



NEW ENGLAND
SECONDARY SCHOOL
CONSORTIUM

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

2ND EDITION

*An Internationally Benchmarked
Self-Assessment Tool
for Secondary Learning*



PREFACE

September 2016

In the six years that have passed since *Global Best Practices: An Internationally Benchmarked Self-Assessment Tool for Secondary Learning* was first published, we have learned a tremendous amount. In many ways, our belief in the potential of the self-assessment tool has been affirmed: we have learned from countless educators around the world that the tool's core ideas and structure have truly helped schools and districts improve. Additionally, what we know about school improvement has increased dramatically since the original publication of the tool. In light of this knowledge and the spirit of continual improvement, we have updated *Global Best Practices* to reflect advancements in secondary school reform across the globe.

The intent of this revision is to enhance—not replace—the tool's core concepts and benchmarks. Revisions add clarity and specificity to performance-level descriptions, sample strategies, and evidence of improvement and reflect findings from the increased body of international research on secondary school improvement as well as strategies and evidence we have gleaned while supporting hundreds of schools across the country.

Readers will also notice the addition of a fourth strand, *District Leadership*. The strand outlines the roles and responsibilities of high-functioning school boards in one dimension and that of effective central office leadership in another. This new strand is a recognition that school improvement does not exist in a vacuum—the success of secondary school improvement efforts depends on the thoughtfulness and support of not just building-level leaders, but district leaders and local school boards, as well.

We are confident that, in its second edition, *Global Best Practices* will continue to be a go-to, up-to-date self-assessment tool that schools and districts rely on to ensure their improvement efforts are well-informed and result in sustained success for all students.

ABOUT THIS TOOL

Global Best Practices: An Internationally Benchmarked Self-Assessment Tool for Secondary Learning Second Edition is a practical, action-oriented tool for teachers, school administrators, superintendents, school board members, parents, and other stakeholders in a school community. The tool grew out of a recognition that national borders no longer define the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that students need for success, and that secondary schools may need assistance reviewing learning standards, organizational structures, leadership models, teaching strategies, professional development, and student outcomes in relation to research on high-performing educational systems and practices. The first edition of *Global Best Practices* was an initial step toward defining, in detail, the characteristics of effective 21st-century education and applying them to the creation of new models of teaching, learning, and leading in today's secondary schools. Now, *Global Best Practices Second Edition* enhances that definition with findings from the newest research and latest lessons learned from practitioners working in the school-improvement field.

This tool distills some common characteristics of high-performing schools in the United States and abroad, and presents them in a concise, user-friendly format. Rather than give school and district leaders and teachers a simple list of recommendations, the tool offers a practical, step-by-step process that schools can use to assess their relative performance in key areas and shape their school-improvement plans. *Global Best Practices* is intended to make this important research more accessible and useful to the schools and educators across the country.

We will continue to revise and update *Global Best Practices* as new research and strategies emerge, and as we receive feedback from practitioners who are using the tool in their schools. If you have recommendations for strengthening this resource, we strongly encourage you to submit suggestions to gbpfeedback@greatschoolspartnership.org

STRANDS + DIMENSIONS

Global Best Practices is organized into four main *strands*, each with its own subsections, or *dimensions*. The strands identify broad areas of focus that every school community should address in its improvement work, while the numbered dimensions are intended to guide in-depth investigations into specific issues or strategies.

Each dimension includes comprehensive descriptions that define the concept being explored, as well as a selection of sample *strategies* and *evidence* to provide relevant examples of specific policies, practices, and outcomes that schools can consider and reflect on.

TEACHING + LEARNING

- 1.1 Equity
- 1.2 Personalization + Relevance
- 1.3 Academic Expectations
- 1.4 Proficiency-Based Education
- 1.5 Assessment Practices
- 1.6 International + Multicultural Learning
- 1.7 Technology Integration
- 1.8 Learning Communities

ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN

- 2.1 Vision, Mission + Action Plan
- 2.2 School Culture
- 2.3 Multiple Pathways
- 2.4 Transitions
- 2.5 Supports + Extensions
- 2.6 Time + Space
- 2.7 Data Systems + Applications
- 2.8 Continual Improvement

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

- 3.1 Teacher Recruitment + Retention
- 3.2 Administrative Leadership
- 3.3 Shared Leadership
- 3.4 Moral Courage

SCHOOL DISTRICT

- 4.1 School Board
- 4.2 District Administrators

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

Global Best Practices is a comprehensive tool designed to equip educators with a thoughtful process for in-depth professional and institutional self-reflection. While school communities are encouraged to work through all twenty-two dimensions in this resource, it is not necessary to tackle the entire process all at once. School communities may choose a particular strand—such as Teaching + Learning, for example—or a selection of dimensions within or across strands that are relevant to their action plan, and then work through these first. The process can also be broken up over multiple months, semesters, or years. What’s most important is that schools and their districts use this document in ways that work best for them—there is no “right” or “wrong” way to use this tool.

The pages that follow are intentionally structured to be simple, straightforward, and easy to follow. Each numbered dimension offers a detailed profile of a foundational concept or strategy, and a four-step process school communities can follow to investigate and reflect on their performance in a particular area. The instructions below will walk your school through the four steps.

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

In Step 1, school teams review descriptions of the three performance levels. Keep in mind that these performance levels are merely concise profiles of secondary schools and districts at various stages of the school-improvement process. Your school and district may closely resemble one of the descriptions (or it may not), or it could be implementing different elements of all three levels. The purpose of this step is not to force your school or district into any one category, but to provoke thoughtful, self-reflective faculty discussions about where you are on a school-improvement continuum. At this time, the team engaged in the self-assessment can pose questions to each other, take notes, and identify data, documents, or other resources that should be consulted to provide a more detailed picture of what your school and/or district is or is not doing in the dimension.

STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

In Step 2, school teams are provided a list of sample, research-based strategies for school improvement. In some cases, your school and district may already be implementing one or more of the sample strategies; in others, none of the strategies will apply. The list is intended to give school teams a sense of the kinds of organizational or instructional practices that are aligned with the dimension and help to explain it in greater detail. These examples offer a range of potential strategies schools and districts might consider if it is determined that work needs to be undertaken in a particular area. Once the list has been reviewed and discussed (either individually, as a large group, or in multiple small groups), school teams record the specific strategies being implemented to improve student outcomes, instructional quality, or organizational effectiveness in the dimension. We recommend that school teams describe the major features of a strategy (i.e., what makes it effective) when recording it during Step 2. If the space provided is insufficient, teams can record their strategies on a separate sheet of paper.

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

In Step 3, school teams review a list of sample evidence that the work undertaken in the dimension has had a positive impact on the school community or its student performance. It is not enough to have implemented a strategy; schools and districts need to know how strategies are impacting students. Again, your school and district may already be seeing the kinds of results reflected in the list or it may not—the examples are merely intended to give school teams a general sense of the types of evidence, whether quantitative or qualitative, they might want to consider or investigate to assess progress in the dimension. It is important that schools strive to record only objective, empirical data and evidence, not subjective perceptions or wishful thinking. If, for example, the sample evidence refers to student surveys, and your school has not conducted student surveys, participating educators should not fill in the blank space with what they may believe to be the case. Anecdotal evidence may be sufficient if confirmed by multiple individuals and supported by several specific examples. If your school or district does not have any concrete evidence of performance or progress in the dimension, then the next step may be a collective decision to consider collecting and tracking relevant data or anonymous impartial surveys to ascertain actual perceptions. The goal of this step is to determine what your school or district already knows—or needs to find out—about your performance in a given area.

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

In Step 4, school teams reflect on the performance description, strategies, and evidence they have reviewed and discussed, and then place themselves on the continuum of improvement described in the dimension. The score recorded for your school or district should reflect a collective consensus that has resulted from an open, honest, and frank discussion. One option is to bring together a representative cross-section of school and district staff and ask them to complete a self-assessment individually. After all the scores are compiled, determine the mean score and discuss, as a group, why different individuals came up with different scores. Keep in mind that a self-assessment score is not a perfect measure of performance in the dimension, but only a useful guide when engaging in the substantive work of school improvement. If you determine that your school or district is on the lower end of the continuum, don't be disheartened—a low score should not be seen as evidence of failure or a cause for blame, just as a higher score should not become an excuse to rest on your laurels and stop learning and growing as a community of professionals.

A NEW ENGLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL CONSORTIUM RESOURCE

A FEW THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

1 This tool does not provide an exhaustive list of performance evidence or strategies, and the descriptions are only intended to be representative, not all-inclusive. Many examples of effective teaching and learning are not represented in these pages—not because they are unimportant, but because of the limitations of formatting and page space.

2 The sections and dimensions in this tool focus attention on a selection of important concepts and high-impact areas to provide schools with a logical structure and process to follow. Obviously, real schools are not neatly organized into clear categories, educational research is unable to take every influence and factor into account, and systemic school-improvement never unfolds according to a perfectly charted step-by-step process. Schools are complex, interdependent learning communities with unique qualities and characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, teachers and students—which means that no tool or process, no matter how well devised, will be able to anticipate or address every need.

3 *Global Best Practices* is a research-based tool that is guided by an unwavering belief in educational equity—giving every student a fair chance to succeed in life. The tool assumes that every graduate should leave secondary school equipped with the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind needed to succeed in a four-year postsecondary-degree program and in the globally competitive careers of the 21st century. By proceeding on this assumption, the Consortium is not advocating that students be forced to attend college or that enrolling in college is the best choice for every student. Rather, we are advocating that secondary schools apply universally high standards and expectations regardless of a student's background or professed aspirations. Since few adolescents know what they want to do with their lives, and few adults, for that matter, can confidently say that they knew their educational and career path at the age of fourteen, it is our belief that secondary schools should endeavor to expand life opportunities for students, not foreclose on them prematurely.

4 While many educators and policy makers have recently begun emphasizing the importance of international benchmarking, there is still no consensus on the precise definition of this term or how international benchmarking can be effectively conducted in secondary schools. In this tool, both domestic and international research studies were considered, and the descriptions and strategies presented in these pages are an attempt to distill the most relevant findings. Instead of simply importing international research with little thought given to the particular characteristics of American schools, we have made efforts to translate this research in ways that will be familiar to American educators. Just as a literal translation of a foreign-language text will produce a clunky, unreadable document, we have endeavored to convert research findings into logical guidance that is appropriate to American educational contexts. And given the vagaries of cultural context, educational research conducted in the United States will be the most relevant to American schools. For more information about the research that informs this tool, consult the *Global Best Practices* literature review.

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USING THE PRIORITY GUIDE

Once your school has completed a section or worked through all twenty of the individual self-assessments, you can use the priority guide on this page to help determine school-improvement priorities and next steps. The guide is merely a graphical aid that will give schools a visual overview of how each individual self-assessment was scored, which can be helpful in determining priorities—if a school scores lower in one dimension than another, it may indicate a weakness or need that should be addressed. The scoring scale used throughout this tool is not an absolute measure of performance, and school leaders must be thoughtful and judicious when determining school priorities as they consider numerous contextual, political, financial, and personal factors that extend well beyond the purview of this tool.

LOWER PRIORITY ← → HIGHER PRIORITY

TEACHING + LEARNING	5	4	3	2	1	NA
1.1 Equity						
1.2 Personalization + Relevance						
1.3 Academic Expectations						
1.4 Proficiency-Based Education						
1.5 Assessment Practices						
1.6 International + Multicultural Learning						
1.7 Technology Integration						
1.8 Learning Communities						

ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN	5	4	3	2	1	NA
2.1 Vision, Mission + Action Plan						
2.2 School Culture						
2.3 Multiple Pathways						
2.4 Transitions						
2.5 Supports + Extensions						
2.6 Time + Space						
2.7 Data Systems + Applications						
2.8 Continual Improvement						

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	5	4	3	2	1	NA
3.1 Teacher Recruitment + Retention						
3.2 Administrative Leadership						
3.3 Shared Leadership						
3.4 Moral Courage						

SCHOOL DISTRICT	5	4	3	2	1	NA
4.1 School Board						
4.2 District Administrators						

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STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING
<p>Teachers and staff question whether all students can or want to succeed. Academic, social, and aspirational inequities across the student body may have been identified, but no formal or strategic actions have been undertaken to address them. Students performing below grade level typically fail to catch up to their peers. The school's courses, curricula, and instruction do not promote common high expectations or engagement for all students. The academic program is a complex hierarchy of tiered tracks and teachers are not trained in classroom differentiation or other personalization strategies. Student performance and behavioral data are collected and reviewed at the school level, but individual and demographic data are not disaggregated or analyzed to identify disparities in behavior or performance between student subgroups. School discipline structures are punitive rather than strategic or restorative, and consequences interfere with learning time. While all students have access to enriching school activities and co-curricular programs, actual participation patterns reveal that certain demographic groups participate in these programs at significantly lower rates. Some staff members, parents, guardians, and community members display considerable resistance to adopting strategies that would promote a more equitable school structure.</p>	

3	DEVELOPING
<p>There is a disconnect between the school's stated beliefs that all students can succeed and the structures, policies, and practices it has in place. While there may be clearly stated common and rigorous academic expectations for all students, there may be inconsistencies in the manner in which these are applied. Student performance data continues to reveal persistent gaps among demographic groups. The school is beginning to collect and analyze disaggregated performance and behavioral data to identify and address individual student needs on an ongoing basis. The school offers some support opportunities to academically struggling students, but interventions are not systemic or integrated into regular courses. Some academic tracks have been eliminated, but barriers to accessing higher-level courses remain in place. There is inconsistent use of instructional and assessment practices that are personalized, student-centered, and engaging. The school is beginning to reexamine and revise discipline policies and practices to be more restorative and supportive of learning. Inequities across the student body are monitored at least annually. A small number of staff, parents, guardians, and community members remain resistant to adopting strategies that promote greater equity. Participation in enriching school activities and co-curricular programs is relatively consistent across demographic groups. Community input is solicited and reviewed and personalization is considered when programs are developed or refined.</p>	

5	PERFORMING
<p>Teachers hold each other accountable for engaging in ongoing reflection and courageous conversations with colleagues and students about their own practice and beliefs, and acknowledge the role that bias and privilege play in their work. Teachers develop strong, trusting relationships with all students and employ asset-based approaches to teaching and learning. The school community has embraced the belief that all students can succeed, and this stance clearly informs the school's actions, structures, policies, and practices. Every member of the school community is able to recognize and interrupt implicit and explicit prejudicial and harmful language and actions such as racial microaggressions or bullying based on gender identity, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, social class, or disability. Educators help build upon the experiences and strengths each student brings and promote positive self-images and high academic expectations for all learners. They take responsibility for engaging and motivating students. Every student is enrolled in academically rigorous, college-preparatory courses or learning experiences. Discipline systems and structures are restorative and instructive in their approach, leading to an increased ability for students to address differences in positive and healthy ways. The perspectives, experiences, and voices of every demographic group represented in the school community is sought out, included, and incorporated in the development and refinement of programs.</p>	

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STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Enroll all students in untracked, heterogeneously grouped classes, and train all teachers in differentiated and personalized instruction to identify and meet individual learning needs.
- Assign the most effective and experienced teachers to students who are the most in need of support to progress academically.
- Build structures into the school day for intervention, extension, and acceleration.
- Include students and families in the review of discipline data and the refinement of discipline policies. Provide professional development for teachers to increase their understanding of restorative discipline and positive communication.
- Remove barriers (such as prerequisites) that might prevent or discourage students from taking challenging courses (including Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate options) or meeting basic admission requirements for college.
- Create a system of interventions to ensure that struggling students receive the academic and personal support they need to succeed in rigorous courses. (Elements of a system may include a data system to identify, place, and monitor students.)
- Regularly communicate and engage with all parents. Make parent and guardian participation at school events feasible by mitigating common barriers to attendance: vary meeting times and locations, provide live translation, serve food, and offer transportation and childcare as needed.
- Establish a school-wide system for monitoring student performance and socialization issues.
- Have guidance counselors work closely with teachers to provide practical and timely college and career guidance to all students.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- No significant achievement or aspiration gaps exist among students from different cultural, racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, linguistic, or special-needs backgrounds.
- Underperforming ninth-grade students are performing at or above grade level by the end of tenth grade.
- Student participation in electives, higher-level courses, and co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities is consistent across all student subgroups.
- College-enrollment rates are high, even among first-generation students from families with no college-going history.
- No gaps exist among demographic groups in terms of attendance, suspension, detention, or retention.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING
<p>Teachers use a limited repertoire of instructional strategies. Curriculum design and lesson planning reflect whole-group learning targets with little personalization or differentiation. The school is not organized to provide personalized learning or mitigate performance gaps, and teachers do not have timely access to data on individual student learning needs or progress. In-depth inquiry, student collaboration, and the application of real-world skills are absent from most courses and lessons.</p>	

3	DEVELOPING
<p>The school's vision and mission have been revised to reflect a school-wide commitment to serving all students. Teachers are actively learning about personalization and differentiation. Most teachers have received professional development and support for using formative assessments, educational technologies, and student-centered strategies that can help identify student needs and increase academic personalization. Courses are still fairly traditional, classroom-based experiences, but teachers are beginning to use instructional practices proven to engage diverse types of learners. The school has implemented an advisory structure for students, but both students and teachers report that the time is not being used effectively. Though teachers recognize the importance of communicating with parents, few structures are in place to help them contact parents efficiently and frequently.</p>	

5	PERFORMING
<p>The faculty has made a bold public commitment to creating a student-centered culture and learning environment, and personalized instructional strategies designed to meet the intellectual, developmental, social, and emotional needs of every student reflect this commitment. Teachers continually review student data to diagnose learning needs and improve instructional practice. The school has implemented systems that help teachers get to know their students well, such as advisories. The school provides a variety of curriculum options, universal access to digital technologies, and multiple learning pathways both within and outside of the classroom. Students take a proactive role in designing their own education and planning for future learning. By using personal learning plans, portfolios, rubrics, online course-management tools, or other strategies, teachers help students manage their own educational experience and apply their knowledge and skills. Teachers and school leaders regularly communicate with parents, encourage their involvement in the academic life of their children, and use Web-based tools to ensure that parents are knowledgeable about their children's academic progress. Curriculum is culturally and socially relevant, and classroom instruction emphasizes real-world concepts and applications, including hands-on learning, problem solving, research, technological literacy, and current national and international issues.</p>	

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STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Ensure that all courses, syllabi, lessons, and instructional strategies are developmentally appropriate, culturally and socially relevant, and informed by educational and cognitive research.
- Engage all students in co-designing challenging, long-term projects that culminate in a public exhibition and provide opportunities to demonstrate mastery of content and 21st century skills. (In addition to more traditional research and writing projects, these can include community-based learning, service learning, internships, and other alternative-learning options.)
- Provide multiple pathways for students to meet learning standards, including extended learning opportunities (internships, community-based volunteerism, apprenticeships, etc.), online courses, and dual-enrollment experiences.
- Disaggregate and analyze multiple sources of data to determine the needs of individual students and student subgroups.
- Utilize data to provide timely student feedback and modify instructional practices.
- Conduct classroom observations on an ongoing basis and provide timely and specific feedback about implementation of instruction, curriculum, and assessment.
- Provide professional development for all teachers to increase their collective capacity in differentiating instruction and personalizing learning.
- Regularly analyze up-to-date information about the academic performance and socialization of individual students.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Student surveys and comments indicate a high degree of academic engagement, satisfaction with their teachers, and a strong desire to continue learning beyond high school.
- A significant percentage of the student body participates in internships, volunteerism, and other community-based learning opportunities, and participation rates are consistent across all student subgroups.
- Absences, expulsions, behavioral issues, and dropout rates are declining.
- Course failures during the ninth and tenth grades have declined significantly.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING
<p>Students are often engaged in time-consuming, discrete skill-based activities that do not reach the level of rigor associated with the course's stated learning standards (if these in fact exist). Course-enrollment patterns reveal that low-achieving students from various demographic groups tend to be enrolled in less-challenging courses that are taught by new or less-qualified teachers. Teachers infrequently engage students in long-term projects, complex problem solving, and other tasks that require the application of knowledge and higher-level reasoning skills. Remedial courses deliver less-rigorous instruction at a slower pace, and underperforming students are not always given the additional time they need to catch up to their peers. Under-performing students, including special-education students, are often separated from their peers, reinforcing negative self-images of academic or personal potential.</p>	

3	DEVELOPING
<p>Most students are enrolled in college-preparatory courses, and the lowest academic tracks have been eliminated. Prerequisites for higher-level courses, including honors, Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and dual-enrollment courses, have been removed so that any student can access challenging learning experiences regardless of past academic performance. Some teachers are collaborating to develop learning experiences and courses that lead to opportunities for students to demonstrate their ability to meet the school's college- and career-ready expectations that explore concepts from multiple perspectives. Student data are analyzed to identify underachieving students, and teachers are investigating and using intervention strategies focused on learning acceleration, but these support strategies are not yet integrated across the school community. Students are challenged to achieve at high academic levels, but may not be systematically supported in the development of academic behaviors.</p>	

5	PERFORMING
<p>All students access and participate in rigorous college preparatory courses. The administration and faculty believe all students can achieve the learning standards, and teachers collaborate to foster cross-curricular connections. Teachers take responsibility for building relationships with and challenging every student and see their role as instrumental in engaging and motivating students. Students are given time to investigate ideas in depth, and engage in performance-based demonstrations that blend foundational knowledge and complex thinking to support the transfer of learning. Student learning is measured against agreed-upon standards and scoring guides, rather than against peer performance. Students exercise voice and choice as they work independently and collaboratively to learn and demonstrate knowledge and skills at high levels. A variety of instructional strategies and consistent feedback allow students to develop academic behaviors such as how to self-regulate, persevere, and self-monitor.</p>	

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Establish clear college- and career-ready graduation standards for all students.
- Develop common language and definitions around academic rigor and expected levels of performance.
- Collaboratively review student work samples and agree upon exemplars that illustrate quality learning. Share these exemplars with students so that they have a clear understanding of expectations.
- Engage staff in cross-disciplinary discussions about instructional strategies related to learning habits and how they provide opportunities for feedback and reflection.
- Examine all course sequences to ensure that they lead to mastery of the learning standards.
- Engage all students in long-term, in-depth lessons and projects, and engage community mentors and local experts in supporting this work.
- Treat all students as if they are college-bound: require every student to take a nationally recognized college-entrance exam (SAT, ACT), apply to at least one postsecondary-degree program, and complete the Common Application for Undergraduate Admission and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
- Offer a college-planning program for parents that begins in the ninth grade, and provide a variety of workshops and assistance strategies to ensure all families, especially those of first-generation college students, have the information and guidance they need to encourage, support, and finance their children's postsecondary education.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Scores on standardized tests and local assessments are rising, particularly among traditionally underperforming student subgroups.
- The number of first-generation and low-income students enrolling in and completing postsecondary-degree programs has increased.
- The percentage of graduates needing remedial coursework in college has decreased.
- A high percentage of students graduate with a strong set of demonstrated academic and real-world skills, as evidenced by college acceptances, scholarships, grant awards, community-service awards, internship offers, or other recognitions and opportunities that are a direct extension of their high school work.
- Results of student feedback surveys show that students feel challenged, engaged, supported, and connected to their teachers.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING
<p>Some efforts have been made to align coursework with college- and career-ready learning standards, but in practice many teachers continue to use lessons that are unaligned or outdated. The school uses a standardized credit system based on seat time, letter grades, number averaging, and other traditional practices to measure academic progress and determine readiness for graduation. There is a great deal of variation from classroom to classroom in grading practices. Reporting practices do not provide clear information about how students are performing against the school's standards or indicate what students have learned. Students are often unaware of learning expectations for courses and lessons, and they rarely receive descriptive feedback on assignments. High-stakes external assessments often unilaterally drive instruction and lesson design. There is no consensus across the school and the district regarding what all students should learn and be able to demonstrate.</p>	

3	DEVELOPING
<p>School-wide curricula and instruction have been aligned with common learning standards, but this effort has not been systematic or systemic. District and school leaders have engaged in conversations about adopting a standards-based system that leads to college- and career-readiness for all students. The principal and teacher-leaders have examined schools that are using effective proficiency-based practices. Some common scoring criteria have been developed to enhance the consistency of grading and reporting, but this practice has not been embraced by all teachers or institutionalized school-wide. Teachers use multiple formative assessment strategies in the classroom aligned with standards, and academic support is available to struggling students. Few opportunities exist for students to demonstrate learning in different ways. In some cases, learning expectations remain unclear and many students are still unaware of their own learning strengths and weaknesses or which learning standards teachers are addressing.</p>	

5	PERFORMING
<p>The school and district have publicly committed to becoming a standards-based learning community, and graduation policy has been modified to require all students to demonstrate achievement of learning expectations to ensure college and career readiness before receiving a diploma. The faculty has prioritized learning standards so that each learner demonstrates the most essential cross-curricular and discipline content, skills, as well as habits of work. The grading and reporting system aligns with these standards and distinguishes content knowledge and skills from habits of work. All teachers use common scoring criteria that provide detailed descriptions of learning standards at each expected level of performance. Assessments are aligned to learning standards and results are used to inform instructional practice and identify students' levels of performance against these standards. Students receive ongoing, specific feedback related to their progress toward achieving the learning standards. Alternative learning experiences are provided to all students so they have enough time and support to learn and demonstrate achievement consistent with the learning standards. Students who have met the learning standards have access to extensions or opportunities to move on to another learning experience.</p>	

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Use curriculum mapping to align coursework not only with state standards, but also with companion standards that address local needs, regional issues, college readiness, and preparation for globally competitive 21st century careers. Share completed curriculum maps and other course materials online.
- Develop a communication and engagement strategy to inform family members about proficiency-based learning systems and collaborate with them in the design, implementation, and refinement of the proficiency-based learning system in your school or district.
- Engage the entire faculty in collaboratively creating and regularly refining common scoring criteria and assessments that promote greater coherence and comparability across grade levels and courses.
- Use school-wide reporting practices and an online student-information system to provide updated and detailed information about student progress and learning.
- Develop materials to accompany your school profile that explain your proficiency-based reporting system so that it can be readily translated by admissions personnel to meet college-application requirements.
- Engage all schools in ongoing conversations about proficiency-based grading practices to ensure consistency in grading across the district.
- Utilize classroom observation data to monitor fidelity of implementation and provide feedback to ensure practices are adjusted accordingly.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Student scores on both locally developed assessments and standardized tests are rising among all student groups and achievement gaps are decreasing.
- College-remediation rates among recent graduates are low and college-persistence rates are high or rising.
- When asked, students are able to describe what they are learning, what their strengths are, and how they address their learning gaps.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING
<p>The school does not have a set of common scoring criteria and teachers employ rubrics that are written in isolation. The school primarily uses a “one-size-fits-all” approach to assessment, and most assessments employ fixed- response, selected-response, and multiple-choice questions that primarily measure recall. The assessment literacy of teachers is limited, and many are unaware of research-based assessment strategies or the impact that varied assessment strategies can have on student learning. When students struggle to demonstrate what they have learned, assessment practices seldom change when students are retested. Teacher feedback often lacks clear guidance that will help students recognize learning needs and progress toward proficiency. Student learning is assessed infrequently, and assessment data are rarely used to modify instructional strategies.</p>	

3	DEVELOPING
<p>Teachers have collaborated to write scoring criteria aligned with standards that are associated with particular assessment tasks. More teachers are employing multiple assessment strategies in the classroom, but these practices are unevenly applied across the school and only occasionally result in personalized instructional modifications. Faculties are supported in increasing their understanding of assessment design and in matching assessments to specified learning goals. The school has started using more innovative assessment strategies— including exhibitions and portfolios—but many student projects display a lack of academic rigor, sophistication, or intellectual curiosity. The school has provided a few professional development opportunities to improve faculty understanding of effective assessment design and how assessment strategies can also be a learning tool for teachers and students. Results from formative assessments are being reviewed and analyzed sporadically to inform instructional practices (including in-class grouping and re-grouping). Oral and written feedback is specific and aligned with learning expectations.</p>	

5	PERFORMING
<p>Teachers have developed and use common, task-neutral scoring criteria to assess evidence of student learning. The teaching faculty understands assessment as a critical component of the learning process. The school has a system of curriculum-embedded assessments that are aligned with standards and designed to capture a range of student learning. Teachers have received training in using assessments to identify and respond to student learning needs and are skilled in the use of diagnostic assessment. Teachers use formative, performance-based assessment strategies to identify student needs. Teachers modify instruction and coordinate support before students fall behind. Performance assessments and demonstrations of learning are challenging, relevant, and drawn from real-life situations. Learning expectations are communicated to all students at the beginning of courses and lessons, and students understand the assessment methods used by teachers. The feedback students receive informs their selection of learning strategies as well as the teacher’s adjustment of instruction, supports, and interventions. Teachers provide specific, timely, and actionable oral and written feedback to students on their learning strengths and weaknesses. Students have ample opportunity to exhibit learning using multiple approaches. Equitable assessment practices ensure that all students have the time and support they need to demonstrate proficiency against the same standards and provide teachers with the data they need to understand their students’ learning needs.</p>	

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school’s performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Provide professional development that is focused on building assessment literacy among teachers.
- Utilize professional learning groups to create opportunities for teachers to research and apply proven assessment strategies and create, tune, and score common assessments together. Use results to collaboratively refine and adjust instruction, assessments, interventions and curriculum decisions.
- Employ multiple assessment strategies and sources of evidence throughout the school year, including performance-based assessments, selected and constructed responses, questioning strategies, teacher observation, personal communication, self-assessments, student portfolios, and public exhibitions of student work. Based on these assessments, provide meaningful, actionable feedback to students.
- Ensure that formative and summative performance-based assessments utilize open-ended questions and multi-step problem solving that require students to analyze problems, apply knowledge, think critically, and write extensively.
- Design assessment tasks so that all students have the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency.
- Assess, monitor, and report academic progress and achievement separately from work habits, character traits, and behaviors.
- Encourage students to regularly assess their own learning and the learning of their peers against publicly shared scoring criteria to help them determine what they have learned and how they learned it.
- Employ grading practices that do not penalize students for early learning struggles during the formative assessment phase.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- The administrative team and faculty can cite critical student-performance data by content area, grade level, and student subgroup.
- There are no significant performance gaps among demographic subgroups.
- Student exhibitions evidence high levels of creativity, innovation, intellectual sophistication, and applied skills.
- All parents are informed about their child's academic progress and the school works to help them understand the standards and methods of assessing mastery of standards.
- Students can explain how assessments are connected to learning expectations.
- Parent-teacher conferences focus on assessment performance not just on work habits and behaviors.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING	3	DEVELOPING	5	PERFORMING
<p>Some teachers rely on outdated textbooks and learning materials that primarily espouse a Eurocentric point of view. The school only offers instruction in one or two European languages, and there are no alternative options for students interested in learning other world languages. History and social science courses focus primarily on the American experience and rarely explore the emerging global interconnectedness of societies and cultures. The school’s vision and mission do not address international learning or multicultural awareness. Students and teachers have reported incidences of racial, ethnic, and religious slurs being used during or outside of school. English-language learners spend most of the day in separate classes, and students, parents, and community members from other countries are rarely invited to share their background and experiences with students.</p>		<p>School leaders and teachers recognize the importance of exposing students to global issues and perspectives, and the school’s action plan outlines specific objectives for expanding international-learning opportunities for students. The school has added new world-language courses and is working to forge partnerships with regional high schools and local colleges to enhance world-language opportunities. The school offers programs designed to increase multicultural understanding among staff and students, but these opportunities are often elective, offered after normal school hours, or unconnected to curriculum and instruction. Teachers make efforts to recognize and honor the cultural diversity of their students, and lessons are often modified to include material relevant to the diverse social and cultural backgrounds represented in the class. ELL students, immigrant families, well-traveled students, and leaders of local cultural institutions are occasionally invited to present their experiences in classes. Students increasingly participate in exchange programs, travel-abroad opportunities, volunteerism, internships, leadership programs, and other opportunities that expose them to different societies and cultures.</p>		<p>Enhancing student understanding of international issues and world cultures is not only an explicitly stated goal of the school, but school leaders and staff have made a concerted effort to incorporate international knowledge, cultural diversity, and global values into all programs and learning opportunities. Students have access to a variety of world-language learning options and experiences. International issues and perspectives are emphasized across the content areas and embedded in the curriculum and learning materials, particularly in world history, geography, anthropology, literature, art, culture, economics, politics, and current-event lessons. Humanities, history, and social studies courses go beyond “flags, fun, food, and festivals” to explore the global interconnectedness and interdependence of societies, cultures, and economies. Learning opportunities designed to foster a greater understanding of diverse cultures and belief systems are integrated into the school day and co-curricular programs.</p>	

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school’s performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Recognize culturally important themes, particularly those that reflect the diversity and interests of the student body.
- Increase world-language course offerings, and coordinate with other schools, colleges, or cultural institutions in the region to share world-language educators and resources, or to provide online and distance-learning courses in languages for which a full-time hire may be impractical or infeasible.
- Emphasize challenging issues with global ramifications in science courses, such as climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem loss, fisheries depletion, deforestation, and food and water shortages.
- Make use of visiting lecturers, service-learning projects, sister-school programs, student and faculty exchange programs, and virtual exchange programs to expose students to different cultures, increase multicultural understanding among students, and internationalize curriculum and instruction.
- Ensure that courses and co-curricular programs address problems and challenges that result from racism, discrimination, ethnic conflict, and religious intolerance.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Provide opportunities for all students to interact with students from other schools, states, and countries.
- The number of students enrolling in and passing non-traditional Advanced Placement world-language courses (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Hebrew, and Arabic) has increased.
- The engagement, performance, and co-curricular participation of the school's English-language learners have increased significantly, as has participation in school activities among immigrant or minority families.
- There is no evidence of student violence, bullying, or behavioral issues stemming from racial, ethnic, cultural, or socioeconomic differences among students.
- Student coursework and assessments demonstrate a strong understanding of local, national, and global issues.
- Voices and experiences of diverse community members are integrated into curricula.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING
<p>Access to computers and online resources is limited due to scheduling issues, and inadequate supply of computers, outdated hardware and software, or a lack of skilled technical support. The school is not wireless and persistent technical issues occasionally shut down or disable the network. The faculty does not use common online applications to plan, organize, and manage courses, or to track student data related to lessons, performance, and demographics. The school does not provide professional development in the use of new digital learning technologies, and some teachers remain uncomfortable using digital learning applications in the classroom. The school does not have a long-range technology plan. Technology is generally unaligned with expectations, is misused by students, or serves as a distraction.</p>	

3	DEVELOPING
<p>The school has a computer lab or mobile station equipped with new computers, a variety of learning software, and a full-time learning-technology specialist, but an insufficient supply of computers, scheduling issues, and other minor problems limit teacher and student access to technology. A secure, stable network provides reliable wireless connectivity throughout the school facility. Teachers are growing increasingly skilled in using digital tools and applications, but these practices are often limited to online researching, word processing, emailing, and other basic strategies. A few teachers in the school are highly skilled in using technology to increase student engagement and performance, but the school does not provide structured opportunities for advanced practitioners to model instruction or share best practices with their colleagues. Most students take at least one general course in digital and online literacy prior to graduation, but the school does not offer courses in practical technology skills—such as coding, digital photography, or graphic design—and computer skills are only occasionally integrated into regular courses. Online courses are available and a number of students access them. Protocols are in place to determine the extent to which technology is aligned with standards and supportive of student learning.</p>	

5	PERFORMING
<p>Technology use across the school is transformative, changing the way that teachers and students teach and learn. The school is a one-to-one learning environment, and each student has a laptop computer that can be used throughout the school day and after school hours. Student learning extends beyond the classroom to include real-world tasks or communication with experts outside of the school. Teachers take advantage of course-management software, a common student-information system, open-source applications, and other digital tools to facilitate planning, instruction, assessment, and communication. The faculty promotes and models digital citizenship and online responsibility, including respect for intellectual property, appropriate documentation of online sources, and ethical conduct and safety in online social interactions. Learning technologies and online resources are used on a daily basis in most courses, and every teacher has developed strategies to integrate digital tools into their pedagogy. Technology is used to engage students in sophisticated knowledge construction, complex problem solving, peer collaboration, and the virtual exploration of global issues, and every student is required to demonstrate a high level of technological literacy prior to graduation. A strategic, long-range technology plan takes into account emerging needs and increases technology resources over time. Online courses are available and a significant number of students access them. Protocols are in place to ensure that the use of technology is aligned with standards and supportive of student learning.</p>	

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STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Post all syllabi, assignments, and course materials online.
- Require students to maintain online portfolios of their work and use course-management software to stay informed about their courses and to communicate electronically with teachers and peers.
- Encourage teachers to create and publish online videos, podcasts, slideshows, blogs, and other digital resources that help students contextualize content, apply knowledge, and learn more effectively.
- Use videoconferencing, chatting, social-networking sites, and other online communication technologies to create virtual-exchange experiences that expose students to experts and peers across the country and around the world.
- Create an online “repository of best practices” to facilitate the sharing of professional literature, effective lessons, instructional materials, and teaching strategies across content areas and grade levels.
- Develop a coherent policy on the use of information technology and share it with teachers and students.
- Provide guidance to parents and families on technologies to support their student’s learning and growth.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Student exhibitions display a sophisticated understanding of new learning technologies (i.e., films, musical compositions, science experiments.)
- Students regularly participate in technology-based projects outside the classroom, including high-tech internships, online entrepreneurship, and technical-support services for the school community and local organizations.
- Students use technology to analyze data, distinguish important information, show cause and effect, create mathematical or graphic models, or present abstract concepts in a variety of ways.
- Teachers have an in-depth understanding of student learning due to the use of digital applications that allow them to disaggregate data and informs their communications with students and parents.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING
<p>Teaching practice is largely individualistic and uninformed by current research, collegial feedback, formative assessments, or student data. Classroom doors are generally closed and faculty members rarely observe one another teaching or have focused discussions about specific instructional strategies or student needs. The administrative team is largely focused on managerial responsibilities, and only limited time is devoted to investigating proven best practices, analyzing student-performance trends, and participating in professional learning. School policies do not explicitly support ongoing professional learning, and teacher schedules and workloads do not provide time for collaborative work and study. Some tensions among the faculty may go unresolved for long periods of time.</p>	

3	DEVELOPING
<p>Teacher interactions indicate that there is a growing sense of trust, appreciation, and mutual respect for one another's contributions to the school community. Several teachers have been trained to facilitate professional sharing among teachers, and a significant percentage of the teaching faculty meets every month to discuss student work and instructional strategies. The leadership team has taken steps to stay informed about current research, analyze student data, distribute best-practice literature to the faculty, and support the ongoing professional learning of every teacher. Time for collaborative preparation and planning is provided to teachers during the school day, but this time is often unstructured, loosely facilitated, or unproductive in terms of improving classroom instruction across the school. It is not always clear to teachers how the various initiatives and professional development opportunities connect to each other or how the school's professional learning groups support these efforts.</p>	

5	PERFORMING
<p>School leaders work to foster an environment in which faculty interactions are characterized by the kind of collegiality, trust, and respect that result from strong personal relationships, professionalism, and mutual appreciation. Teachers regularly share their own work and observe one another's practice, providing constructive feedback that is based on a shared understanding of effective teaching, learning goals, and student needs. The faculty has developed a "shared language" for discussing instruction, assessment, and other critical elements of teaching and learning. All teachers are involved in consistent, group-based professional conversations that are well established, organized, skillfully facilitated, and goal-driven. These conversations and all other professional development opportunities are clearly aligned with the school's coherent and comprehensive action plan. Group agendas and conversations focus on addressing the specific tasks and strategies of student-centered, inquiry-based teaching and assessment. Faculty meetings are characterized by enthusiasm, intellectual curiosity, and a sense of collective responsibility for improving student learning and outcomes for all students. Throughout the school, teacher expertise is recognized and teachers have the autonomy to create original learning experiences for their students within a set of common learning expectations. Professional learning groups are used to foster an environment where teachers are encouraged to try new approaches and errors are regarded as learning opportunities.</p>	

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Create a professional development program that balances graduate courses, external workshops, conferences, and school visits with job-embedded professional learning, including mentoring, instructional coaching, classroom observation, data analysis, and professional learning groups that aim to enhance both pedagogical and content area expertise.
- Create a centralized online repository of research, best-practice literature, rubrics, scoring guides, curriculum maps, and effective lesson plans that can facilitate sharing and ongoing professional learning.
- Develop a “shared language” among the faculty for discussing instruction, assessment, and other essential elements of teaching and learning.
- Require all educators to participate in a structured professional learning group that meets at least once a month for two hours or longer. Ensure that these sessions are well facilitated and follow a purposeful agenda focused on instructional improvement and student performance.
- Create time in the schedule for professional learning groups to meet regularly during the school day.
- Regularly use protocols to examine student work and discuss how and why students do or do not acquire new knowledge and skills.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Interdisciplinary collaboration and team teaching are common, and teachers are knowledgeable about the learning expectations of their colleagues’ content areas and the instructional practices they use.
- The school has lower dropout rates, reduced absenteeism, and fewer behavioral issues.
- Teachers report a more positive view of their students’ abilities, more enthusiasm for teaching, more rewarding interactions with colleagues, and a stronger desire to continue learning and developing their own skills.
- Teachers are not only attending more conferences and other local or national learning opportunities, but they are also submitting proposals to lead presentations or facilitate workshops.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING
<p>The school has a public vision and mission, but these statements have not been reviewed for many years and no longer reflect the needs of the current student body or the values and contributions of the current staff. The school's improvement plan does not represent a collective commitment or reflect the expressed values of the school community. State and federal funds for school improvement and professional development often go underutilized or unused. Many major decisions appear to contradict the school's mission statement, but faculty, students, and parents rarely discuss these inconsistencies. Teaching, assessment, and reporting practices are inconsistent across grade levels, departments, and classrooms.</p>

3 DEVELOPING
<p>The school has collaboratively developed a public vision and mission that reflects the contributions and values of diverse stakeholders in the school community, although some staff members and parents remain critical of the school's new direction. Despite broad-based participation in its development, the action plan tends to reflect the personal interests and desires of a few strong voices. School leaders have discussed the action plan with all staff members and some community leaders. These communication efforts have increased support among parents, the public, and the local media. The principal has presented the school's action plan to the school board and received general approval of its goals and strategies. Major decisions are increasingly aligned with the school's vision, mission, and action plan, and instructional practices are being modified to reflect the school's stated goals and values.</p>

5 PERFORMING
<p>In collaboration with staff, students, parents, community members, and local policy makers, the school has created a bold, student-centered, long-term vision for ongoing school improvement and professional growth. The mission and vision statements express a unified value system that is based on personalizing teaching and learning, promoting common high expectations, cultivating student aspirations and ambitions, and nurturing the holistic development and wellness of every student. The vision and mission statements are clear, understandable, and powerful, and exemplify the shared principles and ideals of the school community. These statements have been formally endorsed by the school board, local policy makers, and business and community leaders. The vision and mission are used to guide all budgetary, staffing, and instructional decisions, and to shape professional development opportunities and annual action plans. The coherence among these parts allows for a singular focus on student learning. The action plan and all relevant documents are publicly available online, and school and community stakeholders are familiar with its major goals and strategies. The school has established a process for allowing stakeholders to continually analyze and contribute to the mission, vision, and action plan.</p>

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STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Invite a broad representation of school and community stakeholders to collectively develop a vision and mission that are ambitious but feasible, and based on proven, research-based strategies.
- Have school leaders and teachers, in collaboration with a school coach or colleagues from other schools, meet for several days during the summer to revise the school's action plan for the coming year based on an extensive review of quantitative and qualitative data from the previous year.
- Utilize online applications to track progress on action-plan objectives and to enhance transparency, accountability, and communication among staff members involved in implementing the action plan.
- Align supervision, evaluation, professional development, and hiring procedures with the school's vision, mission, and school-improvement plan.
- Establish trusting relationships with local editors, journalists, and producers, and proactively communicate with the media when either difficult issues or success stories arise.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- All students demonstrate consistently high achievement regardless of their gender, cultural background, socioeconomic status, or special needs.
- The community influences and embraces the school's mission, values, and action plan, as evidenced in surveys of parents and other stakeholders.
- Local media outlets regularly run stories on the school's improvement work and profile student success stories.
- The school board, state representatives, and business and community leaders are informed about the school and publicly supportive of its goals.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING	3 DEVELOPING	5 PERFORMING
<p>Some efforts have been made by school leaders to energize the staff, but general morale and motivation remain low. Adult interactions occasionally lapse into complaints, gossip, and other negative commentary about students, colleagues, or the school itself. Teachers unevenly enforce rules about student behavior, and persistent classroom-management issues too often become the focus of teacher attention and disrupt learning for students. Students have few opportunities to participate in school governance, and parents and community members infrequently or unevenly participate in school programs and events. Exclusionary cliques are common across the student body. Staff, students, and parents occasionally report incidences of bullying and derogatory language by students. The school lacks a clear structure or process to engage students, parents, and staff in decision making.</p>	<p>The school has formal procedures that allow students, staff, and parents to voice concerns directly to the administrative and leadership teams. Innovation and risk-taking by teachers are encouraged although structures and systems interrupt or stall implementation of changes. Improved collegial relationships are having a noticeable impact on staff motivation and morale, but that has not yet translated to improvement in student outcomes. The community states a belief in having a growth mindset though attitudes, structures, policies and procedures may contradict that belief. Administrators and teachers have developed a communication plan that is helping to keep parents and community members informed about the school. Student behavioral issues tend to be minor, and there is little evidence of bullying or harassment by students. A small handful of students and parents tend to assume leadership roles.</p>	<p>The school has formal structures and opportunities to engage and fully include staff, students, and parents in decision-making. Adults in the school do not make unconstructive critical statements about students, colleagues, or the school itself. School leaders and faculty encourage innovation, risk-taking, and professionalism in the classroom, and effective teaching is recognized and rewarded. The community demonstrates a belief in growth mindset through attitudes, structures, policies and procedures. Students feel a sense of pride in their school and ownership over their learning. Students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds are active in school governance and serve as leaders in co-curricular and extracurricular activities. Administrators and faculty actively attempt to resolve any tensions or problems that may arise. Co-curricular programs and course-embedded lessons address diversity awareness and the importance of cultural sensitivity, and students are encouraged to explore and question their own beliefs about race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and disability. School leaders and staff do not tolerate hurtful language, prejudicial behavior, or the perpetuation of false stereotypes about other people and cultures. Successes both in and outside of the classroom are regularly and publicly celebrated.</p>

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Ensure that all teachers intentionally model positive behaviors and actively promote positive student self-images of academic ability, future aspirations, and personal potential in the classroom.
- Hold open community forums in which school leaders candidly discuss school matters, and in which stakeholders are encouraged to speak up and raise concerns.
- Establish decision-making committees with representation from all stakeholder groups—staff, students, parents, and community members—for important decisions.
- Use agendas, protocols, norms, and other strategies to ensure that staff meetings are well organized, efficiently run, and focused on improving instructional quality, collegial relationships, and the student experience—not just administrative issues.
- Empower student government organizations to take ownership of important decisions and participate in school-wide decision-making committees.
- Regularly celebrate school and district accomplishments at public events, in school newsletters, or in local media.
- Administer surveys about school culture and engagement to various constituent groups at least yearly.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Teachers, students, and parents are informed about school plans and activities, and student and parent participation in school decisions and activities is increasing.
- Few to no instances of bullying are reported.
- Student survey data show that students feel safe at school.
- More students are taking advantage of additional support opportunities before, during, and after the school day.
- Discipline referrals have decreased and attendance rates are above 95%.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING	3 DEVELOPING	5 PERFORMING
<p>The curriculum is a series of classroom-based courses culminating in a high school diploma, and students infrequently engage in learning experiences outside the classroom. Interdisciplinary collaboration is rare, and teachers infrequently use strategies to make content more relevant or to connect students with local issues, leaders, organizations, and opportunities. Student choice is primarily limited to course selection, and most courses do not integrate personalization strategies that address different learning styles and needs. The school has not taken steps to develop partnerships with local businesses or collegiate institutions, and it does not have established internship or early college programs. Technical education is entirely separate from the academic program. Students are given few opportunities to earn academic credit outside of classroom-based courses.</p>	<p>Multiple course options are available, although course content and sequences are largely predetermined and learning expectations are applied unevenly. Most courses are still taught in traditional classrooms, but teachers are gradually redefining their conceptions of what an effective learning environment can or should be. Online credit-recovery courses provide students who have failed one or more courses with alternative learning options that allow them to catch up to their peers and graduate on time. The school is responsive when students propose alternative pathways to meeting graduation requirements, but the faculty has not developed a system to encourage innovative, student-designed projects. Teachers in the academic program are beginning to collaborate with educators from the local technical program, and several integrated courses expose students to rigorous academic content while giving them the opportunity to develop applied skills. Partnerships with local business and collegiate institutions have led to the development of new internship and early college programs, but only a small number of students are taking advantage of these opportunities.</p>	<p>The school and faculty have adopted a general pedagogical philosophy that teaching strategies, learning environments, and time can be variable, but learning standards will remain constant. The school provides a variety of learning pathways to every student—including classroom-embedded, co-curricular, and outside-of-school pathways—that encourage multiple learning strategies and accommodate developmental needs while applying the same universally high academic expectations. Students are encouraged to take an active role in planning their own education, and opportunities to propose and co-design additional projects or courses of study are provided. Access to and participation in alternative learning options is consistent across all student subgroups, and all pathways prepare students for success in college and globally competitive modern careers. The school's career and technical education program is aligned with and integrated into the school's academic program, and students are encouraged to select courses from both programs. Vibrant internship and dual-enrollment programs enroll a significant percentage of the student body. A variety of academic options and graduation pathways provide opportunities for students to participate in the design of their own personalized educational experiences.</p>

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Develop strategic partnerships to provide intellectually rigorous courses and programs that prepare students for college and technology-driven, 21st-century workplaces (e.g., career and technical centers, community-based education programs, institutions of higher education, etc.).
- Forge partnerships with local or state colleges and universities to develop dual-enrollment programs for eleventh- and twelfth-grade students.
- Create curriculum-integrated, career-based programs—such as apprenticeships, internships, and job-shadowing—that enhance student understanding of career paths and strengthen school, community, and local business connections. Provide flexibility within the school schedule to facilitate participation in these programs.
- Develop new graduation policies and requirements that provide more flexibility in meeting learning standards and that promote more varied learning experiences for all students (e.g., a policy that requires students to complete a service-learning project before graduation).
- Monitor and track student engagement and dropout rates, and interview dropouts to determine the primary reasons why they left school.
- Develop alternative programs and adult-education pathways for dropouts to earn a high school diploma.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Attendance, graduation, college-enrollment, and internship-participation rates have increased dramatically, and dropout rates are low and decreasing.
- A broad variety of students—including high- and low-performing students, high- and low-income students, and male and female students—take advantage of the school’s career and technical programs.
- A significant number of students are graduating with transferable college credits and postsecondary certifications.
- Follow-up surveys indicate that dropouts have returned to school or completed an adult-education program.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING	3 DEVELOPING	5 PERFORMING
<p>Teachers have little information about the learning needs of incoming students, and the school has not developed a strategy for keeping parents informed about and involved in their children’s education. Teachers rarely communicate student-learning needs across grade levels and the progression of academic expectations is not always articulated or aligned from one grade to the next. The school does not receive student data from its sending schools. Although individual teachers take a personal interest in their students’ development, there is no systemic strategy for helping teachers identify student needs as they transition into high school or progress from grade to grade. The school has little information on student outcomes following graduation, such as data on college enrollment, remediation, and persistence rates.</p>	<p>Better communication between sending and receiving schools is beginning to occur, but these strategies tend to focus on administrative or logistical issues, not data exchange or student needs. The learning expectations in most courses and other learning pathways are aligned with the school’s college-and career-ready graduation standards, although some students continue to be enrolled in courses and pathways that do not result in true college or career preparation. The school has created a structure that pairs every incoming student with at least one adult in the school, but the purpose of the program has not been clearly articulated and some advisories tend to be disorganized or unfocused. The school offers a variety of extended learning options, internships, and college-preparation programs to juniors and seniors, but these opportunities are largely being utilized by high-performing students from advantaged households. The school tracks information on graduates, but rarely analyzes it to improve programs and support strategies for current students.</p>	<p>School leaders and teachers have established strong connections between sending and receiving schools. Teachers from these schools participate in transition meetings that focus on both programmatic alignment and student-needs issues. School structures ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult in the school. Students are offered meaningful guidance as they develop and follow their personalized learning plans and receive specific instruction in the transferable skills. Courses and curricula have been articulated across grade levels, and with sending middle schools and postsecondary expectations, to mitigate content gaps and ensure a seamless continuum of learning. Teachers are knowledgeable about all content-area and cross-curricular expectations. The school gathers and analyzes postsecondary data on their graduates and uses that information to improve postsecondary-planning programs and support systems.</p>

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school’s performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Implement teaming during the ninth and tenth grades to increase personalization and enhance teacher understanding of individual learning needs
- Align all learning expectations, curriculum, and instruction with the school's sending middle schools to ensure that entering ninth-graders are equipped with the skills to succeed.
- Create a dual-enrollment program that allows students to take college courses for high school and college credit.
- Beginning in the ninth grade, offer a comprehensive college- and career-planning program to all students and parents focused on practical guidance, including selecting a degree program, completing applications for college admission and financial aid, budgeting for college expenses, writing a resume, and interviewing.
- Adopt a policy that requires students to apply to at least one postsecondary-degree program and complete the Common Application for Undergraduate Admissions and the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
- Provide transitioning students specific programming to develop study skills, organizational skills, executive functioning, and a growth mindset.
- Provide summer enrichment programs for students to decrease summer learning loss.
- Adopt a district-wide learning management system where data related to each student's learning and specific needs are recorded.
- Designate a school or district leader to organize and facilitate transition meetings.
- Require all students to complete a comprehensive plan for success after graduation.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Course failures, absences, behavioral issues, and dropout rates are low or decreasing among ninth- and tenth-grade students.
- College enrollment and persistence rates—particularly among first-generation, minority, and immigrant families— are rising significantly each year.
- A significant percentage of juniors and seniors are participating in summer learning programs, internships, peer tutoring, dual-enrollment courses, volunteerism, political campaigns, social-change activism, and other experiences that develop leadership skills, maturity, active citizenship, and preparation for postsecondary learning and adult life.
- The number of students taking standardized college-entrance exams, such as the SAT, ACT, and Accuplacer is increasing, particularly among potential first-generation college students.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING
<p>Interventions and support strategies are only offered occasionally outside of regular courses and school hours. When available, academic support is not integrated with regular courses and primarily consists of repeating material at a slower pace using the same general instructional strategies employed in regular classes. Students who have mastered content are infrequently offered extensions. Students with disabilities are pulled from the classroom to receive services, spend a great deal of time isolated from their peers, and experience social stigma. Detailed data on absenteeism, behavioral incidences, and course failures are not consistently tracked or regularly analyzed to identify potential at-risk or underperforming students who may be in danger of failing or dropping out.</p>

3 DEVELOPING
<p>Intervention and support strategies are available to all students and offer some degree of differentiation, but they are rarely evaluated for effectiveness or modified from year to year in response to fluctuations in student performance or needs. Academic support and re-teaching is viewed as an "add on," not as an essential component of effective teaching and learning that should be integrated into courses to accelerate learning for all students. Students are expected to already know strategies to be self-directed learners. Academic-support personnel receive little professional development, rarely coordinate with classroom teachers, and often employ the same instructional strategies that proved ineffective in regular courses. The school is taking steps to develop a comprehensive intervention system, but support strategies are not systemic, remain insufficiently challenging, allow little flexibility for grouping and regrouping, and are provided too late to have a meaningful impact on performance. There is no system in place for pre-assessing incoming ninth-graders, though data is used to monitor student progress. Students who have mastered expectations are provided with some opportunities to extend or deepen their learning.</p>

5 PERFORMING
<p>Support systems ensure that all students receive the personalized interventions, extensions, and instructional time they need to achieve high learning standards. There is a school-wide tiered system of support and teachers regularly use formative assessment data to reteach during class time. Teachers model, teach, and provide feedback on strategies for self-directed learning. Teachers across content areas regularly discuss the learning needs of their shared students and co-develop personalized support strategies for students who need support or extension. The school's approach to academic support extends beyond traditional remediation to include tailored supports, acceleration, and opportunities for deeper exploration of commonly defined learning expectations. Data are used regularly to analyze student outcomes. Incoming ninth-graders are pre-assessed to determine learning needs, and interventions are provided at the first indication that a student is falling behind. All students understand what they need to demonstrate in order to exceed expectations in every course or learning experience. Students design or are provided with opportunities to extend their learning or pursue options that are of greater interest to them.</p>

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Use “early warning” strategies such as attendance data, formative assessment, and advisories to help identify struggling and at-risk students before they fall behind or drop out. Use data to determine the reason for attendance, behavioral, and academic challenges and to inform the nature of support needed.
- Develop a comprehensive intervention system that utilizes integrated support strategies, including after-school programs, summer school, co-teaching, peer tutoring, companion and bridge classes, and course-embedded re-teaching.
- Ensure that academic-support and extended-learning options are highly inclusive, offered to all students, and integrated into all courses, including independent studies and honors challenges.
- Provide all teachers with professional development focused on classroom-embedded support, personalized learning, and academic acceleration aligned with strategies included in the state’s Multi-Tiered System of Supports.
- Have skilled support staff—literacy coaches, special education teachers, guidance counselors, technology specialists, social workers, language specialists—work with teachers to coordinate and enhance student interventions.
- Provide regular planning time for the teachers and interventionists supporting common students.
- Establish a school-wide grading policy that allows students to revise work.
- Provide honors learning opportunities for all students within heterogeneously grouped classes.
- Explicitly teach and provide feedback to students on learning strategies, habits of work, and social/emotional skills.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Academic support is no longer stigmatized within the school community, but is viewed as a positive, essential component of the learning experience.
- Nearly all students are performing at or above grade level by the end of tenth grade.
- Graduation and college-going rates have increased significantly among traditionally underperforming subgroups.
- Course failures have decreased.
- Attendance rates have increased.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING	<p>Instructional strategies employed by teachers are often hampered by time constraints with an emphasis on materials coverage rather than depth of student learning. The school calendar, daily schedule, and other important information are not consistently updated or publicly available online for students and parents. School facilities are generally closed to the public on evenings, weekends, and during the summer, and few community organizations use the school for meetings, events, or programs. Outside of lockers, students are not given personal space, such as reading nooks or workstations. The majority of seniors attend school for only a few hours each day, and many of these students do not use this extra time to increase their readiness for college, work, or adult life.</p>	3 DEVELOPING	<p>Teachers have discussed how learning spaces and time can be used more efficiently or effectively, and the majority of teachers are making efforts to incorporate proven practices that make better use of instructional time. The school, however, has not adopted formal policies to support these innovations. The school offers students some alternate pathways that they can use to gain academic skills. School facilities are being used more frequently for community activities and extended learning programs, but these opportunities are rarely integrated with the school's academic program and student participation is sporadic. Extended school hours, a year-round calendar, and other flexible scheduling approaches are starting to be employed. Individual teachers have designed some opportunities for re-teaching and enrichment, but these are not built into the daily schedule.</p>	5 PERFORMING	<p>All teachers ensure that lessons and pedagogy are being refined to make efficient and effective use of instructional time. Learning time is varied, enabling students to master skills and gain knowledge based on their unique learning needs rather than an inflexible common schedule. The school offers students a range of alternate pathways to gain academic skills and knowledge, including online courses, internships, and extended learning opportunities outside the school walls. The school has organized its facilities and space to ensure that they are conducive to learning, and administrators have identified and prioritized needed improvements and upgrades. The school has made concerted efforts to become a learning center for the community, and school facilities are frequently utilized after normal school hours and on weekends throughout the year. The weekly school schedule includes time for common planning and professional learning groups for teachers and regular re-teaching and enrichment blocks for students. School leaders have investigated developmentally appropriate class-scheduling strategies, longer blocks of time, extended school days, off-campus learning, and other flexible scheduling strategies that can empower teachers and students to work and learn more creatively. The school has taken steps to create flexible, multipurpose learning spaces that can be used in a variety of innovative and non-traditional ways by both students and teachers.</p>
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STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Conduct a “time audit” to identify trends and patterns in how instructional time is being used in every course.
- Restructure teacher schedules and workloads to increase the amount of time teachers devote to collaborative planning, preparing lessons, curriculum design, evaluating student work, professional learning groups, data analysis, instructional refinement, professional development, meeting with students and parents, and other responsibilities related to improving pedagogical effectiveness (in some high-performing countries, for example, teachers often spend less than 50% of their time in the classroom).
- Publish a master schedule online so every member of the community can access information about all school and community events for the year.
- Involve students in planning the use of existing school facilities and any proposed expansions, including projects to develop environmentally sustainable practices and to test the facility for environmental contamination.
- Prioritize all structural improvements, equipment purchases, and staffing decisions to ensure that student-learning needs are met first.
- Use an online scheduling program to enable teachers to request a student’s participation in a re-teaching or enrichment activity during designated blocks.
- Establish a position for a coordinator of internships, extended learning opportunities, and community partnerships.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- More students and teachers are arriving at school early or staying late to take advantage of school resources and learning opportunities.
- Parent involvement in school activities, fundraisers, and volunteer opportunities has increased, particularly among low-income, first-generation, and immigrant families.
- Community members and business leaders regularly provide expertise, services, and personal time to the school.
- The school facility is increasingly used during evenings and weekends to host adult education programs, community celebrations, and public forums.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING

Annual student data are made available to school leaders and teachers, but it is often too late in the year to guide action plans, curriculum modifications, or professional development. There is little to no use of data among teacher teams, content areas, or individual teachers to shape instruction, reflect on practice, and improve individual student outcomes. The school does not have a defined structure for collecting and sharing data, making it difficult to access and organize. Frequent errors are uncovered in school and student data—even in state and federal reporting—and responsibilities for collecting and reporting data are not clearly defined. Teachers are unskilled in using data to identify student learning needs and are not provided with professional development around analyzing data.

3 DEVELOPING

Data are regularly shared with the staff, but are often confusing or misunderstood and only occasionally leads to changes in organizational design or instructional practice. Teachers—in content- or grade-level teams—occasionally use data to guide instruction, reflect on practice, and improve individual student outcomes. The school has developed a defined process for collecting, archiving, tracking, and analyzing student data. Some professional development has been provided to teachers and school leaders to improve their capacity in accessing and analyzing data. School data are reliable and accurate. All teachers use data systems for grading and reporting, but many teachers are not yet using data diagnostically to improve student outcomes.

5 PERFORMING

Current and historical student data are an integral part of the school's decision-making process and academic program. The faculty is trained in how to use data to guide improvements in programs and in outcomes for all students. The school has a data-collection system in place that allows the faculty to look beyond test results and general percentages to identify institutional strengths and weaknesses, as well as patterns of performance across courses, content areas, grade levels, student demographic groups, and individual students. Teachers—in content or grade level teams—regularly use disaggregated student data to guide their own professional growth, and regularly make data-informed instructional modifications intended to address the identified needs of their students. Parents and students have online access to performance data and updates about academic progress. A thoughtful communication strategy utilizes online technologies to keep parents, local policy makers, and the public apprised of school-performance data and ongoing efforts to improve student outcomes.

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Make use of a common student-information system and other technological tools to track, disaggregate, and analyze student data (include data required for state and federal reporting, but also data that can help identify priority areas for instructional improvement, such as course failures, intervention outcomes, and postsecondary success data).
- Provide parents and students with online access to up-to-the-minute information on academic progress, including information about current and upcoming assignments.
- Use the National Student Clearinghouse’s StudentTracker for High Schools system to track the college-enrollment and -persistence rates of all graduates.
- Collect data on student engagement and classroom practice, and use that data to identify specific strengths and weaknesses and inform professional development and action planning.
- Conduct confidential surveys of students, parents, and teachers to collect data on school culture, teacher effectiveness, and other important issues.
- Utilize professional learning groups and other school-embedded professional development structures to ensure that teachers understand the importance of analyzing data, and have time to disaggregate student data, discuss their findings with colleagues, and determine research-based solutions to improve classroom practice.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Regular upgrades in data technology and ongoing refinement of the data-collection process are increasing efficiency and minimizing errors.
- Surveys of the faculty indicate that data are used to guide both programmatic and instructional decisions.
- Noticeable improvements in course failures, retention, graduation rates, college enrollment, college persistence, and parent access to and engagement with the online system.
- Discussions about student data at the faculty and community levels are aligned with the school mission and action plan, and are focused on addressing identified student needs.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING
<p>Supervision and accountability procedures are largely top-down and teachers view efforts to evaluate their practice primarily in terms of job security, not professional improvement. Professional development opportunities are randomly selected, sporadically offered, and unconnected to a coherent plan for ongoing, school-wide improvement. Very little common-planning or preparation time is built into the school schedule for teachers, and faculty members rarely collaborate on curriculum design and interdisciplinary lessons. The school offers late-start and early release days, but many teachers use these opportunities to catch up on personal work or deal with short-term logistical issues. Funding streams are generally disconnected and available resources are not used to support a strategic, long-term school-improvement plan.</p>

3 DEVELOPING
<p>The school has an action plan that is reviewed and revised annually, but it may be confusing, cumbersome, or overly ambitious. The faculty has developed academic-improvement goals, but goals are general and not specific to content areas or student subgroups. Teachers are energized to improve instruction and learning opportunities for students, although new ideas and initiatives are often introduced haphazardly, resulting in some inefficiencies, confusion, and burdensome workloads. Teachers are beginning to see themselves as knowledge workers, and a culture of professional inquiry, self-reflection, and evidence-based teaching is emerging. Some teachers are participating in self-designed study groups, but the school has not yet offered the training and support necessary to institutionalize professional learning groups. Teachers regularly participate in conferences and seminars, yet school leaders have not developed a coherent professional-development plan based on academic goals and identified student-learning needs.</p>

5 PERFORMING
<p>The school's action plan is ambitious, but achievable, and focused on a relatively limited number of targeted, high-priority goals each year. School-wide academic improvement goals are based on identified programmatic or instructional weaknesses. Specific goals have been set for content areas and student subgroups, and all professional development activities (e.g. workshops, professional learning groups, faculty meetings, etc.) are aligned to those goals. The action plan is coherent and driven by multiple measures—not just standardized assessment results—including student-level data and community demographics. School goals are clearly and regularly communicated to the school community and resources and support structures for reaching those goals are identified and shared. Progress toward achieving action-plan objectives is monitored throughout the school year, and transparency, collaboration, and consistent communication ensure accountability to the vision and objectives of the action plan. Disaggregated student data and assessment results are used to inform strategic planning and professional development, and the impact of professional learning is continually monitored using teacher surveys, assessment trends, and other data. Teachers view themselves not as employees or passive recipients of professional development, but as a community of leaders, knowledge producers, and student mentors. The school budget, grant funding, and other resources support the priorities and actions outlined in the school's improvement plan.</p>

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Provide teachers with time for classroom observation, common planning, and other collaborative strategies to develop a common understanding of student learning and improve instructional quality.
- Ensure that professional development addresses the characteristics of effective instructional improvement identified by research: (1) create awareness of weaknesses in individual practice; (2) provide precise knowledge of best practice; and (3) motivate teachers to improve.
- Foster a pedagogical culture of research and inquiry in which teachers regularly review, discuss, and act upon the latest educational, instructional, developmental, and cognitive research.
- Examine collective bargaining agreements and look for ways to offer incentives (e.g., public recognition, sabbaticals, subsidized graduate study, professional advancement, etc.) to encourage teachers to improve classroom practice.
- Appoint expert mentor teachers trained in facilitation skills, coaching techniques, and instructional modeling to help new or struggling teachers.
- Contract a long-term school coach—i.e., a skilled facilitator and school-improvement strategist who develops trusting relationships and a strong understanding of the school and its needs—to help guide the school-improvement work.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Ten percent of teacher work time (or more than a hundred hours a year) is devoted to professional development, including professional learning groups, instructional coaching, and other forms of school-embedded learning.
- At least five percent of district or school budgets are devoted to providing professional development designed to improve instructional quality.
- Teacher surveys indicate that they regularly discuss improvement strategies with colleagues, mentor teachers, and school coaches, and a culture of cooperation, collegiality, and professionalism is evident among the staff.
- Classroom observations are used to improve practice and not simply for annual performance evaluations.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING
<p>Administrators select new teaching hires with little input from staff members, students, parents, and other stakeholders in the community. Teacher performance is reviewed yearly, though not against a collaboratively determined set of competencies. Disparities in student learning outcomes across courses are not investigated, discussed, or understood as part of the annual review process. New teachers receive little formal professional support, and the official guidance they receive is primarily focused on procedural issues, not instructional improvement. The school has a difficult time retaining experienced or motivated faculty, which has resulted in high turnover rates and persistent inconsistencies in programs and standards. Nearly all teacher time is spent in the classroom, and interdisciplinary collaboration is rare. The school does not have a formal professional-development program, and when professional-development opportunities are provided they are not aligned with the school's vision, mission, action plan, or identified staff needs. Any school- or district-wide educator effectiveness model currently in place has been developed by a handful of individuals rather than through a collaborative process that leads to shared ownership and understanding.</p>	

3	DEVELOPING
<p>Teachers contribute to the hiring process, including participation on interview committees, although the school tends to hire the most qualified candidates without sufficiently considering whether their background, personality, motivation level, and other factors are a good fit for the school community or its student needs. The school's induction process creates a welcoming environment for new hires by pairing new and less-experienced faculty with an experienced mentor teacher who provides regular guidance throughout the first year. After the initial induction period, structured opportunities for ongoing instructional coaching, professional learning, collaboration, and career growth taper off significantly, although administrators make efforts to visit classes periodically and provide formative feedback to teachers. Teachers are sometimes included in the planning of professional development activities, which are usually aligned to the school's action plan. However, professional development features mostly full-group direct instruction or task-oriented activities. Some teachers establish their own professional learning goals and collect evidence to determine student learning and growth. Teachers have an emerging sense of their impact on learning and reflect upon it to refine their practice.</p>	

5	PERFORMING
<p>The school has a rigorous, multi-stage teacher-selection process that has been collaboratively developed with input from staff, students, and representative stakeholders within the school community. Every prospective teacher is evaluated against a clear, collaboratively determined set of professional competencies that are aligned with the school mission and that outline expectations for content knowledge, pedagogical skill, professional conduct, ongoing learning, and other essential attributes of highly effective teaching. Background, personality, motivation level, and other critical job-performance factors are considered during the hiring process to help ensure that new teachers are not only qualified, but a good fit for the school community and its needs. Beginning teachers are paired with an experienced mentor teacher who provides regular support, guidance, and in-class instructional modeling during the first two to three years of practice. Supervision and evaluation procedures, as well as ongoing professional development opportunities, are differentiated to accommodate the strengths and needs of teachers. The district ensures professional learning and growth are characterized by collaboration and reflection. Thoughtful professional-advancement and performance-recognition procedures encourage teachers to increase their professional expertise, pursue advanced degrees, assume leadership roles, and make valuable contributions to the school community.</p>	

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Develop rigorous criteria and a multistage selection process for new hires that involves diverse representation from across the school community.
- Look for faculty candidates that embody the qualities of effective teachers as identified by international research: (1) strong literacy and numeracy skills, (2) strong communication and interpersonal skills, (3) a willingness to learn and grow professionally, and (4) a strong desire and motivation to teach.
- Examine collective bargaining agreements and salary scales and identify ways to restructure these processes to encourage teacher leadership, increase scholarly activities, and focus professional growth on improved student learning.
- Create at least a three-year probationary vetting and support period for new hires—during which their teaching skills are observed and teaching assignments are different than those of veteran teachers—before offering a permanent position. Provide probationary teachers with more professional development time.
- Provide new teachers with mentoring, practical-skill coaching, guided practice, and extra professional development during their first three to five years of teaching, and select mentor teachers and instructional specialists based on their record of effective teaching and coaching.
- Align hiring and retention decisions with the school’s collaboratively determined professional competencies.
- Conduct exit interviews with teachers who leave the district.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- The faculty is composed of teachers from a broad range of backgrounds that bring varied professional skills, talents, and experiences to the classroom.
- Active engagement in professional learning has increased conference attendance, the pursuit of more advanced degrees, and other indicators of improved professional motivation among the faculty.
- Faculty turnover is low or decreasing and new hires are retained.
- Faculty surveys reflect high or increasing levels of job satisfaction.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING
<p>School administrators are primarily focused on budgetary, building, and behavioral management, and relatively little of their time is devoted to instructional leadership. Major decisions are made by the superintendent or principal with little input from staff or students, and these decisions often seem random or unconsidered to many members of the school community. The principal has not clearly articulated his or her vision for the school community or its academic program, and many administrative decisions are not aligned with the school's learning goals, action plan, or identified student needs. The principal is largely uninformed about the instructional practices being used throughout the school, and has not made professional development a school or budgetary priority.</p>	

3	DEVELOPING
<p>The principal's vision for the school has energized some faculty members and stakeholders, but a few outspoken faculty, student, and parent voices remain opposed to the new direction. Despite good intentions, building-management and budgetary issues continue to absorb a significant amount of the principal's time, which has diminished his or her ability to take a stronger leadership role in improving instructional quality throughout the school. The principal and other administrators regularly praise and encourage the teaching staff, but they display little actual knowledge about or understanding of the teaching and learning taking place throughout the school on a daily basis. The principal recognizes that a good leader empowers others to assume leadership roles and work more effectively, and he or she has made a public commitment to promoting more shared-leadership opportunities in the school. During the summer, school leaders meet with faculty to review and refine the school's action plan, but administrators often fail to assess progress throughout the year and hold staff members accountable when responsibilities and tasks are not completed. The school has created a leadership team that includes diverse representation from across the school community, but the leadership team is often not consulted when some major decisions related to the school mission, action plan, and academic program are being made.</p>	

5	PERFORMING
<p>The principal is a skilled instructional leader who understands teaching, regularly observes classrooms, and collaboratively creates and sustains a model of professional learning that includes reflection, application, and coaching. The principal spends the majority of his or her time trying to understand the needs of the student body and develops a student-centered academic program to meet those needs. The principal has articulated a bold, clear, and compelling vision for the school that is supported by a majority of the faculty, students, and parents. The principal and administrative team are committed to providing high-quality professional development to all teachers, and work to cultivate leadership skills, increase professional knowledge, and use feedback from teachers and students to improve practices and leadership strategies. Administrators make teaching assignments based on student needs and specific academic goals. Performance data are used to make a case for redesigning school structures and practices in ways that will address student needs more effectively. A commitment to transparency and communications keeps all stakeholders engaged in efforts to realize the school's vision and mission. The principal recognizes that the school is a public, democratic institution, and that faculty, parents, and other stakeholders need to be involved in major governance decisions. The principal honors all voices, listens to concerns, and acts responsively and proactively to address issues before they become a major problem.</p>	

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Involve the faculty, community stakeholders, and students in hiring a principal with a strong classroom-teaching background and deep understanding of how to lead a change process.
- Devote at least 50% of the administration’s time to school and instructional improvement (i.e., leading curriculum discussions, providing formative and summative feedback to teachers on instruction, participating in instructionally focused professional development, examining student data with teachers, etc.).
- Leverage formal leadership roles to foster a student-focused culture in which student needs take priority over other concerns.
- Require the principal to participate regularly in professional learning groups with faculty, and also with principals from other schools to discuss common issues and effective leadership.
- Conduct annual whole-school reviews, using multiple measures and data sets, to determine what resources and support teachers need to improve student performance and outcomes.
- Develop communication processes that ensure the principal regularly discusses the school’s work with the staff, community, school board, superintendent, state legislators, and other community members.
- Safeguard time for teaching and learning by reducing requests for meetings with faculty that don’t directly align with the school’s priorities for improving instruction.
- Align resources and budget requests with the school’s annual action plan.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- The school community—especially the superintendent, school board, and faculty—have developed a rigorous selection process for new principals to ensure that the qualifications, skills, and personalities of candidates fit the school’s vision, mission, and values.
- The principal and other school leaders regularly visit classrooms, meet with individual teachers and students, and attend school and community functions.
- The principal knows the names of all the students and staff, and is deeply knowledgeable about the school.
- Teachers and students regularly bring their concerns to the principal and/or leadership team.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING
<p>The school's governance structure and decision-making process have not been clearly articulated or publicly shared, and participation in major school decisions remains closed to most stakeholders. Most decisions are top-down and made with little input from the staff despite some attempts to broaden participation in governance. The school has not institutionalized processes that encourage and support aspiring teacher-leaders, and school-supported professional development does not explicitly address leadership-building skills. School priorities have not been clearly articulated or communicated, which has created confusion about staff responsibilities and led to a general reticence about taking risks or trying new approaches.</p>

3 DEVELOPING
<p>The school has developed a shared governance structure, but roles, operational specifics, and accountability procedures remain somewhat vague and undefined. Teachers and other staff members have a greater understanding of the rationale for and intention of decisions made by the principal, and efforts to improve communication and transparency are fostering greater trust and confidence in the administrative team. Leadership roles are routinely offered to the staff, but decision-making authority is limited and leadership responsibilities fall within narrowly defined parameters. Teachers do not feel entirely comfortable questioning administrative decisions, suggesting alternative approaches, or incorporating new strategies into their classroom practice. The principal operates under the belief that he or she needs to be involved in every school decision, which results in delays when it comes to implementing and advancing new initiatives.</p>

5 PERFORMING
<p>The school has established a leadership committee consisting of representatives from multiple stakeholder groups (administrators, teachers, students, and parents). Additionally, a consistent leadership team—made up of skilled, knowledgeable, and motivated faculty—plays a major role shaping the school's strategic plan and academic goals, advocating for the concerns of staff and students, and improving communication and understanding between the administration and faculty. All teachers are held to high expectations and have the decision-making autonomy they collectively need to address and remain responsive to student needs. The school culture is collaborative, respectful, and collegial, and the staff members take pride in conducting themselves in a professional and respectful manner during interactions with students, parents, colleagues, and the public. The faculty is involved in critical instructional decisions, including the selection of instructional resources, the design of professional development, and the creation of the school's action plan. Administrators and other school leaders listen to and honor all voices in the school community, especially voices that have traditionally been marginalized or underrepresented.</p>

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Create a system of communication and transparency that ensures fidelity to the school’s vision, mission, and action plan.
- Develop explicit roles, expectations, and responsibilities for members of the leadership team, including a process for determining membership and making decisions.
- Examine supervision-and-evaluation procedures and other school-wide decision-making processes for ways to encourage greater shared leadership.
- Create ad-hoc working groups, coordinated by a consistent school leadership team, to address specific issues or achieve specific goals.
- Create a process for administrators to regularly meet with individual staff members to discuss job satisfaction, career aspirations, and personal and professional growth.
- Develop a career pathway, which includes professional support and graduate courses, for motivated teachers to assume greater leadership responsibility over time and eventually attain administrative certification.
- Host public forums and other outreach efforts in which school leaders engage the school community in major decisions and strategic planning, and ensure that meeting minutes and other information are distributed in a timely fashion and made available online.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Parent participation in school activities has increased, particularly among traditionally underrepresented families.
- Student participation in school governance, co-curricular activities, community volunteerism, activism, political campaigns, voting, and local, state, and national student-leadership opportunities has increased.
- Surveys of teachers, students, and parents indicate a high degree of satisfaction with school leadership and support for major school decisions.
- Parents, community members, and local business leaders and policy makers are informed about the school and its programs, and the local news media regularly profiles positive stories of student success and teacher leadership.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1	INITIATING
<p>The school culture is largely characterized by complacency and a “don’t rock the boat” mentality, and many important decisions are made in the effort to sidestep potential resistance or pushback from staff and parents. There are no formal structures or processes in place to examine student data, achievement gaps, or equity issues at the classroom, team, or school level, largely due to a desire to avoid singling out a specific teacher, student group, or department. The principal and other school leaders routinely avoid confrontation or discussions about persistent issues, and poor student-performance results are not openly or honestly discussed with individual teachers. Poor scores on state assessments and other unflattering data may be hidden, excused, or minimized. Inappropriate and unprofessional behavior is often tolerated, which has eroded trust and collegiality among the staff. The school culture remains largely resistant to self-reflection, and the belief that “we’re doing good enough” persists despite evidence that too many students are failing to succeed or graduate.</p>	

3	DEVELOPING
<p>The superintendent, principal, and leadership team have developed a strategic plan for confronting challenges that may arise in response to school-improvement efforts. Decisions are increasingly guided by identified student needs, research on school effectiveness, and sound principles—not by a fear of confrontation, resistance, or possible failure. The school community is no longer making excuses for poor student scores or other unfavorable data, but is taking steps to identify the root causes and undertake strategic actions to address the issues. Administrators, teachers, and other staff have collaboratively developed standards and norms for professional behavior and interactions, although unprofessional behavior by some individuals continues to go unaddressed by administrators and colleagues. The school’s action plan is bold and ambitious, but the principal and leadership team have been unwilling to advocate for key elements with important constituents—including the superintendent and school board—even though the strategies are in the best interest of their students.</p>	

5	PERFORMING
<p>The principal, administrators, and teacher-leaders skillfully handle contentious issues and defend equitable ideals and practices—even in the face of actual or potential attacks—that promote positive learning outcomes for all students and decrease achievement gaps. Good intentions and well-laid plans are not undone by careless words or actions, but they are achieved through collaboration, professionalism, and goal-driven moral courage. Each faculty member assumes personal responsibility for addressing interpersonal issues before they turn into problems. School leaders are self-reflective, process concerns and conflicts openly, and move the collective dialogue beyond personal issues and interests. School faculty and staff advocate for the school’s improvement work within the community, and the principal and leadership team work closely with the superintendent and school board to advance critical policies that support a student-centered academic program. When difficult situations arise, the principal proactively communicates with staff, students, parents, and the larger community to minimize the spread of misinformation, including reaching out to school board and local media. In general, challenges are not avoided or postponed, but embraced by administrators, faculty, and staff.</p>	

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school’s performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Review the school mission statement with staff, parents, and the community, and compare existing practices and organizational structures with the mission statement to ensure that programs are in alignment with its expressed principles.
- Adopt an “open door” policy so that any staff member, student, or parent with a significant concern about the school can meet with the principal and leadership team.
- Announce the school’s commitment to equitable practices and outcomes for all students, and have the principal publicly outline a clear plan for achieving these goals.
- Establish a set of school-wide norms that encourage open conversation within and outside of the school regarding student performance results and other data.
- Adopt a set of shared expectations and norms—aligned with the school’s vision and mission—for staff meetings, professional conduct, and adult-student relationships.
- Allow time in faculty meetings for staff members to raise concerns and question decisions in a constructive, respectful, and supportive manner.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- Criticism and differing opinions are expressed constructively and respectfully among staff and within the school community generally.
- Student interactions reflect the positive behaviors, attitudes, and social skills modeled by teachers and other staff members.
- Administrators and teachers regularly ask students and colleagues for feedback on their leadership and pedagogy.
- School leaders regularly discuss the school’s efforts with the district leadership and, when necessary, advocate for changes to district or state policies to create an environment that is more supportive of the school action plan.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING

The school board develops policies to support progress toward district goals, with a focus on alignment with statutory requirements. These policies may be straight from national or state school board associations with little adaptation to the specific district's context or meaningful buy-in from the board or community. The school board sets goals that will keep the district in compliance with state and federal requirements. The board develops a balanced budget that allows schools to meet their state and federal requirements. School board members consider the perspectives of some community members. Board members meet with members of the community when approached with questions or issues. The board has an established process in place to hire and review the performance of superintendents.

3 DEVELOPING

The school board develops policies to support progress toward district goals, with a focus on accountability; some or all of these policies are publically available but may not be in an easily accessible digital location. The school board sets goals that reflect state and federal requirements and community priorities. The board budget supports many of the district goals. School board members represent the interests of the community. School board members stay abreast of local issues and meet with individuals and groups in the community to discuss issues that affect the district. The school board and superintendent both work to support teaching and learning in the district but there may be areas of misalignment or overlap in their efforts. The board's process for selecting a new superintendent is established, and certain aspects of it include stakeholders. There is a process in place to inform the annual review of the superintendent's performance against some of the district's priorities.

5 PERFORMING

The board acts as a cohesive whole on behalf of the entire community, distilling local policies from a community vision, data on student needs, and state and federal requirements. The board focuses its work on policy, allowing the superintendent to attend to the district's operations. In concert with the district, the board develops high-leverage policies that improve academic outcomes, promote equity for all students, and give schools autonomy to meet goals. Board members make decisions based on the best interests of students and serve as advocates for district reforms. Board members set aside time to learn about best practices in education, state and federal policies, and data-informed policymaking and accountability. They regularly audit school policies to ensure continued alignment with district priorities. The board develops a strategic plan, which, together with local policies, establishes budget priorities. The process for hiring a new superintendent is governed by a written policy. The process is shepherded by the board and includes community stakeholders. Candidates are evaluated against the district's mission and vision. The board crafts a plan to support the superintendent's professional growth and updates that plan annually. There is a process in place for the annual review of the superintendent's performance against the district's priorities, and it results in actionable feedback against professional standards.

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with community stakeholders to create a strategic plan that includes a vision and mission statement for the district and a multi-year plan to guide the administration of schools and services for students.
- Establish an orientation for all new board members focused on learning about district policies, best practices in education, current state and federal policies, data-informed policymaking, and the district's norms for communication and collaboration.
- Host and participate in annual board retreats to create yearly objectives for meeting the district's mission and vision and reflect on the previous year's objectives.
- Adopt proficiency standards for students at every level of the district based on the superintendent's recommendations.
- Set graduation requirements to ensure every student graduates an informed and skillful citizen of the community, as described in the vision statement.
- Prioritize programs and services in the budget to meet student needs, referencing the district strategic plan and policies.
- Organize the district calendar to give school faculty and staff the time to implement reforms and create professional communities focused on learning.
- Use community networks to garner support from local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies to augment school resources, forge connections to community services, and provide out-of-school learning opportunities.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- All current policies are accessible to the community on the district website.
- Families and community members are aware of the issues facing the district and its strategic plan; they are not surprised by new initiatives and see clear ties to the collaboratively created mission, vision, and core beliefs.
- There is a process in place to determine community priorities and goals; it has resulted in a vision for a rigorous, equitable, personalized education system and targets for achieving that vision.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 1 >> READ THE PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTIONS

1 INITIATING
<p>The superintendent has an administrative team focused on budgeting, scheduling, and compliance with state and federal regulations. District leaders have few opportunities to learn about the instructional practices in place in schools or do not act as instructional leaders. Professional development is limited and only occasionally informed by data and needs of the faculty and staff. There is no process in place that ensures the alignment of professional development with the school and district's vision, mission, or current initiatives. Each school in the district acts in isolation – with little to no district support or guidance. The district collects data to document compliance with state and federal regulations. The superintendent meets regularly with the school board to discuss the budget and compliance with state and federal requirements, but there are few opportunities to engage in reflections on the district's strengths and challenges.</p>

3 DEVELOPING
<p>The superintendent has begun to align financial and human resources that will support the improvement of teaching and learning across the district. District leaders with responsibilities for teaching and learning are aware of the importance of professional development but have not fully aligned professional development programs with district policies and priorities. District leaders are involved in many day-to-day operations in schools rather than building capacity among district staff or supporting decision-making in alignment with the district and school's vision. The district collects data to document implementation of district goals and compliance with state and federal regulations. The superintendent meets regularly with the school board and community groups to keep them informed about progress toward realizing the district vision and goals, but does not advocate for policies and programs that promote proven practices.</p>

5 PERFORMING
<p>The superintendent champions effective instruction and rigorous academic experiences for all students and establishes a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement among building leaders and teachers. The superintendent ensures that a commitment to equitable systems extends from the district's central office to its schools and classrooms. The superintendent engages in the creation and implementation of district policies and empowers district and building leaders with supported autonomy. District leaders engage faculty and staff in the design, implementation, and monitoring of district-wide vision and standards. The administrative team has a process to vet school plans for coherence with the district's strategic plans. The superintendent builds administrative team members' individual and collective capacity, and prioritizes district- and school-level professional development that aligns with district policies and goals. District leaders publicly support building leaders and teachers. They provide principals with guidance to build capacity for exemplary leadership and establish a process to review principal performance and support their professional growth. The district collects data to evaluate progress and guide continuous improvement efforts. District leaders foster a collaborative relationship with the school board and share their professional expertise with board members to help them understand student needs and best practices. The superintendent and the administrative team engage community stakeholders in conversations about how the schools can best support all students.</p>

STEP 4 >> SCORE YOUR SCHOOL

Place an X on the scale below to indicate your school's performance in this dimension.



STEP 2 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE STRATEGIES

SAMPLE STRATEGIES

- Recruit, hire, and support experienced educators to lead curriculum and instructional departments.
- Hire and support principals who can implement the district’s vision at every school.
- Foster networks of school leaders and teachers to collaborate across schools to encourage continuity, alignment, and growth.
- Collect school and community climate and satisfaction data, share the data with all stakeholders in the community, and create and implement a plan for celebrating achievements and addressing challenges.
- Develop a system for district-wide data collection that includes providing tools for schools to organize and analyze a variety of data, training in the use of those tools, and a process for reporting data to the community.
- Organize learning opportunities for board members to share current data about student needs and best instructional practices.
- Adopt a protocol to guide meetings and communication, including but not limited to: norms for communication, procedures around agenda-setting, identifying next steps, and disseminating minutes and notes. The board, district leaders, and school leaders use these frameworks and processes in their professional interactions.
- Engage local businesses, nonprofit organizations, government agencies to augment school resources, connect students to community services, and provide out-of-school learning opportunities for students and faculty.

OUR STRATEGIES IN THIS DIMENSION

STEP 3 >> RECORD PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

SAMPLE EVIDENCE

- The district has a rigorous and transparent selection process for hiring to ensure that the qualifications, skills, and personalities of candidates align with the district’s vision, mission, and values.
- District leaders regularly visit schools and classrooms, meet with teachers and leaders, and attend school and community functions.
- Trends in student data are published on the district’s website and include targets for progress.
- The district regularly provides data to the board and the community to document implementation of district goals and policies.
- Board members, families, and community members are aware of the issues facing the district and are actively engaged in addressing them.

OUR EVIDENCE IN THIS DIMENSION

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RESEARCH NOTE

Global Best Practices was researched and developed by the New England Secondary School Consortium, which includes the Great Schools Partnership and department of education staff from Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Preliminary drafts of this tool were reviewed and vetted by Michelle LaPointe of LaPointe Analysis and Evaluation for Decisionmakers, the National High School Center at the American Institutes for Research, and Joseph DiMartino at the Center for Secondary School Redesign. Michelle LaPointe is the author of the *Global Best Practices* literature review, which outlines the specific research literature consulted during the development of this tool. The Academy for Educational Development’s High School Reform Strategy Toolkit (highschooltoolkit.com) was also consulted extensively, and many of its recommended strategies and practices have been incorporated.

The New England Secondary School Consortium and the Great Schools Partnership are solely responsible for the contents of this document and any inadvertent factual errors.

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ABOUT THE NEW ENGLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL CONSORTIUM

THE NEW ENGLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL

CONSORTIUM is a pioneering partnership committed to fostering forward-thinking innovations in the design and delivery of secondary education across the New England region. The five partner states of Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, along with the Great Schools Partnership, believe that our bold vision, shared goals, and innovative strategies will empower us to close persistent achievement gaps, promote greater educational equity and opportunity for all students, and lead our educators into a new era of secondary schooling.

OUR GOALS

1. Increasing five-year graduation rates across each of our five states.
2. Decreasing annual dropout rates.
3. Increasing the percentage of students enrolling in two- and four-year college degree programs or pursuing accredited, industry-certified postsecondary certificates.
4. Increasing the percentage of students who graduate from high school college-ready.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Our states are committed to pursuing four long-term objectives:

1. **Diplomas that certify readiness for life:** High school graduation decisions that are based on students demonstrating proficiency on learning standards.
2. **Student-centered learning opportunities:** Personalized and flexible proficiency-based learning pathways for all students.
3. **Measuring what matters most:** Learner-centered accountability systems that utilize multiple measures of student achievement.
4. **Improving practices with data:** in forming a cycle of continuous improvement by collecting, sharing and analyzing data.

WHAT WE DO

The Consortium brings together state leaders and educators to pursue three overarching strategies:

Policy: Advance a state-led policy agenda focused on our four high leverage objectives.

Practice: Connect and support practicing educators across states through networking activities, best-practice exchange, and our League of Innovative Schools.

Public Will: Build public understanding of and support for more innovative approaches to educating today's students.

WHY IT MATTERS

Strong schools are the best job-creation program we have. Imagination, expertise, creativity, entrepreneurialism—these are the assets that drive innovation, create new industries, and produce the most sought-after workers. Preparing every student for success will strengthen our economy and empower our communities.

Strong schools are the foundation of our society. Democracy, opportunity, prosperity, equality—the values that have defined America—depend on an informed, engaged, well-educated citizenry. To prepare the next generation of citizens and leaders, we need great schools for every student.

Strong schools create strong communities. Schools are the cornerstones of our communities. We celebrate our students, cheer on our local teams, and welcome graduates into our workplaces, institutions, and families. To keep our communities vibrant, prosperous, and thriving, we need great schools.

NEWENGLANDSSC.ORG

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