their work and guide teachers in grading. The rubric needs to be clear and easily understood by students and parents. Specific rubrics should be available when tasks are assigned.

6. **Display samples of student work and teacher made models.** Samples and models clarify tasks and show distinctions between levels of performance on the rubric. The display should also be used to identify and discuss strategies for students to improve their performance on assignments.

7. **Allow time for students to analyze work according to the performance standards and rubrics**. Class discussions, teacher feedback, and opportunities to evaluate others' work ensure that students understand and use the performance standards as assessment criteria.

8. **Communicate the level of student's mastery of the standards to their parents**. Conferences and regular progress reports sent home are two effective means of showing parents their child's accomplishments.

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## Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

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## Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

**2.1g    Samples of student work are analyzed to obtain information on student learning, identify achievement and curricular gaps, and to refine instruction.**

### Definition: What is analysis of student work?

**Examining student work** is crucial to understanding the connection between what teachers think they are teaching and what students are actually learning. Many teachers find that using a collaborative process to examine student work is helpful, especially when done as a grade level team. Teachers can learn from each other by sharing the instructional strategies that work best to produce comprehension. Teachers can improve their ability to reach all students by exploring gaps in student work.

### What the Research Says

- Students are more engaged and achieve more when instruction is appropriately suited to their needs. Effective teachers know and understand their students as individuals including their abilities, achievement, learning styles, and needs (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

- When teachers use a scoring rubric and procedures to assist them in scoring tasks, they enhance their own understanding of important content concepts and how students exhibit what they know and are able to do (DiRanna, Osterfled, Cerwin, Topps, & Tucker, 1995).

- A study of Chicago schools found that 70% of the work assigned to students presented either no challenge or minimal challenge to the students. Researchers also found that if students were given more challenging assignments, they did higher quality work. Students who were assigned more demanding intellectual work scored about 50 percentile points higher on authentic measures of student achievement compared with students whose teachers assigned less demanding work. (Newmann, Lopez, & Bryk, 1998).

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Provide professional development for analyzing student work.** Typically, analysis of student work has a set purpose related to instructional outcomes. For example, if students are learning to write, analysis of work might include scoring the work based on the six-trait writing process. Teachers need to learn how to score the work objectively and should be given time to practice.

2. **Use protocols during protected meeting time.** A regular block of time should be set aside for the examination and discussion of student work.

3. **Select student work that relates directly to the goal of the group.** Teachers should bring all the necessary documentation to help the group better understand the context for the students' assignment. The documentation could include task objectives, instructional strategies, and assessment methods. All group members can bring student work if all have given the same task to their students. In some groups, one teacher brings examples of student work per work session.

4. **Facilitated discussion centers on the interpretation, understanding, and reflection of student learning as seen in the student work.** Designate a facilitator to guide the discussions in order to ensure  meaningful analysis of student learning and teaching practice. The facilitation role can be rotated among the teachers in the group. The discussion should highlight ways teachers can enhance teaching based on what they have learned.

## Standard 2: Academic Performance – Classroom Evaluation/Assessment

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*Looking at Student Work,* a Web site dedicated to the process of examining student work, at www.lasw.org

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# STANDARD 3:
# Academic Performance – Instruction

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## 3.1a    Effective and varied instructional strategies are used in all classrooms.

### *Definitions: What are effective and varied instructional strategies?*

**Effective instructional strategies** are those that foster student mastery of content and skills. Teachers use **varied instructional strategies** to meet the individual needs of students at different points in the learning process.

### *What the Research Says*

- Marzano, Gaddy, and Dean (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of research on instruction with the goal of identifying "those instructional strategies that have the highest probability of enhancing student achievement for all students in all subject areas at all grade levels" (p. 4). They identified nine types of strategies as having a strong influence on achievement: 1) identifying similarities and differences; 2) summarizing and note taking; 3) reinforcing effort and providing recognition; 4) homework and practice; 5) nonlinguistic representations; 6) cooperative learning; 7) setting goals and providing feedback; 8) generating and testing hypotheses; and 9) activating prior knowledge.

- A national study relating classroom practice to student achievement (Wenglinsky, 2002) identified several instructional factors that were associated with improved student performance including a focus on higher order thinking skills, application of problem solving techniques, hands-on learning, and individualization of instruction.

- A synthesis of findings from meta-analyses and other large scale studies (Edvantia, 2005) classified into five categories the instructional strategies that have the greatest impact on student achievement, including general principles and specific instructional approaches: 1) metacognition (i.e., thinking about thinking), 2) active student engagement, 3) higher order thinking, 4) cooperative learning, and 5) independent practice.

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Ensure that all teachers understand and can implement effective instructional practices.** Share research findings with teachers and provide relevant professional development opportunities to enable faculty to develop the knowledge and skills needed to implement proven strategies.

2. **Create opportunities for teachers to share, discuss, and model effective strategies.** Provide opportunities for teachers to learn together, engage in mentorship relationships, observe one another's instruction, and model best practices.

## Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction

3. **Encourage teachers to use varied instructional strategies and to differentiate instruction to meet individual student needs.** Teachers should observe students and review individual performance data to identify differences in background knowledge, language ability, interests, and other characteristics that affect learning. Aspects of instruction (e.g., level of difficulty, amount of work time allowed, ways of demonstrating learning) should be varied to meet goals for instruction and to accommodate student needs. Differentiating instruction for students requires that teachers be flexible and adjust curricula and presentation of information as needed.

4. **Monitor use of instructional strategies and assess their effectiveness.** Select instructional strategies based on evidence of their effectiveness. Monitor student performance data on an ongoing basis to ensure that specific instructional goals are met.

### *References*

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### *Helpful Resources*

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Gregory, G. H. (2003). *Differentiated instructional strategies in practice: Training, implementation, and supervision*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Marzano, R. J., Pickering, D. J., & Pollock, J. E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Moore, K. D. (2005). *Effective instructional strategies: From theory to practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

# Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction

## 3.1b    Instructional strategies and learning activities are designed to promote mastery of content standards and performance expectations.

### Definitions: What constitutes mastery of standards and performance expectations?

**Mastery of standards** refers to students meeting grade level expectations associated with the Colorado Model Content Standards.

**Mastery of performance expectations** refers to students meeting specific learning goals for what students should know and be able to do. In Colorado, specific performance expectations are articulated for three grade level groups: K-4, 5-8, and 9-12.

### What the Research Says

- Increased and more focused use of instructional time is associated with greater gains in achievement, even for students in low-performing schools (Education Trust, 2005).

- Alignment of content standards to instructional practice tends to be low and can be increased through teacher professional development activities (Smithson & Blank, 2006).

- Examining the relationship between content standards and the specific instructional strategies used to address them has been a challenge. Recently developed methodologies for survey instrumentation and for conducting content analyses of standards are allowing researchers, teachers, and others to better examine the relationship between content standards and instruction (Smithson, 2004).

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Ensure teachers understand Colorado Model Content Standards.** Provide professional development to teachers to clarify performance expectations for all subject areas and grade levels. Provide opportunities for teachers to access additional training, associated instructional materials, lesson plans, and other related resources.

2. **Provide opportunities for teachers to develop and refine curriculum frameworks and lesson plans.** Curriculum frameworks map out core content, units for instruction, timelines for delivery, prerequisite skills, and specific lesson plans. When teachers to work together to develop and refine frameworks and lesson plans, they engage in ongoing, meaningful conversations about how children learn and ways to improve their classroom practice.

3. **Monitor use of instructional strategies to ensure that performance expectations are met and make adjustments as needed.** Monitor disaggregated student performance data on an ongoing basis to ensure that performance expectations are met.

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## Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction

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Smithson, J., & Blank, R. (2006). *Indicators of quality of teacher professional development and instructional change using data from Surveys of Enacted Curriculum: Findings from NSF MSP-RETA project*. Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers.

### *Helpful Resources*

Council of Chief State School Officers (2002). Models for alignment analysis and assistance to states. Washington DC: Author.

Drake, S. M. (2007). *Creating standards-based integrated curriculum: Aligning curriculum, content, assessment, and instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Squires, D. A. (2004). *Aligning and balancing the standards-based curriculum*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

## Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction

### 3.1c    Instructional strategies, activities, and programs are planned, delivered, and monitored to meet the changing needs of a diverse student population.

#### *Definitions: What instructional strategies meet the needs of a diverse student population?*

A **diverse student population** is one in which children of different cultures, socio-economic statuses, learning needs, and/or physical capabilities are represented. These subpopulations can include gifted and talented, underperforming, special needs students, and/or English language learners (ELLs).

Research based **instructional strategies** adapted to individual student learning needs contribute to an inclusive educational environment in which all children have the opportunity to succeed.

#### *What the Research Says*

- Based on African American elementary and secondary students' descriptions of teaching practices and learning environments, an ethnographic case study of urban contexts found that teachers who establish culturally connected caring relationships with students had a positive effect on student effort, engagement, and achievement (Howard, 2002).

- Elementary schools successfully closing the achievement gap were reported to have the following characteristics in common: 1) a school wide focus on literacy, 2) use of assessment data to inform instruction, 3) school leadership that encouraged inquiry into achievement gaps, 4) teacher collaboration, 5) high expectations for low-achieving students, and 6) a focus on inside school factors instead of outside school factors (Symonds, 2004).

- Results from research on urban elementary schools suggest that schools with strong academic emphases positively effect achievement for poor and minority students (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000).

#### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Be familiar with students' backgrounds.** Learn about the unique qualities that each child brings to the school.

2. **Develop a plan for addressing school equity.** Make sure that the school is in compliance with local, state, and federal equal opportunity and antidiscrimination laws including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which addresses nondiscrimination in federally assisted programs; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (educational equity for girls); various provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (e.g., Title III on language instruction for limited English proficient students and Title V on innovative programs); and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

3. **Create school wide practices that convey respect for students, their families, and their cultural backgrounds.** High expectations for all students, multicultural curriculum units, collaborative teaching approaches, and family learning activities are several ways that schools can embrace diversity and demonstrate respect.

## Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction

4. **Recruit qualified staff who will reflect the diversity of the schools' student population**. Consider hiring administrators, teachers, counselors, and support personnel who are comfortable working with students from varied backgrounds and who can serve as role models.

5. **Develop partnerships with cultural organizations and community agencies**. Check with the local chamber of commerce and/or public library for lists of organizations that could provide volunteers, educational materials, and other resources.

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### *Helpful Resources*

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University of Southern California, Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research. *Striving to make language and culture part of the solution.* Retrieved June 11, 2007, from www-rcf.usc.edu/~cmmr/

Davidman, L., & Davidman, P. (1997). *Teaching with a multicultural perspective: A practical guide.* New York: Longman.

Reed, B., & Railsback, J. (2003). *Strategies and resources for mainstream teachers of English language learners*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. (Booklet). Retrieved June 11, 2007, from www.nwrel.org/request/2003may/ell.pdf

Rodriguez, G., & Caplan, J. (1998). *Critical issue: Meeting the diverse needs of young children* [Online article]. Chicago, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. Retrieved January 18, 2007, from www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/earlycld/ea400.htm

## Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction

Teaching to student strengths. (2006, September). *Educational Leadership, 64*(1).

National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt) at www.nccrest.org

The National Coalition for Equity in Education (NCEE) at http://ncee.education.ucsb.edu

U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA) at www.ncela.gwu.edu/

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers

## Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction

### 3.1d    Teachers and students incorporate the use of technology in teaching and learning.

*Definitions: What is incorporation of technology in teaching and learning?*

**Incorporation of technology in teaching and learning** involves both teacher and student use of technology to support learning goals.

*What the Research Says*

- Several high-performing, high-poverty schools had teachers who frequently used technology and assigned students to use it. In these schools, technology was used for remediation and mastery as well as the development of basic, higher order thinking, and computer skills. Students were most likely to use the Internet and word processors for research and writing activities (Sweet, Rasher, Abromitis, & Johnson, 2004).

- Recently, there has been tremendous growth in the availability of instruction delivered through new technologies that complement traditional instruction. These include online courses, individually designed instruction, and student progress monitoring. Similarly, schools and districts are making greater use of data management systems to more effectively track student progress and to design and manage instructional programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

- To be successful members of an information rich society, students must be able to use technology for critical tasks, such as seeking, analyzing, and evaluating information; solving problems and making decisions; creating and using productivity tools; communicating and collaborating; and serving as informed, responsible, and contributing citizens (International Society for Technology in Education, 2000).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Ensure that needed technological resources are available and that access is equitably distributed.** Base decisions about technology access on how it will support student learning. Access considerations should determine the location and distribution of technology.

2. **Create opportunities to integrate technology into classroom instruction.** Encourage teachers to find ways to deliver course curricula that use technology effectively and maximize student engagement. Teachers can develop knowledge about best practice through research, examples of innovations, and staff development activities.

3. **Encourage teachers to use technology as a tool in their daily work.** Technology may be used to create efficiencies and increase effectiveness in instructional planning, instructional delivery, student assessment, monitoring student progress, and communicating information.

4. **Regularly assess technology use and future needs.** To ensure that decisions on technology use are based on student learning goals, develop a technology plan for the school. A committee may be established to monitor technology use and to explore new applications. All staff members should have opportunities for input in decision making to support staff buy-in and equitable access.

## Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction

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U.S. Department of Education. (2004). *Toward a new golden age in American education: How the Internet, the law, and today's students are revolutionizing expectations* (National Education Technology Plan 2004). Washington, DC: Author.

### *Helpful Resources*

Gahala, J. (2001). *Critical issue: Promoting technology use in schools*. Naperville, IL: Learning Point Associates.

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2002, November). *Technology in schools: Suggestions, tools, and guidelines for assessing technology in elementary and secondary education* (NCES 2003-313). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Forum on Education Statistics, Technology in Schools Task Force. Retrieved May 10, 2007, from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003313.pdf

**Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction**

**3.1e    Instructional resources (textbooks, supplemental reading, library resources and technology) are sufficient to support the effective delivery of the curriculum.**

*Definitions: What are instructional resources and the effective delivery of curriculum?*

**Instructional resources** include basic and supplemental staffing levels, staff time allocation, textbooks, assessment tools, supplies, equipment, and facilities. The availability of these resources affects learning opportunities for students.

**The curriculum is delivered effectively** when deployment of instructional resources promotes achievement of learning goals for all students.

*What the Research Says*

- School level resources are critical because they affect various aspects of instructional programs (Hartman & Boyd, 1998).

- High performing schools tend to adhere to six principles of teaching resource allocation: 1) reduction of specialized programs (e.g., pullout programs); 2) increased flexibility of student grouping; 3) structures that create more personalized environments; 4) longer and varied blocks of instructional time; 5) more common planning time for staff; and 6) creative definitions of staff roles and work schedules (Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1998).

- Effective instructional materials enhance student understanding related to content standards; promote active student engagement; reflect high expectations for all students; allow for meeting needs of diverse learners; use appropriate learning sequences; include assessment tools; and reflect scientifically based research (National Research Council, 1999).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Establish criteria and a process for evaluating the sufficiency of instructional materials.** Criteria for evaluating instructional resources should be clear and used to assess their alignment with state standards and grade level curricula, teacher satisfaction, and evidence of effectiveness. Reviewers with content area expertise, understanding of content standards, and familiarity with the student population should be trained and assigned to review, select, and adapt instructional materials on a regular and as needed basis.

2. **Teachers should have adequate professional development and should be assigned to teach students based on student needs**. Teachers should have adequate training to use instructional materials to maximize their efficacy. Teacher assignments should match teacher skill and knowledge to student needs.

3. **Monitor student progress and needs.** Use student performance data to assess progress toward performance objectives and identify areas where changes to the selection and allocation of instructional resources may be needed. Provide teachers with opportunities to work together to review, select, and adapt instructional materials and to ensure that student-teacher assignments are appropriate.

## Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction

4. **Encourage flexibility in deployment of resources.** Several strategies may be used to maximize availability of instructional resources, particularly in situations where resources are limited. For example, flexible student groupings may allow for teachers to individualize instruction. Flexibility in scheduling and pacing of instruction may also be used.

5. **Access external resources when needed.** For example, learning opportunities, tutoring help, funding, and other resources may be available through partnerships with individuals and organizations in the community. Instructional materials, including lesson plans, may be accessed at no cost through the Internet. Reallocation of budgets or acquisition of grant funds can provide additional resources.

### References

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Miles, K. H., & Darling-Hammond, L. (1998). Rethinking the allocation of teacher resources: Some lessons from high performing schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *20*(1), 9-29.

National Research Council. (1999). *Selecting instructional materials: A guide for K-12 science*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

### Helpful Resources

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University of Chicago Library. (2006). *Web-based collections of K-12 instructional resources*. Retrieved June 11, 2007, from www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/edu/instmtls.html

**Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction**

### 3.1f    Homework is monitored and linked to learning targets/objectives.

*Definitions: What does it mean to monitor homework and link it to learning targets?*

**Homework** is traditionally defined as assignments given to students to complete on their own outside of the school day. Homework helps students deepen their understanding of what they learned in the classroom, prepares them for upcoming lessons, encourages them to develop good study habits, and involves their parents in the learning process. The value of homework is optimized when students know that someone is examining and evaluating their work. Homework should be aligned directly to student learning objectives.

**Learning targets** are instructional objectives that clearly state what a child should learn in each subject area and grade level. Targets help teachers assess student progress, determine if special interventions are needed, and form the basic foundation for advancement to the next grade level.

*What the Research Says*

- Scholars at Duke University reviewed more than 60 research studies conducted between 1987 and 2003 on homework. They concluded that homework generally has a positive effect on student achievement. The strongest positive correlation was for students in grades 7 to 12 (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006).

- Using data from a national sample of 343,900 high school students, Bembenutty (2005) found that students who engaged in self-directed study methods, such as homework, were more likely to succeed academically because they developed higher motivational beliefs about themselves.

- According to an analysis of multiple studies conducted by Cooper (2001), time spent on homework should vary by grade level based on students' developmental needs. Most educators agree with the Ten Minute Rule, or 10 minutes multiplied by the students' grade level per night (i.e., 20 minutes per night for a student in second grade).

- Research conducted by Paik (2003) found that students learned more from homework that was graded, commented on, and discussed by teachers than from homework that received no feedback.

- Nichols (2002) found that schools and districts with clearly defined policies and expectations related to homework were more likely to have higher achieving students than schools and districts without such policies and expectations.

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Determine the learning targets to be addressed**. Schools can use the state or district learning targets or they can develop their own learning targets. Learning targets should be clearly written and specify exactly what instructional objectives should be accomplished.

2. **Decide on the appropriate types and amount of homework based on learning targets and grade levels.** Homework can require students to practice concepts learned in the classroom, prepare for the next days' learning, increase their skill speed, or master basic studying techniques.

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Use the Ten Minute Rule (i.e., 10 minutes multiplied by the students' grade level per night) as a general guideline for assigning homework.

3. **Implement clear homework policies.** Create a written school wide policy for homework that includes expectations, consequences, guidelines, and helpful tips for students, teachers, and parents.

4. **Post the learning targets and homework expectations in the classroom**. Students need to know what is expected of them and how they will be evaluated on their assignments. Show students examples of acceptable and unacceptable work to demonstrate for them what it means to succeed.

5. **Communicate learning targets and homework expectations to parents**. Parental support of classroom learning improves when parents know the expectations for student tasks. Provide parents with resources on how they can support student learning at home.

6. **Provide feedback to students on homework assignments.** Effective and timely feedback helps students understand how they are doing and enables them to correct mistakes. Teachers may provide students opportunities, either in groups or individually, to give feedback to themselves and to their peers on homework assignments.

7. **Communicate student progress on homework to parents.** Conferences and regular progress reports sent home are two effective means of showing parents their child's accomplishments.

8. **Document which homework assignments were most effective in helping students meet instructional objectives.** By tracking the types of homework assignments that result in improved student progress, teachers can develop the most effective means for students to learn outside of the school day.

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### *Helpful Resources*

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## Standard 3: Academic Performance – Instruction

Colorado Parent Information and Resources Center *Making homework manageable.* Retrieved April 19, 2007, from www.cpirc.org/vertical/Sites/{95025A21-DD4C-45C2-AE37-D35CA63B7AD9}/uploads/{32A90A57-029E-4987-AD84-FCEF50724293}.PPT

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# STANDARD 4:
# Learning Environment – School Culture

## 4.1a   There is a safe, orderly, and equitable learning environment in the school.

### Definitions: What is a safe, orderly, and equitable learning environment?

**Safety and order** are aspects of the learning environment that enable teachers to teach and students to learn in a setting that is predictable and free of threats, intimidation, violence, and fear.

**Equity** in a learning environment refers to the provision of high quality educational opportunities to all students regardless of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, national origin, or other factors.

### What the Research Says

- Teachers and students report various levels of fear regarding the state of school crime and violence, and the public sees school discipline and drug abuse as major problems confronting public schools (Ross, 2003).

- Recent incidents of school violence, including high profile shootings in public schools, have focused national attention on understanding potential threats, how to prevent incidents, and how to improve overall school safety (Moore, Petrie, Braga, & McLaughlin, 2003).

- School violence and threats of violence interfere with the educational process and affect the school and the community (Henry, 2000; National Education Association, 2005).

- Research shows that students in schools with a positive school climate are more likely to succeed academically and are less likely to engage in risk behaviors such as substance abuse, sex, and violence. Characteristics of a good school climate include positive interactions among members of the school community, clear consequences for violating rules, and rewards for meeting expectations (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2000).

- A safe school environment is one that is prepared for emergencies, anticipates and prevents school incidents, and provides opportunities for students to engage in school- and community-based activities that take place before, during, and after school. A safe school balances physical security with a nurturing school climate and develops effective school-community partnerships (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2000).

## Standard 4: Learning Environment – School Culture

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Develop and share expectations and policies related to school safety, order, and equity.** Members of the school community should have a shared understanding of school policies related to conduct and discipline that address bullying, intimidation, violence, crime, gangs, weapons, drugs, alcohol, and other factors that affect school safety and order. Provide professional development to school staff to ensure that there is a shared understanding of how to provide equal opportunities, maintain high expectations for all students, promote respect for all students, and recognize and address biases in one's own practice and in the school as a whole.

2. **Assess progress toward goals for school safety, order, and equity.** Conduct regular assessments of the physical facilities, policies, practices, and plans for safety and crisis response.

3. **Establish a school safety committee to respond to needs and concerns.** Convene a committee with representatives of the school community to ensure that local safety needs are identified and addressed in an ongoing manner.

4. **Monitor achievement progress of student groups.** An examination of achievement gaps among different groups may identify disparities. Identify and report disparities in equity and develop plans to address them.

5. **Ensure appropriate responses to needs as they arise.** Develop prevention and intervention programs to respond to school order and safety concerns. Concerns expressed by members of the school community should be documented and addressed, in accordance with school policy. Develop partnerships with local law enforcement, community, and state agencies as appropriate.

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## Standard 4: Learning Environment – School Culture

Ross, D. M. (2003). *Childhood bullying, teasing, and violence: What school personnel, other professionals, and parents can do*. (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

### *Helpful Resources*

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2005). *Measuring violence-related attitudes, behaviors, and influences among youths: A compendium of assessment tools, second edition.* Atlanta, GA: Author.

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The Center for School Safety, School Climate and Classroom Management at http://education.gsu.edu/schoolsafety.

The Educational Equity Center at the Academy for Educational Development at http://education.gsu.edu/schoolsafety.
Provides programs and materials to promote bias-free learning.

The National School Safety Center at www.schoolsafety.us

**Standard 4: Learning Environment – School Culture**

**4.1b    Teachers hold high academic and behavioral expectations for all students and this is evident in their practice.**

*Definitions: What are high expectations?*

**High expectations** hold all students, except those in the most severe disabled categories, responsible for learning challenging content. Schools communicate high expectations through instruction, feedback, assignments, and other interactions. Some students may need further assistance, increased time to meet high expectations or enrichment programs.

*What the Research Says*

- High schools that had successfully narrowed or closed the achievement gap and sustained the achievement over time were characterized by high expectations for all students, a supportive environment, deep content expertise among the faculty, and specific interventions for those who were falling behind (Billig, Jaime, Abrams, Fitzpatrick, & Kendrick, 2005).

- High impact schools have consistently high expectations for all students, regardless of students' prior academic performance. At these schools, principals, teachers, and counselors take responsibility for helping students to succeed. Barriers to high-level course taking were removed and students were encouraged to accept academic challenges (Education Trust, 2005).

- All children, including those who have been underserved, can learn when they have access to high quality instructional programs that support their learning (Silver & Stein, 1996).

- Subtle communication of lower expectations can hinder student achievement. Clearly articulated high expectations can create a self-fulfilling prophecy (Wong & Wong, 1998).

- Studies have repeatedly found schools that are high performing have high expectations for all students (Visher & Hudis, 1999; Ware, 1999).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Provide challenging opportunities for all students to learn content and problem solving.**

2. **Accommodate differences to help everyone learn the content.** Some students may need further assistance or additional resources to meet higher expectations.

3. **Understand how students learn.** Through professional development, teachers can confront biases they may have about students from diverse backgrounds or with specific disabilities.

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**4.1c    School leaders and staff create experiences that demonstrate the belief that all children can learn at high levels and they work to facilitate continuous improvement in student learning.**

*Definitions: What is the belief that all children can learn at high levels and what is continuous improvement in student learning?*

**The belief that all children can learn at high levels** refers to an expectation that all children can meet high academic expectations, given sufficient opportunities and support. The expectations are generally expressed as state, district, or school standards. Students who score at the proficient or advanced level are considered to have learned at high levels.

**Continuous improvement in student learning** is a process through which educators use assessment of student progress and formal reflection on their practice to guide ongoing improvement.

*What the Research Says*

- A recent study of successful high schools that served economically disadvantaged students found that schools with the most positive impact had consistently higher expectations for all students, regardless of their prior academic performance and that school staff (i.e., principals, teachers, and counselors) took responsibility for helping students succeed (Education Trust, 2005).

- A study of high- and low-performing elementary schools in 10 states found that a key component of the school environment in the most successful schools was the maintenance of high expectations for all students (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, 2005)

- Simmons & Schuette (1988) described the role of teachers as reflective practitioners who make "instructional decisions consciously and tentatively, critically consider[ing] a full range of pertinent contextual and pedagogical factors, actively seek[ing] evidence about the results, and continu[ing] to modify these decisions as the situation warrants" (p. 20).

- Little (1982) identified two primary characteristics of schools that contribute to successful staff development programs: a *norm of collegiality,* which includes an expectation for shared work in a cooperative atmosphere for all teachers; and a *norm of continuous improvement,* which includes high expectations for analysis, evaluation, experimentation, and collaborative work among teachers to improve the school.

- Professional learning communities facilitate teacher change. McLaughlin and Talbert (1993) found that when teachers had opportunities for collaborative inquiry, they were able to develop and share wisdom from their experience. Darling-Hammond (1996) found that schools that provided structured time for teachers to work together in planning instruction, observing each other's classrooms, and sharing feedback led to curriculum reform and transformation of teaching roles.

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### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Establish school wide goals that articulate high expectations for all students.** Clearly and consistently communicate the expectation that all students can achieve at high levels. Instill the message in the mission and vision and in formal and informal discussions about student learning. Identify and address instances where high expectations are not maintained.

2. **Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely (SMART)**. Establish "SMART" goals that are clearly articulated, attainable with existing resources, perceived as realistic, tied to a timeframe and include specific measurement criteria.

3. **Establish a school wide expectation of continuous improvement.** Express clear, consistent expectations for staff improvement. Work towards becoming a learning organization with a reputation for challenging but realistic goals, support and incentives for change, development and sharing of institutional knowledge, and a culture of continuous reflection and refinement.

4. **Support data based decision making.** Collect information about student and teacher needs and achievement to establish objectives for school improvement efforts and to guide continuous improvement. Data sources may include standardized test results; district assessment results; examples of teacher assignments and the resulting student work; climate survey results; demographics; and information regarding discipline, attendance, and parent involvement. Establish benchmarks for measuring progress.

5. **Engage in ongoing progress monitoring activities.** Educators need information to assess how students are doing relative to grade-level standards, to identify student needs, and to engage students in improving their achievement.

6. **Examine studies of high-performing schools.** A large body of research documents specific instructional, organizational, and school environmental factors, which are common among successful schools. Several studies examine characteristics of high performing schools that serve high concentrations of economically disadvantaged and language minority students and other students with special needs. Identification of those characteristics that are most relevant to local student needs can provide a strong basis for improvement.

7. **Establish structures and processes that support reflective practice.** Staff development activities that emphasize reflective practice will help to foster a culture of continuous improvement. *Teacher learning teams* are one type of professional learning community that enable teachers to learn together to address student needs and improve their practice. *Lesson study* is a professional development process in which teachers systematically examine their practice. Teachers work collaboratively on "study lessons" in which they plan, teach, observe, and critique fellow group members while examining an overarching goal and related research question. The process entails collaboration, experimentation, and reflection.

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## Standard 4: Learning Environment – School Culture

**4.1d    Teachers and non-teaching staff are involved in both formal and informal decision-making processes regarding teaching and learning.**

### Definitions: What is non-teaching staff and what is involvement in decision making?

**Non-teaching staff** includes school administrators, librarians, paraprofessionals, support and custodial staff, and other professionals who work in the school building.

**Involvement in decision making** means giving individuals opportunities to express opinions and contribute to educational decisions.

### What the Research Says

- Research has documented a general sense of powerlessness among many educators and indicates that role ambiguity and a lack of goal congruence contribute to a sense of a lack of control and efficacy (Enderlin-Lampe, 1997).

- Shared decision making in schools has the potential to improve the quality of decisions; increase decisions' acceptance and implementation; strengthen staff morale, commitment, and teamwork; build trust; help staff and administrators acquire new skills; and increase school effectiveness (Liontos, 1993).

- In a study of schools that switched to shared decision making, Lange (1993) concluded that schools made better decisions than they would have under more centralized school management and that trust increased as staff gained understanding of management complexities and principals learned to respect faculty judgment.

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Establish policies for shared decision making that match the abilities and interests of school staff.** Involve teachers and non-teaching staff in decisions related to topics with which they are well informed and which match their knowledge, experience, priorities, and interest. Clearly articulate to staff which areas will involve shared decision making.

2. **Articulate decision making structures, participants, and processes**. Many schools develop one decision making team or council, while others use several groups or committees. The school community should be aware of who will be involved in shared decision making, the nature of decision making group(s), and how decisions will be made within them. Participants should be clear about the decision making agenda, the process, their roles, and their responsibilities.

3. **Build trust and support by empowering the decision making group(s) and ensuring access to the decision making process.** Shared decision making will be effective only to the extent that shared decisions are valued and supported throughout the school hierarchy and applied to meaningful activity in the school. All school staff should feel that they have a voice in decision making. Provide formal opportunities to teaching and non-teaching staff to

## Standard 4: Learning Environment – School Culture

participate in decision making processes and informal opportunities to provide input and feedback about decisions.

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**4.1e    Teachers recognize and accept their professional role in student success and failure.**

*Definitions: What does it mean for teachers to recognize and accept their role in student success and failure?*

**Recognition and acceptance of one's role in student success and failure** reflects an understanding that teachers can influence how well students learn, including those students with challenges related to their economic circumstances, low ability, or lack of motivation.

*What the Research Says*

- Nye, Konstantopoulos, and Hedges (2004) found that student achievement outcomes were significantly associated with teacher effectiveness. Differences were more pronounced for mathematics scores than reading scores, and there was most variation among teacher effects in schools serving students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

- The extent to which teachers believe that they can influence how well students learn has been characterized in research as the key component of teacher efficacy (Guskey & Passaro, 1994).

- Teachers with high efficacy as instructors tend to indicate confidence in their abilities to overcome factors that could make learning difficult for a student while those with low teacher efficacy often indicate that student background or environmental factors overwhelm any influence teachers have in schools (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998).

- Teacher efficacy has been shown to be predictive or strongly related to student achievement and several other important variables, including student motivation, teachers' adoption of innovations, teachers' classroom management strategies, supervisors' ratings of teacher competence, program implementation success, and school effectiveness (Guskey, 1998).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Provide opportunities for teachers to experiment and experience success.** Successes related to student learning, in particular experiences overcoming challenges through persistent effort, help build teacher efficacy. Supporting staff development in areas that are likely to lead to visible impact on students is one way to promote success. Increase the visibility of individual and collective successes through recognition or celebration activities.

2. **Promote understanding of what is possible by sharing successes from other settings.** Share information about successful teachers and schools in similar circumstances to help teachers understand that seemingly insurmountable challenges can be overcome.

3. **Create a culture of efficacy**. Establish the expectation that all children will succeed in school and focus on teachers' roles in providing meaningful programs and resources for all

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students. Reinforce the message through professional development activities, feedback about student achievement, and informal communication.

4. **Help teachers understand and respond to the needs of their students**. Many students have unique challenges to their ability to learn, such as physical, psychological, or learning disabilities, difficult home environment, or poor prior academic preparation. Increasing teacher understanding and response to student needs will help teachers internalize their role in student success and failure.

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### 4.1f Staff members are assigned to maximize opportunities for all students to have access to the staff's instructional strengths.

### *Definitions: What are staff strengths?*

**Instructional strengths** refer to areas in which a staff member has earned a degree, received additional training, acquired additional certification, or demonstrated teaching excellence.

### *What the Research Says*

- Fourth and eighth grade students whose teachers had an undergraduate degree in mathematics averaged six points higher on the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics test than those who did not (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001).

- On the 2000 NAEP science test, there was a statistically significant difference in achievement of eighth graders who were taught by instructors with undergraduate degrees in science and those who were not (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

- Students whose teachers majored in the relevant subject area were 39% of a grade level ahead of other students both in math and science (Wenglinsky, 2000).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Identify needed teacher qualifications and skills and recruit new teachers with those skills.** Whether hiring new teachers or working with veteran teachers, examine their personnel files, talk with human resource staff, interview staff, and gather additional information to become knowledgeable about their qualifications.

2. **Identify instructional needs and assign specific teachers with appropriate skills.** Using data identify educational and instructional needs to further organizational goals and improve student achievement. Based on qualifications and skills (not years of experience), align staff expertise and capabilities with student needs.

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### 4.1g    Teachers regularly communicate with families about each student's progress.

*Definitions: What constitutes student progress?*

**Student progress** refers to student achievement on educational measures such as attendance, discipline referrals, and scores on state tests, classroom assessments, and performances.

*What the Research Says*

- Parents who perceive that they are receiving frequent, positive messages from their child's teachers tend to get more involved in their child's education than do parents who do not receive such messages (Ames, Khoju, & Watkins, 1993).

- Clark (2002) reported that students' standardized test scores were higher when their teachers reported more communication with parents and when the parents "perceived themselves to be engaged in a healthy partnership with the teacher." Teacher-parent communication factors accounted for about 7% of the variance among students' reading test scores in this research study.

- Communication frequency between teachers and parents differs depending on the grades served (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school). Roderick and colleagues' (1998) research in Chicago schools showed that teachers in majority Hispanic elementary schools reported the highest rate of communication with parents, yet in majority Hispanic high schools, this rate was the lowest. High school parents, in general, felt less connected to their child's school than parents of elementary age children. High school parents wanted more communication about academics.

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Regularly send home student progress reports.** These reports may be on paper or e-mail and should be sent on a regular schedule, at least quarterly. Additional reports may be sent home as needed. The reports should include specific written explanations of student performance and should be clearly written and available in the parents' home language, if possible. If appropriate, reports should also include progress on the goals of the student's Individualized Education Plan.

2. **Provide separate individual student scores in all core academic areas**. It important for parents to have an overall picture of their child's achievement and to understand their child's strengths and weaknesses in each core subject. Reports should include student scores and the criteria for mastery of standards.

3. **Encourage teachers to regularly contact families by phone, e-mail, or home visit to discuss the progress of individual students**. Personal contact may elicit parental assistance with students who are experiencing lags in achievement.

4. **Involve students in reporting their own progress to their families**. Students should have an opportunity to demonstrate their progress to their parents. This may be done through conferences and interactive journals written by the students and responded to by parents and teaches.

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5.  **If individual teachers maintain Web pages on the school site, provide parents with a secure password to obtain information on their child's classroom progress.** This works well if teachers make frequent in class determinations of student progress.

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### 4.1h    Teachers and staff care about students and inspire their best efforts.

#### Definitions: What is a caring school culture?

A **caring school culture** promotes healthy development in young people and inspires them to achieve. In a caring school environment, teachers and staff bring out the best in students through affirmation and encouragement.

#### What the Research Says

- Two-way communication is one of the most important components of a caring relationship between teachers and students. Students are more willing to learn from and work cooperatively with their teachers when they feel they are listened to, respected, and valued. School leaders play a key role in creating a caring school culture by modeling what it means to be caring and holding high expectations for all students and teachers. As one former principal noted, "A caring school is not a 'soft' school. Care rejects second-rate teaching and does not allow lame excuses for low achievement. Care requires a standard of equality for all students, regardless of how they look or what they bring to the schoolhouse door" (Rooney, 2003).

- According to Stronge (2002), characteristics of caring go well beyond just knowing students; they include qualities such as patience, trust, honesty, kindness, courage, and gentleness. Effective teachers demonstrate caring by listening to their students, encouraging them to do their best, and understanding their life circumstances.

- In a study conducted at 24 elementary schools in six school districts across the United States, researchers assessed students' sense of school as a caring community. High ratings were strongly associated with increased academic achievement, positive attitudes toward school and learning, educational aspirations, and trust in and respect for teachers. Students who felt "cared for" by teachers and staff demonstrated increased prosocial attitudes and behaviors including concern for others, altruistic behavior, conflict resolution skills, and sense of efficacy. A caring school environment was also correlated with decreased student drug use and involvement in delinquent behaviors (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1994).

- A study of 154 California middle and high schools found that as students' ratings of caring relationships and high expectations increased so did gains in their state test scores (Hanson, Austin, & Lee-Bayha, 2004).

- High school students who viewed their teachers as "not caring" tended to report less incentive to complete schoolwork or participate in class, according to a study conducted by the Center for Research on the Context of Secondary School Teaching at Stanford University (Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1992).

- Analysis of data from the 1994-1995 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health found that adolescents who felt cared for by people at their school were less likely to use illegal substances, engage in violence, or initiate sexual activity at an early age. A caring school environment that met students' developmental needs was related to students' sense of school connectedness (McNeeley, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002).

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### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Create a classroom environment that is predictable and consistent**. This enables students to feel safe and gives them a sense of continuity and constancy during the school day.

2. **Develop classroom rituals to help students understand the significance of everyday activities, learn about each other's cultural backgrounds, and celebrate achievements.**

3. **Attend to the academic needs of students.** Teach them study skills, challenge them to be better students, and consider their interests when developing lesson plans.

4. **Get to know students well and be a good listener.** This helps students develop trust, feel good about themselves, and become committed learners. Mutual trust, honesty, and respect can be promoted by working with students to develop classroom norms.

5. **Check in with students to assess how they are feeling about school and learning.** This can occur on an individual basis and through group discussions.

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### 4.1i    Multiple communication strategies and contexts are used for the dissemination of information to all stakeholders.

### *Definitions: What are multiple communication strategies?*

Using **multiple communication strategies** means that educators transmit information to people in more than one way. In schools, traditional methods of communication tend to be one way (school to home) and usually in a written format (e.g., a newsletter or progress report). Advances in technology enable schools to use the Internet, electronic mail (e-mail), automated telephone systems, and voice mail to communicate with and among teachers, administrators, community members, and families. Personal contacts with families though parent-teacher conferences, family-school liaisons, and the use of interpreters and bilingual materials can be effective ways of communicating with an increasingly diverse school population.

### *What the Research Says*

- Research on family involvement in schools indicates that communication should be collaborative, involve families, students, staff, and the community, and use a variety of formats (Epstein, 2001).

- Benefits of effective family-school communication include gains in student achievement, improvements in student behaviors, increases in parental satisfaction with the quality of schooling, and increased parental support for teachers and schools' educational goals (Hoover-Dempsey & Walker, 2002).

- A study of the impact of the South Dakota Head Start/Public School Transition Demonstration Project on school climate and parent involvement found that family service coordinators were instrumental in creating a more open climate in demonstration schools due to increased home-school communication. As a result, parents in the demonstration schools were more likely than parents in schools without family service coordinators to be more involved in their children's education, have improved interactions with school personnel, and be more comfortable in the schools (Allen, Thompson, Hoadley, Engelking, & Drapeaux, 1997).

- Parents who responded to a Parent Communication Survey at a suburban Florida middle school noted that they preferred telephone calls home, electronic mail, and notes in student planners. Parents wanted to hear about students' academic progress and concerns, behavioral concerns, social-emotional development, and curricular issues. They appreciated when feedback was timely and specific and when they were included in problem solving and decision making processes (Freytag, 2001).

- A three-year longitudinal assessment of teacher perceptions of parent involvement at an urban elementary school in southern New England concluded that quality of parent-teacher communication was a better predictor of improvement in both children's behavior and academic achievement than frequency of communication (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow,& Fendrich, 1999).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Develop a communication plan**. Involve school staff and parents or guardians of students attending the school in developing a plan that meets the needs of the school's population.  Conduct

discussions of the best ways to communicate in staff meetings. A communication needs assessment is one way of including all stakeholders in this process. When developing communication strategies, schools need to pay particular attention to parents' educational levels, language abilities, work schedules, access to and knowledge of technology, and cultural expectations. Teachers and staff should be trained on formal and informal strategies to increase the quality and effectiveness of family-school communication.

2. **Introduce the communication plan at the beginning of the school year.** At the beginning of the school year, inform staff about the various strategies and expectations for school-home communication. Provide families with information on how they can reach teachers and let them know what types of resources they will receive at various times during the school year.

3. **Make sure that all methods of communication are easily understood and inclusive.** Communication to parents should be jargon-free and in a language spoken by the family at home, if possible. When addressing letters sent home, use "Dear Parents and Caregivers" or "Dear Parents and Guardians" to include the families of children being raised in other family settings. Arrange teacher conferences and school events at times when the majority of family members can attend. Provide transportation, interpreters, and bilingual materials if necessary. Since many families do not have access to computers or the Internet, provide multiple forms of outreach.

4. **Assess the communication plan.** Check with staff, community members, and families on a regular basis to make sure they are receiving and understanding information being sent from the school. Be sure families are able to contact their child's teacher. Ask families if they have any questions about school policies and procedures. Survey families at the end of the school year to assess the effectiveness of the communication strategies.

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## Standard 4: Learning Environment – School Culture

### *Helpful Resources*

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National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA) www.nspra.org

North Central Regional Education Laboratory® (NCREL) Information on communicating with families can be found at www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/envrnmnt/famncomm/pa3lk14.htm

US Charter Schools at www.uscharterschools.org

## Standard 4: Learning Environment – School Culture

### 4.1j    Student achievement is highly valued and publicly celebrated.

*Definitions: What does it mean to value and celebrate student achievement?*

**Valuing** student achievement means that teachers, staff, administrators, students, family members, and the community prioritize academic achievement. Student achievement can be **celebrated** through awards, events, articles in newsletters, mottos placed throughout the school, notes sent home, and other types of recognition.

*What the Research Says*

- A shared set of beliefs, rituals, ceremonies, and stories help students and staff to see that their successes are recognized and appreciated. This positive "psychological environment" strongly influences student and staff motivation (Maehr, 1991).

- Benefits of celebrating student achievement include 1) students and staff members feel appreciated; 2) the school's shared values are reinforced; 3) momentum to succeed builds throughout the school; 4) positive role models for students and staff emerge; and 5) the school becomes a positive learning community (DuFour, 1998).

- A study on school climate and student achievement found a significant difference between schools with a positive climate and those with a negative climate. Indicators of student achievement were higher for schools with a positive school climate (Bulach, Malone, & Castleman, 1995).

- A district wide survey of 369 seventh grade students in a semi-rural school district in California showed that students' perceptions of school climate significantly predicted grade point average (GPA) across gender and ethnicity. Students who felt supported by school staff tended to have higher GPAs than those who did not feel supported (Buckley, Storino, & Sebastiani, 2003).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Reinforce the importance of student achievement**. Display mottos, banners, and symbols of success to provide students and staff with reminders about the importance of learning.

2. **Make student achievement everyone's responsibility.** In a positive learning community, responsibility for student success is shared by students, teachers, administrators, counselors, family members, and the community.

3. **State the purpose for celebrating student achievement.** Explain the rationale for celebrating, that is, celebration is important for sustaining the school's success and motivating individuals to achieve.

4. **Link recognition to the advancement of the schools' vision**. Include articles in the school newsletter and send press releases to local media outlets that explain how student achievement contributes to efforts to improve the school.

5. **Create opportunities for lots of winners**. Celebration is most effective when all students, staff, and families feel they have the opportunity to be publicly recognized for their individual efforts and contributions.

6. **Remember to celebrate small successes.** Find simple examples of improvement, such as a class achieving its goal of reading a certain number of books, and recognize those efforts. Note that different cultures have different ways of acknowledging success.

### *References*

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## Standard 4: Learning Environment – School Culture

**4.1k**      **Support for the physical, cultural, socio-economic, and intellectual needs of all students reflects the school's commitment to equity and appreciation of diversity.**

### Definitions: What is equity and appreciation of diversity?

A school demonstrates commitment to **equity** when all students have equal access to learning facilities, resources, and curricular programs.

**Appreciation of diversity** is reflected in the ways the school serves children of different cultures, socio-economic statuses, learning needs, and physical capabilities. When all children, regardless of their backgrounds and abilities are fully welcomed and supported at school, the learning environment is considered inclusive.

### What the Research Says

- A three-year study conducted in a West Virginia county showed that teachers who were trained in culturally responsive teaching methods and who taught culturally responsive curriculum units created a more positive classroom learning environment and demonstrated better use of class time than teachers who did not. The same study found that students of these teachers had greater opportunities to learn, received more appropriate instruction, and were more engaged in learning tasks than their peers in other classrooms (Hughes et al., 2005).

- Findings from an ethnographic case study that examined African American elementary and secondary students' descriptions of teaching practices and learning environments within urban contexts demonstrated that teachers who establish "culturally connected caring relationships with students" had a positive impact on student effort, engagement, and achievement (Howard, 2002).

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

The following steps were developed by the National Staff Development Council, 2001 and Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001.

1. **Become familiar with students' backgrounds.** Learn about the unique qualities each child brings to the school to gain a complete picture of the student population.

2. **Develop a plan for addressing equity at the school.** Make sure that the school is in compliance with local, state, and federal equal opportunity and antidiscrimination laws including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which addresses nondiscrimination in federally assisted programs; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (educational equity for girls); various provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (e.g., Title III on language instruction for limited English proficient students and Title V on innovative programs); and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

3. **Establish a curriculum review process to ensure that curriculum is screened for bias and meets the needs of all students.**

4. **Provide diversity training to staff.** Give staff opportunities to understand their own attitudes regarding race, social class, and culture, and persons with special needs, and how their attitudes

## Standard 4: Learning Environment – School Culture

affect their teaching practices and expectations for student learning and behavior. This enables teachers to develop classroom management skills that support positive interaction.

5. **Create school wide practices that convey respect for students, their families, and their cultural backgrounds**. High expectations for all students, multicultural curriculum units, collaborative teaching approaches, and family learning activities are several ways that the school can embrace diversity and demonstrate respect.

6. **Recruit qualified staff members who reflect the diversity of the schools' student population**. Consider hiring personnel who are comfortable working with students from varied backgrounds and who can serve as role models.

7. **Develop partnerships with cultural organizations and community agencies that could serve as resources.** Check with the local chamber of commerce and/or public library for lists of organizations that can provide volunteers, educational materials, and other resources.

### *References*

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## Standard 4: Learning Environment – School Culture

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National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt) at www.nccrest.org

The National Coalition for Equity in Education (NCEE) at http://ncee.education.ucsb.edu

U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (NCELA) at www.ncela.gwu.edu

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers

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# STANDARD 5:
# Learning Environment – Student, Family and Community Support

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**5.1a    Families and the community are active partners in the educational process and work with the school staff to promote programs and services for all students.**

### *Definitions: What is a barrier to learning?*

A **barrier** to learning is anything that might impede the learning process such as language difficulties, learning disabilities, limitations of parenting and home environments, lack of community involvement, socio-economic considerations, or inadequate educational resources. These factors may result in student disengagement, acting out, bullying, dropping out or other negative behavior.

### *What the Research Says*

- Hawkins, Catalano, and Associates (1992) and Hawkins, Catalano, and Miller (1992) identified a number of risk factors leading to learning, behavioral, and personal problems. Factors include poverty, lack of parent involvement in and support for education, child abuse, and unsafe communities. The researchers also identified preventive factors that could be implemented when the community became involved in the schools.

- Research shows that students who receive social-emotional support and prevention services achieve better academically in school (Fleming et al., 2005).

- Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2004) collected scientifically based research that suggested a strong impact of learning support systems. These systems enhanced students' social and emotional behaviors that, in turn, improved their school success.

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Conduct a needs assessment.** Some barriers to learning may not be immediately apparent. A needs assessment should examine factors impacting student achievement in the home, the community, and in the school. The assessment can take the form of surveys, interviews, observations, and/or focus groups.

2. **Review the research.** The school should look for strategies that have the most promise of affecting a positive change in student achievement.

3. **Begin small.** After identifying those barriers that most impede the educational process, choose no more than two or three on which to focus initial effort.

4.  **Assess success.** Build in appropriate assessments to measure the success of the strategies. Collect data frequently that measure student achievement related to these strategies. Make adjustments as needed.

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### *Helpful Resources*

Adelman, H. S., & Taylor, L., (2005). *The implementation guide to student learning supports in the classroom and schoolwide: New directions for addressing barriers to learning.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. (2001). Addressing barriers to learning: A set of surveys to map what a school has and what it needs [A resource aid packet] (Rev. 2004, September). Los Angeles, CA: Author. Retrieved January 16, 2007, from http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/Surveys/Set1.pdf

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WestEd. (2001). Removing barriers to learning. *R&D Alert: Low-performing schools begin turning the corner, 3*(2), 8.

## Standard 5: Learning Environment – Student, Family and Community Support

### 5.1b    Support structures and programs are in place to reduce barriers to learning for all students.

*Definitions: What are learning support structures?*

**Learning support structures** are programs, resources, policies, and strategies that address barriers to learning in ways that enhance the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual support of learners and facilitate their growth and ongoing development. Learning support systems provide a continuum of services and are often implemented in collaboration with the community.

*What the Research Says*

- Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2004) collected scientifically based research that suggested a strong impact of learning support systems. These systems enhanced students' social and emotional behaviors that, in turn, improved their school success.

- "School systems are not responsible for meeting every need of their students. But when the need directly affects learning, the school must meet the challenge" (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents ,1989).

- Children of parents who are involved in their education have higher grades and achievement test scores, stronger attendance and better attitudes and behaviors (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Clearly define which learning barriers will be addressed, and through which supports and structures.** The goal of creating a systemic system of learning supports is to have a cohesive, comprehensive, and accountable system that does not strain existing staff and resources. This is accomplished by linking the efforts of the school with community projects with similar goals.

2. **Study existing research on learning support systems and barriers to learning.** Seek out research based, effective programs and practices.

3. **Design an accountability system** which measures the impact of the learning supports system on classroom work and student achievement.

4. **Enhance access to community resources to assist students in overcoming learning barriers**. Consider sharing resources or facilities, if appropriate.

5. **Provide appropriate professional development to staff regarding barriers to learning and research based strategies to address them.** The intent of this professional development is to build system and staff capacity and to be more proactive in preventing crises.

6. **Ensure that the learning support system is working effectively**. After the system has been operational for over a year, examine disaggregated data on student achievement and the other indicators to see how groups of students are achieving. If barriers continue to exist for certain subpopulations, go back to Step 2. This evaluation should also ensure minimization of duplication of services among agencies, and identify ways to address gaps in services created by changing student needs. Share the results with the school community.

## Standard 5: Learning Environment – Student, Family and Community Support

### *References*

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents. (1989). *Turning points: Preparing American youth for the 21st century.* Washington, DC: Author.

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## Standard 5: Learning Environment – Student, Family and Community Support

**5.1c    The school maintains an accurate, secure student record system that provides timely information pertinent to the student's academic and educational development.**

### Definitions: What is an accurate, accessible student record system?

A **student record system** is a collection of student records that are linked together to perform functions such as generating reports and conducting data analysis. Student record systems are **accurate** when the information is up-to-date and correct. They are **accessible** when teachers, administrators, counselors, and families can easily retrieve information they need.

Families have certain rights with regard to their children's education records under the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974* (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CRF Part 99) (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). This law applies to all schools that receive funds from the U.S. Department of Education. Parents have the right to inspect and review student's education records maintained by the school. They can request that a school correct records that they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. FERPA allows schools to disclose records, without consent, to certain parties, such as accrediting organizations and schools to which a student is transferring. Schools must notify family members annually of their rights under FERPA. Notification should be translated for family members who do not speak English and must be made available in accessible formats for those who are disabled (U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

### What the Research Says

- Parents at a middle school in Pennsylvania where a Web-based academic record and feedback system was used reported that they were better informed of their children's schoolwork, were more involved in their children's academic lives, and felt that the system allowed for better and quicker communication with teachers (Sonak, Suen, Zappe, & Hunter, 2002).

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Determine the purpose of the student record system.** Talk with teachers, counselors, and other school staff to determine who will use the system, for what purposes, and to whom and how information will be reported.

2. **Identify federal, state, and local regulations affecting the maintenance of student records.** Check with the charter authorizer regarding regulations and review FERPA. Consider establishing an oversight committee to review policies, procedures, and activities involving student records.

3. **Determine the physical design of the student record system.** This involves selecting appropriate software that is user friendly. There may be certain software packages that the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) or district requires each school to use, so check with the appropriate department at CDE and the district before purchasing a system.

4. **Determine procedures for providing access to the system.** Refer to the FERPA regulations regarding access. Develop policies and procedures for who can enter and view student data, and make sure there is good security for the system. Provide training to teachers and staff.

## Standard 5: Learning Environment – Student, Family and Community Support

5. **Notify parents about when and how their child's information will be reported to them.** Let parents know how they can use the system to support student learning at home and communicate with their child's teacher.

### References

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U.S. Department of Education, Family Policy Compliance Office. (2005). Family education rights and privacy act (FERPA). Retrieved January 9, 2007, from www.ed.gov/print/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa

### Helpful Resources

U.S. Department of Education, Family Compliance Office at www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco

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# STANDARD 6:
## Learning Environment – Professional Development Growth, and Evaluation

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**6.1a    Teachers who demonstrate the content knowledge and instructional skills necessary to challenge and motivate students to high levels of learning are recruited and supported through professional development.**

*Definitions: What are effective teachers and what does it mean to recruit and support them?*

**Effective teachers** are those who help students master curricular objectives at a level expected by the school, district, or state. **Recruitment** refers to the procedures for identifying qualified teachers, interviewing them, and convincing them to teach at the school. **Supporting teachers** refers to providing teachers with professional development, professional treatment, and the human and material resources they need to do their jobs well.

*What the Research Says*

- The U.S. Department of Education (1997) identified 10 principles of high quality professional development that reflect research based best practices. High quality professional development:
    1. Focuses on teachers but includes all other members of the school community;
    2. Focuses on individual, collegial, and organizational improvement;
    3. Respects and nurtures the intellectual and leadership capacity of staff and leadership;
    4. Reflects best available research and practice in teaching and learning;
    5. Enables teachers to develop further experience in subject content, teaching strategies, uses of technologies, and other essential instructional tools;
    6. Promotes continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools;
    7. Supports collaborative planning by those who will participate in and facilitate professional development;
    8. Sets aside time and other resources;
    9. Follows a coherent long term plan; and
    10. Evaluates the impact on teacher effectiveness and student learning to guide subsequent professional development efforts (p. 3).

- Teacher quality influences student achievement more than many other factors, including class size and student demographics (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002).

- Snipes, Doolittle, and Herlihy (2003) reported that three urban districts with coherent district wide instructional plans that supported teacher development around the curricula with

coaching and grade level planning periods had improved achievement rates and narrowed achievement gaps.

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Establish a recruitment strategy that emphasizes teacher effectiveness.** Study the "competition" and understand the type of teacher who will be drawn to the school's setting. To the extent possible, market the school and provide incentives for effective teachers to join. The incentives may be salaries or a supportive culture and leader. Choose teachers from teacher preparation programs with known records of effectiveness.

2. **Create a professional development plan that focuses on teachers' needs.** Conduct a needs assessment to determine the professional development needs of teachers in content and pedagogy. Provide ongoing, intensive professional development to help teachers acquire necessary skills and knowledge and transfer what they have learned to the classroom.

3. **Ensure that the school culture supports teachers.** Reward effectiveness and share what works among the staff.

4. **Provide opportunities for staff to increase their responsibilities (and rewards) to promote a sense of job growth**. Give staff opportunities to become leaders or specialists to reward their efforts and maximize their contribution to the school and its students.

### *References*

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Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., & Herlihy, C. (2002, September). *Foundations for success: Case studies of how urban school systems improve student achievement.* Washington, DC: Council of Great City Schools.

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### *Helpful Resources*

National School Boards Association. *Models for professional development.* Retrieved April 18, 2007, from www.nsba.org/sbot/toolkit/index.html .

National Staff Development Council. *What is your professional development IQ?* Retrieved April 18, 2007, from www.nsdc.org/library/basics/profdevIQ.cfm.

## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

### 6.1b   Professional development opportunities are selected based on a range of criteria and data.

#### *Definitions: What are professional development opportunities?*

**Professional development** is defined as learning experiences designed to enhance teacher skills and knowledge. Opportunities vary considerably and can include formal in-services, coaching, study groups, continuing education, peer collaboration, conferences, and curriculum writing.

#### *What the Research Says*

- The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (Peixotto & Fager, 1998) identified the following criteria for selecting professional development activities, based on their review of the research. High quality professional development:
  - Reflects school and/or district priorities;
  - Provides ongoing technical support during the implementation stage;
  - Has institutional support for implementation, including time and resources;
  - Provides a means for determining the impact on student learning and performance;
  - Reflects current understanding of best practice for adult learners; and
  - Encourages teachers to be active, investigative, effective practitioners.

- The National School Boards Association (n.d.) advises those who are planning professional development to consider conducting a needs assessment to determine what teachers need and want to know, costs, and timing. They write that primary motivators for professional development are to develop a sense of mastery, improved job skills, opportunities for continued employment and salary increases/promotions, enhanced efficiency and creativity, and satisfaction from seeing student achievement increase.

#### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

Advice provided in the learning new technologies literature can be generalized to all professional development. Salpeter (2003) wrote 20 Tips for Effective Professional Development, which included:

1. **Be aware of reluctant learners.** Needs vary from individual to individual and change takes time.

2. **"Keep it real."** Develop learning opportunities around standards and goals so that teachers can see the connection between what they are learning and the curriculum.

3. **Provide opportunities for teamwork.** Since teachers tend to be isolated within their classrooms, it is important for them to communicate, develop some shared understanding and language, and collaborate for success.

4. **Vary the professional development tools.** This will help keep teachers interested.

5. B**uild a library of resources.** Collect sample lesson plans, support materials, tips, and practical applications.

6. **Share what works.** Help teachers to build their collective knowledge bases in the school by sharing what does and does not work.

7. **If possible, create summer learning experiences.** Teachers have more time during the summer and can learn in a more relaxed environment.

8. **In addition to the advice given by Salpeter, schools should also base professional development offerings on a needs assessment.** Target professional development to meet needs that surface as educators implement research based strategies to help students master content areas.

9. **Evaluate the effects of the professional development to determine its impact on student achievement.** This will enable schools to see the effects of the changes and adjust additional professional development as needed.

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### *Helpful Resources*

PBS TeacherLine at http://teacherline.pbs.org/teacherline.

National Commission on Teaching and America's Future www.nctaf.org

National Staff Development Council, National Standards for Staff Development and School Improvement, at www.nsdc.org/standards/index.cfm

## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

### 6.1c    Professional development opportunities impact classroom practices, staff efficiency, and school functioning.

### Definitions: What are professional development opportunities?

**Professional development** is defined as learning experiences designed to enhance teacher skills and knowledge. Opportunities vary considerably and can include formal in-services, coaching, study groups, continuing education, peer collaboration, conferences, and curriculum writing.

### What the Research Says

- A study by Wenglinsky (2000) investigated the influence of professional development, classroom practices, and teacher input on student achievement, as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The study showed that classroom practices had the highest influence, followed by professional development.

- Professional development that emphasized specific strategies for teaching higher order thinking skills increased teachers' use of those strategies in the classroom. Effective professional development was consistent with teachers' goals and available materials; tied to reform rather than to conference participation or workshops; and was of a longer duration. Collective participation by a group of teachers who taught similar grades or subject matters also appeared to have positive effects on instruction (Porter, Garet, Desimone, Yoon, & Birman, 2000).

- Newmann, King, and Youngs (2001) found that professional development is most likely to impact organizational capacity if it is comprehensive and not just focused on acquisition of skills and knowledge. A comprehensive approach included consideration of knowledge, skills, and dispositions of staff members, program coherence, professional community, technical resources, and principal leadership. Schools that were highest in building organizational capacity concentrated on implementation of specific programs in literacy and mathematics, used external technical assistance, and had adequate funding for professional development.

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

General approaches, described by Fullan (2001) featured the following steps:

1. **Set aside adequate time for staff to plan, implement, and evaluate professional development.** Some researchers argue that having enough time is critical to success since change proceeds in developmental phases (Edvantia, 2005).

2. **Ensure that the school leader is supportive of the content of the professional development.** Without leadership support, the acquired skills and knowledge are unlikely to affect practice.

## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

3. **Use research based practices to increase the probability of success.** Adopt professional development strategies that work in similar schools.

4. **Provide adequate resources.** Be sure that teachers have the materials and equipment they need to carry out the strategies they learned.

5. **Celebrate successes.** Help teachers to become more efficacious by trying new strategies and measuring results. Celebrate successes and discuss experiences to derive lessons learned.

6. **Do not overload innovations**. It is better to focus on a few changes to produce coherent change than to engage in too many innovations at the same time.

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### Helpful Resources

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## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

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## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

### 6.1d    Professional development is implemented and evaluated for effectiveness.

*Definitions: What is professional development implementation and how is it evaluated for effectiveness?*

**Professional development implementation** is defined as transferring the knowledge and skills gained through attendance at training sessions into the workplace. **Evaluation for effectiveness** is defined as the fidelity of practice with the professional development and the influence on student achievement.

### What the Research Says

- Snow-Renner and Lauer (2005) examined 37 studies of professional development and reported that professional development most likely to influence teacher instruction was focused on specific content or pedagogy, included grade level or school level teams, was coherent and of considerable duration, and was infused with active learning strategies.

- When teachers receive professional development that builds their knowledge and skills related to subject matter, they are better at utilizing instructional materials (Corallo & McDonald, 2002).

- Research from local systemic change initiatives showed that extended professional development aligned with curricular content and followed up with on-site support produced significant changes in teachers' classroom practices and increased benefits for students. High quality professional development was grounded in research; aligned with the school's curriculum and assessments; focused on student learning; drew on teachers' existing expertise; and included mechanisms to foster principal support (Weiss & Pasley, 2006).

- In a national study of over 1,000 mathematics and science teachers, Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) found that professional development that increased teachers' knowledge and skills and changed instructional practice focused on content knowledge, provided opportunities for active learning, and was consistent with other learning activities.

- Guskey (2002) outlines five types of professional development evaluation. An evaluation may measure 1) participants' satisfaction with the experience; 2) gains in participants' knowledge and skills; 3) organizational support and change needed to foster implementation of new knowledge and skills; 4) participants' use of new knowledge and skills; and 5) student learning outcomes related to the specific goals of the professional development.

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Ensure that the professional development opportunities are planned to meet specific needs and reach achievement related goals.** To ensure successful implementation, participants must be able to see the value and utility of the information being presented.

## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

2. **Design high quality professional development experiences.** High quality experiences follow the National Staff Development Council Standards for Staff Development (www.nsdc.org) and include active learning opportunities, sufficient intensity and duration, and attention to adult learning strategies.

3. **Ensure that the school leader is supportive of the content of the professional development.** Without leadership support, the acquired skills and knowledge are unlikely to affect practice.

4. **Provide adequate follow up to help participants transfer their learning**. It is important for practitioners to see models and to receive direct feedback on what they are doing well and where they need to improve. This should occur in a supportive environment that allows individuals to try new things without fear of penalties.

5. **Establish criteria for effectiveness at the onset of implementation**. This will allow practitioners to understand expectations and strive to achieve goals.

6. **Evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development by measuring fidelity of practice and impact on practice and student achievement.**

7. **Use the results to plan follow-up professional development.** Follow up by celebrating and sharing what has worked and by addressing those areas that were not found to be effective.

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## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

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## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

### 6.1e    The school provides fiscal resources for professional development.

### Definitions: What are fiscal resources for professional development?

**Fiscal resources for professional development** refer to those funds allocated for professional development such as participation in workshops, conferences, or other events; ongoing professional development opportunities such as demonstration, coaching, and/or professional learning communities; and follow up activities and/or evaluations of effectiveness.

### What the Research Says

- Researchers found six core elements of professional development spending: 1) teacher time; 2) training and coaching; 3) administration; 4) materials, equipment, and facilities; 5) travel and transportation; and 6) tuition and conference fees. Using this classification, Miles, Odden, Fermanich, and Archibald (2004) concluded that districts invested widely varying amounts of resources in professional development that were managed by numerous departments. The majority of spending was targeted to school level capacity building but there were few tracking strategies in place for coordinating the investments.

- Fermanich (2002) reported that many principals did not know how much they were investing in professional development and had no way to capture the information. A study of five school districts revealed that generally, schools spent a significant amount on professional development activities, ranging from $2,900 to $16,000 per teacher, and averaging more than $7,700 per teacher. Spending on professional development varied by school performance, availability of discretionary funds, and staff preferences.

- Killeen, Monk, and Plecki (2002) found that, on average, districts spent about 3% of their general budgets on professional development, which translated into an expenditure of about $200 per student.

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Use the national No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 guideline of allocating 10% of education funds for professional development.** This ensures that sufficient funds are allocated to professional development since classroom instruction has the greatest impact on student achievement of all school related factors.

2. **Design professional development to meet school needs and reach achievement related goals.** To be an effective investment, professional development should be designed to meet needs and be consistent with high quality practices.

3. **Measure results and use the data to improve professional development experiences.** Evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development by measuring fidelity of practice and outcomes on practice and student achievement. Use the results to plan follow-up professional development.

## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

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## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

### 6.2a     A clearly defined evaluation process is implemented at the school.

### *Definitions: What is a clearly defined evaluation process?*

A **clearly defined evaluation process** is one that is based on specific expectations for outcomes as described in the school improvement plan. The expectations are clearly communicated to teachers, staff, students, and parents, and appropriate stakeholder groups are held accountable for meeting the identified goals. Clearly defined evaluations specify the questions to be addressed, the methods by which data will be gathered, the types of data analysis to be used, and the contents of the evaluation report.

As applied to teacher performance, the evaluation process serves two purposes: a formal process of measuring teacher competence and an informal process focused on the advancement of teachers' professional development or growth. The formal process is usually developed and implemented by districts in accordance with state and district policies and used to provide end-of-the-year ratings of teacher quality. The standards for quality are in writing and are communicated to teachers in advance of the evaluation process. The informal evaluation process is focused on professional development and is designed to meet the needs of teachers. It is formative in nature and based on engaging teachers in dialogue to improve teaching and student achievement.

### *What the Research Says*

- A study of elementary school principals' ratings of teacher quality found the rating of teachers' abilities effectively predicted future gains in student achievement. Principals were more likely to be accurate in their ratings of the most and the least competent teachers (Jacob & Lefgren, 2006).

- A study of the relationship between teacher evaluation scores and student achievement indicated the importance of using both subject specific indicators of teacher quality and evaluators with expertise in content areas of the teachers being evaluated (Gallagher, 2004).

- A case study was conducted on a newly implemented standards based teacher evaluation system that was connected to performance pay. One component of the system included peer and administrator evaluations and a four point rubric rating of standards collected from a teacher's self-evaluation. Findings showed that the system was open to too much individual interpretation. Peer ratings were generally less favorable than administrator ratings. Observations or walk-throughs were reported to be very time consuming to implement and often those being observed never received any feedback (Kellor, 2005).

- A study examining the perceptions of 752 teachers and 46 administrators found portfolios to be a promising tool to measure teacher performance. Those surveyed believed the portfolios were generally accurate and comprehensive. However, it was noted that since portfolios are a project, some teachers could put together a good portfolio even if they were not good

teachers, while some good teachers might not construct a good portfolio (Attinello, Lare, & Waters, 2006).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Identify the purpose and goals for the evaluation system.** The components of the evaluation system could include the teacher's value added impact on student achievement; the teacher's ability to meet performance based standards; the teacher's learning of certain knowledge and skills; or the teacher's leadership and collaboration activities.

2. **Share the purpose and goals and solicit feedback.** There tends to be more trust in the evaluation system if teachers have some input into the evaluation criteria. Teachers are more likely to attain goals if they are aware of them.

3. **Set the standards, objectives, or expectations for each goal and decide how the standard or objective will be measured**. For example, if the school chooses to use student achievement in its teacher evaluation system, it needs to identify the content areas and the student assessments to be considered and the standards and methods the school will use to evaluate the achievement and teacher's contribution. The school may choose to base standards of teacher performance on those developed by the Educational Testing Service or other organization. The methods of measuring teacher performance skills could include observation or portfolios.

4. **Decide how data will be collected**. Each method for evaluation will need to be addressed. For example, if observation is a chosen method, the plan should include who will conduct the observation, how the data will be collected, and the length of time needed for the observation(s). If a decision is made to evaluate teacher knowledge and skills, the plan should note the specific areas to be measured and the specific indicators of performance. The plan should indicate whether knowledge and skills will be equally weighted or if those skills associated with school goals should be given more weight. Indicators for performance should be as objective as possible. Those conducting the evaluation may require training.

**Clearly communicate the evaluation process and results**. Communicate with the teacher before the evaluation process is initiated as to what is being assessed and how it will be assessed. Communicate with the teacher after the evaluation to discuss findings. The feedback should be delivered in a positive manner with balance between positive and negative feedback. Examples should be provided to illuminate reasons for the ratings.

5. **Link evaluation results to professional development**. Evaluation results should lead to specific, achievable goals for the teacher. The teacher and evaluator should discuss the goals and identify strategies and professional development opportunities to improve weak areas.

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**Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation**

**6.2b    The employee evaluation process is used to improve staff proficiency.**

*Definitions: What is an evaluation process that is used to improve staff proficiency?*

An **evaluation process** assesses goal attainment and quality of performance. **Staff proficiency** is typically determined in advance and identifies behaviors, knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be effective in the job. A **process used to improve proficiency** is one that includes analysis of strengths and weaknesses and a plan to address weaknesses on an individual and group basis. An effective evaluation and professional development plan ensures teachers and staff receive training in the skills they need to be proficient at their jobs.

*What the Research Says*

- A study of 205 classroom teachers in 11 public K-12 schools in New York showed that professional development was most effective when it was linked to the teacher evaluation process. In addition, professional development was most often effective when it was job embedded, based on individual development plans, tied to the school district's goals, and linked to student achievement (Lowden, 2006).

- A case study of a charter school that implemented a standards based teacher evaluation system connected to performance pay found that the system had a positive influence on professional development and promoted changes in skills and knowledge of especially new teachers. Over time, as teachers became more familiar with expectations and more experienced with teaching, the system had less of an effect on teachers in changing their instructional approaches (Kellor, 2005).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Develop the employee evaluation process.** Specify and clearly communicate expectations for performance to all employees who will be evaluated. Expectations should be related to the school's mission and achievement goals. Performance objectives should describe the behavioral expectations for each staff member's position within the school organization. Identify the person responsible for evaluating performance.

2. **Apply the process objectively.** Rate all employees who are subject to evaluation using the same criteria for performance. Indicators should be valid, reliable and consistently applied.

3. **Identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.** Collect and analyze data to determine strengths and areas in need of improvement. Discuss the results with the employee. For improvement purposes, it is helpful for the process to be more diagnostic than judgmental.

4. **Develop an improvement plan with identified performance objectives for each area of weakness.** After identifying areas in need of improvement, the evaluator and employee should collaboratively identify and discuss performance goals. The goals should be specific

and achievable. Performance objectives to meet the goals and opportunities for assistance or professional development should be discussed. It might be valuable to enlist experienced staff members who have reached proficiency goals to assist the employee.

5. **Implement and monitor the improvement plan.** Conduct regular discussions, observations, and walk-throughs to monitor progress and identify additional needs. Professional learning communities and portfolios are also a viable means of helping staff to reflect on their progress toward meeting goals and objectives.

6. **Evaluate the improvement plan during the staff member's next performance review.**

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## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

**6.2c    Leadership uses the evaluation process to provide teachers with follow-up and support to improve professional and instructional practices.**

***Definitions: What is an evaluation process that is used to provide teachers with follow-up and support to improve professional and instructional practices?***

An **evaluation process** assesses goal attainment and quality of performance. A **process used to provide teachers with follow-up and support to improve professional and instructional practices** generally involves an analysis of whether the results of the evaluation apply to many teachers or just a few. If the trends indicate that many individuals have the same needs, follow-up and support is generally provided through workshops, study groups, or other forms of group professional development. If the trends indicate that only a few teachers have common needs, follow-up and support is generally provided through coaching or more individualized feedback and monitoring. In any case, it is the leadership's responsibility to provide the teachers with feedback and to support the improvement process.

### What the Research Says

- A meta-analysis of the research on the relationship between leadership and improvement showed that providing teachers with materials and professional development aligned with expectations had an average effect size of .26, meaning that the practice had a moderate to strong influence on student outcomes (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).

- Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom's (2004) comprehensive review of the leadership research found that success for all categories of schools increased when there was a clear focus on attaining high standards of student achievement with explicit goals for student performance and an emphasis on instructional quality. Teacher support included strategies such as inter-visitations, demonstration lessons, in-class coaching, teams of teachers doing lesson study, curriculum planning, and analysis of assessment data. Teacher development featured multiyear goals for instructional improvement in content areas.

- Through a review of the literature, Sergiovanni (1992) discussed six leadership strategies that promote professionalism and instructional effectiveness: 1) direct and close supervision of teachers; 2) standardization of the work of teaching; 3) standardization of the outcomes of teaching; 4) emphasis on professional socialization; 5) emphasis on purpose; and 6) a structure for collegiality and interdependence.

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Develop the teacher evaluation process.** Specify expectations for professional and instructional performance and clearly communicate them so that there is no misunderstanding of what will be evaluated. Inform teachers in advance about the methods used in the evaluation process, the person responsible for the evaluation, and any appeals process. If there is to be a special emphasis on a particular aspect of professional or instructional performance, notify teachers about the emphasis.

## Standard 6: Learning Environment – Professional Growth, Development and Evaluation

2. **Apply the process objectively.** Rate all teachers in a particular area using the same criteria for performance. There may be different expectations for a teacher who has been given feedback on the need to improve, but if this is the case, the teacher should be made aware of this ahead of time. Indicators should be valid and reliable and should be used consistently over time (if there are many observations).

3. **Identify areas of strength and areas for improvement.** Collect and analyze the data collected for the evaluation and determine strengths and areas in need of improvement. Discuss results with the teacher to ensure that the information is understood. For improvement purposes, it is helpful for the process to be more diagnostic than judgmental.

4. **Develop an improvement plan with identified performance objectives for each area of weakness**. After identifying areas in need of improvement, the evaluator and the teacher should collaboratively identify and discuss performance goals. The goals should be specific and achievable. They should set performance objectives and consider opportunities for assistance or professional development. It might be valuable to enlist experienced teachers who have reached proficiency goals to assist the teacher and to use a coaching or mentoring approach. If there are multiple teachers with the same needs, a professional development plan should be developed to help the entire group meet the professional or instructional goals.

5. **Implement and monitor the improvement plan.** Regular discussions, observations, and walk-throughs should be used to monitor progress and identify additional needs. Formative feedback should be provided. Professional learning communities and portfolios are also a viable means of helping staff to reflect on their progress toward meeting goals and objectives.

6. **Review and evaluate the improvement plan annually** during the performance review. If goals are not met, consider other strategies for providing support.

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# STANDARD 7:
# Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

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## 7.1a    Leadership develops and sustains a shared vision and mission.

### *Definitions: What does it mean to sustain a shared vision or mission?*

To **sustain a shared vision and mission** means to make sure that they are upheld, communicated, and celebrated over time. The vision and mission are the foundation upon which all school decisions, plans, and goals are built. A shared vision and mission are known by all stakeholders including staff, administrators, students, parents, and the community.

### *What the Research Says*

- A study of high-achieving high schools in central and northern California (Goldring, 2002) showed that compared to similar schools, teachers and principals shared and used a vision to strengthen school culture.

- A study of nine high-achieving, high-poverty, urban elementary schools (Johnson & Asera, 1999) found that they shared certain characteristics, including: "school leaders identified and pursued an important, visible, yet attainable first goal. They focused on the attainment of this first goal, achieved success, and then used their success to move toward more ambitious goals" (p. viii).

- Hallinger and Heck (1998) found that principals exerted a significant but indirect effect on student achievement and school effectiveness by setting a vision, mission, and goals for the school.

- A review of the literature (Lashway, 1997) revealed that what a principal does after developing a vision is important as the school evolves a "climate and culture of change" (p. 4). Lashway concluded that the successful principal accomplishes this "by speaking about the vision often and enthusiastically; by encouraging experiments; by celebrating successes and forgiving failures; and by remaining steadfast in the face of the inevitable problems and missteps" (p. 4).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Develop the vision.** Involve representatives from each stakeholder group in a collaborative process to develop the school's vision and mission.

2. **Communicate the vision.** Communicate the vision and mission to the entire school community. It is helpful to establish a communications team to share this information.

3. **Reinforce and support the mission and vision.** Continuously reinforce and support the vision and mission of the school and use them to guide all decision making. Establish a systematic process to

ensure that all decisions are regularly reviewed and considered for modification to maintain alignment with the mission and vision.

4. **Focus the staff.** Focus the staff on implementing the vision and mission by using them as a foundation for designing instructional programs. Focus the school community on implementing the mission and vision by using them as a filter for school improvement initiatives.

5. **Update stakeholders on progress.** Allow time for the achievement of the mission. Provide updates to stakeholders on the progress toward accomplishing the mission. Articulate and reinforce the mission and vision in written and spoken communications. Establish a feedback loop to ensure that the vision and mission are revised as necessary and that strategies are appropriately modified to maintain momentum toward accomplishment of the mission.

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Lashway, L. (1997, January). Visionary leadership (ERIC Digest 110). Retrieved April 4, 2007, from www.eric.ed.gov/sitemap/html_0900000b801b52aa.html (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED402643).

### *Helpful Resources*

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Lindsay, C. P., & Enz, C. A. (1991). Resource control and visionary leadership: Two exercises. *Journal of Management Education*, *15*(1), 127-135.

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## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

**7.1b   School leadership disaggregates data, communicates the information to school staff, and systematically incorporates the data into the school's improvement plan.**

### Definitions: What are disaggregated data and what is a school improvement plan?

**Disaggregated data** means data that have been taken apart and thoroughly examined. Data may be disaggregated by grade level, teacher, demographic information, subject area, gender, ethnicity, special education status, and/or any number of other factors. The purpose of disaggregating data is to help make strategic plans and decisions to improve student achievement.

**School improvement plans** are plans that schools create to guide them in the school improvement process. School improvement plans specify the school's goals and research based strategies and activities selected to help the school meet its objectives. The plan designates those responsible for the activities, a timeline, and accountability measures.

### What the Research Says

- Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004), in a meta-analysis of leadership research, found that the correlation between leadership and student achievement is second only to classroom instruction as a contributor to student achievement. Establishing direction and goals accounts for the largest proportion of the leader's impact.

- Mulhall, Flowers, and Mertens (2002) found that disaggregating data directs the school improvement process by enabling investigators to understand both the big picture and the areas that should be targeted for immediate action. Disaggregating middle school data for over 32,000 respondents revealed that there were variations in the expectations for postsecondary attendance by socio-economic status with boys from lower income families having the lowest expectations. At the same time, they found that these boys read more books on average than their peers, had higher academic efficacy over time than girls, and had fewer conversations about academics than girls. This kind of information is useful for selecting goals and strategies.

- Snipes, Doolittle, and Corrine (2002) made three recommendations based on their observations of effective use of data. Leaders should 1) provide achievement data to teachers at regular intervals beginning early in the academic year; 2) train teachers and principals in the diagnostic use of these data; and 3) assist teachers to develop instructional responses that improve instructional practices and increase student learning and achievement.

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Provide administrators and teachers access to disaggregated data.** Test scores and other achievement measures should be disaggregated by program type and demographic characteristics and provided in a readable form to those who will develop the school improvement plan.

2. **Compare academic achievement of population subgroups and/or those served by different programs.** Disaggregating the data and comparing achievement rates helps decision makers to determine whether instruction is working for all students. Those involved in developing a school improvement plan should examine the academic achievement of population subgroups such as by

income level, ethnicity, and gender. The achievement rates of students served in special programs should also be examined.

3. **Set goals based on the data.** Review the disaggregated data in collaboration with the School Accountability Committee to determine goals for next year and timelines for reducing achievement gaps. Share these disaggregated data results with all stakeholders.

4. **Study the research on what works to close the achievement gap**. If there are gaps in achievement rates between the various subgroups, examine the research on what works with those subpopulations or with the program being offered. Base decisions about changing strategies on the research that best reflects the context for the school.

5. **Provide professional development to ensure that strategies are successfully implemented.** Be sure that individuals who are responsible for implementing new strategies are provided with the professional development they need to succeed.

6. **Assess the success of the strategies at the end of the school year by examining disaggregated results.** Retain those strategies that appear to be working. Examine the implementation of unsuccessful strategies and make changes as appropriate.

### *References*

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Snipes, J., Doolittle, F., Corrine, H. (2002). *Foundations for success: Case studies of how urban school systems improve student achievement.* Washington, DC: Council of Great City Schools.

### *Helpful Resources*

Bernhardt, V. (1999). *The school portfolio: A comprehensive framework for school improvement* (2nd ed.). Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Creighton, T. B. (2001). *Schools and data: The educator's guide for using data to improve decision making*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Love, N. (2002). *Using data/getting results: A practical guide for school improvement in mathematics and science*. Norwood, MA: Christopher Gordon.

Wellman, B., & Lipton, L. (2003). *Data-driven dialogue: A facilitator's guide to collaborative inquiry*. Sherman, CT: MiraVia.

## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

**7.1c** **Leadership ensures that all instructional staff has access to resources related to the content standards for Colorado public schools.**

### Definitions: What are resources related to the Colorado Model Content Standards?

**Resources** refer to the human and material supports necessary for delivering high quality instruction. In education, these resources include time, money and specific educational products such as textbooks, sample lesson plans, standards aligned assessments, technology and professional development.

**Colorado Model Content Standards** are challenging academic standards created by the Colorado General Assembly and the state Board of Education with the help of educators from around the state. These standards address what students should know and be able to do in mathematics, reading, writing, science, social studies, the arts, physical education, civics, and other subjects covered in school.

### What the Research Says

- Johnson and Asera (1999) found that high-achieving, high-poverty, urban elementary schools shared certain characteristics, including alignment of instruction to the standards and assessments required by the state or the school district. Teachers and administrators at these schools understood precisely what students were expected to know and be able to do and planned instruction to ensure that students had the opportunity to learn what was expected of them.

- In research conducted in New York City District #2, Stein and D'Amico (1999) found that administrators' content knowledge of literacy and mathematics was necessary for standards based reforms to be successful.

- From structured interviews with administrators and teachers, Bredeson and Johansson (2000) found that principals were expected to provide expertise and guidance regarding professional knowledge of teaching and learning by modeling and facilitating professional learning in a standards based environment for their teaching staff.

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Provide professional development so instructional staff are very familiar with the standards.** Ensure that staff members have access to and are trained in the use of the Colorado Model Content Standards, other curriculum related materials, and data resources.

2. **Share and discuss curriculum information.** Share and discuss with staff curricular information from professional sources such as the district office, the Colorado Department of Education, and national sources. If financially feasible, give staff members opportunities to participate in external curriculum development experiences such as national and statewide workshops that address effective strategies for helping students become proficient in the standards. Consider distributing weekly tip sheets to all instructional staff.

3. **Establish a leadership team or a training-of-trainers approach.** Establish and support master teachers and a leadership team within the school in order to build internal professional development capacity on both the Colorado Model Content Standards and curriculum materials supporting the standards. This team should be provided with research based resources and

incentives to enable them to initiate and sustain capacity building efforts centered on Colorado's standards.

## References

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## Helpful Resources

Colorado Department of Education, Colorado K-12 Academic Standards at www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/OLR/k12_standards.html

Jamentz, K. (2002). *Isolation is the enemy of improvement: Instructional leadership to support standards-based practice*. San Francisco: WestEd.

National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) at www.ncee.org.

## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

### 7.1d Leadership ensures that time is protected and allocated to focus on curricular and instructional issues.

### Definitions: What is instructional time?

**Instructional time** is defined as the time that the state, district, school, or teacher provides the student with instruction. For example, a school may require that reading and language arts be taught 90 minutes every day in the second grade.

### What the Research Says

- Johnson and Asera's (1999) study of nine high-achieving, high-poverty, urban elementary schools found that principals created additional time for instruction either by focusing on critical instructional issues during the school day or by adding instructional time before or after school. "The quantity and quality of time spent on instructional leadership activities increased. Principals spent more time helping teachers attend to instructional issues and decreased the time teachers spent on distractions that diverted attention away from teaching and learning" (p ix).

- Evans and Teddlie's (1995) study of 53 schools found that those principals who were effective had taken specific steps to allocate sufficient time in the school day for instruction.

- Outstanding secondary "principals of the year" created operational procedures enforced through rules and guidelines to protect instructional time (Bartels, 1990).

- Research shows that it is not simply the amount of time, but how well it is used that increases student achievement (WestEd, 2001). A critical factor in increasing school quality time is helping teachers and administrators improve their capabilities.

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Provide structure and support.** The school leadership should provide the necessary structure and support for staff members to use time to provide quality instruction and maximize student learning.

2. **Establish policy.** The School Accountability Committee should establish a policy and the school leadership should fully implement related procedures to minimize disruptions of instructional time.

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## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

WestEd. (2001, May). *Making time count* (Policy Brief). Retrieved April 16, 2007, from
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### *Helpful Resources*

Cooper, H., Charlton, K., Valentine, J. C., & Muhlenbruck, L. (2000). Making the most of summer school: A meta-analytic and narrative review. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 65*(1, Serial No. 260).

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## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

**7.1e    Leadership allocates resources based on identified needs and monitors the use of the resources.**

*Definitions: What are resources?*

**Resources** are the ways and means educators have available to them for increasing student achievement including tangible assets, technological capabilities, and funding. Staff time and capacity are also valuable resources.

*What the Research Says*

- A study of nine high-achieving, high-poverty, urban elementary schools (Johnson & Asera, 1999) found that the schools shared certain characteristics, including: "school leaders got the resources and training that teachers perceived they needed to get their students to achieve at high levels. In particular, school leaders made sure that teachers felt like they had adequate materials, equipment, and professional development" (p. ix).

- Miles and Darling-Hammond's (1998) case studies of exemplary schools found five resource allocation principles:
  1. Reduce specialized programs;
  2. Group students flexibly;
  3. Create structures for more personal environments;
  4. Offer longer, more varied blocks of instructional time; and
  5. Provide teachers with more common planning time.

- Seventeen highly resource effective Kansas school districts were compared to less resource effective districts (Standard & Poor's, 2006a). This study resulted in a list of 18 strategies consistently applied across the high resource effective districts that created added value through higher student achievement. These shared strategies included:
  - Engage in steady, ongoing improvement;
  - Make proactive, highly intentional decisions;
  - Maintain shared central office and school authority over major resource decisions;
  - Align spending with strategic priorities;
  - Establish budgeting and other processes to ensure effective spending;
  - Encourage cost avoidance;
  - Invest strategically;
  - Use aggressive recruiting techniques;
  - Support and enhance classroom teachers' performance;
  - Assign and group staff flexibly to meet student needs in cost effective ways;
  - Invest in targeted professional development;
  - Use teachers as expert resources for key decisions;
  - Place a premium on the time students spend learning math and English;
  - Extend the contract year to increase teacher development and planning time;
  - Focus district and building meetings on learning and instruction;
  - Consider only research substantiated programs and evaluate them thoroughly;
  - Ensure district assessment programs generate performance data necessary to guide program decisions; and
  - Make substantial investments in academic support programs for at-risk populations in order to narrow or close achievement gaps (pp. 3-4).

## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

- From the Kansas Education Resource Management project requested by the Kansas governor, Standard & Poor's study (2006b) of highly resource effective districts yielded a list of common strategies for managing the following categories of resources: monetary, staff, time, and programmatic. In addition to the strategies given above, this list includes:
  - Eliminate or combine bus routes to more efficiently spend transportation dollars;
  - Recruit and retain high quality teachers who are in tune with the district's culture and philosophy;
  - Align faculty teaching assignments with students' needs;
  - Allocate time (e.g., schedules, meetings) according to strategic priorities; and
  - Systematically use an effective mix of formative and summative assessments (p. 2).

- A study by Plecki, Alejano, Knapp, and Lochmiller (2006), one of a series of state-of-the-field investigations for the Leadership Issue Project funded by the Wallace Foundation, explored how school leaders allocate resources and create incentives to improve student outcomes. At the school level, the following efforts supported learning improvement agendas:
  - Greater school discretion in hiring;
  - Expanded systems of novice teacher support;
  - Greater use of accomplished teachers;
  - Redirecting teachers' work with special needs;
  - School-community partnerships as a source of expertise;
  - School based budget management and authority;
  - Investing in specialized staff;
  - School-community partnerships as a revenue source;
  - Restructuring the school day (e.g., block scheduling, team time blocks);
  - Restructuring staff time for professional development, planning; and
  - Expanding the school day and year (e.g., after school, summer) (p. 19).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Become aware of available resources.** Investigate sources of monetary and non-monetary resources for the school including business and community resources.

2. **Make sure resources are equitable, consistent, and focused.** Examine resources to ensure that they are equitable, consistent with the vision, mission, and strategic priorities of the school, and focused on student learning. Use these resources to support school goals and priorities. Secure additional resources and/or reallocate funds if possible.

3. **Make sure resources are sufficient.** Examine resources to ensure that they are sufficient to support the learning goals of the school. Demonstrate sound fiduciary practices and responsibilities.

4. **Monitor and modify the resources.** Monitor and modify the instructional programs, organizational practices, and physical facilities of the school to sustain continuous school improvement. Establish a "critical friends" network to provide an opportunity for "shared learnings" and collaboration that maximizes the impact of resources.

## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

### References

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### Helpful Resources

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## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

**7.1f    School leadership ensures the implementation and maintenance of a safe and effective learning and work environment.**

### Definitions: What is a safe and effective learning and work environment?

A school's **learning and work environment** includes all of the places within and outside the school where students, staff, teachers, and administrators conduct their activities. This includes the physical environment, such as the building and its grounds, and the cultural environment, including the way people conduct themselves and interact with others.

A **safe** environment is one that respects students' personal, developmental, academic, social, and emotional needs. Physical and affective environments are protected and comfortable.

**Effective** environments are those in which the goals and objectives of the school may best be accomplished.

### What the Research Says

- Goldring (2002) found that, compared to lower-performing schools, high-achieving high schools in central and northern California were more likely to have teachers and principals who implemented a shared vision to strengthen school culture.

- Johnson and Asera (1999) studied the administrators of nine high-poverty, high-achieving urban elementary schools. They found that these educators helped students learn personal responsibility for their behavior.

- Scheurich's (1998) study of principals who had turned around low-achieving urban schools showed that they did not focus on discipline, but rather on a culture of appropriate conduct.

- Toch, Jerald, and Dillon (2007) reviewed research that showed increasing the rigor of curricula and raising graduation standards helped improve graduation rates. The authors concluded that principals should help teachers become more supportive of students since this support produces significant improvements in student learning when combined with high expectations and rigorous instruction.

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Establish and implement policies and procedures regarding the learning and work environment.** Establish policies in collaboration with the School Accountability Committee and implement procedures that maintain a supportive, safe, healthy, orderly, and equitable learning and working environment for both students and staff members. Regularly evaluate these policies and procedures and modify them as necessary.

2. **Maintain quality facilities and equipment.** Ensure that resources are allocated to provide quality facilities and equipment to support a safe and effective learning environment.

3. **Collaborate with community stakeholders to obtain additional funding to provide more resources.**

## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

4. **Conform to legal standards.** Ensure policies are consistent with legal and ethical standards.

### *References*

Goldring, L. (2002, November/December). The power of school culture: Research shows which traits of a school's culture most affect student achievement, and how schools can work toward positive change. *Leadership, 32*(2), 32-35

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### *Helpful Resources*

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Fullan, M., & St. Germain, C. (2006). *Learning places: A field guide for improving the context of schooling.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

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## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

**7.1g    The school accountability committee provides input into the development and implementation of the school improvement plan, including student academic performance, based on anticipated needs.**

### Definitions: What is a School Accountability Committee and what is a school improvement plan?

A **school accountability committee,** according to Colorado law, "may be composed of two parents, three teachers, and an administrator" (Colorado Department of Education [CDE], 2006, p 79). The School Accountability Committee has the responsibility of reviewing the school's improvement plan, making recommendations for any revisions, and reporting the school's progress in meeting its goals.

In Colorado, there are two types of **school improvement plans**. One type is an accountability plan required of all schools for accreditation. Another type must be completed by schools that receive federal funds. The plans generally require administrators, teachers, and parents to participate in their formation, monitor their progress, and follow formats provided by the CDE. Formats typically include a summary of needs, statements of goals and objectives, strategies for attaining the goals and objectives, timelines, and resource allocations. Plans also require citations of research to support the efficacy of the proposed strategies.

### What the Research Says

- Highly successful principals empowered parents and community stakeholders to make significant decisions about schooling in organizational structures such as parent controlled school councils (Murphy & Beck, 1995).

- Schools in the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) program are showing positive results attributable to parent involvement in planning and monitoring school activities. A study of NNPS schools by Sheldon and Epstein (2001) suggested that involving families in students' mathematics learning produced higher student performance on standardized mathematics tests. Sheldon (2004) reported that school efforts to organize school, family, and community partnerships affected elementary school student attendance.

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Align the actions of the School Accountability Committee with other school initiatives designed to improve student achievement.** Most schools have a number of initiatives, such as reading programs, after-school programs, curriculum alignment efforts, and others, that are designed to enhance student achievement. Be sure that the accountability committee is aware of these efforts and facilitates their alignment with the committees' actions and the school's vision, and mission. Ensure that the School Accountability Committee conducts periodic self-assessments.

2. **Give the School Accountability Committee access to student performance data.** Make sure that the committee regularly analyzes student performance data as it works toward establishing priorities for student academic performance and for closing gaps among subpopulations. This information will inform the committee's input into the school improvement plan.

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3. **Provide the School Accountability Committee with research on effective teaching and learning practices.** The committee needs to be well informed on the most current research so that its guidance can be effective.

4. **Develop a progress monitoring system with the School Accountability Committee so that various stakeholders can assess how well the school improvement plan is working.** Work with the committee to establish benchmarks for success and monitor progress by analyzing interim data.

### *References*

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### *Helpful Resources*

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## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

**7.1h    The principal demonstrates leadership skills in the areas of academic performance, learning environment, and efficiency.**

### Definitions: What are leadership skills in the areas of academic performance, learning environment, and efficiency?

**Leadership skills** are required for effective principals and supervisory staff.

**Academic performance** includes all measures of learning used within the school setting, such as test scores, classroom quizzes, end-of-unit tests, and other formal and informal measures of learning.

The **learning environment** of a school includes all of the places inside and outside the school building where students learn under the supervision of teachers and other instructional staff. A learning environment includes a school's culture as well as the physical environment.

**Efficiency** applies to focused use of resources to accomplish the school's goals and objectives.

### What the Research Says

- The National Association of Secondary School Principals (Hersey, Flanary, Bucker, & Hersey, 1994) listed leadership skills in the following areas: administrative, interpersonal, written and oral communication, and knowledge of self.

- Cotton (2003) reported that principal leadership skills leading to improved student achievement were: 1) self-confidence, responsibility, and perseverance; 2) visibility and accessibility; 3) emotional and interpersonal support; 4) staff empowerment; 5) support of appropriate risk taking; and 6) acting as a role model for staff and students.

- From a meta-analysis of research on principals' effects on student achievement, Hallinger and Heck (1996) concluded that principal leadership behavior is linked to student learning indirectly through its influences on internal school processes.

- Waters, Marzano, and McNulty's (2003) analysis of leadership research identified several school level factors, all influenced by the principal, that affect student achievement. These factors are: 1) a guaranteed and viable curriculum; 2) challenging goals and effective feedback; 3) parent and community stakeholder involvement; 4) a safe and orderly environment; and 5) staff collegiality and professionalism.

- Successful principals promoted a shared vision with their staff and provided opportunities and incentives for teachers to change their classroom practices (Haynes, 1998; Lieberman, Falk, & Alexander, 1994; Rosenholtz, 1989; Stringfield, Datnow, & Ross, 2000).

- Two key elements related to positive effects on instruction were the principal's skill in developing the learning capacity of teachers and students within the school and how well the principal supported and understood the reform being implemented (Davidson & Taylor, 1998).

- Principals who modeled the effective use of time and built a professional culture of learning were the most successful (Knapp & Associates 2003).

## Standard 7: Organizational Effectiveness – Leadership

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Engage the staff in academic conversations.** Provide instructional leadership and model professionalism, collaboration, and continuous learning. Regularly engage staff members and students in conversations focused on student academic performance. Engage community stakeholders in similar conversations to generate the commitment needed to produce deep reform.

2. **Know the Colorado Model Content Standards.** Demonstrate knowledge of the Colorado Model Content Standards and provide assistance to staff members with their use. Focus faculty meetings on improving student academic performance by sharing ideas, research, instructional strategies, and learning experiences.

3. **Conduct classroom observations.** Conduct frequent informal and formal classroom observations and provide timely and specific feedback to staff members on their instructional practice. Collaborate with teacher leaders to share the leadership responsibility of ensuring that effective and varied instructional strategies are routinely implemented in all classrooms.

4. **Sustain a healthy environment.** Lead and collaborate with staff members to sustain a supportive, safe, orderly, equitable, and healthy learning school environment.

5. **Provide organizational direction.** Provide organizational direction, develop distributed leadership capacity, and maximize the use of resources in order to support high student and staff performance. This will ensure that school improvement will be sustained and advanced in the principal's absence.

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# STANDARD 8:
# Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

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**8.1a    The school is organized to maximize use of all available resources to support high student and staff performance.**

*Definitions: What does it mean to maximize resources to support achievement?*

**Achievement** refers to student academic performance, usually related to a state, district, or school accountability system. This generally translates into test scores on the state assessment.

**Maximization of use of resources** means that money (salaries and other funds), time, staff, materials, and other supports are allocated to and expended in those areas that show the greatest relationship to improving student achievement. Typically maximization means that more resources are allocated to instruction and instruction related factors.

*What the Research Says*

- In a review of the literature on resource reallocation, Odden (2007) found schools that reallocated funds to address poor student performance were more likely to provide lower class sizes, invest more in teacher professional development, and grant more intensive help to struggling students. Schools that doubled their performance in a short period of time in one or two content areas set high goals, analyzed student data, replaced curriculum, invested heavily in teacher training, created smaller classes for early elementary grades, and increased time for core courses.

- In a study of 12 districts, Pan, Rudo, Schneider, and Smith-Hansen (2003) found that higher-performing schools and school districts spent more on instruction, core expenditures, and the number of teachers than lower-performing schools and districts. Higher-performing sites also spent more per pupil on instruction and instruction related areas and less on administrative and other non-instructional areas.

- Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998) reported that high-performing high schools tended to allocate more resources to instruction, used block scheduling and ensured teachers had common planning time.

- Grissmer, Flanagan, and Williamson's (1998) study found that smaller class sizes and employment of better educated, experienced teachers were associated with positive increases in the achievement of low-income and minority students.

## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1.  **Map resource use.** Identify all of the resources allocated to the school. If possible, map the way resources have been allocated over the past several years.

2.  **Conduct a cost analysis.** Use the Resource Cost Model (Pan, Rudo, Schneider & Smith-Hansen, 2003), economic cost function approaches (Reschovsky & Imazeki, 1998), or other cost analysis program to identify base resource needs and to allocate resources to programs and other fiscal categories depending upon specific needs and goals for effectiveness.

3.  **Track the correlation between spending and student outcomes**. Be sure to take into account other influences on achievement so that correlations can be correctly interpreted.

4.  **Reallocate resources as needed.** If specific types of spending, such as spending to reduce class sizes or spending on tutoring, lead to increased student achievement, consider reallocating other resources to maximize impact. If the same trend continues over a period of a few years, consider enacting policies to expand these activities.

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## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

### 8.1b    The master class schedule reflects that all students have access to the entire curriculum.

***Definitions: What is a master schedule and what does it mean to provide all students with access to the curriculum?***

The **master schedule** contains a list of all of the classes offered at the school. **Providing all students access to curriculum** means ensuring that all students have the ability to enroll in core classes needed for graduation. Curriculum access must also be provided as appropriate to students identified for special education services. This may include the provision of assistive technology or aides. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has special provisions to ensure access to the general education curriculum for those students identified for special education services.

### *What the Research Says*

- Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose, and Jackson (2002) found that access to the general curriculum has three stages: access, involvement, and progress. Access refers to whether the curriculum is available. Involvement consists of meaningful participation in curriculum. Progress refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills leading to mastery of standards. Each of these stages has implications for educational planning including scheduling, professional development, teacher collaboration, and differentiated instruction.

- McLaughlin, Nolet, Rhim, and Henderson (1999) reviewed the research literature on inclusive schooling practices and found that students with access to the general education curriculum need more than the ability to attend classes. To be successful, students may need additional instruction and supports. Greater collaboration and planning to help both regular classroom teachers and special education teachers to understand the general curriculum and needs of the students was shown to lead to higher student achievement.

- The Education Trust (2005) cited the statistic that only 68 out of 100 students entering ninth grade will graduate from high school on schedule. When they conducted a study of the high schools that had high rates of graduation, they found that "high impact" schools were more likely to focus on preparing all students for college and careers rather than simply for graduation. Barriers to high level course taking for all students were removed and help was provided to keep students on track with college preparatory requirements.

- Tomlinson (2001) identified three elements in curriculum that can be differentiated to meet the needs of all students: content, process, and products. Aligning the task and objectives to learning goals, including multiple approaches and materials to support instructional content, using flexible grouping, and engaging in ongoing assessment, are keys to success.

## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Review all of the appropriate laws to ensure that the school is in compliance with curriculum access requirements.** Consult the IDEA and correlating regulations and state policies on special education, ELLs, and other special populations to ensure that the school follows the appropriate policies.

2. **Offer professional development to teachers and administrators so they understand the law, policies, and best practices.** Share literature on best practices for access to curriculum to help in planning and implementation. Techniques for instructional differentiation may be particularly helpful.

3. **Determine what accommodations, if any, need to be in place to enable access to the general curriculum for all students.** There are many assessments that can be used to determine individual student strengths and needs for diagnostic and planning purposes.

4. **Become familiar with the universal design for learning and/or other literature reviewing newly emerging practices for curriculum access.** The universal design for learning literature is based on understanding the best ways to select materials and methods to guide learning. Universal design generally uses an approach that teaches students to recognize essential cues and patterns, acquire skills for action, and engage in lifelong learning.

5. **Provide time for teachers to collaborate for planning instruction for all students.** Provide time for all teachers, particularly for regular and special education or other special teachers such as bilingual aides, to collaborate and plan instruction. This will help set expectations and make enforcement of classroom routines easier.

6. **Evaluate results.** Conduct evaluations at least annually to ensure that all students have appropriate access to curriculum and are making adequate yearly progress. If appropriate progress is not being made, take steps to engage in continuous improvement. Visit schools that are successful, conduct study groups on the effective practice literature, and provide appropriate professional development.

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## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

### 8.1c     Instructional and non-instructional staff are allocated and organized based upon the learning needs of all students.

### *Definitions: What is efficient allocation and organization of staff?*

**Efficient allocation of staff** refers to assigning individuals to positions where their time is used most cost effectively. For example, schools can decide to use educational aides instead of teachers to walk students to and from buses, thereby saving the more expensive teacher time for tasks that require higher levels of expertise.

**Efficient organization of staff** means that instructional time and staff are assigned to those areas of greatest need and that unnecessary duplication of tasks is avoided. For example, staff may be organized to provide common planning time during school since is more efficient than asking teachers to engage in planning during in-service days. Efficient allocation and organization of staff typically includes consideration of the ways in which schools and classrooms are designed, how teachers are organized into departments or teams, and scheduling.

### *What the Research Says*

- Miles and Darling-Hammond (1998) reported that the high performing urban high schools they studied shared six resource allocation strategies: They reduced specialization and gave teachers more generalized roles, used flexible student grouping, organized the school to support strong teacher-student relationships, created common teacher planning time, implemented longer instructional time blocks, and made creative use of the school day and staff.

- Pan, Rudo, Schneider, and Smith-Hansen (2003) found that high-performing schools and districts increased allocation of resources for instruction, including increasing the numbers of teachers, faster than lower-performing schools and districts.

- Odden and Archibald (2001) found that one common way that schools addressed staff allocation was to reorganize time during the school day so teachers could meet and discuss student performance and engage in professional learning. Schools also reallocated staff to meet specific improvement needs, such as lowering class sizes for certain subjects.

- Plecki, Alejano, Knapp, and Lochmiller (2006) discussed four areas of staff allocation: hiring staff, distributing staff to schools, attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers, and matching staff skills with student learning needs. In their review of the literature, they discovered that late vacancy notification, late budgeting and economic forecasting, and some teacher union transfer requirements were the factors most likely to inhibit the hiring of highly qualified teachers. Averaging teacher costs generally served schools in high poverty areas poorly since they needed teachers with higher levels of expertise and experience. The need for supporting novice teachers, especially those in low-performing schools, was also not anticipated by many schools.

## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Assess the expertise and experience of all staff.** Examine the school goals and teacher and staff performance evaluations and student achievement data to determine strengths and needs.

2. **Understand and document any allocation requirements.** If federal programs or other specific sources of funding have special requirements, be sure to allocate staff to fulfill those requirements first.

3. **Decide staff assignments based on strengths and needs.** As possible, assign the strongest staff to the students who need them the most. Utilize the right people for role responsibilities by asking whether aides can perform the tasks currently assigned to teachers to free up teachers' time or whether volunteers can do the work that aides currently do.

4. **Create time for professional collaboration and learning focused on the improvement agenda**. The research shows that common planning and learning time is strongly associated with student outcomes (Plecki et. al, 2006).

5. **Protect instructional time so that the time is used efficiently**. Minimize disruptions of class time by making announcements only at the beginning of the day and having smooth classroom routines and transitions.

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## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

**8.1d    The Staff makes efficient use of instructional time to maximize student learning.**

### Definitions: What is efficient use of instructional time to maximize learning?

**Instructional time** refers to the time allocated for learning activities. Researchers make a distinction between allocated time, engaged time, and academic learning time. **Allocated time** refers to the total number of days and hours students are required to attend school, including both instructional time and non-instructional time (e.g., lunch, recess, transitions). **Engaged time** refers to those hours during which students are focused on learning. **Academic learning time** refers to the hours or days when learning actually occurs. Being **efficient** means that students spend most of their time learning, rather than doing non-instructional activities or being off task during the instructional period.

### What the Research Says

- Increasing time in the school day only impacts student achievement if the time is well used for instruction. Merely adding hours does not guarantee any increases in student performance (Brown, 2000).

- Cotton and Wiekland (1990), in their review of the research, found that many factors in schools lead to a loss of instructional time including slow start up of instruction, lengthy transitions between classroom activities, frequent interruptions of class time by announcements, visitors, or disciplinary matters, and unused class time.

- In a review of the research literature, Aronson, Zimmerman, and Carlos (2001) identified three key factors related to time that strongly contributed to student learning: 1) improving teachers' classroom management techniques so there are fewer disruptions and less of a need for disciplinary actions; 2) ensuring appropriateness of curriculum and instruction so that teachers use a large repertoire of strategies matched to students' readiness levels; and 3) increasing student motivation by sparking interest and offering challenging activities.

- Struggling students in schools that already have a high proportion of academic learning time benefit from extending the school day or school year (Farbman & Kaplan, 2005).

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

General approaches feature the following steps, which are based on a poster developed by Cotton (2006):

1. **Allocate time for content teaching based on school or district goals and needs.** School and/or district improvement goals should help to guide instructional time allocation, with emphasis given to core subjects.

2. **Consider conducting a time inventory and analysis.** Examine the ways in which time is being used to help inform decision making. Creative scheduling and possibly reducing class sizes for core subject teaching may increase student achievement.

3. **Minimize classroom disruptions.** Through policies and practices, ensure that learning time is protected from unnecessary announcements and other interruptions.

4. **Establish classroom norms for starting and ending on time and for transitions.** Teachers should begin instruction as quickly as possible, finding alternative and more efficient ways for taking attendance or other administrative duties. Teachers should ask students to begin working on activities while attendance is being taken and enforce the no tardy policy. They should have routines for transitions and procedures for students who finish work early.

5. **Help teachers learn to use non-disruptive signals to reengage students.** Eye contact and hand signals can be used to indicate to students to reengage and display appropriate behaviors. Using reminders for classroom rules and standing near those students who have difficulty focusing may also help.

6. **Provide learning time outside of the regular school hours for students who need help.** If possible, offer tutoring sessions before and after school or during lunchtimes or study periods so that those who need help have the opportunity to receive it.

7. **Keep instruction lively.** Facilitate students' active engagement by setting a brisk but appropriate pace and keeping students engaged through a variety of interesting and relevant learning opportunities.

8. **Reduce re-teaching time by teaching study skills and learning strategies.** Help students learn by teaching them various learning and study skills strategies. Help them to learn from each other and to become independent learners.

9. **Maintain awareness of all students while working with individuals or small groups.** Continue monitoring all students even while working with subgroups. Ensure that assignments are challenging but can be done independently. Bring the teachers to the students instead of the students to the teacher to save time.

10. **Consider relying less on the 50 minute period and exploring other scheduling options like block scheduling**. Block scheduling provides more concentrated time for focusing on core subject matters.

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## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

### 8.1e    Procedures promote vertical and horizontal team planning that is focused on the goals, objectives and strategies in the improvement plan.

*Definitions:    What is vertical and horizontal team planning?*

**Vertical team planning** occurs when educators from adjacent grade levels get together to review curriculum, instruction, classroom organization, and other procedures to ensure consistency and coherence. Team planning is also used to align curriculum and instruction and reduce duplication and gaps. Vertical teams may also help students navigate the transitions between elementary, middle/junior high, and high schools.

**Horizontal team planning** involves educators from the same grade level discussing the same types of issues. Often horizontal team planning addresses integrated curriculum approaches and needs for specific students who may be having trouble with academic performance.

### *What the Research Says*

- A research review on instructional coherence found that students are more likely to learn and retain their learning when experiences connect with and build on each other. Students are more likely to engage in learning when curricular experiences within and among classes over time are connected to one another. This type of coherence can be facilitated through vertical and horizontal teaming and discussion (Newmann, Smith, Allensworth, & Bryk, 2001).

- Case studies conducted by the Texas Leadership Center (1998) showed that vertical teaming was most effective when there was support from the superintendent and school board, when the team had access to information and time for communication, and when the team members fostered communication with others from their grade spans that were not on the teams.

- Focus groups with leaders from high schools that had narrowed or closed the achievement gap and sustained their achievement over time revealed that these schools typically engaged in teaming for planning instruction (Billig, Jaime, Abrams, Fitzpatrick, & Kendrick, 2005).

- The Donald McKay K-8 School in Boston attributed its improvement in achievement to vertical and horizontal teaming structures. The school's five step approach is as follows: 1) Listen and observe without being judgmental, then make expectations clear; 2) build teams around identified needs and strengths, and structure them for two way communication; 3) focus on students and align resources and efforts to meet their needs; 4) give teams what they need: real tasks, regularly scheduled meeting time, and responsive leadership; and 5) as capacity for leadership develops, stand back and allow it to flourish (Mass Insight Education, 2006, p. 1).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1.  **Allocate common meeting times for educators in the same and adjacent grade levels.**
    Although it may be difficult, scheduling common planning time is the first step to making

teaming possible. If common planning time is not available, find ways to compensate teachers and staff for their time to get together.

2. **Orient educators to the purpose for teaming.** To ensure common planning time is well used, orient participants to the goals of consistency, coherence, and effective use of instructional time. Discuss transition needs and other challenges as they arise and ask the team to keep notes and record their decisions.

3. **Use the teams to engage in activities known to impact student achievement**. These include curriculum mapping, discussing and using data for improvement, and learning differentiated instructional techniques to share with others.

4. **Encourage systems thinking**. This will help create an environment that enables teachers to share challenges, brainstorm solutions, and provide support for trying new strategies.

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## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

### 8.1f The schedule is designed to ensure that all teaching staff can provide quality instructional time.

#### *Definitions: What is quality instructional time?*

According to Berliner (1990), instructional time is best viewed as a family of concepts, including the terms of **allocated time** (time provided in a schedule for instruction); **engaged time** (time when students are paying attention to presentations or materials that address instructional goals); **time-on-task** (engaged time in learning activities); **academic learning time** (allocated time to subject matters and content); **transition time** (non-instructional time before and after instructional activity); **waiting time** (time students wait before they receive help); **aptitude** (time a student needs to reach some criterion of learning); **perseverance** (amount of time a student is willing to spend on learning); and **pace** (content covered during some time period). Generally the term **quality instructional time** refers to maximizing academic learning time, engaged time, and time-on-task and reducing transition time and waiting time. Effective schedules are designed to provide quality instructional time; reduce time students spend in transitions; minimize interruptions to instruction and learning; enhance instructional efficiency by reducing the need to re-teach concepts; and organize both the school day and the school year to maximize the number of hours devoted to instruction.

#### *What the Research Says*

- Banicky and Janicki (2006) conducted a study of the use of instructional time for the Virginia Beach City Public Schools using a district wide survey and focus groups. Teachers in their study reported 10 categories of impediments to maximizing instructional time:
  1. Assessment and testing;
  2. Class size and composition;
  3. Equipment, technology, and materials;
  4. Facilities;
  5. Interruptions;
  6. Planning time issues;
  7. Recordkeeping and paperwork;
  8. Scheduling and pacing;
  9. Staffing; and
  10. Student behavior.

  The study identified various strategies that could be effectively implemented to reduce the influence of the identified impediments and increase the amount of quality instructional time available to students. Recommendations included providing more instruction to students on self-regulation; reallocating or placing equipment in different locations; reallocating educational aides; providing more professional development on differentiating instruction and working in inclusive environments; hiring staff to help with recordkeeping and paperwork; using technology; and reviewing building utilization.

## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

- The Consortium on Chicago School Research (2003) developed key measures of school development connected to increased student achievement. In their research, high quality instructional programs were defined as "coordinated and well-paced exposure to content, engaging students in intellectually challenging tasks, and implementing a strategic balance of instructional practices. Subject matter is introduced at a steady pace and coordinated within and across grade levels. Teachers may teach basic skills, but they seldom rely on repetition and review. Teachers make frequent use of intellectually-challenging assignments that require students to study a topic in depth. Students are asked to communicate and explain what they have learned and draw connections to problems and situations beyond school. Teachers use instructional practices that engage students in the content in intellectually-demanding ways. Didactic teaching methods rely on whole-class presentation, recitation, and individual student work to transmit and promote the acquisition of specific knowledge. Interactive teaching methods use interactive, problem-oriented strategies to promote analysis, application, and production of knowledge. High-quality instruction is characterized by a balance between these two approaches with a relatively strong emphasis on interactive instruction. Finally, high-quality instruction is supported by strong curricular and instructional materials and adequate time for teaching" (p. 4).

- Studies of instructional pacing show that student achievement in reading is increased when teachers had materials ready, had students seated appropriately, moved through the lesson briskly, and were warm and enthusiastic in providing instruction. These teachers followed procedures for each section of the lesson routine, scaffolded student responses appropriately, and maintained student attentiveness (Mathes et al., 2005).

- A study of the Chicago schools identified the most pervasive factors contributing to slow pacing. These factors were review and repetition of material students already knew, giving students familiar tasks to earn points and raise their grades or to prepare for tests, not assigning homework or beginning homework in class, student resistance to difficult or unfamiliar material, "battered faith" due to the shifting priorities and mandates for schooling, and low expectations about what can actually be accomplished on a daily basis (Smith, Smith, & Bryk, 1998).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Provide curricular and instructional frameworks that support standards based instruction and coherence in all content areas.** Frameworks should be provided to all teachers, along with professional development on best practices for instructional delivery of content.

2. **Reduce demands for paperwork and set aside time for teachers to work together to build instructional capacity**. Find ways to reduce administrative paperwork through better use of technology and staff time, and help teachers to build instructional skills through collaboration.

3. **Minimize activities that take away from instructional time.** Help teachers develop rules and processes to minimize classroom misbehavior and disruption and to reduce set-up time and transition times. Help the school to establish instructional time as its highest priority.

4. **Provide professional development on instructional pacing.** Teachers and administrators should be provided with tips for organizing materials, maintaining a brisk but appropriate pace, asking questions and giving corrective feedback, and managing student behavior.

5. **Recognize and reward students for using time well.** Rather than emphasizing negative consequences, find ways to praise students who are on task and engaged in learning.

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## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

**8.2a    The school has a clearly defined process to provide equitable and consistent use of fiscal resources.**

### Definitions: What constitutes equitable allocation of resources?

**Equitable allocation of resources** refers to allocation of school resources that affect the learning opportunities available to individual students. In the past, equity in resource allocation tended to focus on inputs (i.e., ensuring that per-pupil expenditures were equal). More recently, emphasis has been placed on educational outputs, ensuring that resources are allocated such that all students can meet educational performance goals. School level resources include basic and supplemental staffing levels, staff time, funding amounts for textbooks and supplies, selection of new equipment (particularly technology), and support for new or renovated facilities (Hartman & Boyd, 1998).

### What the Research Says

- Although specific policies vary, most charter schools have greater autonomy in how they allocate resources and are expected, in turn, to demonstrate their effectiveness by meeting goals for student performance (Odden & Busch, 1998).

- School based resource allocation processes can be complicated and time consuming. Schools must identify appropriate decision makers, the scope of decisions to be made at the site, procedures for making decisions, and how resources are best allocated to meet student needs (Hadderman, 1999).

- School finance systems have historically been only moderately successful in sustaining equity of financial resources. Finance systems need to focus on both equity and educational adequacy, which is the assurance that resources are allocated based on student needs, with the goal of high achievement for all students (Odden & Clune, 1998).

- Teacher salary and other professional staff costs account for roughly 75% of all education spending (Odden & Busch, 1998). High performing schools tend to adhere to six principles of resource allocation: 1) reduction of specialized programs (e.g., pullout programs and special education); 2) increased flexibility of student grouping; 3) structures that create more personalized environments; 4) longer and varied blocks of instructional time; 5) more common planning time for staff; and 6) creative definitions of staff roles and work schedules (Miles & Darling-Hammond, 1998).

### Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator

1. **Establish a written policy that outlines a process for resource allocation.** The policy should be consistent with priorities in the school improvement plan and should focus on distribution of resources that affect instructional programming, such as assignment of students to staff, allocation of staff time, and availability of professional development activities.

2. **Use student performance data to allocate resources based on student needs.** To ensure equity of educational outcomes, resources should be targeted to enable all students to meet performance goals. Ongoing examination of performance outcomes for subgroups and for individual students allows resources (e.g., assignment of teachers with particular knowledge or skills) to be allocated to those who most need them.

3. **Build flexibility into the resource allocation process.** The flexibility to change aspects of resource allocation, such as staff assignments, class size, and scheduling, is another way to ensure that student needs can be met.

4. **Ensure that the process is transparent with opportunities for input.** So that members of the school community recognize that resource allocation is supporting the goals of the school improvement plan, it is important that they understand the process through which decisions are made and the rationale behind them.

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## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

### 8.2b     Resource allocations are based on analysis of appropriate data and are aligned with school improvement priorities.

### *Definitions: What are discretionary funds?*

**Discretionary funds** are funds that can be used flexibly by the school to support a wide range of activities, programs, and services. Depending on the source, their allocation may be intended for a particular group of students (e.g., special education) or programs (e.g., after school programs or field trips).

### *What the Research Says*

- Integrated school resources that are targeted to student needs can facilitate the redesign of schools to better serve all students, reduce curricular and instructional fragmentation, and promote more effective accountability to ensure that all students meet high standards (Wilhelm, 2002).

- Schools engaged in improvement processes are most successful when they have discretionary authority over budget and resource allocation. School improvement efforts may be hampered when teachers and principals do not feel that they have the authority to reallocate resources based on needs (Desimone, 2002).

- Districts and sites that do not meet performance targets commonly have significant carry over budgets, tend to display very little change in resource allocation from year to year, and have not studied the link between resource allocation and achievement (Tempes, Anderson, & Kubinec, 2007).

### *Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Ensure that discretionary funds are allocated in accordance with written policies and procedures.** Like other resource allocation decisions, discretionary funds should be allocated in a manner consistent with priorities in the school improvement plan and should focus on distribution of those resources that affect instructional programming, such as assignment of students to staff, allocation of staff time, and professional development activities.

2. **Use student performance data to allocate discretionary resources based on student needs.** Ongoing examination of performance outcomes for subgroups and for individual students enables discretionary funds to be used for programming that serves the students with the greatest needs.

3. **Ensure that the process is transparent with opportunities for input.** So that members of the school community recognize that allocation of discretionary funds is consistent with the goals of the school improvement plan, it is important that they understand the process and rationale behind allocation decisions. Provide opportunities for input into resource allocation policies.

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### *Helpful Resources*

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## Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources

### 8.2c State and federal program resources are allocated and integrated to address student needs identified by the school and/or district.

*Definitions: What is integration of state and federal funds?*

**Integration of state and federal funds** involves combining state and federal government funding for school wide improvements, as outlined in the school improvement plan, and allowable under the applicable funding guidelines.

*What the Research Says*

- The vast majority of funds for K-12 education come from state and local sources. Federal funds have substantial restrictions on their use and are intended to supplement rather than supplant local and state funds (U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

- During the last decade, schools have been given greater flexibility to integrate federal, state, and local funding sources. For example, schools with 40% or more students who are eligible to receive Title I services may operate a "schoolwide program" in which federal, state, and local funds may be combined to upgrade the instructional program for the whole school (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

- The value of integrating funding sources to improve delivery of services has been recognized in education and other fields (Greenberg & Noyes, 2005).

- Integrated school resources that are targeted toward student needs can facilitate the redesign of schools to better serve all students, reduction in curricular and instructional fragmentation, more effective accountability to ensure that all students meet high standards, and development of shared goals for improving schools (Wilhelm, 2002).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Examine policies that guide integration of funds and provide guidance to those who make resource allocation decisions.** Because policies about integration of funds vary, be sure to study and follow published guidelines.

2. **Encourage integration of federal, state, and local funds.** Funding should be combined to the extent that it can support school improvement goals.

3. **Use student performance data to allocate federal, state, and local funds based on student needs.** Through the ongoing examination of performance outcomes for subgroups and for individual students, schools can direct funding from different sources to programming that serves the students with the greatest needs.

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**Standard 8: Organizational Effectiveness – Organizational Structure and Resources**

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*Helpful Resources*

U.S. Department of Education Flexibility and Waivers Web Site at
.www.ed.gov/nclb/freedom/local/flexibility/index.html

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# STANDARD 9:
# Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning

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**9.1a    A collaborative process is used to develop and communicate the school's vision, mission, and goals and guide decision making for improvement.**

### *Definitions: What is a mission statement and vision statement?*

A school's **vision statement** provides a description of where the school is headed. It describes a picture of the future and how leaders, educators, and partners see events unfolding over an extended period of time.

A **mission statement** is a description of the schools' purpose. It sets the foundation and brings focus to the school. It should be to the point and should define "why the school is there" and "what are the school is going to do." A mission statement provides clarity and direction.

### *What the Research Says*

- Schools with educational missions give educators stronger motivation and provide parents with a clear picture of what the school values (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2005).

- "The clearer a school community is about its mission; the more successful it can be" (Chavez, 2005).

- "Those lacking in educational vision will fail to take full advantage of the charter legislation and struggle unnecessarily with the challenges presented by the charter implementation process" (Premack & Diamond, 1994).

- "Experts agree that the single most important attribute of the successful charter school is a clear sense of purpose or mission shared by parents, students, staff, and the school's board of trustees. A common vision of what it means to be educated and how one becomes educated forms the basis of a coherent school design. It guides the schools' decision making in every aspect of planning and operations. It gives potential employees, prospective students, and their parents clear indications of how they will be treated and what will be expected of them. It explains to chartering agencies and the community at large how this charter school is distinctive from other public schools. It provides a basis for decisions to support the school. It gives prospective supporters confidence that key personnel and constituencies have the level of commitment and purpose necessary to make the school financially viable" (Millot & Lake, 1996).

**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

### *Step-by Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Create a vision statement.** The creation of a vision statement typically involves a collaborative effort with multiple school stakeholder groups such as faculty, staff, parents, and community members. The vision statement includes answers to the questions: "What direction will the school take?" "What will the school be like five to 10 years from now?" "How will the school fulfill the needs of the students, parents, staff, and community?" The vision statement also describes how the school will be a driving force with its programs, educational philosophy, and will satisfy student, parent, and community needs.

2. **Create a mission statement.** Creation of a mission statement typically is a collaborative effort involving administrators, faculty, staff, students, parents, and the community. The mission should describe how the school will attain the vision. Mission statements often include five elements: values, educational approach, curriculum approach, customer service, and outcomes and goals. The statement is developed to answer two questions: "Who does the school seek to serve?" and "What does the school seek to accomplish?" A shared mission emerges through the process of parties working together and discussing what is important for their particular school. The statement should capture the spirit and uniqueness of the school and explain to the rest of the world the purpose and standards of the school.

3. **Review the statements for clarity and consistent meaning.** Make sure the mission and vision statements correctly define the school. Share the statements with other members of the community and ask what the statements mean to them. Eliminate words that are difficult to understand or that can have different meanings to different groups.

4. **Revise the statements periodically.** A charter schools' purpose may change making it necessary to rewrite the mission and vision.

5. **Implement the statements.** The mission and vision statements should guide the goals and decision making at every level in the school. The statements should clearly define the work, spirit, and expectations of administrators, teachers, staff, and students. At mission-driven schools it is easier to focus on what will help the students reach the schools' goals and objectives. Statements can inspire and motivate everyone involved to work toward a common goal. They can also serve as a reference in recruiting, hiring, and evaluating staff.

### *References*

Chavez, C. (2005). *State your mission: Creating mission statements that work* [School Administrators Article]. Wallingford, CT: Education World. Retrieved January 19, 2007 from www.education-world.com/a_admin/admin/admin412.shtml

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North Central Regional Educational Laboratory. *Critical issue: Building a collective vision.* Naperville, IL. Retrieved December 20, 2006 from www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadrshp/le100.htm

*Helpful Resources*

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. Washington, DC at www.publiccharters.org

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US Charter Schools. *Developing a mission statement*. Retrieved January 19, 2007, from www.uscharterschools.org/cs/r/view/uscs_rs/1701

**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

**9.1b   The school planning process involves collecting, managing, and analyzing data.**

*Definitions: What is the planning process?*

The **planning process** is a series of activities or steps that lead an organization to identify what is being done to support and further the mission and vision of the organization and what changes will strengthen the organization. The planning process takes time and actively engages all stakeholders in various tasks. When done correctly, the planning process results in a strategic plan that provides an outline of organizational goals and a blueprint for accomplishing those goals over a specific period of time.

*What the Research Says*

- Effective use of data must play a major role in the development of school improvement plans (Fitch & Malcom, 1998).

- Continuous, organized opportunities for collaboration and assessment are part of an ongoing cycle of continuous improvement that enables schools to make the most of the best factors and strategies (Schmoker, 2006).

- Whether the action steps are presented to the faculty as a formal survey or simply as discussion items at a faculty meeting, the process should provide staff a clear view of the school including where the school is not performing (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Build a planning team.** Representation from various stakeholder groups will increase buy-in. Take time to create a supportive culture for honest, open communication and collaboration. Without a "team" approach, implementation will be more difficult.

2. **Focus the planning process.** Avoid developing elaborate plans that identify many goals and objectives as these plans have too many areas of focus to have significant impact. Keep the planning process targeted to specific goals and activities that will directly impact student achievement.

3. **Gather data and analyze results.** Gather information on how the school is accomplishing its academic mission including achievement results, discipline logs, observations, and other indicators. Examine the data with the planning team and look for areas of need. These areas become the focus of the goals and action steps.

4. **Develop goals and action steps.** Based on the findings from the data, develop a few, measurable goals, define action steps, set timelines, and designate individuals responsible to accomplish the actions.

**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

5. **Make the plan visible, monitor progress, and report frequently.** Make everyone aware of their responsibilities. Acknowledge the work as it is underway and celebrate successes.

*References*

Fitch, M., & Malcom, P. (1998). Using data effectively for school improvement planning. *Effective School Report for Research and Practice, 16*(6), 1, 4-5.

Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

*Helpful Resources*

Bernhardt, V. L. (2000). *Designing and using databases for school improvement*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Creighton, T. B. (2001). *Schools and data: The educator's guide for using data to improve decision making*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

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**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

> **9.1c   The school analyzes and uses a variety of data to set goals for school improvement.**

*Definitions: What are data to set goals for school improvement?*

**Data** can be defined as any information about the school that, when taken together and analyzed, produces knowledge and informs decision making. Data types include achievement related, demographic, programmatic, and perceptional.

**Goals for school improvement** are statements that describe in measurable terms school objectives to achieve specific outcomes that advance the school's mission and vision and improve student achievement.

*What the Research Says*

- The effective use of data must play a major role in the development of school improvement plans (Fitch & Malcom, 1998).

- What separates successful from unsuccessful schools is the use of one, often neglected, essential element: data (Bernhardt, 2004).

- In a meta-analysis of the research literature, Marzano, Waters, & McNulty identified specific characteristics associated with schools that set and keep goals. Such schools establish and maintain a focus on concrete goals for curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices and general functioning of the school. The schools also have high expectations for all students (2005).

*Step-by Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Develop a leadership team.** Different perspectives are needed to ensure that various sources of data are not overlooked and to add diverse views to the discussions.

2. **Collect, organize, and analyze several types of data and generate hypotheses.** The team should identify, collect and analyze relevant data looking for patterns and relationships. The team should then develop a number of hypotheses to explain underlying causes of areas needing improvement.

3. **Develop goals.** Focusing on a few of the most urgent problems, the team should set improvement outcomes. Goals should be few, clear, data-based, measurable, and attainable.

4. **Develop strategies for meeting the goals.** The team should review the literature on what works to achieve specific goals. It may be helpful to convene a study group or develop a professional learning community.

5. **At the end of a specified period, determine whether goals have been met.** The team should regularly evaluate the school's progress and make changes as needed.

**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

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## *Helpful Resources*

Bernhardt, V. L. (1999) *The school portfolio: A comprehensive framework for school improvement* (2nd ed.). Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

Holcomb, E. L. (1996). *Asking the right questions: Tools and techniques for teamwork.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

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**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

**9.1d   School improvement plans reflect current research and established performance expectations for student learning.**

*Definitions: What are current research and performance expectations?*

**Current research** refers to recently conducted, well designed studies with findings that schools can use to improve instruction and programs.

**Performance expectations** are those accomplishments, abilities, or behaviors that all students are expected to demonstrate.

*What the Research Says*

- In a meta-analysis of research on leadership and high student achievement, researchers found that successful schools establish concrete goals for general functioning of the school, curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. Such schools have high expectations for students (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

- In one study of high-performing schools, principals were found to have high expectations for faculty and staff, who in turn held high expectations for themselves and the students. There was a strong belief that all students could succeed academically and that faculty were capable of making this happen (Kannapel & Clements, 2005).

- Research based professional development was found to bridge the gap between standards and achievement (Elmore, 2002).

- Principals' knowledge of effective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment is related to effective instructional leadership for school improvement (Fullan, 2001).

*Step-by Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Become familiar with "scientifically based research."** The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 defines scientifically based research as that which is experimental or quasi-experimental in nature. The findings from this type of research are the most reliable.

2. **Determine sources of evidence.** Collect research that provides reliable information on the strategies in the school improvement plan. Be sure that there are multiple trustworthy sources that provide results for populations similar to those that the school serves. Weigh the evidence carefully before making decisions. Many educators choose to examine the effect sizes of any interventions before making adoption decisions.

3. **Identify performance expectations** as called for by state and school standards. Set goals based on school strengths and challenges. Use the instructional and organizational strategies identified as "best" or "promising" in the research literature to address the challenges facing the school.

**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

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*Helpful Resources*

Education World at www.education-world.com

National Urban Alliance at www.nuatc.org/resources/weblinks/bestpractices.html

NGA Center for Best Practices at www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.50aeae5ff70b817ae8ebb856a11010a0/

Online Resource Center, Appalachian Regional Commission at www.arc.gov

What Works Clearinghouse at www.whatworks.ed.gov

**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

**9.1e   School goals for student learning are clearly defined.**

*Definitions: What are school goals for student learning?*

**Goals for student learning** are measurable statements about what students should know and be able to do according to state standards and the school's expectations. At the school level, this means that expectations are clearly defined for the school, each grade level, and every classroom for every content area.

*What the Research Says*

- Successful schools allow more professional autonomy, but they also provide accountability through explicit goals for student learning (Schmoker, 2004).

- Implementation of classroom assessments, along with dialogue about results on a frequent, regular basis, resulted in an increased percentage of students scoring in the top quartile, from 27% to 50% (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004).

- Students who can identify what they are learning significantly outscore those who cannot (Marzano, 2005).

- Studies have repeatedly found that schools that are high performing have high expectations for all students (Visher & Hudis, 1999; Ware, 1999).

*Step-by Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Establish goals based on an analysis of existing data, state and school expectations for performance, and the school's vision and mission.** Establish long term learning goals according to state expectations for proficiency. Short term goals may be based on progress toward meeting the long term goals. Measurable and achievable goals should be set for each content area, including English/language arts, mathematics, science, and other subjects.

2. **Translate the goals into easily understood terms.** Disseminate the goals widely to all administrators and faculty, students, parents, and the community. Check for understanding and revise communications as needed.

3. **Track progress toward meeting goals.** To create a sense of momentum, track progress toward meeting goals. Different schools use various techniques, such as tracking progress using benchmarks or quarterly posting a chart that shows progress.

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**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

| 9.1f | Methods for achieving school goals are identified in clear, specific action steps. |

*Definitions: What are methods to achieve school goals and action steps?*

**Methods to achieve school goals** are strategies for attaining the results identified in the goals.

**Action steps** are the specific actions and timelines used to meet the goals.

*What the Research Says*

- "Simple plans" work best – those with a direct focus on straightforward actions and opportunities (Collins, 2001).

- Whether the action steps are presented to the faculty as a formal survey or simply as discussion items at a faculty meeting, the process should provide staff a clear view of the school including where the school is not performing (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

*Step-by Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Develop goals and action steps.** Based on the findings from the data, develop a few, measurable goals and define action steps, timelines, and responsibilities.

2. **Review the literature to identify promising approaches that best fit the school's goals.** Review the literature to identify those strategies that appear to have the greatest effect sizes and are successful in settings like those of the school. Discuss which strategies will be used, the professional development, materials, and resources needed for implementation, and where the strategies fit in the curriculum map.

3. **Select specific strategies for the action plan.** Select strategies, building on hypotheses made from data and the review of the research, to help the school reach its goals.

4. **Monitor plan implementation.** Be sure that actions are being implemented by monitoring the plan and communicating how well it is being carried out. Provide appropriate support for anyone who is not implementing the plan according to their commitments.

5. **Evaluate how well the actions worked.** At the end of the year or another time period specified in the plan, evaluate whether the actions led to goal attainment. Revise as needed and celebrate as appropriate. Make sure students, parents, and school personnel have ample opportunities to learn about and discuss the evaluation findings.

*References*

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*Helpful Resources*

Center for Social and Emotional Education at
www.csee.net/climate/schoolimprovement/action_planning.html

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools at
www.sacscasi.org/region/selfstudy/Worksheet_for_Developing_an_Action_Plan.pdf

**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

9.1g   **The means for evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement plan are established.**

*Definitions: What are means for evaluating the effectiveness of the plan?*

**Establishing means for evaluating the effectiveness of the plan** involves the creation of plans and procedures for evaluation, allocation of necessary resources, and building support for the effort. Effectiveness is measured by the impact of the plan on student achievement, changes in instructional practice, and other measures of goal attainment.

*What the Research Says*

- Effective school improvement plans include comprehensive analysis of school problems, thoughtful identification and selection of solutions, and meaningful implementation of research proven solutions (American Federation of Teachers, 2006).

- The most effective school improvement plans are collaboratively developed by individuals who represent all stakeholders in the school community, who are actively involved in leading and monitoring improvement efforts, and who have a strong commitment to the process (Barnes, 2004).

- Successful monitoring and evaluation activities include the use of tools that are easy to administer and understand, address common school improvement concerns, and are used by practitioners in the field (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 2006).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Establish a process for monitoring and evaluating progress**. The school improvement plan should specify how progress toward each school improvement goal will be measured, including who will be responsible for measuring progress, what assessments or tools will be used, when data will be collected, and how information will be analyzed and reported. To ensure that plans for monitoring and evaluation have the support of the entire school community, it is important that all stakeholder groups be involved in their development. Designate a team to develop, lead, and coordinate the school improvement process. Team members can help ensure that roles and responsibilities for all aspects of the evaluation processes are identified and fulfilled.

2. **Identify data sources and tools that are aligned with school improvement goals**. A review of data that already exist should be conducted to determine the extent to which they inform assessment of school improvement goals. Existing data may include student achievement scores, lesson plans, student work, attendance records, professional development plans, and other information. A review of existing data sources and tools provides a starting point for developing clarity and consensus around what will be

measured and to identify needs for additional information. Additional data collection tools should reflect specific standards of practice or performance indicators articulated in the school improvement plan and may include surveys, interviews, rubrics, checklists, observation protocols, and self-assessments. Tools and procedures should allow for collection of baseline data with which subsequent data can be compared over time to assess progress.

3. **Ensure that the data collection focuses on key areas, includes appropriate stakeholder group input, and is evaluated on its utility**. The evaluation plan should emphasize those areas of school improvement (e.g., student learning, curriculum, instruction, assessment, school climate, staff development, resource allocation, parent involvement, support services). Consider all stakeholders in the school community (e.g., parents, students, instructional staff, school leaders, administrators, and community members) as sources for providing information in these areas and as audiences for disseminating results. As part of the evaluation process, assess the quality and utility of the information collected.

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### *Helpful Resources*

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Northwest Regional Education Laboratory. (2001). *Listening to student voices self-study toolkit*. Portland, OR: Author. Retrieved June 12, 2007, from www.nwrel.org/scpd/scc/studentvoices/

What Works Clearinghouse at www.whatworks.ed.gov

**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

**9.1h   The school improvement plan is implemented as developed.**

*Definitions: What does implemented as developed mean?*

**A school improvement plan is implemented as developed** if it is carried out with fidelity to the original goals, action steps, actors, and timelines.

*What the Research Says*

- Successful improvement plans promote development of learning communities that engage in informed and short term cycles of action, assessment, and adjustment (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006; Schmoker, 2004).

- Effective staff development is built around "collaborative exchange," in which "teachers work together, reflect on their practice, exchange ideas, and share strategies" (Guskey, 2003, p. 749).

- Those who implement school reforms engage in "sense-making" processes through which they construct their own understandings and often are required to reevaluate prior notions. Lack of clarity or differences in understanding about improvement goals and how to achieve them can cause failures in implementation (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002).

- Successful school improvement requires close attention to issues of initial and long term implementation and to institutionalizing change (Stringfield, Millsap, & Herman, 1997).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Develop and communicate specific action plans.** Written action plans should provide detailed information about what will be done, by whom, and when. Care should be taken to ensure that expectations are realistic and match individual and organizational capacities, such as individual abilities, available time and organizational resources.

2. **Ensure commitment to implementation.** Secure commitments to implementing the school improvement plan informally or through written agreements. Prior to securing commitment, make expectations for implementation clear and members of the school community have opportunities to seek clarification, raise concerns, and suggest changes.

3. **Monitor implementation and make adjustments as needed.** Monitor and evaluate action plan activities and their impact on an ongoing basis. Feedback should be collected regularly from those involved in implementation to assess progress toward goals, identify facilitators and barriers to progress, and support changes. Implementation should include regular opportunities to review data and revisit goals or adjust strategies, as needed.

4. **Ensure that successful strategies are sustained and institutionalized.** Several strategies exist to ensure that successful improvement strategies are sustained beyond initial

## Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning

implementation. These include establishing strong leadership, creating organizational support structures, documenting impact, making results visible, and providing incentives for ongoing implementation.

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**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

**9.1i    The school evaluates the degree to which it achieves the goals and objectives for student learning set by the school improvement plan.**

*Definitions: What are improvement goals and what is evaluation?*

**Improvement goals** are specific objectives identified in the school improvement plan.

**Evaluation** is the processes that include collection, analysis, and reporting of data that inform assessment of progress toward specific school improvement goals.

*What the Research Says*

- Using tools and data to evaluate school improvement helps members of the school community to think about issues in new ways and to view persistent challenges through a different lens (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006).

- Evaluating the effectiveness of school improvement plans includes the documentation of baseline school practices and outcomes for tracking progress over time (Barnes, 2004).

- Successful strategic plans promote informed and short term cycles of action, assessment, and adjustment (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 2006).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1.  **Collect data that allow for assessment of progress toward school improvement goals**. Many data sources may already exist, such as student achievement scores, attendance records, lesson plans, student work, professional development plans, and other information. Additional data collection efforts should focus on specific standards of practice or performance indicators articulated in the school improvement plan and may include tools such as surveys, interviews, rubrics, checklists, observation protocols, or self-assessments. The data collected should allow for comparison over time to assess progress.

2.  **Analyze and report data**. Analysis of data should focus on key questions about progress toward improvement goals. Use disaggregated data from multiple sources to identify trends and reveal patterns that may not be apparent within larger groups. Audiences for dissemination of results should be identified in advance. Reports should be concise, well organized, and aligned with the audience's ability to interpret them. Results from analyses should include conclusions that are grounded in evidence, discussion of limitations that may affect conclusions, gaps or areas of progress not adequately addressed by the data, and next steps for data collection and analysis.

3.   **Ensure that members of the school community understand and support evaluation efforts**. For the results of evaluation efforts to be meaningful and valued, members of the school community must have a clear understanding of their purpose and a sense that the information collected is valid. Information about evaluation efforts and how they are used to monitor and guide school improvement activities should be communicated regularly.

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### Helpful Resources

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform at www.annenberginstitute.org/tools/Tools/index.php

Calhoun, E. (1994). *How to use action research in the self-renewing school*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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**Standard 9: Organizational Effectiveness – Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

**9.1j   The school sustains a commitment to continuous improvement.**

*Definitions: What is continuous improvement?*

**Continuous improvement** is an ongoing and iterative process through which schools make incremental improvements to their quality and performance.

*What the Research Says*

- Effective schools are guided by an ethic of continuous improvement and seek out information to improve performance. These schools engage in an ongoing process of reflection and action that involves: 1) establishing desired outcomes, 2) defining questions and setting criteria related to outcomes, 3) collecting and organizing data, 4) making meaning of the data, 5) taking action, and 6) assessing and evaluating actions (Keeney, 1998).

- One of the most widely used tools for continuous improvement is called the "plan-do-check-act (PDCA) cycle." This four step model involves: 1) identifying an opportunity and planning for change, 2) implementing the change on a small scale 3) using data to analyze the results of the change and determining whether it made a difference, and 4) implementing the change on a wider scale and continuously assessing the results or beginning the cycle again, if the change was not successful (American Society for Quality, 2006).

- Continuous improvement processes facilitate successful implementation, permit assessments of success and failure, and create opportunities to learn, correct failures, and reward successes. Such processes involve clear program design and goals, management of programs for quality, and continuous assessment for improvement of performance (Pane, Ginsberg, & Lauland, 1999).

- Schools that support professional learning communities show greater gains in core course achievement, reduced achievement gaps, and reduced rates of student dropout and absenteeism (Hord, 1997).

- Research on effective teaching over the past two decades has shown that effective practice is linked to inquiry, reflection, and continuous professional growth (Harris, 1998).

*Step-by-Step Process for Addressing this Indicator*

1. **Formalize and support roles for leaders and implement improvement strategies.**
   Creating a team of individuals to lead continuous improvement efforts is critical to ensuring that strategies are successfully planned and implemented, that their impact is assessed, and practices are sustained or modified, as appropriate. Team members should be representative of stakeholders in the school community and should reflect a range of skills and perspectives. Training for team members may be helpful to improve their problem solving skills and to ensure they understand the cycle of continuous improvement.

2. **Communicate improvement goals and strategies clearly and frequently.** The school improvement plan should clearly articulate goals, specific strategies, and measurable objectives. All members who are involved in implementing the plan must have clear and shared understanding of these components as well as timelines for meeting goals and expectations of specific individuals. When changes to goals and strategies are needed, these must also be clearly and frequently communicated.

3. **Encourage reflective practice and learning communities.** One way to infuse the notion of continuous improvement is to encourage reflective practice. Among instructional staff, reflection allows for examination of beliefs, goals, or practices to gain a deeper understanding of what contributes to student learning. Learning communities can also be supported by creating opportunities for teachers to have in depth and open conversations about their practice, what works and does not work, and why. Opportunities may include lesson study, self-assessment activities, and group discussions of practice before, during, and after implementation of improvement strategies.

4. **Implement improvement strategies and assess progress and impact.** Monitor progress throughout the implementation process to ensure that goals are met. It often makes sense to make small or incremental changes before scaling up. Evaluate the effectiveness of improvement strategies as outlined in the school improvement plan to identify if progress toward goals was made, if there were unexpected outcomes, and what changes may need to be made for future implementation.

5. **Support sustainability and institutionalization of effective strategies.** As evidence of successful improvement strategies becomes available, undertake efforts to sustain and institutionalize them.

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