

## School Improvement in MARYLAND

ASSESSMENTS

DATA ANALYSIS

INSTRUCTION

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

USER GUIDES

### **Indicators for Effective Principal Leadership in Improving Student Achievement**

*The Performance Indicators for Effective Principal Leadership in Improving Student Achievement* have been developed by Colleen Seremet, Assistant Superintendent, Dorchester County Public Schools; Bonnie Ward, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Kent County Public Schools; Carol Williamson, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction, Queen Anne's County Public Schools; and Lani Hall Seikaly, Project Director for the School Improvement in Maryland Web site. The performance indicators are intended to provide clarity and specificity about the skills, beliefs, and knowledge a principal needs to demonstrate effective leadership in improving student achievement. We are sharing them in draft form in the hope that you will share your thoughts and ideas about these critical principal performance behaviors. Please email Lani Seikaly, [lanl@mdk12.org](mailto:lanl@mdk12.org), with your input.

Effective principals are strong educators, anchoring their work on central issues of learning and teaching and continuous school improvement. According to Mike Schmoker in his book *Results: the Key to Continuous School Improvement*, the combination of three concepts constitutes the foundation for positive improvement results: meaningful teamwork; clear, measurable goals; and the regular collection and analysis of performance data. Principals must lead their school through the goal-setting process in which student achievement data is analyzed, improvement areas are identified and actions for change are initiated. This process involves working collaboratively with staff and school community to identify discrepancies between current and desired outcomes, to set and prioritize goals to help close the gap, to develop improvement and monitoring strategies aimed at accomplishing the goals, and to communicate goals and change efforts to the entire school community. Principals must also ensure that staff development needs are identified in alignment with school improvement priorities and that these needs are addressed with appropriate professional learning opportunities.

#### **Leadership Skills**

Five performance areas have been identified as the critical leadership skills a principal must demonstrate to effectively lead a school in improving student achievement.

- Promoting collaborative problem solving and open communication
- Collecting, analyzing, and using data to identify school needs
- Using data to identify and plan for needed changes in the instructional program
- Implementing and monitoring the school improvement plan
- Using systems thinking to establish a clear focus on attaining student achievement goals

These five areas are not a chronology of what a principal must do first, second, and third, but rather are cyclical in nature and must be demonstrated continuously throughout the school improvement process. The end product of this process is the school improvement plan, whereas the end goal for the process is improved student achievement.

The performance indicators under each performance area describe how effective principals perform and the skills, knowledge and dispositions necessary for effective performance. They are in alignment with the *Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders (ISLLC)*, but attempt to more specifically reflect the expectations for school principals in Maryland related to their most critical role: leading the school through a school improvement process that results in improved student performance.

#### **Critical Beliefs**

There are a number of critical beliefs which underlie a principal's effectiveness in leading the process of improving student achievement. The principal must believe in, value, and be committed to:

- Student learning as the fundamental purpose of schooling
- The proposition that all students can achieve high standards of learning
- Collaborative problem solving with staff and stakeholders
- Ongoing collection and analysis of data
- Data-driven decision making
- Life long learning for self and others
- Focus and alignment to achieve goals
- Doing the work required for high levels of personal and organization performance

#### Knowledge

Principals may need staff development in some of these areas to be able to effectively perform the indicators in the performance areas. In order to demonstrate effective leadership in improving student achievement, the principal must have knowledge and understanding of:

- The relationship of assessment to improving student outcomes and strengthening instruction
- Information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies
- The school improvement planning process
- Maryland state content standards, core learning goals, and learner outcomes
- School district curriculum guidelines
- Evaluation and assessment strategies
- Strategies for classroom teachers to monitor student understanding and progress
- Research-based best practices
- The principles of Dimensions of Learning, Constructivism, and Multiple Intelligences
- Collaborative problem solving and consensus-building
- Staff development standards
- Systems thinking
- The change process for systems, organizations, and individuals
- Effective communication strategies
- Technology as a tool in organizing and analyzing data and in monitoring progress

### Performance Indicators

#### Performance Area 1: Promoting collaborative problem solving and open communication.

Creating a collaborative environment has been described as the "single most important factor" for successful school improvement initiatives. Virtually all contemporary school reformers call for increased opportunities for teacher collaboration. Student achievement is likely to be greatest where teachers and administrators work together, in small groups and school-wide, to identify sources of student success and then struggle collectively to implement school improvement. Creating and sustaining change requires creating a critical mass of educators within the school who are willing and able to function as change agents.

##### Performance indicators that demonstrate effective principal leadership:

The principal...

- Collaborates with stakeholders in the school improvement process
- Shares student achievement data with all stakeholders
- Provides time for collaborative problem solving
- Demonstrates effective group-process and consensus-building skills in school improvement efforts
- Communicates the school vision, school goals and ongoing progress toward attainment of goals to staff, parents, students, and community members
- Recognizes and celebrates the contributions of school community members to school improvement efforts
- Nurtures and develops the leadership capabilities of others
- Evaluates the collaborative skills of staff and supports needs with staff development

##### Performance Area 2: Collecting, analyzing and using data to identify school needs

Understanding what your data tells you about where your school is performing relative to school and district goals is a first step in data analysis. Seeking to understand why your data looks like it does is the second component. Principals need to model for and train staff to regularly collect, analyze and use data to inform instruction. Principals need to solicit the input of the major constituents (teachers, administrators, parents, and students) to ensure that all perceptions and attitudes are represented in this process.

##### Performance indicators that demonstrate effective principal leadership:

The principal...

- Ensures that multiple sources of data are collected and used to assess student performance
- Engages the entire staff in analyzing student achievement data
- Identifies discrepancies between current and desired outcomes
- Engages staff and other stakeholders in a collaborative process to clarify the problem(s)
- Facilitates the identification of priority needs, based on the data analysis, to address in a school-wide effort
- Models the use of data to make decisions
- Regularly asks staff to identify the data they used in making a decision
- Evaluates the assessment competencies of teachers and supports gaps with staff development

- Uses a variety of tools including technology to organize and analyze data

### **Performance Area 3: Using data to identify and plan for needed changes in the instructional program**

Stephen R. Covey in *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* reminds us, "To begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you're going so that you better understand where you are now so that the steps you take are always in the right direction." Principals need to lead their school through the process of identifying school improvement goals and objectives in alignment with school district and state standards, and of determining the strategies that will promote the attainment of those goals. Strategies are an enormous investment of resources (both time and money), so schools need to be rigorous in their evaluation and selection of school improvement strategies to ensure a wise investment. Principals also need to build the capacity of their staff to implement strategies by identifying staff needs and providing appropriate staff development opportunities.

#### **Performance indicators that demonstrate effective principal leadership:**

The principal...

- Ensures that the school improvement plan is based on data analysis and problem clarification
- Facilitates the development of an improvement plan in which goals, evidence of attainment, objectives and strategies are clearly aligned and articulated
- Identifies with staff the knowledge and skills that teachers need to implement the school improvement instructional strategies
- Ensures that the school improvement plan has identified activities to support strategies, milestones to assess progress toward goals, staff development to support staff needs and staff responsible for each implementation step
- Ensures that assessment, curriculum, and instruction are aligned
- Provides opportunities for staff to learn about research-based strategies that address the identified problem(s)
- Provides opportunities for staff to seek successful strategies data from similar schools that have outperformed them

### **Performance Area 4: Implementing and monitoring the school improvement plan**

Even clearly stated curricular goals will lose their potential to drive the efforts of a school if no effort is made to collect and analyze accurate information about student achievement that is reflective of those goals. In most organizations, what gets monitored gets done. Staff learn what principals value by observing what they pay attention to. Paying attention to the core values and priority goals of the school is the most important way for leaders to communicate effectively. When a school devotes considerable time and effort to the continual assessment of a particular condition or outcome, it notifies all members that the condition or outcome is considered important. Conversely, inattention to monitoring a particular factor in a school indicates that it is less than essential, regardless of how often its importance is verbalized.

#### **Performance indicators that demonstrate effective principal leadership:**

The principal...

- Facilitates the development of a calendar of all school improvement activities and ensures that the calendar is shared and reviewed regularly
- Establishes a regular, predictable process to track the impact improvement efforts have on student achievement
- Closely monitors the systematic collection and analysis of data by staff to assess whether progress toward attainment of objectives is satisfactory for all groups of students
- Continuously collects and utilizes data to inform instructional decisions at the building and classroom level and provide academic interventions for individual and groups of students
- Uses a variety of tools including technology to monitor progress
- Recognizes successes of key players
- Facilitates the use of data to continuously evaluate and revise the school improvement plan
- Aligns all resources (monetary, staff, time, and staff development opportunities) to maximize attainment of school improvement priorities
- Uses regularly scheduled time with staff (e.g. staff meeting, team time, inservice time) to monitor, communicate, and provide staff development for school improvement efforts
- Supports staff in making the instructional changes necessary to support school improvement efforts

### **Performance Area 5: Using systems thinking to establish a clear**

### focus on attaining student achievement goals

Schools are notorious for having an expansive list of priorities that change frequently, are monitored infrequently, and leave the teacher without a clear sense of what is important for them to emphasize in their classrooms. Effective principals understand the importance of focus and help ensure that all parts of the school community are aware of and in alignment with the school's improvement efforts to improve student learning. They understand that all parts of the school and school district system are interconnected and that it is critical to align school goals with district and state standards and goals.

The allocation of time is one of the truest tests of what is really important in any organization. The time devoted to an issue on both the annual calendar and within the daily schedule of an organization tells its people what is really valued. All resources need to be managed in alignment with student achievement goals. Successful principals keep the focus on school improvement efforts and align time, money, and staff development opportunities with the improvement goals.

#### Performance indicators that demonstrate effective principal leadership:

The principal...

- Aligns all school resources with school improvement priorities
- Aligns school improvement goals, classroom instruction, and classroom-/school assessment
- Identifies key processes that impact results
- Identifies performance measures and indicators that link key instructional processes to instructional goals
- Communicates with decision makers outside the school
- Ensures that school goals are aligned to school district goals
- Helps inform district planning by articulating school needs

[site map](#) [about mdk12.org](#) [feedback](#) copyright © 1997-2012 msde