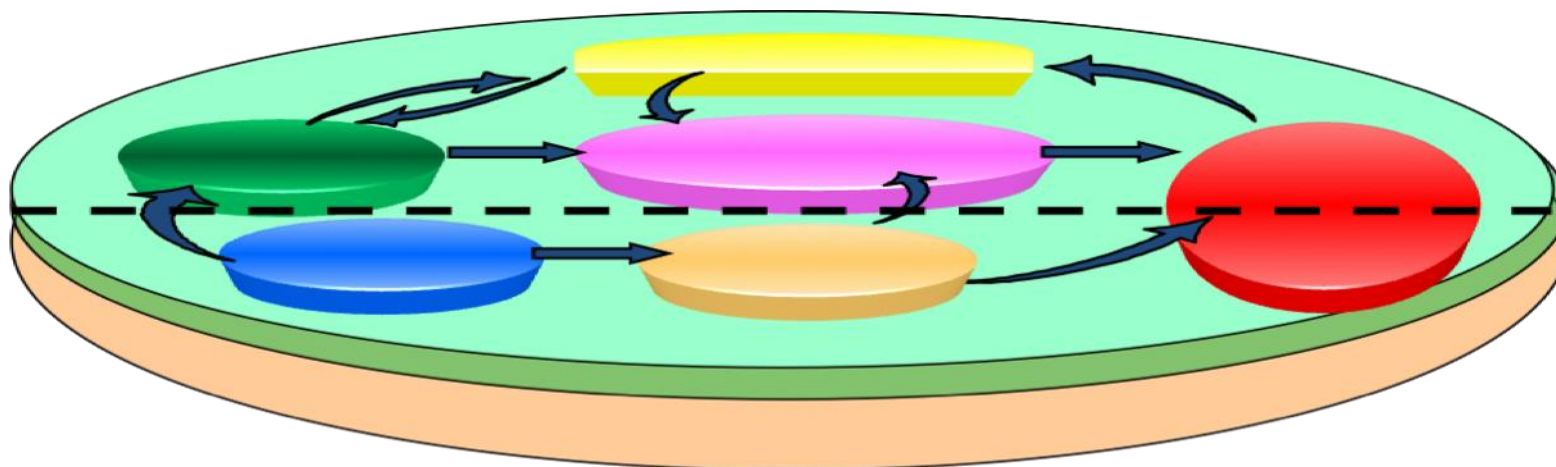


Spring Avenue Elementary School System Assessment Executive Summary Report

The following system assessment feedback report was developed for Spring 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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

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| 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. |

*Adapted from **Aligning Districts As PLCs**, Van Clay, Soldwedel and Many: Solution-Tree, 2011*

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 SMART Goal Team
- Advanced Academics & Enrichment Team
- Parent Organization Leaders
- PE & Fine Arts Leaders
- Problem Solving / RtI Team
- Classroom Paraprofessionals
- Association Leaders
- Non-Instructional Support Team
- Support Staff
- Self-Assessment Teams from Focus on Collaboration, Learning, and Results

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 140 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.

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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:

- + Students are provided with an optimal learning environment. The feeling and culture of the learning environment is outstanding and should be celebrated.**
- + Staff are hard working and extremely dedicated towards meaningful change. Their student focus pushes them to give 100% every day.**
- + Staff have implemented an enrichment program designed to meet the needs of more students. They have begun to use flexible grouping and co-teaching strategies. These specialists also assist in gathering instructional materials, embed professional learning, and help classroom teachers focus on standards-based instruction.**
- + Teachers are engaged in developing common unit plans with learning outcomes as well as pre- and post- assessments through PLDs, Grade Level Planning, and Teacher Academies.**

- + “I can” statements are created for many standards in many grades, and provide students with connections between instruction and performance for essential learning outcomes.
- + A social/emotional approach permeates the school, and staff utilize the Responsive Classroom framework.
- + Teachers have multiple data points from which they can gather information throughout the year, including MAP and Next Step.
- + Push-in and co-teaching support is provided from resource and reading specialists.
- + Data Days are used to assign students to tier groups, analyze individual student needs, and determine individualized pathways for growth.
- + Big Team Plan Days are opportunities for teachers to provide collaboration around instructional strategies and planning as well as share knowledge regarding standards and curriculum.

Focus on Collaboration Strengths:

- + Parent satisfaction and support is high; The PTO is supportive and gives a great deal of time and money to the school.
- + The staff are hardworking, high achieving, professional, and respect each other

with a strong sense of community. This spans from the custodial staff to the principal. Morale is positive. Staff feels the collegial, friendly nature of their peers and the hard working supportive school leaders greatly contribute to the enjoyment of working at Spring Avenue School. The principal is highly respected by staff, students and families; she has an open door policy and is accessible and visible.

- + Stress and anxiety surrounding the many initiatives and uncertainties with curriculum and assessment are not impacting student learning; students enjoy learning and are able to continue learning despite all of the changes mandated by the state in teacher practice.
- + Staff and students work together to create goals that align throughout the system.
- + Staff understand and support the “Big Picture” of where both the district and school are headed; the school improvement plan and staff efforts are aligned to the district strategic plan.
- + Intentional collaboration and communication is supported by administration through data days, Friday common planning time, SIP, and committee work.
- + There are many opportunities for shared decision-making. Staff have opportunities to be heard through teaming, staff meetings, committees, and district roundtables.

- + Data Days provide a safe is discuss data.
- + The school takes time for celebration of accomplishments.

Focus on Results Strengths:

- + Staff are dedicated and committed to improving results.
- + Staff members continue to receive SMART goal and other job embedded training.
- + The school improvement plan and SMART goals are based on student data and are aligned for the district, school, and grade level teams. Progress on some SMART goals is reviewed throughout the year.
- + The teacher evaluation system includes individual goal setting that connects to the grade level team goals.
- + Pre- and post- test results are reviewed at Big Plan Time to create plans for differentiation, enrichment, and remediation for some units.
- + Student achievement and growth metrics are shared with staff on Data Day and decisions are made collectively to implement new instructional strategies.
- + Student achievement is high; the school has been recently recognized as a National Blue Award winner and has been awarded the Illinois Academic

Excellence Award.

- + Many students achieve expected growth goals in MAP.**
- + Survey results are discussed with the staff annually and decisions are made collectively to act on results. Satisfaction data from all stakeholder groups is high.**

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 do not seem to be aware of the essential learning outcomes for units.**
- △ Student report cards do not align to pacing guides, seem to be confusing to parents, and were reported to be based on inconsistent quantities and varieties of graded work. They are aligned to standards but not the essential learning outcomes for each unit of instruction. It is difficult for staff to determine a grade with evidence of mastery of the essential learning outcomes.**
- △ Although many learning outcomes are horizontally aligned, there is a clear perception that more attention needs to be given to vertical articulation of assessment and instruction.**
- △ Although being developed, teachers do not have solid curriculum materials for all areas of instruction that they can utilize in their instruction. Many staff are spending a significant amount of time gathering curriculum resources align to the essential learning outcomes.**

- △ Curriculum expectations seem to be inconsistent; for example, some grades use “I can” statements while others use “SWBAT” statements. Students are not always clear about their progress related to mastery of the essential learning targets.
- △ A reported RtI process exists, but implementation of that process does not appear to be consistent throughout the school. Interventions do not appear to have clear, consistent, and formal identification and monitoring processes.
- △ There does not appear to be enough time to provide interventions without pulling individual students from other curriculum areas; it was reported that students are pulled out of Science and Social Studies to receive extra time for support.
- △ The Responsive Classroom approach does not appear to provide the school with actionable data.
- △ Some staff feel that Big Plan Team time is not utilized effectively plan for instruction due to time constraints. There is not a clear structure to the agenda and often classroom teachers do not walk away with what they need to plan for instruction. The meeting is sometimes too far in advance on instruction to be useful.
- △ Teachers feel that instructional time is being impacted because of the increased number of student assessments.

Focus on Collaboration Opportunities for Improvement:

- △ Staff report that they struggle to differentiate between personal plan time and collaborative time. Staff collaboration times seems to lack structure and clear expectations. There is insufficient time for collaboration.
- △ Staff feel there needs to be a greater awareness among administration of the increasing demands that the many initiatives are placing on teachers. Staff seem to be overwhelmed with all of the initiatives. There may be too many initiatives to implement with a high degree of quality.
- △ Staff often struggle to find a balance between internal and external pressures as they perform all the initiatives with integrity. This was shared in the self-study and repeated by multiple teacher focus groups.
- △ Teams are not assessing their effectiveness or efficiencies. Based on survey results, there is room for improvement in building a safer climate and culture in terms of collaboration for more effective team function.
- △ Some staff report there is confusion between SMART goals, GANS and the strategic plan, thus creating uncertainty of what to truly focus on.
- △ Parent communication seems to lack expectations. Although satisfaction data was high, parent communication was the lowest area. Parents felt like there was often too much information that they didn't know how to filter. Parents are not familiar with the essential learning outcomes for each unit of instruction. They

do not understand how their student is doing related to mastery of those outcomes.

- △ Parents aren't sure how to support teacher efforts in Common Core. They recognize that teachers are required to use it, but feel they have to "figure it out" by themselves to help their children.**
- △ Parents feel opportunities to volunteer in classrooms has declined.**

Focus on Results Opportunities for Improvement:

- △ Reliable, valid, and accurate pre- and post- tests are not available for all units; they are still being developed.**
- △ Standards based reporting is creating confusion for parents in regards to student expectations; staff do not feel adequately equipped to answer their questions or resolve their concerns.**
- △ Although student ownership of learning appears to be important to staff, there does not appear to be a defined expectation or framework to ensure students take ownership in their learning.**
- △ Expectations for the Building Leadership Team are unclear.**
- △ There does not appear to be a formal and predictable system for monitoring progress students who are receiving extra support.**

- △ **Highest achieving students are not reaching their growth goals.**
- △ **The school did not make AYP for the 2013-2014 school year.**
- △ **There is a significant achievement gap between IEP students and non-IEP students.**
- △ **Some staff report there is a lack of math data they can use for instructional purposes.**

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

Continue to design, implement and reflect on common unit plans.

- ✓ Clarify the curriculum with student-friendly learning outcomes aligned to the priority standards for each unit of instruction. Make certain students and their families can articulate what they are to know and be able to do for each unit of instruction.
- ✓ Develop further formative assessments to be used by students and grade level teachers to progress monitor student mastery and growth of the learning outcomes. Make certain students and their families can articulate what the student knows and what are the next steps in learning.
- ✓ Use assessment data to guide differentiated instruction, interventions, and enrichment. Continue to use support services to meet the needs of all students. Use push-in, co-teaching, and flexible grouping to address Tier I. Use support services to address Tier II and Tier III.
- ✓ Align assessments and report cards to the unit learning outcomes.

Priority: Collaborative Culture

Establish clear collaboration expectations to focus on continuous improvement.

- ✓ Expand Big Plan Time and be structured to make sure essential instructional decisions are made in a timely way to coordinate the efforts of support specialists and classroom teachers.
- ✓ Find additional time for team planning.

- ✓ Review and clarify what needs to happen during collaborative time to make the time most efficient and effective.
- ✓ Assess team effectiveness and efficiency and act on findings. Move from highly collaborative teams to highly effective teams.
- ✓ Collaborate with families to include a better understanding of learning outcomes. Enable them to be a partner in supporting learning.
- ✓ Be certain expectations for the Building Leadership Team are clear and their work serves as a conduit for effective communication and collaboration with grade level teams.

Priority: Results Orientation

Use key data and information to assist students, families and staff to progress monitor and report around key indicators and measures to assess growth and achievement.

- ✓ Be certain there are clear guidelines to identify students for interventions and enrichments.
- ✓ Ensure progress monitoring and reporting.
- ✓ Track data to ensure differentiation and interventions/enrichments are working.
- ✓ Ensure data for subgroups is being acknowledged and used to close gaps.
- ✓ Make sure you have the right type and amount of data for all decisions and collaboration.
- ✓ Assess what data you are able to use from Responsive Classroom efforts.