Indicator Explanation

DOMAIN	PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Leadership	Monitor short- and long-term goals	1B.1 The School Improvement Team establishes and monitors implementation of an improvement plan that includes indicators of effective practice and implementation milestones and annual target measures.

Explanation: A collaborative school culture, with educators working together in teams, is linked to higher levels of student achievement.

Questions: Does your Leadership Team consider both disaggregated student outcome data and data on patterns of professional practice to determine professional development needs and plan appropriate professional development? Are multiple and varied data sources considered? Does the Leadership Team conduct non-evaluative classroom walk-throughs to gather data on classroom instruction? How does the Leadership Team assess the impact of professional development within a cycle of continuous improvement? How are data shared with all staff and within professional learning communities to build a culture of data-driven decision-making and support for targeted professional development?

Research has consistently demonstrated that a collaborative school culture, with educators working together in teams, is linked to higher levels of student achievement (DuFour, 2011; Hitt & Tucker, 2016). When principals work with a team of teachers, forming school-based leadership teams, the speed at which improvement efforts occur is increased, and reform is more likely to be sustained (Edwards & Gammell, 2016; Pedersen et al., 2010). Further, school leadership models are more effective when they distribute responsibilities to a team, rather than promoting unilateral decisions and actions (Hanover Research, 2013; Heck & Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2020; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Such a distributed system allows individuals to contribute in their areas of particular strength or interest (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2001). A major task of the school's leadership team is to regularly analyze both school performance and classroom observation data to determine how the school needs to improve and what additional training is needed for teachers and staff.

How can the Leadership Team effectively use data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs?

Leadership teams set the course for school improvement by taking responsibility for activating the school improvement plan and coordinating faculty efforts to reach its goals (Munger & von Frank, 2010; von Frank, 2011). These responsibilities include developing a vision, setting goals, designing strategies, and monitoring the improvement process (Edwards & Gammell, 2016). The leadership team is positioned to take a broad view of the data available to them and to make decisions on the focus and direction of school improvement efforts, thus establishing a data-driven decision-making culture (Kelley, 2010). They can assess where there are strengths to be celebrated and weaknesses that need shoring up through targeted professional development. A leadership team is expected to examine both aggregated and overall student performance data, in

order to set yearly learning goals and make decisions on using resources for professional learning (Redding, 2007).

A study of successful turnarounds found that these schools considered data at three levels: at the school level to focus on areas that needed school-wide improvement, at the classroom level to focus on teachers' instructional strengths and weaknesses, and at the student level to focus on instructional needs of individual students (Herman, et al., 2008). Leadership teams should consider student learning data in the form of test scores that are disaggregated for various groups, including by income level (higher income versus lower income), ethnicity, and student learning needs (e.g., English Language Learners) (Kelly, 2010; Lachat & Smith, 2005). The leadership team should also examine aggregated classroom observation data to show patterns of professional practice across the faculty, and for each grade/subject area.

Von Frank (2011) describes how leadership teams collect data to inform school improvement efforts:
> The leadership team is there to discuss strengths and what we, as a school, need to work on…the leadership team takes responsibility for a cycle of continuous improvement. Leadership team members collect data through student performance indicators, classroom observations of teacher practice, and teaching artifacts…and continuously consider the next steps to school-wide improvement…leadership teams [should] conduct learning walks that are separate in term and conduct from any administrative walk-throughs so that the sense of a formal evaluation is not present and teachers are more at ease with the purpose of the walks. (p. 5)

Leadership teams need to consider data from multiple sources to allow for a comprehensive and balanced analysis that leads to effectively targeted use of professional development resources (Learning Forward, n.d.). Frequent monitoring of student learning data may be necessary; for example, leadership team review of benchmark assessment data during the year can provide teachers with timely information on where students need the most assistance, and adjustments can be made to instruction and/or additional student supports provided (Love & Crowell, 2018). A leadership team can also work with the principal to conduct classroom observations and discern patterns of practice; this procedure aggregates data from several or all teachers without revealing teachers' individual identities. The leadership team can then use the observation data to determine what professional learning is needed for individual teachers, for certain grade levels, or schoolwide (Redding, 2006); professional development can be a huge drain on resources (time and money) if it is not well targeted and implemented effectively, and a school's resources should be used for professional development that is directly tied to classroom observations and analysis of student learning data.

The Learning Forward Standards for Data Use (n.d.) describe the optimum role of the leadership team's use of data within the cycle of continuous professional learning and school improvement:
> At the school level, leadership teams use data to monitor implementation of professional learning and its effects on educator practice and student learning. Engaging teams of teacher leaders and administrators in analyzing and interpreting data, for example, provides them a more holistic view of the complexity of school improvement and fosters collective responsibility and accountability for student results. Frequent collection and use of data about inputs, outputs, and outcomes of professional learning reinforce the cycle of continuous improvement by allowing for ongoing adjustments in the learning process to increase results for students, educators, and systems. Ongoing data collection, analysis, and use, especially when done in teams, provide stakeholders with information that sustains momentum and informs continuous improvement.

Leadership teams may elect to share this data with colleagues school-wide or within professional learning communities through practices such as a "data carousel" in which data are displayed visually and discussed; this process may build support among staff for professional development that is clearly targeted to needs identified through data analysis (Teaching Channel, n.d.).

Indicator Explanation

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Resources

This video highlights an example of a school leadership team's work to use data to identify and implement professional development:

https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/professional-development-around-data

These resources contain tools to use to develop and maintain effective school leadership teams:

College of William and Mary Training and Technical Assistance Center (2011). Strategies for creating effective school leadership teams: Considerations packet. https://education.wm.edu/centers/ttac/documents/packets/strategiesforCreatingEffectiveSchoolLeadership-Teams.pdf

Georgia Department of Education (2021). School leadership team review process guide: Structuring an effective school leadership team. https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Documents/Process%20Guides/2021%20Leadership%20Team%20Process%20Guide.pdf

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