# Seventh Avenue Elementary School
System Assessment Executive Summary Report

The following system assessment feedback report was developed for Seventh Avenue Elementary School, LaGrange District 105 by the System Assessment Review Team of the Consortium for Educational Change.

Using the best practice criteria of a correlation between the Baldrige Performance Excellence Education Criteria and the Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities as a lens, the System Assessment Review Team reviewed information provided by the school and interviewed administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents in order to identify strengths and opportunities for system improvement.
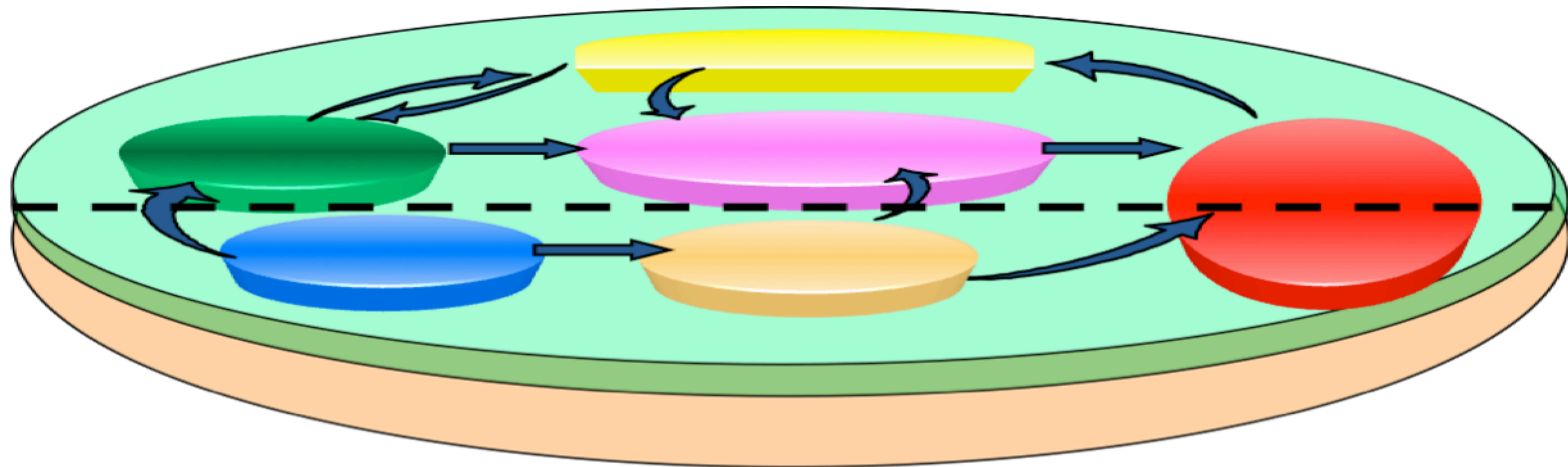
This feedback report was developed reflecting on the indicators described on the next few pages. It is a response to written information provided by the school as well as from information gathered from interviews. It is not intended to represent the perspective of all school administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents. Its accuracy is dependent on the information presented and discussed. The criteria around which we conducted our visit are listed below. It is a synthesis of the research from the Baldrige Performance Excellence Criteria, the Correlates of Effective Schools, the Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities, and Standard Bearer. They represent the four best practice, continuous improvement frameworks. This school uses the Professional Learning Community Framework as its format.

Focus on Learning: We acknowledge that our fundamental collective purpose is to help all students achieve high levels of learning and therefore we are willing to examine all of our practices in light of their impact on learning.

A Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum

A.	***Establishing the Curriculum:*** We set student learning outcomes across all classrooms to build shared knowledge regarding common core state standards, district curriculum guides, trends in student achievement and outcomes for the next course or grade.
B.	***Executing the Curriculum:*** We expect that each teacher give priority to the identified learning outcomes in every unit of instruction to guarantee that each student has equal access to those learning outcomes in all classrooms for the grade level or course.
C.	***Clarifying and Communicating the Curriculum:*** We expect that every teacher is able to assist each student and their parents (families) to know the essential learning outcomes so they can assist in monitoring performance in relationship to those outcomes.

Formative and Summative System of Assessments

D.	***Defining the Assessment System:*** We ensure there is alignment and balance between common, formative assessment data to guide instruction and learning and common, summative assessment data to reflect on teaching, programs, interventions and periodic student progress reporting.
E.	***Assessing What Each Student Knows and Needs to Learn Next:*** We expect each teacher to monitor the learning of all students, aligned to the learning outcomes per unit, to identify what each student knows, is able to do and needs to learn next.
F.	**Providing *Frequent and Timely Descriptive Assessment Feedback:*** We ensure there is frequent and timely feedback regarding the performance of our students on classroom, team, school, district, and state assessments.
G.	***Using Assessment Data and Information to Drive Instruction:*** We expect teachers to use assessment data, aligned to student learning outcomes per unit, to differentiate instruction and respond to students when they either demonstrate they have not learned or are ready for more challenge.
H.	***Using Assessment Data and Information to Recognize Growth and Achievement.*** We regularly recognize and celebrate individual and collective student growth, mastery and success aligned to appropriate unit-based learning outcomes.

Differentiation: Instruction, Interventions and Enrichments

I.	***Differentiating Instruction:*** We expect Instructional activities are engaging and differentiated to meet individual and small group needs for a minimum of 80% of the students within the classroom. We expect classroom differentiation to include models of co-teaching, cross grade instruction, push in instruction, flexible grouping, etc.
J.	***Aligning Interventions:*** We ensure a system of interventions that guarantees each student will receive additional time and support for learning if he/she has not demonstrated mastery of grade level or course unit learning outcomes. Such an intervention system must be school-wide and engage a team of support specialists assisting classroom teachers to improve mastery of grade level or course unit learning outcomes.
K.	***Aligning Enrichments:*** We ensure teachers extend and enrich the learning of students who have mastered common learning targets so every student is challenged. Such an enrichment system must be school-wide and engage a team of support specialists assisting classroom teachers to improve mastery of content beyond or extending grade level or course unit learning outcomes.

Ensuring a Focus on Learning

L.	***Providing Conditions for an Optimal Learning Environment:*** We expect all learning environments to be safe, respectful and engaging while supporting a climate of high expectations for social emotional learning. We recognize the importance of acting on student satisfaction data to improve learning conditions.
M.	***Examining Learning Practices:*** We provide opportunities for teachers to examine homework, grading, report cards, etc. to ensure there is organization-wide clarity and consistency across all classrooms, teams and all other organizational levels.
N.	***Judging Quality Work:*** We expect all teachers to clarify the criteria by which they will judge the quality of student work and practice applying those criteria until they can do so consistently.
O.	***Providing Training and Support:*** We provide sufficient training and follow-up support to assist teachers with expectations in the alignment of assessments and instruction within a standards-driven curriculum.
P.	***Organizing and Allocating Resources:*** We organize and allocate resources of people, time and money with a focus on learning as opposed to a focus on teaching.

Focus on Collaboration: We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose of learning for all students. We cultivate a collaborative culture through the development of high performing teams.	

Building Shared Knowledge and Leadership: Mission, Vision, Values, Goals and Strategies

A.	***Clarifying the "Big Picture":*** We develop and deploy mission, vision, values (collective commitments) goals and strategies to establish clear direction. Everyone has a clear understanding of where we are and where we want to be.
B.	***Communicating the "Big Picture":*** We set clear direction by communicating a "Big Picture" so that everyone sees how current and new initiatives connect to that direction and how those initiatives align with district and school direction. Everyone understands how his/her work contributes to the "Big Picture's" improvement planning process.
C.	***Reinforcing the "Big Picture":*** We expect that common behaviors and actions of all staff support the vision, mission, values, goals and strategies of the organization at all levels. Everyone is accountable for aligning their behaviors and actions to our mission, vision, values and goals.
D.	***Living the "Big Picture":*** We set strategies and action plans to describe the steps to be taken toward attainment of goals. The improvement planning process serves as the centerpiece for examining how the organization performs. Everyone knows how our goals, strategies and improvement actions will get us from where we are to where we want to be.

Making Appropriate Decisions Through High Performing, Collaborative Teams

E.	***Setting Expectations for Team Function:*** We expect work to be done through collaborative teams in which members work together interdependently to achieve common goals. We have appropriate structures and processes to promote shared and distributed leadership.
F.	***Providing Time & Purpose for Teams to Meet:*** We provide time during the contractual day and school year for teams to meet. Team meeting time focuses on improving student learning. Team meetings are effective and efficient.
G.	***Determining Accountability Criteria for Teams:*** We expect teams to be accountable for the decisions they make and the results they achieve. We expect each team to understand its charge and expectations and take responsibility for its actions leading to improvement results.
H.	***Implementing a High Performance Culture through Collective Inquiry:*** We promote a culture/teaching environment of personal growth and high performance. We understand the importance of high morale and professional relationships. We expect team time to be used to engage in collective inquiry on questions specifically linked to gains in student achievement or organization improvement.
I.	***Providing a Safe Data Culture for Effective Team Function:*** We create a safe environment to report and compare data so as to learn from one another and share effective practices.

Fostering Strong Partnerships

J.	***Fostering Collaborative Internal Staff Partnerships:*** We foster collaborative staff partnerships between and across all organizational levels to ensure decisions are made in the best interests of students. We recognize the importance of acting on staff satisfaction data to improve working conditions.
K.	***Fostering Collaborative External Family Partnerships:*** We foster collaborative partnerships with parents (families) to engage them in decisions about the progress of district, school and student goal attainment. We recognize the importance of acting on parent (family) satisfaction data to improve home-school relationships to improve student learning.
L.	***Fostering Collaborative External Community Partnerships:*** We foster collaborative partnerships with the community to engage them in decisions about the progress of district, school and student goal attainment.

Ensuring a Focus on Collaboration

M.	***Providing Conditions for an Optimal Work Environment:*** We expect all work environments to be safe, respectful, and engaging while supporting a climate of high expectations for student learning. We expect collaboration, commitment and accountability for improving our organization and its results
N.	***Providing Meaningful, Aligned Evaluation Systems:*** We enforce system-wide job expectations and provide meaningful evaluation systems.
O.	***Providing Job-embedded Training:*** We ensure professional development and training is job-embedded and ongoing.
P.	***Organizing and Allocating Resources:*** We organize and allocate resources of people, time and money with a focus on collaboration.

Focus on Results: We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions.   Individuals, teams, schools and districts seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement.

Data Transparency and Efficacy: Measuring What Matters Most

A.	**Measuring What Matters Most:** We align key data indicators, measures and targets throughout the organization — district to school to grade level team/department to individual --- to establish effective ways to monitor and report progress.
B.	**Setting SMART Goals:** District, school, team and individual staff goals are specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented and timely (SMART). They address gaps identified through key data sources that focus improvement efforts.
C.	**Aligning Leader Performance Evaluation:** Administrative performance goals align with the organization's improvement plans.
D.	**Aligning Teacher Performance Evaluation:** Teacher performance goals align with district, school and/or team improvement plans.
E.	**Aligning Student Performance Evaluation:** Student performance goals align with unit-based learning outcomes and other assessment data and information.

Creating a Results Orientation

F.	**Using Data Effectively:** We expect all staff to use assessment data to: a) identify students who need additional time and support for learning; b) discover strengths and weaknesses in their own job performance; c) measure and report progress toward goals, and d) define action plans.
G.	**Inspiring Shared Accountability:** We create a safe data culture so students and staff feel comfortable sharing their results in an effort to learn from others to improve results.
H.	**Monitoring and Reporting Progress:** We view, monitor, and report progress to all stakeholders on a regular basis to identify what to celebrate and what to focus on next in terms of improvement.
I.	**Promoting Student Responsibility for Their Own Learning**: We expect staff to assist students take responsibility for their own learning by collecting data in order to monitor and track their performance compared to high expectations and performance results of others.
J.	**Reporting and Acting on Satisfaction Data:** We collect, analyze, prioritize and act upon student, parent, and staff satisfaction data to be certain it is addressing the needs and requirements of our stakeholders.

A Data-Based Picture of Results

K.	**Examining Trend Data:** We have evidence to show our results are improving compared to the past. Our achievement results include measures of growth. We know and are communicating our strengths. We know and are communicating our opportunities for improvement.
L.	**Examining Cohort Data:** We have evidence to show our student cohort achievement results are improving from grade to grade. Our achievement results include measures of growth. We know and are communicating our strengths. We know and are communicating our opportunities for improvement.
M.	**Examining Comparative Data:** We have evidence to show our achievement results are improving compared to others (state and other benchmark districts). We know and are communicating our strengths. We know and are communicating our opportunities for improvement.
N.	**Closing Achievement Gaps**: We have evidence to show our results have narrowed or closed achievement gaps between groups of students. We know and are communicating our strengths. We know and are communicating our opportunities for improvement.
O.	**Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress**: We meet adequate yearly progress requirements as defined by federal and state legislation. Our students are ready for the next level. (elementary to middle, middle to high school, high school to college/career readiness)

Ensuring a Focus on Results

P.	**Managing Data:** We examine policies and processes related to data collection, management and analysis to be certain they are effective and efficient. Data are easily accessible and user-friendly in their formats.
Q.	**Providing Meaningful Data-based Evaluation Systems:** We ensure the aligned evaluation system includes data-based evidence of results.
R.	**Providing Job-embedded Training:** We ensure professional development and training around data and results is job-embedded and ongoing.
S.	**Organizing and Allocating Resources:** We organize and allocate our resources of people, time and money with a focus on results.

SYSTEM ASSESSMENT SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

The school responded to a set of questions aligned to the three criteria research best practice areas listed above.   The external team reviewed the Professional Learning Community effective practices and identified school strengths and opportunities for improvement. The school self-assessed itself as to where they viewed their progress toward implementation of the criteria.   The purpose of the visit was to provide the school with gap information in areas where the external team did not agree with the school self-assessment.

The Review Team examined the information and data prior to the site visit. They developed a list of questions to explore as part of the site visit. The Review Team interviewed all stakeholder groups.
On the first day the Team interviewed:
- Principal
- Building Leadership Team
- Parent Organization Leaders
- Association Leaders
- Instructional Support Team- paraprofessionals
- Paraprofessionals
- Problem Solving/RtI Team/Student Support Team
- Specialists- Reading, Math, English Language Learners, Special Education
- Responsive Classroom Team
- Art, Music, Physical Education
- Non-instructional Support Team

On the second day, the Team interviewed:
- Parents
- Students
- Teachers

Team members conducted classroom visits to interview students about ownership of their learning.

The schedule was set by school leaders.   Representatives interviewed reflected the demographics of the school. Approximately 185 stakeholders were interviewed.

Following interviews, the Team reviewed its findings and prepared an oral report to give the school a preview of overall strengths and opportunities for improvement aligned to the framework and criteria.

The week following the visit, the Team communicated electronically to prepare the final written feedback report. This final report was sent to the school within seven days of the visit.

CEC is available to assist the school in any way it chooses to follow up with suggested next steps. The school has committed to use the information to update its improvement plans. It also has committed to allow staff members to serve on a Review Team for another school's system assessment visit.

System Assessment team members.

Seventh Avenue Elementary School LaGrange District 105 System Assessment Team		
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This report summarizes the strengths and opportunities aligned to the continuous improvement criteria.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL STRENGTHS

Among all of the strengths within each category and for all core values, the assessment team finds these strengths to be highest in priority. It is hoped that recognizing and celebrating these strengths will showcase past investment of resources in improving performance results.

Focus on Learning Strengths:

+ The District has been assisting staff to transition to the Common Core through staff development opportunities. There is a desire to grow and support student learning.
+ Common unit plan are under construction. Plans include student learning outcomes for each unit aligned to a pre and post assessment. Plans are under construction for English Language Arts, mathematics, fine arts and physical education.
+ Parents and students believe there is great learning happening at this school. The school is student-centered. Everyone is working really hard. There is a deep commitment to improving student learning.
+ Balanced literacy with an emphasis on guided and shared reading strategies ensure consistent research-based best practice/pedagogy.
+ Planning time provides considerable time for execution
+ There is a strong commitment to use the assessment data from unit plans to differentiate and plan for interventions and enrichments. Staff have a clear definition and can distinguish between Tier I, II and III instruction. There are flexible groups organized around readiness in each classroom.
+ Class size is small and together with a terrific human resource support team there are optimal conditions for learning.
+ The Responsive Classroom provides for a strong social and emotional curriculum.

Coupled with PBIS, there is a good data monitoring system for student behaviors. Together these programs provide for a good student behavior racking system.
+ There are support systems offered by the district to provide opportunities for professional learning related to unit planning and designing a good assessment system.
+ There is a commitment to ensure a "whole child" approach to teaching and learning.

Focus on Collaboration Strengths:

+ Students enjoy their teachers, other staff and the principal. They feel the school is safe and nurturing. Parents are supportive of all school personnel.
+ Mission, vision, and goals are aligned to the District's strategic plan while a newly created Building Leadership Team meets monthly to review the school improvement plan and address continuous improvement. Everyone has been involved in establishing school goals. Grade level teams develop action plans to achieve those goals.
+ Increasingly staff are coming to a greater understanding of how the numerous initiatives are connecting. 94% staff feels they have a clear understanding of district goals and priorities. 88% feel they have a clear understanding of the school goals and priorities.
+ The principal is a visionary leader and very visible and accessible. Now that the staff knows the new principal better, the self-study reports relationships are becoming more comfortable. She is recognized as very knowledgeable and responsive.
+ Teachers have common plan time to work together in grade level departments developing CCSS blueprints and common assessments. Common plan time is used to review and record data, collect resources aligned to the content standards, meet with specialists and create instructional plans. Teachers appreciate and feel time is productive.

- Opportunities for professional development are plentiful. Through co-teaching and push-in opportunities specialists are modeling, providing job-embedded professional learning, and assisting with instruction.
- There is a general sense of mutual respect among staff, students and other stakeholders. Everyone really likes being here. Morale has improved over last year as reported on the school self-study.
- There is an open door policy at both the district and school levels. Each month there are two building meetings each 75 minutes. There is a minimum of 60 minutes per week for each grade level team on Tuesday for collaboration time (Big Team Time) that involved specialists. Staff meeting time has been used to share resources or artifacts related to goals. Principal created time sometimes provided a building-wide focus for collaboration. District coordinators participate and support Problem Solving Day Meetings for Thursdays.
- Parents feel welcome at the school. Parents trust staff to provide a quality education. Parents are supportive of the new principal and the shifts they see in the school over the past year.
- Parents are included in district decision-making structures. Parents provide volunteers, resources and support to assist the school with its priorities and goals.
- There is a close-knit group in the school community in support of public schools and Seventh Avenue.

Focus on Results Strengths:

- Seventh Avenue Elementary School was recently awarded the U. S. Department of Education's Blue Ribbon Award for continuously improving student achievement.
- The principal performance evaluation is aligned to state requirements including student

growth aligned to performance

+ School goals align with district goals. Teams are working to align their goals and action plans with school and district goals

+ There is a SMART school improvement plan.

+ There are multiple data sources and resources used to make good decisions.

+ The Building Leadership Team is using stakeholder survey data to make improvements.

+ The Building Leadership Team is monitoring progress of the School Improvement Plan.

+ There are collaborative decision-making structures being put into place to better address the responsibility and accountability for results.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES

Among all of the opportunities for improvement within each category and for all core values, the assessment team finds these opportunities to be highest in priority. It is hoped that addressing these opportunities will yield a high future return on investment of resources in improving performance results.

Focus on Learning Opportunities for Improvement:

△ Parents and students do not know the learning targets for each unit of instruction.

△ There are insufficient resources needed to teach the curriculum. Not everyone understands the relationship between standards, curriculum and instructional resources used to teach the curriculum/standards.

△ There is a need to continue to build consistent research-based instructional practices/pedagogy that have a positive effect on student achievement. Once identified those practices/pedagogy need aligned to the performance professional practices through a strong professional learning system. Professional learning is often invitational.

△ There is a need to build formative assessments beyond the pre and post common assessments aligned to each unit's learning outcomes. Those assessments provide descriptive feedback to students during the unit's instruction for students to be able to identify what they know and what they need to know. Formative assessments must guide moment-to-moment instruction.

△ Differentiation need to be owned and developed by all staff. There must be collective ownership for the learning success of all students by individual teachers, grade level

teams and support personnel.

△ Interventions and enrichments are not aligned to the student learning outcomes of each unit and the classroom data system. The building schedule is not maximizing opportunities for staff to work together to differentiate within the classroom and provide extra time and support outside the classroom for those students who are struggling or in need of enriching their learning.

△ Some students expressed being bored while the teacher was working with other groups of students who had not mastered unit learning outcomes. They felt the engagement level and challenge level was insufficient. Parents of the highest achieving learners voiced their concern with the shifts in the gifted program.

△ The Responsive Classroom and PBIS social emotional program must be consistency taught, reinforced and evaluated for its effectiveness and efficiency in addressing student actions and behaviors.

△ Students must own their learning and take responsibility for goal setting, monitoring performance and report progress for both academics and behaviors.

Focus on Collaboration Opportunities for Improvement:

△ Communication and clarification of the school's BIG PICTURE direction is not clearly understood by all stakeholders. There are too many initiatives. Staff is stressed and overwhelmed. There is a need to prioritize and focus initiatives so that a few priorities are executed with a high degree of success rather than many priorities executed at a mediocre or low level.

△ The culture of teaching and learning must shift from being focused on covering much content to learning key concepts that prepare students for college and career readiness.

- △ The principal identified as her greatest challenge seeking balance between developing healthy relationships with staff and ensuring high staff expectations and shared accountability.
- △ Factors affecting morale have been implementation of CCSS, balanced literacy, lack of resources to teach new learning outcomes, and the addition of a new principal and new staff. Last year staff struggled with the implementation of the new CCSS and revisiting a balanced literacy model. Many staff members felt the principal request to move to a balanced literacy model was a top-down decision.
- △ The school is working on building a high level of trust and respect amongst its staff members. Only 61% of the staff reported morale in the building as high.
- △ Depending on priorities from the principal/district administration teachers do not always feel they have enough time for instructional planning. It is unclear how individual planning and collaborative team planning intersects. Expectations for collaboration planning are not explicit.
- △ Not everyone understands how the Responsive Classroom curriculum addresses social and emotional standards that connect with PBIS which is the behavior monitoring system.
- △ Teachers are not comfortable with student learning results to be included in their evaluation. Teachers, according to the self-study, feel there is more to their students than their data, and there are many variables contributing to their students success that are out of their control.
- △ Parents have virtually no idea of what is really happening in the classroom. They trust staff but are most interested in learning more about what students are to know and be able to do. Parents are currently not a partner is tracking learning success.
- △ They trust staff but are most interested in learning more about what students are to know and be able to do and then being a partner is tracking learning success.

Focus on Results Opportunities for Improvement:

△ There is not an accessible data management system. Staff have to go to many difference sources to get what is needed. Parents do not feel data is easily accessible. They report inconsistencies in the way teachers within and across grade levels communicate learning expectations and progress.

△ Parents are unaware of how the school performs in comparison to similar schools in the area and across the state. There is a lack of comparative data. There is a lack of subgroup performance data.

△ Teachers are not always clear on how to use data to assist them address performance gaps among students in their class and grade level.

△ Teachers lack skills, strategies and tools to assist students in goal setting, action planning, and monitoring and reporting their progress.

△ Student goal setting is done with the MAP assessment. Students set very few goals in the classroom on a regular basis tied to what they know and what they need to know next.

△ There is need for data analysis professional learning to ensure a safe data culture. This process also needs to address using data to set goals and targets.

NEXT STEPS

While this report is not intended to be prescriptive, this section provides some suggestions for addressing key opportunities for improvement. It provides suggestions that could serve as next steps. The strengths and areas of opportunity are based on set criteria framed by continuous improvement research. The priorities are not listed in any order.   Each is equally important. Next Steps are framed by the experiences and opinions of the assessment team.

Priority: Focus on Learning

Teachers need to continue their efforts to build unit plans aligned to the Common Core State Standards or other standards in content areas outside of English language arts, mathematics and science. Leaders need to continue to support this difficult and time-consuming work. Following the establishment of clear learning outcomes with a strong, aligned assessment system, teachers need to develop instructional practices/pedagogy to differentiate instruction to ensure mastery of appropriate learning outcomes for each learner.

Priority: Collaborative Culture

The school should explore ways of finding time to enhance collaboration among staff to improve student academic and behavior performance. Establishing trusting and respectful relationships and shared expectations will create the optimal conditions for both

teaching and learning.

Priority: Results Orientation

The school, grade level teams, teachers and students need clear expectations for communicating, monitoring and reporting goal performance. Performance must be aligned to a data system that provides for the measurement of essential indicators. Sharing both responsibility and accountability for performance will have a profound effect on results.