

Tool 1: District Self-Assessment Guide

Purpose: To help district staff reflect on their key roles in support of comprehensive school reform and identify areas needing improvement.

Materials: Depending on your results in completing this tool, you may want to gather articles, reference materials, and key contacts to help you address the issues raised by this instrument.

Directions: Answer each question honestly. If your answer is “yes” or “some”, note what evidence you have. If appropriate, describe any next steps.

Questions	Yes	Some	No	Evidence	Notes / Next Steps
Theme 1: Number One Priority is Academic Achievement for Every Student					
Does the district minimize distractions that take energy away from teaching and learning?					
Does the district keep discussions about academic attainment in the forefront of the dialogue with school staff, parents, students, and community members?					
Does the district link evaluations of employee performance to academic attainment of students?					
Theme 2: Establish Clear, Challenging Goals for Student Achievement					
Does the district demonstrate a clear vision for academic achievement, including measurable goals for all students?					
Is every school required to set and meet measurable goals for academic achievement?					
Are there challenging standards in place for language arts, math, and other core subjects?					
Are the standards integrated into classroom practice (instruction, materials)?					
Does the district provide resources (professional development, funding, other kinds of support) for schools to meet the goals & standards?					
Has the district identified multiple measures to assess school progress?					
Does the district have a policy of accountability or clearly defined response when goals are not met?					

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Is this policy helpful to schools in taking corrective steps?					
When schools fail to meet the goals, does the district provide resources/help?					
Are there the same high expectations of <u>all</u> students? Are there different expectations for students of poverty, with different language backgrounds or ethnicity?					
Does the district take responsibility for non-attainment of goals or failure to meet expectations? If not, who does the district say is responsible?					
Theme 3: Insist that Schools Have Believable Plans for Making Substantial Progress toward Challenging Goals and Objectives					
Does the district assist schools in creating plans that are comprehensive and connect multiple requirements of various funding sources into one coordinated effort?					
Does the district provide support to schools in development of comprehensive school-wide plans to improve student learning results?					
Does the district monitor and assist schools to ensure that school plans articulates a set of activities that will help the school attain its goals?					
Do district staff meet regularly with principals and other key staff to discuss the progress of schools in meeting the goals of their school plans?					
Are district resources available to help schools that fail to adequately meet their stated goals and objectives?					
Can the district identify cases where resources have been added or reallocated to address problems?					
If there is a perceived lack of resources, does the district promote creative use of resources and the development of new resources to ensure needs are met?					
Theme 4: Provide Resources to Support Professional Development					
Does the district have a plan for providing professional development opportunities for school personnel to observe, plan, and try out new practices?					
Does the district ensure that teachers have ongoing opportunities to be observed, to receive feedback, and to incorporate feedback?					

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Does the district ensure that <u>new</u> teachers have opportunities to observe internal or outside experts, and to receive coaching?					
Does the district require schools to create their own staff development plans?					
Does the district help schools with the review and selection of innovative instructional approaches based upon assessment of student data and staff needs?					
Does the district ensure that outside expertise is available to schools to build and sustain local capacity?					
Does the district monitor or coordinate the professional development support provided by outside experts or developers of research-based models?					
Theme 5: Provide Flexibility in Exchange for Accountability					
Does the district provide schools with greater flexibility and decision making in exchange for accountability for student results?					
Does the district provide schools with a high degree of budget authority?					
Does the district offer schools sufficient opportunities to share and learn from other schools' successes or failures with their experiments?					
Does the district provide opportunities for dialogue with schools that have successfully implemented school-wide models?					
In situations where state or federal rules are barriers, have waivers been sought or efforts been made to negotiate changes in policies?					
What else can the district do to support innovation?					
Theme 6: Help Schools See Themselves as Part of the System					
Does the district provide articulation across schools so that they see themselves as part of a system as a whole?					
Does the district frequently engage principals and staff in cross-grade level dialogue about standards and academic goals and objectives?					

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Are there clear expectations regarding the preparation of students to make a successful transition to challenging coursework as they progress to the upper grades?					
Does the district communicate to all schools clear criteria for accountability if students fail to make a successful transition to the next grade span?					
Does the district focus cross-grade level and cross-subject area collaboration on instructional improvement and improved student learning?					
Does the district provide direct assistance to increase collaboration and cooperation across grade levels and subject areas?					
Does the district enable schools to bring cross grade-level and cross-subject area teams of teachers together to focus on academic success?					
Does the district provide support for administrators (e.g., through coaching or intervention) who do not promote adequate collaboration?					
Does the district provide sufficient access to services needed by all students across all grade levels?					
Does the district communicate to all families across all grades (especially new families) the expectations of what their children should know and be able to do?					
Are sufficient efforts made to ensure all students, including LEP and special ed, have the opportunity to meet challenging standards across all grades?					
Are teachers aware of district support services to help them serve students who need timely and appropriate intervention in order to meet challenging standards?					
Theme 7: Expect Continuous Improvement					
Does the district promote a climate of continuous improvement and does it demonstrate that it values a passion for learning, growing, and improving?					
Is there a district-wide process in place to support continuous planning for school improvement?					
Does the district engage in ongoing evaluation and use data to gauge school progress?					

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Does the district assist schools in evaluating their progress with reform?					
Does the district require that data be provided by external research-based providers whose instructional designs or materials have been adopted by schools?					
Does the district report data publicly?					
Does the district help schools analyze student data and use them to make improvements (e.g., make changes in instruction, professional development, and budgets)?					
Does the district acknowledge or reward schools when they meet district-wide goals?					
Does the district call upon schools who meet goals to share strategies across the district?					
Does the district take corrective action based upon data findings—and respond to schools when they fail to meet goals?					
Does the district provide training or support for the continuous learning process of both administrators and school personnel?					