

## **Appendix: Federal Guidance A:15**

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

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

**Rapid Improvement Leader Indicators** *Center on Innovation & Improvement*

**Eight Elements of High School Improvement** *National High School Center*



## Federal Guidance A:15

**From <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/sigguidance11012010.pdf>**

A-15. How can an SEA determine academic achievement in terms of proficiency of the “all students” group on the State’s reading/language arts and mathematics assessments combined to develop one list of schools that will enable it to identify the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the State? To determine the persistently lowest-achieving schools in the State in terms of academic achievement, an SEA must rank each set of schools—i.e., Title I schools in improvement, corrective action, or restructuring and secondary schools eligible for, but that do not receive, Title I funds—from highest to lowest in terms of proficiency of the “all students” group on the State’s reading/language arts and mathematics assessments combined. Accordingly, the SEA must have a way to combine different proficiency rates between reading/language arts and mathematics for each school. There are likely a number of ways an SEA may do this. Below, we give two examples.

### EXAMPLE 1

#### Single Percentage Method

##### Numerator:

Step 1: Calculate the total number of proficient students in the “all students” group in reading/language arts by adding the number of proficient students in each grade tested in a school. Calculate the total number of proficient students in the “all students” group in mathematics by adding the number of proficient students in each grade tested in the school.

Step 2: Add the total number of proficient students in reading/language arts and mathematics.

##### Denominator:

Step 3: Calculate the total number of students in the “all students” group in the school who took the State’s reading/language arts assessment and the total number of students in the “all students” group who took the State’s mathematics assessment.

Step 4: Add the total number of students in the “all students” group in the school who took the State’s reading/language arts assessment and the total number of students in the “all students” group who took the State’s mathematics assessment.

Note: In counting the total number of students who are proficient and the total number of students assessed, include the number of proficient students with disabilities who took an alternate assessment (based on alternate academic achievement standards or modified academic achievement standards) and the total number of students with disabilities who took an alternate assessment.

Step 5: Divide the numerator by the denominator to determine the percent proficient in reading/language arts and mathematics in the school.

Step 6: Rank the schools in each relevant set of schools from highest to lowest using the percentages in Step 5.

## EXAMPLE 2

### Adding Ranks Method

- Step 1: Calculate the percent proficient for reading/language arts for every school in the relevant set of schools using the most recent assessment data available. (Use the same data that the State reports on its report card under section 1111(h)(1)(C)(i) of the ESEA for the “all students” group.)
- Step 2: Calculate the percent proficient for mathematics for every school in the relevant set of schools using the most recent assessment data available. (Use the same data that the State reports on its report card under section 1111(h)(1)(C)(i) of the ESEA for the “all students” group.)
- Step 3: Rank order schools based on the percent proficient for reading/language arts from the highest percent proficient to the lowest percent proficient. The highest percent proficient would receive a rank of one.
- Step 4: Rank order schools based on the percent proficient for mathematics from the highest percent proficient to the lowest percent proficient. The highest percent proficient would receive a rank of one.
- Step 5: Add the numerical ranks for reading/language arts and mathematics for each school.
- Step 6: Rank order schools in each set of schools based on the combined reading/language arts and mathematics ranks for each school. The school with the lowest combined rank (e.g., 2, based on a rank of 1 for both reading/language arts and mathematics) would be the highest-achieving school within the set of schools and the school with the highest combined rate would be the lowest-achieving school within the set of schools.

From: Guidance on Fiscal Year 2010 School Improvement Grants Under Section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. U. S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (November 1, 2010)

## 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.



## Indicators of Effective Practice (District) Center on Innovation & Improvement

### Effective Practices and Indicators for District Support of School Improvement

Adapted from *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*

See the *Handbook* sources for explication and underlying research.

Downloadable from: [www.centerii.org](http://www.centerii.org)

#### **I. District Context and Support for School Improvement**

**Effective Practice:** The district provides a framework of district improvement and support for school improvement.

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

1. The district includes municipal and civic leaders in district and school improvement planning and maintains regular communication with them.
2. The district includes community organizations in district and school improvement planning and maintains regular communication with them.
3. The district includes parent organizations in district and school improvement planning and maintains regular communication with them.
4. The district provides incentives for staff who work effectively in hard-to-staff and restructuring schools.
5. The district contracts with external service providers for key services in restructured schools.
6. The district provides schools with technology, training, and support for integrated data collection, reporting, and analysis systems.
7. The district sets district, school, and student subgroup achievement targets.
8. The school board and superintendent present a unified vision for school improvement.
9. The superintendent and other central office staff are accountable for school improvement and student learning outcomes.
10. The district regularly reallocates resources to support school, staff, and instructional improvement.
11. The district ensures that key pieces of user-friendly data are available in a timely fashion at the district, school, and classroom levels.
12. The district intervenes early when a school is not making adequate progress.
13. The district works with the school to provide early and intensive intervention for students not making progress.
14. The district recruits, trains, supports, and places personnel to competently address the problems of schools in need of improvement.
15. The district allows school leaders reasonable autonomy to do things differently in order to succeed.

#### **II. The Change Process**

**Effective Practice:** The district takes the change process into account in planning and supporting school improvement.

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

1. The district operates with district-level and school-level improvement teams.
2. The district examines existing school improvement strategies being implemented across the district and determines their value, expanding, modifying, and culling as evidence suggests.
3. For each restructuring school, the district makes reference to guidance from *What Works When* regarding how to assess what the best restructuring options are given its unique district and school context.
4. For each restructuring school, the district ensures that the restructuring options chosen reflect the particular strengths and weaknesses of the restructuring school.

5. For each restructuring school, the district ensures that the restructuring plan reflects the resources available to ensure its success.
6. For each restructuring school, the district ensures that the restructuring plan includes both changes in governance and a detailed plan for school improvement.
7. The district ensures that school improvement and restructuring plans include research-based, field-proven programs, practices, and models.
8. The district ensures that school improvement and restructuring plans include a clear vision of what the school will look like when restructured or substantially improved.
9. The district ensures that an empowered change agent (typically the principal) is appointed to head each restructuring school.
10. In restructuring schools, the district ensures that the change agent (typically the principal) is skilled in motivating staff and the community, communicating clear expectations, and focusing on improved student learning.
11. The district ensures that school improvement and restructuring plans include “quick wins,” early successes in improvement.
12. The district is prepared for setbacks, resistance, and obstacles on the path to substantial improvement.
13. The school reports and documents its progress monthly to the superintendent, and the superintendent reports the school’s progress to the school board.

### **III. District-School Expectations**

**Effective Practice:** The district clarifies what it expects from the school and what the school can expect from the district.

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

1. The district designates a central office contact person for the school, and that person maintains close communication with the school and an interest in its progress.
2. District and school decision makers meet at least twice a month to discuss the school’s progress.
3. District policies and procedures clarify the scope of site-based decision making granted a school and are summarized in a letter of understanding.
4. The district provides a cohesive district curriculum guide aligned with state standards or otherwise places curricular expectation on the school.
5. The district provides the technology, training, and support to facilitate the school’s data management needs.
6. Professional development is built into the school schedule by the district, but the school is allowed discretion in selecting training and consultation that fit the requirements of its improvement/restructuring plan and its evolving needs.
7. Staff development is built into the schedule for support staff (e.g., aides, clerks, custodians, cooks) as well as classroom teachers.
8. A team structure is officially incorporated into the school improvement plan and school governance policy.
9. All teams have written statements of purpose and by-laws for their operation.
10. The school’s Leadership Team regularly looks at school performance data and aggregated classroom observation data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs.

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

**Effective Practices and Indicators for Principals  
in Rapid Improvement, Turnaround, and Transformational Situations**

From *School Turnarounds: Leader Actions and Results*  
See this document for explication and underlying research.  
Downloadable from: [www.centerii.org](http://www.centerii.org)

**I. Initial Analysis and Problem-Solving**

**Effective Practice:** The Rapid Improvement Leader takes time early in the process to gain a thorough understanding of the school's operations and develop a plan of action.

**Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. Rapid Improvement Leader personally analyzes data about the organization's performance to identify high-priority problems that can be fixed quickly.
2. Rapid Improvement Leader makes an action plan so that everyone involved knows specifically what they need to do differently.

**II. Driving for Results**

**Effective Practice:** The Rapid Improvement Leader relentlessly pursues significantly improved results in student learning and related goals.

**Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. Rapid Improvement Leader first concentrates on a very limited number of changes to achieve early, visible wins for the school.
2. Rapid Improvement Leader makes changes that deviate from organization's norms and rules if necessary to gain visible wins.
3. Rapid Improvement Leader implements an action plan in which change is mandatory for all staff, not optional.
4. Rapid Improvement Leader replaces or redeploys some staff as necessary based on careful examination of skills and readiness for change.
5. Rapid Improvement Leader quickly discards tactics that don't work and spends more resources and time on tactics that work.
6. Rapid Improvement Leader reports progress but keeps school's focus on high goals.

**III. Influencing Inside and Outside the School**

**Effective Practice:** The Rapid Improvement Leader engages, motivates, and enlists the contribution of people inside the school and in the community to achieve school goals.

**Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. Rapid Improvement Leader motivates others inside and outside the school to contribute to success.
2. Rapid Improvement Leader uses various tactics to help staff empathize with those they serve and be motivated for change.
3. Rapid Improvement Leader works hard to gain the support of trusted influencers among staff and community.
4. Rapid Improvement Leader silences critics with speedy success on "quick win" objectives.

#### **IV. Measuring, Reporting, Improving**

**Effective Practice:** The Rapid Improvement Leader creates metrics to measure, report, and constructively review progress on all aspects of the school's operations and its results (student learning).

**Indicators of Effective Practice**

1. Rapid Improvement Leader sets up systems to measure and report interim results often.
2. Rapid Improvement Leader shares results in open-air meetings to hold all staff accountable for results and to focus on solving problems.



## Eight Elements of High School Improvement: A Mapping Framework

### National High School Center

Research on comprehensive school reform suggests that improvement strategies have the best opportunity for success and sustainability when they take into account the broad array of elements that make up the system being improved. Yet, many current high school improvement initiatives are focused only on specific priority topics (e.g., dropout prevention), specific intervention strategies (e.g., advisories, small schools), or program initiatives (e.g., Check and Connect). Although such approaches can have an important impact, their reach is too frequently limited to a subset of systemic reform elements. Implementing such initiatives may lead to success in addressing specific needs, but the probability of widespread improvement is small when initiatives are implemented in isolation from the broader education systems within which they operate.

The National High School Center’s goal is to encourage researchers, policymakers, and practitioners at all levels to engage in comprehensive, systemic efforts to maximize attainment for all high school students, with a focus on those students who have been historically underserved. To this end, we have developed a framework that consists of eight core elements and provides a lens for mapping school, district, and state high school improvement efforts. The exercise of mapping should inform strategic planning and implementation efforts by illuminating the connections among elements, revealing strengths and gaps in current state and district policies, and highlighting the stakeholders who should be aware of and involved in future improvement efforts.

This document offers descriptions of the eight elements of high school improvement:

Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction	Stakeholder Engagement
Assessment and Accountability	Leadership and Governance
Teacher Quality and Professional Development	Organization and Structure
Student and Family Supports	Resources for Sustainability

Four points are important to note. **First**, the particular combination or separation of the elements is less significant than an understanding that these elements, which are often treated as discrete, actually are inter-related parts of a single system. Each element has an impact on the others, so understanding their interconnectivity is a critical task. **Second**, a major challenge of using this framework is the risk of overwhelming those involved in the work. Every high school improvement initiative does not need to have some activity in each of the elements at every moment. Rather, mapping the implications of an improvement initiative among all affected elements at the outset will lead to more strategic decisions initially and over time. **Third**, every high school and related high school improvement initiative is situated in a unique geographic, cultural, demographic, political, and societal context, which influences the school’s vision, mission, structure, culture, and outcomes. Any efforts at high school improvement must take into account these particular school- and system-level contexts. These considerations affect each element and must be explicitly addressed when improvement strategies are devised. **Fourth**, if scalable and sustainable improvement is the ultimate goal, it is likely that the implementation of improvement efforts will require organizational change. No strategy can be complete without attention to the challenges of leading change within the respective organizational cultures.

### *Eight Elements of High School Improvement*

The eight systemic reform elements that make up the National High School Center Mapping Framework are listed below with their respective characteristics of effectiveness:

1. **Rigorous Curriculum and Instruction:** Everyone in the system is responsible for ensuring that all students have access to rigorous content and instruction that
  - align to local, state, and national standards that look toward the depth of knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for students to thrive in emerging economic, citizenship, and community contexts;
  - incorporate multiple research-based instructional strategies, such as scaffolding, differentiated instruction, and double dosing, for all students, including those with special instructional needs;

- address both academic and workplace literacy skills across all content areas and provide students with knowledge of a variety of career pathways;
- adapt easily to a variety of school organizational structures;
- are organized around student instructional needs and align with instruction in other content areas to support thematic and project-based learning, tiered instruction, etc.;
- interface with the existing school curriculum and quality of instruction;
- align vertically with prerequisite content, cognitive skills, curricula, and follow-up coursework;
- incorporate new modalities for learning and information sharing, including technology and universal design for learning;
- include academic supports such as tutoring, co-curricular activities, and extended learning opportunities, such as summer bridge programs, after-school and supplemental educational services, and Saturday academies;
- incorporate cognitive skills development, including note taking, outlining, content summarizing and synthesis, study skills, and test-taking skills; and
- involve continuous progress monitoring/formative assessment and the differentiation of teaching to meet multiple learners' needs.

**2. Assessment and Accountability:** Balanced assessment and accountability systems cover a broad range of formal and informal assessment policies and practices aligned across multiple levels that

- include formative assessments embedded in instruction;
- may include school-based portfolios or projects, interim or benchmark exams (which often are implemented at the district level) as well as end-of-course exams, state standards-based assessments, and high-stakes competency or exit exams;
- provide timely and effective feedback and access to data so that teachers, students, and parents can capture and evaluate student knowledge and skills, plan for future educational programs, and adapt instruction to better meet student needs;
- encourage and support continuous progress monitoring through both formal and informal assessments;
- give teachers and students access to college and work readiness assessments in order to best plan high school courses of study;
- support the early identification of students with special needs and those at risk of failure so that placement and tiered interventions appropriately meet student needs;
- collect and report longitudinal data to measure short- and long-term student growth for student-, teacher-, and/or program-based impact evaluations, including new interventions and initiatives; and
- can include both internal and external accountability provisions, including teacher and program performance measures, rewards, and consequences (depending on local and state contexts).

**3. Teacher Quality and Professional Development:** Teacher quality and professional development systems recognize a teacher's need for deep content and pedagogical knowledge and include a broad set of recruitment, preparation, induction, professional growth, and retention policies and practices that

- include accreditation of teacher education programs, teacher certification and licensure standards and procedures, professional development requirements and opportunities, compensation systems, and local norms and expectations;
- are based on standards for staff development and adult learning and pass quality reviews;
- promote knowledge of adolescent development, varied and effective pedagogy for high school students, and the ability to motivate students and to work with diverse student needs effectively and empathetically;

- increase the abilities of and opportunities for teachers to work together to improve classroom practice and help all students connect information across disciplines and programs, such as Title I, special education, and services for English language learners;
- provide teachers with skills in assessing students and adjusting instruction accordingly;
- are embedded at the school and classroom levels and are connected and offered throughout the school year;
- help teachers develop and build on their classroom and leadership skills and abilities over time and, preferably, in collaboration with other teachers and instructional leaders; and
- promote effective classroom management skills.

**4. Student and Family Supports:** All high school students need guidance and supports that address the whole child, including physical and socio-emotional needs, through positive conditions for learning that

- incorporate formal and informal guidance programs, including peer and professional counseling and mentoring;
- include attendance and behavior monitoring and support systems, such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS);
- support wrap-around and English-language services that extend beyond the classroom;
- foster a positive school climate, including safe schools and respectful environments (e.g., anti-bullying);
- cultivate student voice and leadership in the classroom, school, co-curricular activities, and community;
- promote health and physical education and co-curricular activities;
- support students as they transition into and out of high school;
- provide family-focused services and outreach that engage parents and family members in programs and services; and
- respect and honor the strengths and resources of the student's family and community.

**5. Stakeholder Engagement:** High schools exist in unique social, political, and cultural contexts, and high school improvement efforts should incorporate stakeholder engagement strategies that

- engage the interests, needs, skills, and resources of its multiple stakeholders, such as school staffs, students, parents and family members, guardians, community organizations and members, and business partners;
- foster relationships among high schools, middle-level and elementary schools, and postsecondary education institutions (e.g., dual enrollment agreements), the workforce, families, and communities;
- ensure that all appropriate stakeholders are at the table during critical planning and decision-making activities;
- incorporate multiple communications strategies that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and support two-way communications;
- acknowledge and draw on the strengths of the various stakeholder groups;
- are designed with contingencies of stakeholders in mind; and
- incorporate technologies to more creatively and effectively support stakeholder engagement.

**6. Leadership and Governance:** Promoting and supporting high-quality instructional and organizational leadership at the building and district levels require exercising leadership and approaches to governance that

- provide principals with adequate knowledge, time, and interpersonal skills to work with teachers as they define curricular and instructional goals and develop instructional strategies;
- promote distributed leadership, encouraging multiple roles for teacher leaders and tackling organizational change where necessary;

- incorporate alternative structures to address management, discipline, and other functions of running high schools traditionally performed by principals;
- shift the focus of state and local policymakers and education agency staffs to support comprehensive high school improvement centered on strengthening the instructional core;
- enact enabling policies and codify a vision, a mission, and/or strategic plans for scale-up and sustainability;
- develop strategies and skills to lead and support required organizational change; and
- clarify decision-making authority at all levels and recognize the expectations, requirements, compensation, and recognition of faculty and staff.

**7. Organization and Structure:** Many high school improvement initiatives are enhanced by or may necessitate changes from the organization and structure of traditional, comprehensive high schools toward operational structures that

- support effective teaching and learning and personalization through physical and operational changes, such as the creation of small schools and smaller learning communities, freshman academies, career academies, career-tech high schools, and other alternative structures;
- incorporate alternative time/scheduling approaches, such as block scheduling, year-round schooling, and double dosing, especially in core academic courses;
- provide increased opportunities to learn, such as virtual courses, dual enrollment opportunities, and work-based internships;
- include students with special needs in the general curriculum with access to rigorous content through co-teaching, tiered intervention structures, and adaptive supports;
- support teacher organizational changes beyond traditional departmental structures, such as common planning periods, professional learning communities, and co-teaching; and
- support the difficult process of culture changes as roles, responsibilities, relationships, and patterns of engagement change.

**8. Resources for Sustainability:** Critical to any high school improvement initiatives are the identification and commitment of adequate fiscal and other resources that

- grow both the physical and human capital within the system for implementation and sustainability of high school reforms;
- continuously upgrade facilities, tools, and materials to keep pace with the changing economy, technology, and citizenship expectations;
- adequately staff the initiatives and acknowledge the need for workload equalization and/or reduction;
- provide appropriate time and necessary fiscal support for initiatives to be implemented and take hold;
- continuously develop teacher knowledge and skills to incorporate these changes into their instruction;
- move effective practices to full implementation and scale-up; and
- define priorities and allocate needed resources to sustain them over time.

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