

**Indicators of Effective Practice (School)**  
**Center on Innovation & Improvement**

**Complete list is for Continuous School Improvement**  
**Italicized indicators are for Rapid School Improvement**

From *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*  
School Community Indicators from *The Mega System: Deciding. Learning. Connecting.*  
See these sources for explication and underlying research.  
Downloadable from: [www.centerii.org](http://www.centerii.org)

**I. Leadership and Decision-Making**

**A. Team Structure**

**Effective Practice:** Establish a team structure with specific duties and time for instructional planning.

**Indicators of Effective Practice**

- 1. A team structure is officially incorporated into the school improvement plan and school governance policy.*
- 2. All teams have written statements of purpose and by-laws for their operation.*
- 3. All teams operate with work plans for the year and specific work products to produce.*
- 4. All teams prepare agendas for their meetings.*
- 5. All teams maintain official minutes of their meetings.*
- 6. The principal maintains a file of the agendas, work products, and minutes of all teams.*
- 7. A Leadership Team consisting of the principal, teachers who lead the Instructional Teams, and other key professional staff meets regularly (twice a month or more for an hour each meeting).*
- 8. The Leadership Team serves as a conduit of communication to the faculty and staff.*
- 9. The Leadership Team shares in decisions of real substance pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and professional development.*
- 10. The school's Leadership Team regularly looks at school performance data and aggregated classroom observation data and uses those data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs.*
- 11. Teachers are organized into grade-level, grade-level cluster, or subject-area Instructional Teams.*
- 12. Instructional Teams meet regularly (twice a month or more for 45 minutes each meeting) to conduct business.*
- 13. Instructional Teams meet for blocks of time (4 to 6 hour blocks, once a month; whole days before and after the school year) sufficient to develop and refine units of instruction and review student learning data.*
- 14. A School Community Council consisting of the principal, parent facilitator, social worker or counselor, and parents oversees family-school relationships and the curriculum of the home.*
- 15. A majority of the members of the School Community Council are parents of currently enrolled students and are not also employees of the school.*
- 16. The School Community Council meets regularly (twice a month for an hour each meeting).*

**B. Principal's Role**

**Effective Practice:** Focus the principal's role on building leadership capacity, achieving learning goals, and improving instruction.

**Indicators of Effective Practice**

- 1. The principal makes sure everyone understands the school's mission, clear goals (short term and long term), and their roles in meeting the goals.*
- 2. The principal develops the leadership capacity of others in the school.*
- 3. The principal communicates the likelihood of success based on the plan and hard work.*
- 4. The principal models and communicates the expectation of improved student learning through commitment, discipline, and careful implementation of sound practices.*

5. *The principal participates actively with the school's teams.*
6. *The principal keeps a focus on instructional improvement and student learning outcomes.*
7. *The principal monitors curriculum and classroom instruction regularly.*
8. *The principal spends at least 50% of his/her time working directly with teachers to improve instruction, including classroom observations.*
9. *The principal challenges, supports, and monitors the correction of unsound teaching practices.*
10. *The principal celebrates individual, team, and school successes, especially related to student learning outcomes.*
11. *The principal provides incentives for teacher and student accomplishment.*
12. *The principal personally engages parents and the community in the improvement process.*
13. *The principal offers frequent opportunities for staff and parents to voice constructive critique of the school's progress and suggestions for improvement.*

## **II. Professional Development**

**Effective Practice:** Align classroom observations with evaluation criteria and professional development.

### **Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. *The principal compiles reports from classroom observations, showing aggregate areas of strength and areas that need improvement without revealing the identity of individual teachers.*
2. *The Leadership Team reviews the principal's summary reports of classroom observations and takes them into account in planning professional development.*
3. *Professional development for teachers includes observations by the principal related to indicators of effective teaching and classroom management.*
4. *Professional development for teachers includes observations by peers related to indicators of effective teaching and classroom management.*
5. *Professional development for teachers includes self-assessment related to indicators of effective teaching and classroom management.*
6. *Teachers are required to make individual professional development plans based on classroom observations.*
7. *Professional development of individual teachers includes an emphasis on indicators of effective teaching.*
8. *Professional development for the whole faculty includes assessment of strengths and areas in need of improvement from classroom observations of indicators of effective teaching.*
9. *Teacher evaluation examines the same indicators used in professional development.*
10. *The principal plans opportunities for teachers to share their strengths with other teachers.*

## **III. Parents and Learning**

**Effective Practice:** Help parents to help their children meet standards.

### **Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. *Parent policies, activities, and programs cultivate the "curriculum of the home."*
2. *Parents receive regular, jargon-free communication about learning standards, their children's progress, and the parents' role in their children's school success.*
3. *Parents receive practical guidance to maintain regular and supportive verbal interaction with their children.*
4. *Parents receive practical guidance to maintain daily conversations with their children about their school experiences and progress.*
5. *Parents receive practical guidance to establish a quiet place for children's studying at home and consistent discipline for studying at home.*
6. *Parents receive practical guidance to encourage their children's regular reading habits at home.*
7. *Parents receive practical guidance to model and encourage respectful and responsible behaviors.*
8. *Parents are given opportunities to meet with each other to share their child-rearing concerns and successes.*
9. *Parents are given opportunities to meet with teachers to discuss both their children's progress in school and their children's home-based study and reading habits.*

10. Parent involvement policies, classroom visit policies, and homework policies are clear, constructive, and frequently communicated to parents and teachers.
11. The faculty, students, and parents regularly discuss the school's Compact that outlines key expectations of students, parents, and teachers.
12. The student report card shows the student's progress in meeting learning standards.
13. The student report card provides parents an opportunity to report on the student's home-based studying and reading habits.

#### **IV. Curriculum, Assessment, and Instructional Planning**

##### **A. Aligned Instruction**

**Effective Practice:** Engage teachers in aligning instruction with standards and benchmarks.

##### **Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. *Instructional Teams develop standards-aligned units of instruction for each subject and grade level.*
2. *Units of instruction include standards-based objectives and criteria for mastery.*
3. *Objectives are leveled to target learning to each student's demonstrated prior mastery based on multiple points of data (e.g., unit tests and student work).*

##### **B. Classroom Assessment**

**Effective Practice:** Engage teachers in assessing and monitoring student mastery.

##### **Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. *Units of instruction include pre-/post-tests to assess student mastery of standards-based objectives.*
2. *Unit pre-tests and post-tests are administered to all students in the grade level and subject covered by the unit of instruction.*
3. *Unit pre-test and post-test results are reviewed by the Instructional Team.*
4. *Teachers individualize instruction based on pre-test results to provide support for some students and enhanced learning opportunities for others.*
5. *Teachers re-teach based on post-test results.*

##### **C. Differentiated Instruction**

**Effective Practice:** Engage teachers in differentiating and aligning learning activities.

##### **Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. *Units of instruction include specific learning activities aligned to objectives.*
2. *Instructional Teams develop materials for their standards-aligned learning activities and share the materials among themselves.*
3. *Materials for standards-aligned learning activities are well-organized, labeled, and stored for convenient use by teachers.*

##### **D. Periodic Assessment**

**Effective Practice:** Assess student learning frequently with standards-based assessments.

##### **Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. *The school tests every student annually with the same standardized test in basic subject areas so that each student's year-to-year progress can be tracked.*
2. *The school tests each student at least 3 times each year to determine progress toward standards-based objectives.*
3. *Teachers receive timely reports of results from standardized and objectives-based tests.*
4. *The school maintains a central database that includes each student's test scores, placement information, demographic information, attendance, data, behavior indicators, and other variables useful to teachers.*
5. *Teams and teachers receive timely reports from the central database to assist in making decisions about each student's placement and instruction.*

6. *Yearly learning goals are set for the school by the Leadership Team utilizing student learning data.*
7. *The Leadership Team monitors school-level student learning data.*
8. *Instructional Teams use student learning data to assess strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instructional strategies.*
9. *Instructional Teams use student learning data to plan instruction.*
10. *Instructional Teams use student learning data to identify students in need of instructional support or enhancement.*
11. *Instructional Teams review the results of unit pre-/post-tests to make decisions about the curriculum and instructional plans and to “red flag” students in need of intervention (both students in need of tutoring or extra help and students needing enhanced learning opportunities because of early mastery of objectives).*

## **V. Classroom Instruction**

### **A. Instructional Preparation and Delivery**

**Effective Practice:** Expect and monitor sound instruction in a variety of modes.

#### **Indicators of Effective Practice**

##### **Instruction—Preparation**

1. *All teachers are guided by a document that aligns standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.*
2. *All teachers develop weekly lesson plans based on aligned units of instruction.*
3. *All teachers use objectives-based pre-tests.*
4. *All teachers use objectives-based post-tests.*
5. *All teachers maintain a record of each student’s mastery of specific learning objectives.*
6. *All teachers test frequently using a variety of evaluation methods and maintain a record of the results.*
7. *All teachers differentiate assignments (individualize instruction) in response to individual student performance on pre-tests and other methods of assessment.*

##### **Instruction—Teacher-Directed—Introduction**

1. *All teachers review the previous lesson.*
2. *All teachers clearly state the lesson’s topic, theme, and objectives.*
3. *All teachers stimulate interest in the topics.*
4. *All teachers use modeling, demonstration, and graphics.*

##### **Instruction—Teacher-Directed—Presentation**

1. *All teachers proceed in small steps at a rapid pace.*
2. *All teachers explain directly and thoroughly.*
3. *All teachers maintain eye contact.*
4. *All teachers speak with expression and use a variety of vocal tones.*
5. *All teachers use prompting/cueing.*

##### **Instruction—Teacher-Directed—Summary and Confirmation**

1. *All teachers re-teach when necessary.*
2. *All teachers review with drilling/class recitation.*
3. *All teachers review with questioning.*
4. *All teachers summarize key concepts.*

##### **Instruction—Interaction**

1. *All teachers re-teach following questioning.*
2. *All teachers use open-ended questioning and encourage elaboration.*
3. *All teachers re-direct student questions.*
4. *All teachers encourage peer interaction.*
5. *All teachers encourage students to paraphrase, summarize, and relate.*
6. *All teachers encourage students to check their own comprehension.*
7. *All teachers verbally praise students.*

**Instruction—Student-Directed (Group or Individual)**

1. *All teachers travel to all areas in which students are working.*
2. All teachers meet with students to facilitate mastery of objectives.
3. All teachers encourage students to help each other with their work.
4. *All teachers interact instructionally with students (explaining, checking, giving feedback).*
5. *All teachers interact managerially with students (reinforcing rules, procedures).*
6. *All teachers interact socially with students (noticing and attending to an ill student, asking about the weekend, inquiring about the family).*
7. All teachers verbally praise students.

**Instruction—Computer-Based**

1. *Students are engaged and on task.*
2. Students are comfortable with the program and its navigation.
3. All teachers travel about the room to assist students.
4. All teachers have documentation of the computer program's alignment with standards-based objectives.
5. All teachers maintain a record of student mastery of standards-based objectives.
6. *All teachers assess student mastery in ways other than those provided by the computer program.*

**B. Homework Practices and Communication with Parents**

**Effective Practice:** Expect and monitor sound homework practices and communication with parents.

**Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. *All teachers maintain a file of communication with parents.*
2. *All teachers regularly assign homework (4 or more days a week).*
3. *All teachers check, mark, and return homework.*
4. All teachers include comments on checked homework.
5. All teachers count homework toward the student's report card grade.
6. *All teachers systematically report to parents the student's mastery of specific standards-based objectives.*

**C. Classroom Management**

**Effective Practice:** Expect and monitor sound classroom management.

**Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. When waiting for assistance from the teacher, students are occupied with curriculum-related activities provided by the teacher.
2. Transitions between instructional modes are brief and orderly.
3. Students maintain eye contact and are attentive.
4. *Students raise hands or otherwise signal before speaking.*
5. *All teachers use a variety of instructional modes.*
6. *All teachers maintain well-organized student learning materials in the classroom.*
7. All teachers display completed student work in the classroom.
8. *All teachers display classroom rules and procedures in the classroom.*
9. *All teachers correct students who do not follow classroom rules and procedures.*
10. *All teachers reinforce classroom rules and procedures by positively teaching them.*
11. All teachers conduct an occasional "behavior check."
12. All teachers engage all students (e.g., encourage silent students to participate).

## VI. School Community

### A. Purpose, Policies, and Practices

**Effective Practice:** Define the purpose, policies, and practices of the school community.

#### Indicators of Effective Practice

1. The school's homework policy requires homework at all grade levels.
2. The school's homework policy makes homework a part of the student's report card grade.
3. The school's homework policy stresses the importance of checking, marking, and promptly returning homework.
4. The school's mission statement, Compact, and homework policy are included in the school improvement plan.
5. The school recognizes the accomplishments of teams (e. g., teacher teams, school councils).
6. The school regularly and clearly communicates with parents about its expectations of them and the importance of the curriculum of the home.
7. The school maintains a program of home visits by teachers, staff, and/or trained community members.
8. The school's mission statement is distinct, clear, and focused on student learning.
9. The school's Compact outlines the responsibilities/expectations of teachers, parents, and students.
10. The school's Compact includes responsibilities/expectations of parents drawn from the curriculum of the home.
11. The school's Compact is annually distributed to teachers, school personnel, parents, and students.
12. The school's homework policy provides guidelines for the amount of daily study time at home by grade level.
13. The school celebrates its accomplishments.
14. The school recognizes the individual accomplishments of teachers.

### B. Communication

**Effective Practice:** Provide two-way, school-home communication linked to learning.

#### Indicators of Effective Practice

1. The school's Compact, homework policy, and learning standards are routinely reviewed and discussed at faculty meetings.
2. The school's Compact, homework policy, and learning standards are routinely reviewed and discussed at open houses and parent-teacher conferences.
3. Parent-teacher conferences are held at least twice a year and include students at least once a year.
4. The "ongoing conversation" between school personnel and parents is candid, supportive, and flows in both directions.
5. Teachers regularly make "interactive" assignments that encourage parent-child interaction relative to school learning.
6. The school maintains a program of home gatherings, with groups of parents meeting in a home with a teacher.
7. Teachers are familiar with the curriculum of the home and discuss it with parents.
8. Parents are familiar with the curriculum of the home and discuss it with teachers.

### C. Education

**Effective Practice:** Educate parents to support their children's learning and teachers to work with parents.

#### Indicators of Effective Practice

1. Parent education programs include some multi-session group experiences with specific agendas.
2. Professional development programs for teachers include assistance in working effectively with parents.
3. Parent education programs are led by trained parent leaders.
4. The school offers parent education programs focused on building skills relative to the curriculum of the home.

**D. Connection**

**Effective Practice:** Connect members of the school community to support student learning.

**Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. The school provides “intragenerational associations” in which students of different ages are brought together to learn.
2. The school provides “intergenerational associations” in which parents or community volunteers assist in the classroom.
3. The school provides opportunities for parents to get to know each other and discuss the curriculum of the home.
4. The school’s policies encourage parents to visit classrooms.
5. The school has a parent-friendly document that outlines the rules for parent visits to classrooms.
6. The school sponsors all-school events that include parents, students, and teachers and focus on aspects of student learning.
7. All-school events include parent-child interactive activities.
8. Office and support staff members are trained to make the school a “welcoming place” for parents.

