



PENNSYLVANIA'S

Essential Practices for Schools and their Communities

Evidence-based practices for sustained improvement in teaching and learning

- Culture of high expectations for success*
- Collective vision for teaching and learning*
- Empowered staff*
- Needs-based organization and allocation of resources*
- Continuous monitoring of school improvement plan implementation*

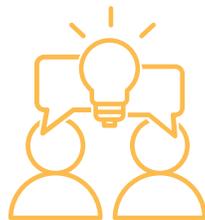
Empower Leadership



Every Student Succeeds

Foster Quality Professional Learning

- Professional learning responsive to teacher and student needs*
- Multiple professional learning designs*
- Evaluating the impact of professional learning*



Focus on Continuous Improvement of Instruction

- Aligned curriculum, instruction and assessment*
- Collaborative instructional planning*
- Variety of assessments to monitor student learning*
- Identify and address individual student learning needs*
- Frequent, timely feedback and support on instructional practices*



Provide Student-Centered Supports

- Positive school environment where all members feel welcomed, supported, and safe*
- Schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports*
- Multi-tiered system of supports for academics and behavior*
- Family engagement to support learning*
- Partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and other agencies*

Last revised September 2021.

Prácticas esenciales

DE PENNSILVANIA

Para las escuelas y sus comunidades

Prácticas basadas en evidencia para la mejora sostenida en la enseñanza y el aprendizaje

Cultura de altas expectativas para el éxito

Visión colectiva para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje

Personal empoderado

Organización y distribución de recursos basadas en las necesidades

Monitoreo continuo de la implementación del plan de mejoramiento escolar

Empoderar el liderazgo



Fomentar un aprendizaje profesional de calidad

Aprendizaje profesional que responda a las necesidades de los maestros y estudiantes

Diseños múltiples de aprendizaje profesional

Evaluación del impacto del aprendizaje profesional



Enfocarse en el mejoramiento continuo de la instrucción

Currículo, instrucción y evaluación alineados

Planeación colaborativa de la instrucción

Variedad de evaluaciones para monitorear el aprendizaje del estudiante

Identificar y abordar las necesidades individuales de aprendizaje del estudiante

Retroalimentación y apoyo frecuentes y oportunos para las prácticas de instrucción



Proveer apoyos centrados en el estudiante

Entorno escolar positivo donde todos los miembros se sientan bienvenidos, apoyados y seguros

Intervenciones y apoyos para el comportamiento positivo a nivel de toda la escuela

Sistema de apoyo de múltiples niveles para el área académica y conductual

Participación familiar para apoyar el aprendizaje

Colaboración con los negocios locales, organizaciones comunitarias y otras agencias

Cada estudiante triunfa

Actualizado por última vez en septiembre de 2021

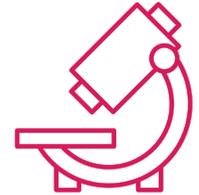


RUBRIC:

Pennsylvania Essential Practices for Schools

CONDITION: **Focus on Continuous Improvement of Instruction**

Effective instructional practice, including strong standards-based instruction, data-based planning, differentiation, and individualization, and evidence-based instructional strategies are identified and supported.



PRACTICE 1: Align curriculum, assessments, and instruction to the PA Standards

FOCUS ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTION	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	No instructional materials or assessments demonstrate the rigor of the PA Standards.	Some instructional materials and assessments demonstrate the rigor of the PA Standards.	Instructional materials (e.g., lesson plans, unit plans, performance tasks, assessments, curriculum maps, scope and sequence documents, guides) and assessments for all subjects and grade levels are aligned with the rigor of the PA Standards. A formal process to review alignment is implemented annually. <small>*Refer to the <i>Indicators of Operational Implementation</i> document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</small>	Instructional materials (e.g., lesson plans, unit plans, performance tasks, assessments, curriculum maps, scope and sequence documents, guides) and assessments for all subjects and grade levels are aligned with the rigor of the PA Standards. Materials and resources are used in all classrooms and programs and continuously revised by educators and support staff to ensure alignment with student needs.
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS		SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the evidence that our school has a written curriculum aligned to Pennsylvania’s standards? • How do we know that all educators understand how the content they teach builds on, or relates to, content in other grades/subjects? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum documents <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson Plans <input type="checkbox"/> Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) <input type="checkbox"/> Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs) <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum documents shared with families <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom visits <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups

PRACTICE 2: Use systematic, collaborative planning processes to ensure instruction is coordinated, aligned, and evidence-based

FOCUS ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTION	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	There is no evidence of collaborative instructional planning among educators.	Time for collaboration between educators is scheduled, but limited to a few educators, grade levels, or subjects. Use of collaborative planning time is not structured or monitored.	The schedule includes time for collaboration for general education, special education, and ESL educators. Use of collaborative planning time is structured and impact on teaching and learning is monitored. <i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i>	The schedule includes time for collaboration for general education, special education, and ESL educators and paraprofessionals. Use of collaborative planning time is structured and systematically evaluated to ensure it helps all educators continually align and improve their practice.
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we create a culture of reflective practice that results in student success? • How do we ensure the effectiveness of our collaborative teams? • How do we define collective responsibility for learning and the actions needed to support it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Master schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Team meeting agendas <input type="checkbox"/> Common assessments <input type="checkbox"/> Data analysis protocol <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups 	

PRACTICE 3: Use a variety of assessments (including diagnostic, formative, and summative) to monitor student learning and adjust programs and instructional practices

FOCUS ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTION	<p>NOT YET EVIDENT</p> <p>A collaborative process to analyze assessment results does not exist. Instruction is rarely, if ever, adjusted based on assessment results.</p>	<p>EMERGING</p> <p>Educators occasionally use a collaborative process to analyze assessment results. Instruction is sometimes adjusted based on the analysis.</p>	<p>OPERATIONAL*</p> <p>A multi-disciplinary team of educators within grade levels and content areas use a systematic, collaborative process to analyze a variety of assessments throughout the school year. Instruction is routinely adjusted based on the analysis.</p> <p><small>*Refer to the <i>Indicators of Operational Implementation</i> document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</small></p>	<p>EXEMPLARY</p> <p>A multi-disciplinary team of educators use a systematic, collaborative process to analyze assessment results within and across grade levels. Programs and instruction are consistently adjusted based on the analysis.</p>
	NOTES / EVIDENCE		GUIDING QUESTIONS	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we know our assessment system effectively measures and informs teaching and learning for all student groups? • How do you ensure that stakeholders understand the purposes and results of assessments? • How do we ensure that decision-making is based on comprehensive data analysis? • How do we involve students in data analysis to answer the questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Where am I now?</i> • <i>Where am I going?</i> • <i>How can I close the gap?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment schedule and samples <input type="checkbox"/> Data analysis protocol <input type="checkbox"/> Data warehouse/data system information <input type="checkbox"/> Examples of student work <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback to students <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plans <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plan, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom visits <input type="checkbox"/> Observations of grade or departmental team meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Student focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey <input type="checkbox"/> Student survey

PRACTICE 4: Identify and address individual student learning needs

FOCUS ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTION	<p>NOT YET EVIDENT</p> <p>Structures, practices, and protocols to support data use, evidence-based instructional strategies, and differentiation do not exist.</p>	<p>EMERGING</p> <p>Structures, practices, and protocols for using data to identify evidence-based strategies and differentiate instruction to address individual students' academic needs exist but are not consistently used or followed.</p>	<p>OPERATIONAL*</p> <p>Structures, practices, and protocols guide educators use of individual student data to identify evidence-based strategies and differentiate instruction to address students' academic needs, resulting in rigorous instruction that meets the needs of each student. Educators regularly collaborate to assess implementation and effectiveness of differentiation strategies.</p> <p><i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for "Look-Fors" aligned to this Essential Practice.</i></p>	<p>EXEMPLARY</p> <p>Structures, practices, and protocols guide educators use of individual student data to identify evidence-based strategies and differentiate instruction to address students' academic and non-academic needs, resulting in classroom instruction that meets the needs of each student. Educators regularly collaborate to assess implementation and effectiveness of individual student support strategies.</p>		
	NOTES / EVIDENCE		GUIDING QUESTIONS		SOURCES OF EVIDENCE	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure that our instructional design meets the needs of all learners? • How do we ensure that school-level systems are used intentionally to support student success? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Data analysis protocol <input type="checkbox"/> Data warehouse/information system <input type="checkbox"/> Examples of student work <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback forms for students <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plans <input type="checkbox"/> Student data notebooks <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plans <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom visits <input type="checkbox"/> Plans/agendas from cross-role meetings about shared students <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Student focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey <input type="checkbox"/> Family survey <input type="checkbox"/> Student survey 	

PRACTICE 5: Provide frequent, timely, and systematic feedback and support on instructional practices

FOCUS ON CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTION	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	Instructional leaders conduct routine classroom observations required for the educator effectiveness system. There is little to no evidence that specific, actionable feedback on the effectiveness of instruction is being provided to individual educators.	Instructional leaders conduct routine classroom observations as part of the educator effectiveness system. There is some evidence of timely feedback focused on strengthening educators’ instructional practices.	Instructional leaders conduct at least two classroom visits per month – in each classroom – to gauge the quality of instructional practices and provide actionable feedback on the effectiveness of instruction. These data inform the provision of supports for educators, as needed. <i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i>	Instructional leaders conduct weekly or daily classroom visits – in each classroom – focused on strengthening educators’ instructional practices and provide actionable feedback on the quality of instruction to individual educators. These data inform the provision of targeted and individualized supports.
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS		SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure continuous improvement of instructional practices in all classrooms? • How do we ensure instructional leaders are prepared to provide high quality, actionable feedback for all subjects they observe? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator evaluation schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Administrator schedule – time in classrooms <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom observation/visit protocols <input type="checkbox"/> Protocols for feedback discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Input from leaders on their preparedness to give effective feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups: effectiveness of leaders’ feedback 	

CONDITION: Empower Leadership

School leaders establish a culture of collective responsibility for the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of all students (especially students who are economically disadvantaged, students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and other student groups who are historically marginalized); and continuously monitor and improve programmatic, human, and fiscal resources to ensure achievement of school improvement goals.



PRACTICE 6: Foster a culture of high expectations for success for all students, educators, families, and community members

	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	School leaders understand the importance of high expectations for success for all students, but do not implement strategies to ensure a culture of high expectations throughout the school community.	Strategies to ensure a culture of high expectations for student success are evident in some, but not all, aspects of the school community.	Strategies to ensure a culture of high expectations for success for all students are pervasive throughout the school community. <i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i>	The entire school community is held accountable for ensuring that all students achieve the rigorous outcomes established for them.
EMPOWER LEADERSHIP	NOTES / EVIDENCE		GUIDING QUESTIONS	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we ensure that high expectations are being implemented throughout the school community? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School mission and vision <input type="checkbox"/> Lesson plans <input type="checkbox"/> Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) <input type="checkbox"/> Language Instruction Educational Programs (LIEPs) <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting agendas and minutes <input type="checkbox"/> Current school plan <input type="checkbox"/> Staff, student, and family handbooks <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom visits <input type="checkbox"/> Communications with families <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Student focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey <input type="checkbox"/> Family survey <input type="checkbox"/> Student survey

PRACTICE 7: Collectively shape the vision for continuous improvement of teaching and learning

EMPOWER LEADERSHIP	<p>NOT YET EVIDENT</p> <p>The school has a loosely defined theory of action or vision along with established goals and interim benchmarks to guide dramatic school improvement, but the goals and benchmarks are not used to inform the school's work.</p>	<p>EMERGING</p> <p>The school has a defined theory of action or vision along with established goals and interim benchmarks, but a sense of ownership for the success of all students lies primarily with school leaders and some staff.</p>	<p>OPERATIONAL*</p> <p>The school has a defined theory of action or vision along with established goals and interim benchmarks to drive priorities related to improvement efforts. These goals and benchmarks are understood and implemented consistently by most staff. The school's theory of action or vision aligns with the district's vision.</p> <p><small>*Refer to the <i>Indicators of Operational Implementation</i> document for "Look-Fors" aligned to this Essential Practice.</small></p>	<p>EXEMPLARY</p> <p>The school has a defined theory of action or vision driving the priorities related to improvement efforts. The goals and interim benchmarks are used to consistently monitor progress (e.g., at least once a month), and identify and prioritize the next level of work by all staff.</p>	
	NOTES / EVIDENCE		GUIDING QUESTIONS		SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure continuous improvement of teaching and learning? • How do we stay focused on achieving our desired results? • How do we ensure that all stakeholders understand and commit to attaining our school's vision? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School mission and vision <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting agendas and minutes <input type="checkbox"/> Current school plan <input type="checkbox"/> Observations of decision-making process <input type="checkbox"/> Interview with school leader <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Student focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey <input type="checkbox"/> Family survey

PRACTICE 8: Build leadership capacity and empower staff in the development and successful implementation of initiatives that better serve students, staff, and the school

EMPOWER LEADERSHIP	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	School leaders frequently make unilateral decisions, regarding school operations, school culture, and student achievement.	School leaders articulate the importance of building a sense of empowerment among staff, but only sporadically incorporates activities, tools, and protocols to develop empowerment among staff in shared decision-making or problem-solving.	School leaders actively model behaviors that promote a sense of empowerment among staff to engage in shared decision- making and problem-solving and to build their leadership capacities. <i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i>	School leaders empower staff to assume responsibility for making decisions regarding school operations, school culture, and student achievement. Extensive structures exist for staff to engage in shared decision- making and problem-solving and to build their leadership capacities.
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS		SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we create an environment that supports the growth of leaders in all stakeholder groups? • What specific roles or opportunities do we offer for educators to make decisions, solve problems, or build leadership capacities? • Do a diverse group of educators participate in leadership roles? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School mission and vision <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting agendas and minutes <input type="checkbox"/> Current school plan <input type="checkbox"/> School team and committee list <input type="checkbox"/> Observations of decision-making process <input type="checkbox"/> Interview with school leader <input type="checkbox"/> Collective bargaining agreement describing additional roles <input type="checkbox"/> Communications used to inform educators about leadership opportunities <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plan <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups 	

PRACTICE 9: Organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources aligned with the school improvement plan and needs of the school community

EMPOWER LEADERSHIP	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	The school leader does not connect the use of fiscal capital to school goals. School leaders allocate personnel, resources, and programs based on staff preference as opposed to student needs.	The school leader makes decisions sporadically on the use of available fiscal capital to fund efforts aligned to school-wide goals. School leaders allocate personnel, resources, and programs considering some but not all student needs.	The school leader analyzes and identifies fiscal capital available to the school community throughout the school year, making interim strategic decisions to fund targeted efforts aligned to school-wide goals, considering the needs of all students and staff members. School leaders allocate personnel, resources, and programs based on annual assessment of student needs. <i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i>	The school leader analyzes and identifies fiscal capital available to the school community throughout the school year, making on-going strategic and sustainable decisions to fund targeted efforts aligned to school-wide goals, considering the needs of all students and staff members. School leaders consistently allocate personnel, resources, and programs based on changing student needs.
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure the alignment of programmatic, human, and fiscal resources in support of student success and to address inequities? • How do we determine whether students from low income families or students of color are taught at higher rates by teachers who are inexperienced, out of field, or less effective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School budget <input type="checkbox"/> Master schedule/staff assignments <input type="checkbox"/> Protocols for assigning teachers and students to classes <input type="checkbox"/> Protocols for problem-solving meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups 	

PRACTICE 10: Continuously monitor implementation of the school improvement plan and adjust as needed

EMPOWER LEADERSHIP	<p>NOT YET EVIDENT</p> <p>The goals and strategies of the school improvement plan are rarely monitored.</p>	<p>EMERGING</p> <p>School leaders occasionally monitor the goals and strategies of the school improvement plan.</p>	<p>OPERATIONAL*</p> <p>School leaders and staff regularly monitor the goals and strategies of the school improvement plan to evaluate the impact on student performance. Adjustments are made to the plan, as needed, based on the analysis of data.</p> <p><i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i></p>	<p>EXEMPLARY</p> <p>School leaders, staff, and other stakeholders continuously monitor the goals and strategies of the school improvement plan to evaluate the impact on student performance. Ongoing adjustments are made based on various performance, process, and perception data.</p>
	NOTES / EVIDENCE		GUIDING QUESTIONS	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we gather input and share information from our stakeholders? • How do we ensure that decision-making is based on comprehensive data analysis? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Current school plan <input type="checkbox"/> Meeting agendas and minutes <input type="checkbox"/> Data warehouse/information system <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Student focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey

CONDITION: Provide Student-Centered Support Systems

The school maintains a positive climate conducive to learning. School communities work together to remove barriers to learning and enhance opportunities for academic achievement, social and emotional development, and health and wellness.



PRACTICE 11: Promote and sustain a positive school environment where all members feel welcomed, supported, and safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically

PROVIDE STUDENT-CENTERED SUPPORT SYSTEMS	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	Little or no evidence exists that a culture of trust and respect has been established. Unresolved conflicts interfere with a sense of community.	The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing, and sustaining a positive school climate.	<p>The school demonstrates each of the following evidence-based climate standards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing, and sustaining a positive school climate; 2. A comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage students who have become disengaged; and 3. Practices to promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students. <p><small>*Refer to the <i>Indicators of Operational Implementation</i> document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</small></p>	<p>The school demonstrates each of the following evidence-based climate standards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing, and sustaining a positive school climate; 2. A comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and re-engage students who have become disengaged; 3. Practices to promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students; and 4. Meaningful and engaging practices, activities, and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we create an environment where all school community feel welcome and safe? • How do we ensure that our learning environment supports student success? • How do we ensure that all student groups experience a positive climate and similar classroom management/discipline responses? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom/building posters and publications <input type="checkbox"/> District/school website <input type="checkbox"/> District/school policies <input type="checkbox"/> Campus/building walk-through <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plan, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Student focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey <input type="checkbox"/> Family survey <input type="checkbox"/> Student survey 		

PRACTICE 12: Implement an evidence-based system of schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports

PROVIDE STUDENT-CENTERED SUPPORT SYSTEMS	<p>NOT YET EVIDENT</p> <p>There is no evidence of a schoolwide behavior plan.</p>	<p>EMERGING</p> <p>The schoolwide behavior plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 or fewer clearly defined, positively-stated expectations; • documented system for teaching behavioral expectations to students on an annual basis; • documented system for rewarding student behavior; • documented system for reporting behavioral violations; and • documented system for collecting, analyzing, and using discipline referral data. <p>There is limited evidence of implementation of the schoolwide behavior plan.</p>	<p>OPERATIONAL*</p> <p>The schoolwide behavior plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 or fewer clearly defined, positively- stated expectations; • documented system for teaching behavioral expectations to students on an annual basis; • documented system for rewarding student behavior; • documented system for reporting behavioral violations; and • documented system for collecting, analyzing, and using discipline referral data. <p>Most staff and students can clearly articulate the features of the schoolwide behavior plan.</p> <p><i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i></p>	<p>EXEMPLARY</p> <p>The schoolwide behavior plan includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 or fewer clearly defined, positively- stated expectations; • documented system for teaching behavioral expectations to students on an annual basis; • documented system for rewarding student behavior; • documented system for reporting behavioral violations; and • documented system for collecting, analyzing, and using discipline referral data. <p>All staff implement the procedures outlined in the schoolwide behavior plan. School leaders monitor implementation using data.</p>
	<p>NOTES / EVIDENCE</p>	<p>GUIDING QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we create an environment where all school community feel welcome and safe? • How do we ensure that our learning environment supports student success? • How do we ensure that all student groups experience a positive climate and similar classroom management/discipline responses? 	<p>SOURCES OF EVIDENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Staff, student, and family handbooks <input type="checkbox"/> Behavioral support program/activity information <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional materials <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline referral forms <input type="checkbox"/> Data warehouse/information system <input type="checkbox"/> Positive behavior reinforcement materials <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plan, materials <input type="checkbox"/> School discipline data <input type="checkbox"/> Signs and postings inside and outside school building <input type="checkbox"/> Classroom visits <input type="checkbox"/> Student focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey <input type="checkbox"/> Family survey <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups 	

PRACTICE 13: Implement a multi-tiered system of supports for academics and behavior

PROVIDE STUDENT-CENTERED SUPPORT SYSTEMS	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	The school has established readiness for systems change and determined that MTSS implementation is desirable and feasible, but there is little evidence that implementation has begun.	The school has built an infrastructure that will support effective and efficient service delivery using an MTSS framework.	Effective and efficient practices and processes have been implemented and refined. There is fidelity of MTSS implementation as evidenced by improved outcomes. <i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i>	The school has established a seamless system of integrated service delivery that is sustainable. There is consistent evidence of equitable, efficient, and effective outcomes.
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure that our instructional design meets the needs of all of our learners? • How do we define and ensure high quality instruction in all of our classrooms? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Master schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Tier 1 lesson plan samples <input type="checkbox"/> Tier 2 lesson plan samples <input type="checkbox"/> Tier 3 lesson plan samples <input type="checkbox"/> Student learning data <input type="checkbox"/> Research/rationale for selection of interventions <input type="checkbox"/> Screening instruments <input type="checkbox"/> MTSS team meeting agendas and notes <input type="checkbox"/> Progress monitoring instruments <input type="checkbox"/> Team meeting agendas <input type="checkbox"/> School calendar of events <input type="checkbox"/> District/school website <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plan, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Student focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey <input type="checkbox"/> Family survey 	

PRACTICE 14: Implement evidence-based strategies to engage families to support learning

Types of Engagement:

1. Assist families in providing housing, health, nutrition, clothing, and safety and developing the skills of families for all age levels.
2. Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children’s progress.
3. Recruit and organize family volunteer opportunities.
4. Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.
5. Include families in school decisions, developing family leaders and representatives.
6. Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

PROVIDE STUDENT-CENTERED SUPPORT SYSTEMS	<p>NOT YET EVIDENT</p> <p>There is little to no evidence that the school makes family engagement a priority.</p>	<p>EMERGING</p> <p>Strategies to engage families are evident, but implementation is inconsistent.</p>	<p>OPERATIONAL*</p> <p>Strategies to engage families are evident across the school community. There is some evidence of monitoring and evaluation of implementation and impact of family engagement strategies.</p> <p><i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i></p>	<p>EXEMPLARY</p> <p>Strategies to engage families are evident across the school community. Stakeholders are continuously engaged in assessing the needs of students and families, evaluating implementation and outcomes of family engagement strategies, and adjusting family engagement strategies as needed.</p>
	NOTES / EVIDENCE		GUIDING QUESTIONS	SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we use a variety of tools and approaches to reach all stakeholders? • How do we ensure that all communication is responsive to the diversity of our stakeholders? • How do we ensure that families are integral parts of our learning community? • How do we invite and involve families to support student success? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Team meeting agendas <input type="checkbox"/> School calendar of events <input type="checkbox"/> District/school website <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plan, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Student focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey <input type="checkbox"/> Family survey

PRACTICE 15: Partner with local businesses, community organizations, and other agencies to meet the needs of the school

PROVIDE STUDENT-CENTERED SUPPORT SYSTEMS	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	The school lacks established strategies and procedures for partnering with local businesses, community organizations, and other agencies to meet the needs of the school.	The school has a plan for increasing partnerships with local businesses, community organizations, and other agencies but inconsistently follows plan or the plan is not clearly aligned to the needs of the school.	The school implements strategies for partnering with local businesses, community organizations, and other agencies aligned to the needs of the school. The school plan explicitly outlines the role of community partners in helping to achieve specific results. <i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i>	The school consistently engages in strategies, policies, and procedures for partnering with local businesses, community organizations, and other agencies aligned to the needs of the school. The school plan explicitly outlines the role of community partners in helping to achieve specific results. School personnel and community partners assess the effectiveness of their relationships on a regular basis to continuously improve opportunities and supports.
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS		SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we use a variety of approaches and tools to reach all stakeholders? • How do we ensure that all communication is responsive to the diversity of our stakeholders? • How do we ensure that community partners are integral parts of our learning community? • How do we invite and involve community partners to support student success? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Team meeting agendas <input type="checkbox"/> District/school events calendar <input type="checkbox"/> District/school website <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plan, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Student focus groups 	

CONDITION: Foster Quality Professional Learning

School leaders, educators, and support staff acquire, enhance, and refine the knowledge, skills and practices necessary to create and support high levels of learning for all students through high-quality, embedded professional learning opportunities.



PRACTICE 16: Identify professional learning needs through analysis of a variety of data

FOSTER QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	Professional learning needs are determined based upon school leaders', educators' and staff interests and preferences, with little or no analysis of data.	Professional learning needs are identified using limited sources of data.	Professional learning needs are identified using a variety of data (e.g., student achievement and growth data; examination of student work; process data; teacher and leader effectiveness data; perception data from students, staff, and families). <i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for "Look-Fors" aligned to this Essential Practice.</i>	Professional learning needs are identified and differentiated through a collaborative analysis process that includes school leaders, educators, and staff using a variety of data (e.g., student achievement and growth data; examination of student work; process data; teacher and leader effectiveness data; perception data from students, staff, and families).
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS		SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do we use data and the school improvement process to identify professional learning needs? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning needs assessment results <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plan, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Samples of staff member professional goals <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol used to select facilitators/vendors <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey

PRACTICE 17: Use multiple professional learning designs to support the learning needs of staff

FOSTER QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	Educators and support staff receive single, stand-alone professional learning that are informational and mostly large-group presentation designs.	Some educators and support staff are engaged in professional learning that makes use of more than one learning design to address their identified needs.	Educators and support staff actively participate in professional learning, most of which is job- embedded and includes multiple designs (e.g., collaborative lesson study, analysis of student work, problem-solving sessions, curriculum development, coursework, action research, classroom visits, online networks) to support their various learning needs. <i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i>	School leaders, educators and support staff actively participate in job-embedded professional learning that engages collaborative teams in a variety of appropriate learning designs (e.g., collaborative lesson study, analysis of student work, problem solving sessions, curriculum development, coursework, action research, classroom visits, online networks).
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS		SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we create opportunities for differentiated professional learning? • How do we ensure that professional learning is ongoing and job-embedded to support the needs of staff and students? • How do we ensure staff is engaged in individual and group reflection, allowing them to share new learning and revise their practices? • How do we ensure we meet the professional learning needs of new staff and less effective staff? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plan, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey 	

PRACTICE 18: Monitor and evaluate the impact of professional learning on staff practices and student learning

FOSTER QUALITY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL*	EXEMPLARY
	Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices rarely occurs.	Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices occurs sporadically.	Professional learning includes some follow-up with feedback and coaching. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices and student learning occurs routinely. <i>*Refer to the Indicators of Operational Implementation document for “Look-Fors” aligned to this Essential Practice.</i>	Professional learning includes extensive follow-up with descriptive feedback and coaching. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices and increases in student learning occurs extensively.
	NOTES / EVIDENCE	GUIDING QUESTIONS		SOURCES OF EVIDENCE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we ensure that professional learning is implemented with fidelity and positively impacts student achievement? • How do we measure indicators of educator practice and student outcomes that specifically align with goals for professional learning activities? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Professional learning plan, materials <input type="checkbox"/> Data used to measure educator practice and student outcomes aligned with goals for professional learning activities <input type="checkbox"/> Educator focus groups <input type="checkbox"/> Educator survey

Last revised August 2021.

Indicators of Operational Implementation

CONDITION:

Focus on Continuous Improvement of Instruction



PRACTICE 1: Align curriculum, assessments, and instruction to the PA Standards

LOOK-FORS:

- A systematic and documented process is used to collaboratively review the school's curriculum for alignment to state standards, district curriculum, and student needs.
- The school's instructional materials and assessments are aligned to the PA Standards in every subject to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment by grade level.
- Curriculum documents and lesson plans include guidance for accommodations and modifications for all learners.
- IEPs and ELD plans reflect alignment to grade level standards and curriculum.
- School leaders are knowledgeable about PA Standards and the implications for teaching and learning.
- A written document articulating the school-wide model of instruction is in place.
- The standards-aligned curriculum is delivered with fidelity to all students.
- Lesson plans clearly reference grade-level, standards-aligned curriculum and reflect high expectations for all students.
- All instructional staff have access to curriculum-related materials and the training necessary to use curricular and data resources relating to the learning goals for the school.
- There is evidence of ongoing schoolwide dialogue about standards, instruction, and assessment with a focus on integrating the use of research-based practices.
- Educators frequently use the resources related to the PA Standards available on the SAS Portal.
- Classroom assessments are periodically reviewed to ensure alignment to grade-level expectations and learning targets and consistently measure intended outcomes.
- Classroom assessments evaluate student learning at a level of rigor comparable to the cognitive/performance level required by the PA Standards.

PRACTICE 2: Use systematic, collaborative planning processes to ensure instruction is coordinated, aligned, and evidence-based

LOOK-FORS:

- Policies and structures allow educators both individual and collaborative time weekly to use data and plan to meet student learning goals, cultivating mutual respect and collegiality among staff.
- Policies and structures support regular collaborative instructional planning between general and special educators, related service providers and paraprofessionals.
- Protocols for collaboration and evaluation of instructional effectiveness focus on planning and delivering grade-level, standards-aligned instruction.
- School leaders hold educators accountable for planning, teaching, and assessing in ways that promote student learning.
- Teachers have regular times to meet and discuss effective instructional practices (e.g. lesson study, professional learning communities).
- Time and support are available for individual and collective reflection and adjustment as well as shared learning and professional learning, to facilitate responsiveness to student needs.
- School and classroom assessments are vertically and horizontally aligned for coherence across grades and content areas.
- IEPs reflect integrated information, services and data from general educators, special educators and related service providers about how access to general curriculum will be provided.
- ELD plans reflect integrated information, services and data from general educators and ESL educators about how access to general curriculum will be provided.
- School leaders and educators engage in regular discussions of student learning expectations, both horizontally (with colleagues in their grades or subjects) and vertically (across grades).
- Systems are in place for educators to develop and share standards-aligned instructional materials and resources.
- Teacher teams regularly evaluate the impact of classroom instruction on student learning, and on addressing educational disparities across student groups.

PRACTICE 3: Use a variety of assessments (including diagnostic, formative, and summative) to monitor student learning and adjust programs and instructional practices

LOOK-FORS:

- The school has a documented system for collecting and analyzing data on a pre-determined schedule.
- There is a clear structure for schoolwide and classroom data teams that outlines processes for ongoing data use.
- The school implements a balanced assessment system and ensures that summative and ongoing formative assessments are aligned to curriculum and instruction.
- District, school, and classroom assessments are vertically and horizontally aligned for coherence across grades and content areas.
- Classroom assessments are aligned to the depth of knowledge required to demonstrate proficiency with standards.
- Grade levels and departments use common assessments and scoring guides to ensure fidelity to curriculum and consistent performance expectations.
- Lesson plans include planned formative assessment strategies at multiple points in the instructional process.
- Multiple sources of individual and disaggregated student group data are routinely analyzed to identify student needs, evaluate classroom practices, and modify instruction.
- Educators continually monitor and adjust instruction and content based on multiple checks for understanding.
- The school uses a data system and all staff are trained to use it.
- Processes and protocols guide and facilitate stakeholders' collection, analysis, review and use of student assessment data.
- The school community uses data and research to drive decisions and measure progress toward school improvement goals.
- Professional learning is focused on building the capacity of staff and other stakeholders to use data for decision-making (e.g., use of data for classroom instructional planning and for monitoring of student learning progress and disparities).
- Parents/guardians read school/district data reports to make informed decisions and provide input in schoolwide decisions.

PRACTICE 4: Identify and address individual student learning needs

LOOK-FORS:

- An effective process to identify and provide extensive support to students having trouble meeting standards is in place.
- Lesson plans and observational data show evidence of instructional planning that includes consideration of individual student needs.
- Educators provide multiple options for students to demonstrate what they know and can do related to standards-aligned goals and learning targets.
- Educators exhibit instructional flexibility and responsiveness that allows for timely adjustments based on student needs.
- The school provides opportunities for students performing at grade level and beyond to ensure their learning is challenging, engaging, and sustained.
- Written goals are established for each student in terms of their performance on state/district assessments, diagnostic assessments, benchmark or formative assessments, or common assessments.
- Educators share learning targets, performance requirements, and assessment results in student-friendly language.
- Educators provide students with regular and timely descriptive feedback to help them improve their performance.
- The school uses a variety of materials, curricula, and academic tasks that are responsive to the range of student needs.
- Educators implement a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to meet the needs of students who are non-English-speaking and/or who have limited English proficiency.
- Educators implement a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
- Educators prepare and guide paraprofessionals to provide appropriate levels of support needed for individual students.
- Educators explain and interpret data in ways that are helpful to students and families for understanding student progress.
- Students track and use their own achievement data to monitor, evaluate, and reflect on how to improve their performance.

PRACTICE 5: Provide frequent, timely, and systematic feedback and support on instructional practices

LOOK-FORS:

- School leaders engage in ongoing (weekly and daily) observations and formal and informal visits in classrooms, followed by the timely provision of constructive feedback to educators.
- School leaders collaborate with educators on the best way to provide feedback on strengths and areas for growth.
- School leaders provide targeted instructional guidance, support, and feedback to educators.
- Individual teachers have written pedagogical growth goals.
- Meetings are regularly scheduled with teachers regarding their growth goals and tracking of their progress.
- School leaders utilize effective processes to help all educators improve effectiveness of teaching and learning for students in all groups and at all levels of academic performance.
- School leaders recognize and encourage implementation of instructional practices that best motivate and increase student achievement.
- School leaders routinely monitor the use of school and classroom-level assessments and provide ongoing feedback to ensure educators use high quality assessment practices.
- School leaders understand what is required to implement a rigorous cycle of teaching and learning and guide practices and processes for systemic implementation.
- School leaders are aware of predominant instructional practices throughout the school.
- School leaders and educators understand expectations and the school's observation, monitoring, and feedback systems.
- Educators in all areas of assignment report the usefulness of focused feedback from supervisors, staff and/or colleagues. This applies to educators in all subjects, including special education, ESL, and electives.
- When asked, educators can describe their progress on their pedagogical growth goals.
- When asked, educators can share documented examples of how reflection has improved their instructional practice.

Pennsylvania Essential Practices for Schools: Indicators of Operational Implementation

CONDITION:

Empower Leadership



PRACTICE 6: Foster a culture of high expectations for success for all students, educators, families, and community members

LOOK-FORS:

- High expectations for learning and growth of all students are reflected in clear, measurable goals.
- Regardless of culture, ability, life experience, socioeconomic status, or primary language, each student is expected to master grade-level expectations.
- Written goals are established for eliminating achievement gaps.
- School leaders and educators develop and regularly communicate high expectations and goals for student and school outcomes, emphasizing all staff members' roles and accountabilities.
- The school community works actively to identify and confront policies, practices and cultures that keep students of different backgrounds and races from achieving equitable outcomes.
- School leaders proactively recognize quality teaching and establish it as an example of expected performance.
- The school community holds every member responsible and accountable for ensuring that all students achieve the rigorous outcomes established for them.
- Educators include high expectations and academic rigor for all students in their instructional planning.
- Educators hold students accountable for producing quality work and provide students with quality criteria (indicators of mastery) and support.

PRACTICE 7: Collectively shape the vision for continuous improvement of teaching and learning

LOOK-FORS:

- School leaders work collaboratively with stakeholders to develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate a well-articulated school improvement plan aligned to the established vision, mission and school needs.
- The vision is clear and strategies are evidence-based.
- The school plan team is representative of the school and community.
- Measurable short- and long-term goals are clearly articulated for the whole school, as well as student groups (especially students who are economically disadvantaged, students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and other student groups who are historically marginalized).
- The school plan is reviewed and revised annually to reflect current needs of the school community.
- School leaders create systems and engage parents/guardians and all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success reflecting the community's vision of the school.
- The school community maintains a consistent process for ensuring that the school's vision and mission drive decisions, school-level processes, practices, and classroom activities and inform the culture of the school.
- School leaders continually and consistently articulate the vision during all meetings and interactions with internal and external stakeholders.

PRACTICE 8: Build leadership capacity and empower staff in the development and successful implementation of initiatives that better serve students, staff, and the school

LOOK-FORS:

- There is a building-wide decision-making process with protocols that is shared and understood by stakeholders.
- Leadership is intentionally developed and distributed among individuals and teams (e.g., building leadership team, data teams, teacher leaders, committees) to foster shared ownership of school success.
- The development and distribution of leadership is clearly understood, equitable, and transparent.
- All staff have awareness of and the opportunity for leadership roles within the school.
- Stakeholders view school leaders as inclusive, facilitative leaders.
- Students serve on committees/student government and contribute to decisions regarding programs, services, and day-to-day operations of the school.
- High performing educators report satisfaction with available leadership opportunities.

PRACTICE 10: Continuously monitor implementation of the school improvement plan and adjust as needed

LOOK-FORS:

- A clear system has been developed to gather and analyze data on implementation and outcomes of the major components of the school plan.
- Leadership teams are committed to improving student learning and implementing the vision and goals of the school through on-going inquiry and reflection.
- Consistently implement a process for monitoring, revising, and implementing the School Improvement Plan with shared responsibilities for all stakeholder groups.
- The school community monitors and provides feedback within the school, and to the district, about the implementation of curriculum, assessment, and instructional practices.

PRACTICE 9: Organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources aligned with the school improvement plan and needs of the school community

LOOK-FORS:

- There is evidence of a systematic and transparent process for reviewing and allocating resources to most effectively support school needs.
- Multiple sources of data are used to prioritize resource allocations.
- The school community evaluates school needs, using a robust data-based decision-making process, and include sufficient time for staff input into the whole process.
- Students and schools with high needs are a priority when budget and resource allocation decisions are made.
- School leaders ensure ongoing communication between the school and district, as well as within the school, regarding the need, availability, and allocation of resources.
- Instructional and non-instructional staff are allocated and organized based upon the learning needs of all students, and not primarily based upon requests from staff or families.
- Leaders intentionally assign experienced, in-field and highly effective educators to students who are economically disadvantaged, students of color, and/or performing below grade level.
- Budgets and purchasing records reflect equitable allocation of resources.
- Working within district guidelines, school administrators identify, assign, promote, and retain those with qualifications and proven results in serving the school's mission.
- School leaders strategically coordinate and monitor spending of required and discretionary funds to align with identified student needs.
- School leaders integrate school, district, and community resources to maximize the efficiency of school operations.

Pennsylvania Essential Practices for Schools: Indicators of Operational Implementation

CONDITION:

Provide Student-Centered Supports



PRACTICE 11: Promote and sustain a positive school environment where all members feel welcomed, supported, and safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically

LOOK-FORS:

- Adult-student, adult-adult, and student-student interactions are positive, caring, and respectful.
- The school intentionally creates opportunities for students to build positive relationships with peers.
- Stakeholders collaboratively develop, publicize, and model codes of conduct that support positive and sustained school climate.
- The school uses multiple evidence-based methods of collecting data, such as surveys, observational methods responding to behavioral violations, and behavior reports, that recognize the range of factors that shape school climate (e.g., social norms, school connectedness, sense of safety, discipline, learning/teaching, leadership, absence rates and mobility), shares the results regularly with the school community, and monitors student/staff feedback on school culture for disparities across groups.
- Policies, mission, and vision statements that promote social, emotional, ethical, and civic, as well as intellectual, skills and dispositions are developed and institutionalized.
- Policies promote curriculum content, continued monitoring and standards for social, emotional, ethical, and civic learning and are fully integrated into the classroom and school in ways that align with 21st century learning and with students' prevailing cultures, circumstances, and languages.
- Leadership and staff are provided continuous professional development to develop and sustain practices related to national school climate standards.
- Discipline procedures are aligned with the goals of supporting students in their learning and being respectful of all individuals; the goals are enhanced with authentic student-driven opportunities for reconciliation when appropriate.
- There are clear procedures for reporting and responding to safety concerns.
- Stakeholders have a desire and the ability to share their perceptions readily (e.g., enter into dialogue with adults and peers at school), emphasize interests and needs, stress options and choices and a meaningful role in decision making, provide enrichment opportunities, provide a continuum of guidance and support and minimize coercive interactions.
- Stakeholders perceive the school as warm, inviting, and helpful.

PRACTICE 12: Implement an evidence-based system of schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports

LOOK-FORS:

- Five or fewer positively stated schoolwide behavioral expectations are clearly posted throughout the school.
- There is a documented system for teaching behavioral expectations on an annual basis.
- There is a documented system for rewarding positive student behavior.
- There is a documented system for responding to behavioral violations.
- Discipline referral forms include (a) student name, (b) grade, (c) date, (d) time, (e) time, (f) referring staff name, (g) problem behavior, (h) location, (i) persons involved, (j) probable motivation, and (k) administrative decision.
- The school implements systems for collecting and analyzing discipline referrals.
- Discipline referral data are used to make decisions about design, implementation, and evaluation of schoolwide behavioral supports.
- A schoolwide team manages the design, delivery, and evaluation of behavior support systems in the school.
- Arrival, dismissal, and other schoolwide transitions are safe, efficient, and orderly.
- School leaders provide data summary reports to school community at least three times per year.
- Educators maximize instructional time through well-managed classroom routines.
- Behavioral expectations are explicitly taught, clearly understood, and consistently reinforced in classrooms.
- Educators use evidence-based classroom management strategies with fidelity to support positive behavior for all students as well as to intervene with challenging behaviors.

PRACTICE 13: Implement a multi-tiered system of supports for academics and behavior

LOOK-FORS:

- A core MTSS team leads and manages the MTSS for the school.
- All students are screened a minimum of three times per year.
- Screening instruments used are brief, have standardized administration and scoring rules, predict student performance on established benchmarks, and are technically adequate.
- School resources and staff are strategically aligned and matched to students needs based on screening and progress monitoring data.
- Continuous progress monitoring drives instructional decision-making and tiered movement.
- Tiers 2 and 3 are different in terms of instructional intensity, individualized problem-solving, and exist as part of the general education system and are supplemental to core instruction.
- All intervention models, programs, or strategies are evidence-based and delivered to meet the individual learning needs of students.
- The school systematically monitors attendance, dropout rates, and promotion/graduation rates to identify trends.
- The school routinely monitors tiered supports and interventions to ensure they are delivered with fidelity and provide feedback regarding effective implementation.
- The school actively monitors student achievement, student assessments, instruction, and effectiveness of tiered responses to student needs throughout the school.
- Educators develop skills relative to differentiating instruction and providing all students, including students with complex support needs, with meaningful access to high expectations, rigor, and grade level standards/curriculum.
- Parents/guardians report their school has programs in place to help their child meet their achievement goals.
- Decisions are made without delay; low percentages of failed RtI; more students responding well to less intensive instructional efforts (efficiency).
- Patterns show improved performance on benchmark, diagnostic, or formative assessments (efficacy).
- Students who are more vulnerable are showing reduced risk and greater achievement; results are comparable across grades and classrooms (equity).

PRACTICE 14: Implement evidence-based strategies to engage families to support learning

LOOK-FORS:

- The school maintains clear policies and processes for researching and applying best practice, familial engagement strategies and activities.
- The school provides numerous formal and informal opportunities for families to interact with the school in meaningful ways.
- The school has an active family partnerships team that reflects the diversity of the student population and leads the school's family engagement strategies.
- Translations of relevant documents and translators for key events and interactions (e.g., parent/teacher conversations) are evident.
- Professional learning helps educators learn how to meaningfully engage and empower families.
- School leaders and educators make themselves available to work with families in addressing student needs.
- Programs are provided for families that are age appropriate to their students' social, academic, and developmental needs (e.g., enhancing literary experiences, giving appropriate assistance and encouragement, monitoring homework).
- The school regularly shares data through various parent-friendly venues.
- The school uses structured, ongoing, systematic processes for communicating with and soliciting feedback from families (e.g., emails, surveys, polls).
- The school respects family contexts, preferences, and cultural traditions.
- The school extends opportunities for family learning by partnering with agencies, business and/or organizations (e.g., local libraries, community colleges, businesses, museums, parks, camps, virtual/online partners, and other venues).
- The school tracks rates of family engagement in various partnership activities to ensure that all groups are able to participate.

PRACTICE 15: Partner with local businesses, community organizations, and other agencies to meet the needs of the school

LOOK-FORS:

- The school community systematically collects and reviews data about community interests and needs as well as the environment in which the local school resides.
- School leaders effectively devote appropriate financial resources and personnel to community partnership efforts.
- The school provides a broad spectrum of forums for two-way communication opportunities with the community through newspapers, school report cards, meetings, announcements, and a consistently updated website.
- Interdisciplinary, cross-sector community partners share responsibility and accountability for student and school success.
- Partners are active at the school (e.g., attendance at leadership meetings).
- Partners have experience aligning school-day and out-of-school time learning experiences.
- The school collaborates with the community to provide opportunities for all students to know and experience potential career choices.
- MOUs define agreements between the school and its partners, including desired results.
- The school's and partners' goals and priorities reflect one another.
- Data are collected on how well partners meet their goals and objectives as stated in school improvement plan.

Pennsylvania Essential Practices for Schools: Indicators of Operational Implementation

CONDITION:

Foster Quality Professional Learning



PRACTICE 16: Identify professional learning needs through analysis of a variety of data

LOOK-FORS:

- The school conducts a comprehensive needs assessment to develop a plan for professional learning based on the needs of students and adults within the school.
- Professional learning is differentiated to support the professional growth of instructional staff, support staff, and school leadership.
- School leaders have a professional learning plan focused on the development of effective leadership skills.
- School leaders use a needs-aligned protocol to select vendors/facilitators for professional learning.
- School leaders create opportunities for professional growth for all staff members, based on walk-through data, formal evaluations, and/or self-reflection, that allow all staff to improve their teaching craft and encourage the development of leadership skills.
- All educators and support staff have a professional learning plan focused on evidence-based practices.

PRACTICE 18: Monitor and evaluate the impact of professional learning on staff practices and student learning

LOOK-FORS:

- Professional learning opportunities are routinely evaluated for relevance, usefulness, and effectiveness in improving professional practice and in meeting student outcome goals.
- Data are collected linking the effectiveness of professional learning to the improvement of teacher practices.
- Professional learning opportunities include a demonstration of gains in educator skills/knowledge (e.g., submission of sample lesson plans, observation of practice).
- Provide clear expectations for implementing new skills and practices with fidelity.
- School leaders track educator participation in professional learning activities.
- Stakeholders can describe how the professional learning supports their attainment of instructional growth goals.

PRACTICE 17: Use multiple professional learning designs to support the learning needs of staff

LOOK-FORS:

- Professional learning opportunities frequently model evidence-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment strategies to support student learning and respond to the identified needs in the school.
- School leaders and educators engage in ongoing, job-embedded professional learning opportunities (including coaching) aligned with school improvement priorities.
- Professional learning promotes independent and group reflection that enable educators to share innovations and revise classroom practices.
- Educators have opportunities to engage in instructional rounds.
- Educators have opportunities to view and discuss video-based examples of exemplary teaching.
- Coaches have the technical knowledge and skills to work successfully with staff members and are held accountable for helping staff improve educators' ability to impact student learning and close gaps.
- Stakeholders report that professional learning opportunities:
 - Have periodic follow-up throughout the school year;
 - Include enough time to think carefully about, try, and evaluate new ideas;
 - Are closely connected to my school's improvement plan;
 - Include opportunities to work productively with colleagues in my school;
 - Include opportunities to work productively with teachers from other schools;
 - Provide opportunities for analyzing student work; and
 - Are integrated/linked with my daily lessons/curricula.
- Staff agreement with the previous indicators is fairly consistent across groups of teachers (e.g., subject area, experience level).

Last revised 10/2021.



PA Essential Practices Self-Assessment Guide

*Every school. Every step.
Every student succeeds.*

INTRODUCTION

There is a substantive evidence base identifying explicit conditions and practices that are most critical for improved teaching and learning for all students. Drawing from decades of school improvement research, lessons from leading states and reflections on successes and challenges in our local statewide system of support, Pennsylvania’s school improvement efforts will enhance our approach to school improvement beginning with a more robust focus on essential conditions observed in schools that have shown significant and sustained gains in student achievement:

- Employ intentional practices for improving instruction;
- Establish a school-wide community of practice through leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration;
- Provide student-specific academic, social, emotional, and behavioral supports to all students; and
- Provide evidence-based, job-embedded professional learning for all leadership and staff.

Through a [pilot in Spring 2018](#), the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and 19 schools across three diverse districts (Allentown School District, Juniata County School District and Pittsburgh Public Schools) field-tested tools and a process to improve our capacity to diagnose and correct the systemic issues that undergird the performance challenges in individual schools. Through authentic collaboration with Superintendents from these three districts and their teams, we explored the following:

- A more robust approach to assessing the conditions and practices associated with rapid and sustained improvement in teaching and learning;
- Integrating state-level initiatives within the context of current district systems and priorities; and
- Authentic empowerment of district and school communities to prioritize improvement efforts that are most pressing for the students they serve.

Feedback from pilot participants contributed to the final design of a rubric for measuring current implementation of 18 essential practices, as well as an evidence-based self-assessment process completed by a committee of diverse stakeholders and relies on data from a variety of sources to ensure an objective and reliable assessment.

This guidebook, the PA Essential Practices for Schools and their Communities rubric (Appendix A) and supplemental materials (Appendix B & C) are designed to improve the focus of the comprehensive needs assessment in two key ways:

- Improve our capacity to diagnose and correct the systemic issues that undergird performance challenges in individual schools; and
- Increase the efficiency and efficacy of school improvement efforts and sustain progress over time.

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PA ESSENTIAL PRACTICES FOR SCHOOLS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

The purpose of the PA Essential Practices for Schools and their Communities is to provide formative feedback and inform school improvement efforts. The data gathered through the Essential Practices Assessment process will help schools and local education agencies (LEAs) understand the current status of the implementation of evidence-based practices that foster sustained improvement in teaching and learning for all students and assist school communities in identifying priorities for improvement that will lead to improved teaching and learning for all students.

While the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) highly encourages all schools to use the PA Essential Practices for Schools and their Communities, schools designated for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Title I schools designated for Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (A-TSI), and the districts that support and manage them, are required to use the PA Essential Practices for Schools as an integral part of a comprehensive needs assessment.

The PA Essential Practices for Schools and their Communities provides critical information and feedback on the progress districts and schools are making toward improving student outcomes.

- Schools designated for CSI or Title I schools designated for A-TSI will utilize the PA Essential Practices for Schools as part of the comprehensive needs assessment process beginning in the 2018-19 school year.
- Schools will update their Essential Practices Assessment in Spring of each subsequent school year.
- PDE will use the Essential Practices Self-Assessment to inform deployment of support and assess progress over time for CSI and A-TSI schools and their LEAs.

STRUCTURE OF THE ESSENTIAL PRACTICES RUBRIC

The PA Essential Practices for Schools and their Communities is divided into four core conditions:

1. Focus on Continuous Improvement of Instruction;
2. Empower Leadership;
3. Provide Student-Centered Support Systems; and
4. Foster Quality Professional Learning.

Within each condition, discrete essential practices are defined to provide a clear playbook for school leaders in their efforts to establish and maintain these core conditions for success. There are 18 essential practices in total.

For each practice, a rubric is provided to describe the progression of implementation across a continuum from “not yet evident” to “exemplary”. Although the descriptors within the implementation continuum are unique to each practice, to give you a general sense of the meaning of each of the four implementation stages, Figure 1, below, shows the universal meaning and progression across the implementation continuum.

Figure 1: Universal Meaning and Progression across the Implementation Continuum

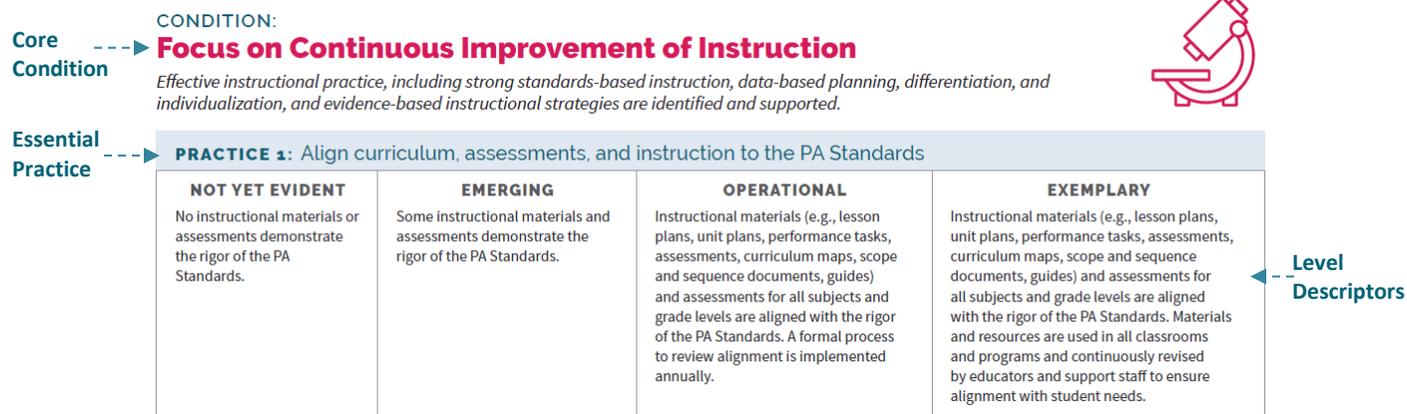
NOT YET EVIDENT	EMERGING	OPERATIONAL	EXEMPLARY
There is little or no evidence of implementation.	Initial steps to implement the practice have occurred and generated some evidence of implementation in a few areas.	The practice is implemented consistently and has generated evidence of implementation throughout the district.	The practice is implemented at a high level; there is evidence of continuous improvement of the practice, yielding evidence of more equitable results.

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Each practice also defines discrete **indicators**, further defining specific pieces of each practice along the implementation continuum.

Figure 2, below, illustrates the overall structure of the rubric, including a core condition, an essential practice, the implementation continuum, and implementation level descriptor.

Figure 2: Sample Implementation Continuum for a Specific Essential Practice



PA ESSENTIAL PRACTICES SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The Essential Practices Self-Assessment is a collaboration between school leadership and diverse stakeholders and LEA leadership and staff. The process is designed to determine the current status of implementation of 18 evidence-based practices that foster sustained improvement in teaching and learning for all students in a manner that:

- Promotes shared responsibility for school improvement among a diverse group of stakeholders across the school community; and
- Relies on a comprehensive array of sources of evidence to establish a valid and reliable assessment of a school’s current level of implementation of practices that are fundamental for sustained improvement.

The Essential Practices Self-Assessment is not an evaluation of any one individual or stakeholder group. It is a formative assessment of the school’s current implementation of 18 practices that are essential for sustained improvement in student outcomes. It is important for the school team to keep this in mind and continuously reinforce the school community’s understanding of the purpose of the self-assessment throughout the process.

Prior to conducting the self-assessment, review the listed materials in the following order:

- PA Essential Practices for Schools and their Communities Rubric (Appendix A)
- PA Essential Practices for Schools and their Communities: Quick Reference Guide (Appendix B)
- PA Essential Practices for Schools and their Communities: Indicators of Operational Implementation (Appendix C)

Step 1: Form a Self-Assessment Team

Each school should begin the PA Essential Practices Self-Assessment process by forming a team that will complete the self-assessment process. Please note, the self-assessment team does not necessarily need to be representative of all school stakeholders; the assessment process itself is meant to lift the voices and perspectives of all stakeholder groups through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and site visits.

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The school administrator will form a team of four to six members who will support all self-assessment activities, including:

- Coordination of self-assessment logistics (e.g., scheduling of assessment activities, data and artifact collection, survey administration, determination of interview/focus group questions, etc.);
- Facilitation of interviews and focus groups;
- Note-taking during interviews and focus groups;
- Classroom and building walk-throughs;
- Analysis of evidence to determine current implementation status on the rubric; and
- Documentation of notable observations/comments for each source of evidence that informed rubric ratings.

Step 2: Gather and Analyze Multiple Sources of Data to Prepare for the Self-Assessment

During this step, the self-assessment team will collaboratively collect and organize a variety of sources of evidence. This will include documents like data reports, artifacts, and surveys. Interviews and focus groups will also provide key feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders. Please refer to the “Quick Reference Guide” in Appendix B for possible sources of evidence and data to gather for analysis for each essential practice.

Below is a step-by-step guide to prepare for the self-assessment.

- **Collect a variety of data and artifacts**, using the possible sources of evidence listed in the “Quick Reference Guide” in Appendix B (e.g., curriculum documents, lesson plans, IEPs, ELD plans, curriculum documents shared with families, classroom visit summaries, educator surveys, etc.).
- **Administer surveys to school staff.**

Important note about stakeholder surveys:

Surveys and focus groups are both very effective methods to solicit input from a wide variety of stakeholders. If your LEA already administers surveys to educators, students, and parents/ guardians, your school is encouraged to crosswalk the survey items with the PA Essential Practices for Schools and their Communities and use those items as sources of evidence for the respective practice(s). It is highly recommended that the survey data be no more than one year old. If the surveys were last administered more than one year ago, we encourage you to administer them again prior to engaging in the PA Essential Practices Self-Assessment.

- **Analyze preliminary data and evidence to lift high-level trends and create a snapshot of student performance and the overall state of the school** (e.g., enrollment, teacher retention, stakeholder perceptions, etc.); utilize data analysis findings to identify areas to probe further during remaining self-assessment activities (e.g., interviews, focus groups, and walkthroughs) and identify any gaps in evidence.
- **Schedule focus groups** with teachers, families, students.

Schools can customize questions based on:

- Stakeholder group and/or type of focus group;
- Identified areas to probe further (e.g., areas identified through collection of data and artifacts, through

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- surveys, etc.); and
- Other district contextual factors (e.g., reframe questions using language familiar to the district, etc.

- **Facilitate scheduled focus groups.** The school self-assessment team will conduct stakeholder interviews and focus groups and capture notes from these conversations.

Guidance for facilitating focus groups:

- Depending on the size of the school community, three to five focus groups with students and three to five focus groups with educators should be conducted prior to the PA Essential Practices Self-Assessment.
- The focus groups should be facilitated by neutral individuals who would typically engage in honest discussions about student or educator experiences in the school. For example, school counselors or another adult in the building whom students trust would be the most ideal person to facilitate student focus groups. Lead teachers, mentors, or coaches might be best fit for facilitation of educator focus groups. The presence of rating supervisors in focus groups is discouraged, as this typically compromises focus group discussion and candor.
- When planning for focus groups, keep in mind a plan for following up with communication regarding how the focus group feedback is being used to inform the school planning process.
- Feedback gathered through focus groups should remain anonymous. Focus group data should be presented as high-level themes that emerged across focus groups. If a direct quote would be a powerful piece of evidence, do not attach a name or any other information that can be traced back to the individual who provided it.

- **Gather walk-through data representative of all school types and grade levels within the district.** Coordinate with principals to ensure school staff is aware of the walk-through and its purpose (e.g., non-evaluative, informing a district continuous improvement planning process, etc.).

Step 3: Self-Assess Current Implementation Using the Essential Practices for Schools Rubric

- **Each member of the self-assessment team completes an individual, anonymous self-assessment.** PDE recommends that the self-assessment team members complete an individual, anonymous self-assessments of the PA Essential Practices for Schools Rubric (see Appendix A) prior to the group self-assessment. This allows time for individual members to learn the contents of the rubric and prepare initial thoughts about their own perceptions of the school's current implementation of each of the 18 essential practices. *Please see guidance on how to rate implementation using the PA Essential Practices for Schools Rubric below.*

Identify a point person to collect and collate the individual committee member responses and summarize ratings (e.g., tallies sheet, synthesize rubric, etc.) in each implementation level for each practice prior to the scheduled PA Essential Practices for Schools Self-Assessment.

- **Assign self-assessment roles.** On the day of the scheduled PA Essential Practices Self-Assessment, it is important to identify members of the self-assessment team who will serve in the following roles:
 - **Facilitator:** Person responsible for guiding the self-assessment team through review of relevant sources of evidence and discussion of agreed-upon rating for each of the 18 essential practices. The Facilitator will likely be the principal or identified designee.
 - **Note-taker:** Person responsible for capturing key points of discussion about the evidence for each of the 18 essential practices, as well as the group’s agreed-upon rating for each practice.
 - **Curator of evidence:** Person responsible for organizing and ensuring the committee’s access to the possible sources of evidence for each essential practice as the group moves from one practice to the next.

- **Conduct the self-assessment with the full self-assessment team** using the PA Essential Practice for Schools Rubric and following the process recommended below.

RECOMMENDED SELF-ASSESSMENT PROCESS	GUIDANCE
1. Share the goals, purpose, and process for the self-assessment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforce that this is a formative assessment of the district’s current status of implementation, not an evaluation or indictment of any one individual or stakeholder group. • Establish norms for engagement in the self-assessment that create conditions for safe, open discussion about what the sources of evidence suggest about the current implementation of each practice. • Keep the group focused on the sources of evidence, not anecdotal perceptions.
2. Start with Practice 1. Review the Rubric indicators for the selected essential practice at each level of the implementation continuum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the “Quick Reference Guide” (Appendix B) to identify sources of evidence related to the selected essential practice. • Review the “Look-fors” tool (Appendix C) for more guidance regarding what to look for in specific pieces of evidence in alignment with the practice. • Ensure everyone is clear on what the practice entails and looks like at each level of the implementation continuum.
3. Review the summary of individual, anonymous self-assessment ratings related to the selected essential practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify where the team is aligned on potential ratings and where deeper analysis and discussion of evidence is needed. • If there is a high degree of consensus, allow time for the team to confirm whether gathered evidence supports the initial consensual rating. Test assumptions and document evidence before moving to step 4. • If there is a great deal of diversity in ratings, the team will spend more time in step 4 considering the guiding questions in the “Quick Reference Guide” (Appendix B), the “Look-fors” (Appendix C), and the school’s gathered evidence.

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<p>4. Compare gathered evidence of the selected essential practice to the Rubric indicators at each of the implementation levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the guiding questions in the “Quick Reference Guide” (Appendix B), the “Look-fors” (Appendix C) to discuss to what level of implementation the school’s evidence currently supports. • Document evidence that indicates level of implementation progress for each indicator (e.g., using a note-catcher, folder of evidence, etc.).
<p>5. For each indicator come to consensus on the current level of implementation.</p>	<p>On the rubric, document the agreed upon level of implementation progress for each indicator by highlighting/boldfacing the indicator that best describes the district’s current level of implementation.</p>
<p>6. Repeat this process for each practice until you complete these steps for each of the 18 practices.</p>	<p>At the end of this process, schools should have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Completed rubric with bold/highlighted indicators for each of the 18 essential practices essential practices; and □ Documented notes and evidence to support rubric ratings.

Step 4: Determine School Priorities for Improvement

Once the self-assessment team finalizes and documents its current implementation status for each practice, **convene to summarize findings and lift trends from the review process**. This debrief should include a summary of findings that highlight specific strengths and challenges aligned to the core conditions and essential practices, as well as a presentation of final ratings for each practice.

- **Identify the highest-leverage priorities for continuous improvement.** A school may choose to have the existing self-assessment team make these decisions and propose recommendations or a school may invite other leaders and stakeholders to review framework findings and participate in the prioritization discussion. Ultimately, the school will elect a manageable set of essential practices (no more than three) to focus on for the current school planning cycle.
- **These priorities should inform the school’s plan.** It is recommended that schools consider any recommendations from the self-assessment team, conduct root cause analysis on challenges related to identified essential practices, and plan for continuous improvement. It may take several years to reach fully operational implementation of any given practice.

Recommendation to determine the highest-leverage priority areas:

- Start with a strong vision; all other essential practices flow from the vision.
- Identify root causes; drill down to determine which essential practices can impact multiple areas of leadership, teaching, and learning.
- Look for trends across all stakeholder groups; for example, if all surveys and focus groups are lifting a concern with programs and supports for a student group or outcome area, this signals urgency.

APPENDIX OF ADDITIONAL TOOLS

TOOL	PURPOSE	SUGGESTED USE
Appendix A: Rubric	Provides a clear playbook for school leaders in their efforts to establish and maintain the core conditions for success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During Step 2 of the review process for individual, anonymous self-assessments. • During Step 3 of the review process to self-assess and document implementation progress in each essential practice.
Appendix B: Quick Reference Guide	Guiding questions and possible sources of evidence, aligned to each essential practice to determine a school's current implementation progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During Step 2 of the review process to determine sources of evidence to collect. • During Step 3 of the review process to assist with analysis of evidence.
Appendix C: Look-Fors	Detailed Look-Fors aligned to each essential practice, to provide details about what districts should be "seeing" in their possible sources of evidence if they are truly operational or exemplary in that practice.	During Step 3 of the review process to assist with analysis of evidence.