



## Indicator Explanation



DOMAIN	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Leadership	Prioritize improvement and communicate its urgency	1A.5 A School Improvement team consisting of the principal, teachers who lead instructional teams, and other key professional staff meets regularly (twice a month or more for an hour each meeting) to review implementation of evidence-based practice.

**Explanation:** Some decisions concern the general operation of the school and its continuous improvement. Schools typically place those decisions with a Leadership Team that is headed by the principal and includes teachers and other staff. In order to facilitate communication and coordination among the grade levels and the departments of the school, a typical composition of the Leadership Team is the principal and team leaders from the Instructional Teams. The Leadership Team needs to meet twice each month for an hour each meeting. Less frequent meetings lead to drift and loss of continuity; less time for each meeting creates hurriedness and insufficient attention to the work at hand. Effective teams operate with agendas, keep minutes, stay focused, and follow through with the plans they make.

**Questions:** Does your school operate with a Leadership Team that includes the principal, teacher leaders, and other staff as appropriate to the size and composition of your school? Does the Leadership Team meet at least twice a month in regularly scheduled meeting of at least an hour?

Think of a great team you've been on. It had just the right people. You had a project you were excited about and that had great importance. There was synergy in the group. You had a productive meeting and came up with great ideas. And then...nothing. Everyone got busy with their normal workload. No more meetings were held. And the project fell to pieces. By the time the team met again, nothing had been done and everyone felt like they were starting over from scratch.

Looking at it from that perspective, everyone can agree that the way to move something forward is to have the right people on a team and that the team must meet regularly to keep a project moving forward. Great gaps in time only cause the team to lose momentum and focus. Think of your own school. What is the highest priority for the school? Schools may state it differently, but it is probably student achievement—making sure every student reaches his or her greatest potential. To achieve this, leadership teams need time to meet. They need the right team members to drive innovations forward. Instructional teams need time to meet. All teachers meet together to discuss the students they have in common and to plan instruction and improvements. Turning Point (2001) writes this about teams, “In a collaborative culture, members of the school community work together effectively and are guided by a common purpose. All members of the community—teachers, administrators, students and their families—share a common vision of what the school should be like. Together they set goals that lead them toward this vision. In doing so, they create a culture of discourse in which the most important educational matters facing the school are openly and honestly discussed” (p. 3). They recommend that a leadership team have “six to twelve members including the principal and teachers representing major constituencies in the school (e.g., all grade levels, specialists, disciplines, etc). ...The leadership team meets every other week for two hours and works on a number of different fronts to lead the change process” (p. 9). For instructional teams, they recommend the teachers who “teach and are responsible for the same students. This team meets at least twice a week for a minimum of 45 minutes each time” (p. 12).



In the current climate of school turnaround/transformation, it is tempting to think of the “turnaround principal” or “turn-around leader” that can come into a school and transform it from the ground up. While these individuals do exist, the number of them is few and typically, they remain at a school only as long as it takes to begin to see student achievement begin to rise. Then, the principal is moved to another school in dire need. So, what happens to the school that is left behind? Ben Levin writes in his book, *How to Change 5000 Schools*, “No leader, no matter how effective, can change an organization and maintain it in that changed state on her or his own. Organizations are about shared leadership and teamwork” (p. 181)

## References

- Levin, B. (2012). *How to change 5000 schools. A practical and positive approach for leading change at every level.* Harvard Education Press.
- Sam Redding, *The Mega System. Deciding. Learning. Connecting. A Handbook for Continuous Improvement Within a Community of the School.* [www.adi.org](http://www.adi.org). See Download ADI publications.
- Turning Point. (2001). *Transforming middle schools: Guide to collaborative culture and shared leadership.* National Turning Points Center