

Pennsylvania Essential Practices for Schools: 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.

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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.

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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.

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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).

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