


SCHOOL HAPPENS!

*A Practitioner's Guide
for Increasing
School Achievement*



-Effective Leadership
-Collaborative Teachers
-Rigorous Instruction

Dr. Salvador A. Fernandez

SCHOOL HAPPENS!

A Practitioner's Guide for Increasing School Achievement

- Effective Leadership
- Collaborative Teachers
- Rigorous Instruction

Dr. Salvador A. Fernandez

Table of Contents

3	Introduction
6	Three Pillars for School Achievement
7	Effective Leadership
17	Collaborative Teachers
22	Rigorous Instruction
45	References



STEM Happens Network
1069 Pinebrook Blvd
New Rochelle, NY 10804

Copyright © 2019 STEM Happens Network

All rights reserved. This book, or parts thereof, may not be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without permission in writing from the publisher, STEM Happens Network.

INTRODUCTION

The word leadership is often used synonymously with the word management, but there is a marked difference between the two. While a good manager might ensure that a team's deadlines are met and goals are accomplished, a good leader can inspire, motivate and empower their teams, urging them to go beyond what is required and always keeping the needs of the entire organization in mind. Leadership is a challenging, multi-faceted position. Leaders must have, of course, great management skills. An effective leader needs so much more.

“Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice, and discipline.”

—Jim Collins

An effective leader knows how to identify people that share the same passion and desire to affect change and creates opportunities for them to work collaboratively to achieve common goals. An effective leader inspires and motivates others, instilling in their teams the belief that they can accomplish any task, no matter what obstacles come their way, because they are working together and have the collective skillset to do so. An effective leader builds the capacity of his or her team to tackle challenges because they value innovation and out-of-the-box thinking. An effective leader focuses on community, collaboration and consistency as they think about their work and the work of the school. There is a fine line between managing and leading and a true leader not only understands this, but constantly works to keep that balance in proper alignment appropriate to the needs of his or her organization.

This guide, and the aligned modules developed from it, was designed to support school principals in understanding that fine line between management and leadership, looking closely at the elements of leadership that will support the creation and development of strong schools. However, upon completion, we discovered that it's not just for administrators, but could also be useful for assistant principals, coaches, department heads, or anyone else looking to further develop their leadership skills and find tools to support this work.

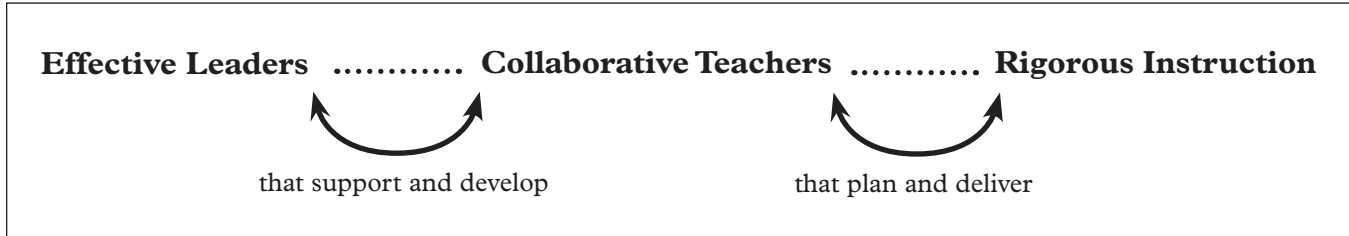
Each year, educators start with the best of intentions. We have new ideas for how to better organize and run our classrooms, to communicate more frequently and effectively with parents, to more efficiently check homework or grade assignments, or even to provide meaningful staff development and support, to name just a few. Yet, we often get derailed. We begin these projects, but we lose steam along the way and often fail to see them through completion. Are we just lazy educators giving up halfway through the year as we dream about our summer plans? Hardly. In fact, it's quite the opposite. So what happens to our plans? Simply put, school happens.

“School happens” is a phrase used to describe the daily reality of life in schools. Budget cuts, new standards, standardized tests, parent concerns, a stomach flu that sweeps through the school – they all happen and when they do it's easy to get off track, pushing many of our intentions and initiatives to the back burner.

School – like life - will always happen. We can't avoid this reality but we can work within that reality to still build and maintain great schools. By focusing our attention on fewer, but more effective initiatives and creating a structured system that supports our efforts, we can continue to develop and build successful schools.

While the roadmaps we design to build these successful schools may differ, there is something that remains constant across education: great schools need three critical elements. These three elements or pillars of successful schools are: 1) effective leadership, 2) collaborative teachers and 3) rigorous instruction. Oftentimes the focus of rebuilding or restructuring schools comes down to focusing on just teachers and their classroom practices. However, we need to be talking about all three of these key elements moving together in the same direction to achieve success in our schools.

In short, we need:



GOAL: The goal of this guide is simple: to support school leaders in building and maintaining a successful school for their students. This is achieved through a clear focus on 1) Effective Leadership 2) Collaborative Teachers and 3) Rigorous Instruction

What makes a great school?

Think about this question for a minute. Is a school considered great because of its people: administrators, teachers, students, parents, or community members? Is a school considered great because of the instructional materials or economic resources to which it has access? Is a school considered great because of high test scores and graduation rates, extracurricular activities, sports programs, school layout or environment, curriculum, delivery of instruction, management or structures?

Certainly we'd all agree that there are many factors involved in building successful schools. As educators, however, there are only so many of these factors over which we have control. The socio-economic status of students, absentee parents, or binding union contracts are just a few of the things over which we have little to no power. In fact, we can complain that students don't behave in class, or that they come to school lacking the skills they need. We can complain that parents aren't involved enough. We can even complain that the education system, itself, is corrupt. While there may be some truth in each of those statements, it doesn't take away from the roles that we, as educators, are there to fill.

Before we got into this field, we probably never realized all the hats that we would wear and all the challenges that would face us daily. However, regardless of the struggles, if we are to remain committed and effective in this, our chosen profession, we have to find a way to acknowledge the difficulties and still do our jobs. Providing a high quality education to all students is non-negotiable. Therefore, while we must acknowledge that students, teachers, and administrators are all coming to this work at different levels of education, experience, and background, we must also

acknowledge that wherever we land within the work is where we land. All students will be held to the same expectations and it is up to us to figure out how to get them there. Yes, it is easy to get discouraged, but at some point, we simply need to accept where we are and problem-solve to move forward.

In the book *Good to Great and the Social Sectors: Why Business Thinking is Not the Answer* by Jim Collins, the author examines the idea of using business principles to guide the management of social sector organizations – and maintains that this is not the way to go. Rather, Collins explores the elements that differentiate good businesses and organizations from great ones. Essentially, he believes it comes down to understanding and working within the values of “greatness.” As Collins maintains, “That’s what our work is about: building a framework of greatness, articulating timeless principles that explain why some become great and others do not,” (Collins 2). One significant point that we can apply to our system of education, although there are many, is the concept of the Stockdale Paradox: “You must retain faith that you can prevail to greatness in the end, while retaining the discipline to confront the brutal facts of your current reality. What can you do today to create a pocket of greatness, despite the brutal facts of your environment?” (Collins 30). As educators, we need to believe that we can build and maintain great schools in spite of the many challenges and harsh realities we face. So, how can we take Collins’ principles of greatness and explicitly apply them to building great schools? What can we do today to achieve this?

GOAL:

The goal of this guide is simple: to support school leaders in building and maintaining a successful school for their students. Admittedly, doing that is not quite so simple. However, this guide will provide the tools and supports necessary for moving in the direction of achieving a great school.

While we are certainly aware that there are significant variables, such as school organization and parent/community involvement, identified through research as critical for successful schools, the purpose of this document is to jumpstart a conversation about the quality of education in schools by focusing on the critically important three pillars: 1) Effective Leadership, 2) Collaborative Teachers and 3) Rigorous Instruction.

Three Pillars for School Achievement

EFFECTIVE LEADERS:	COLLABORATIVE TEACHERS:	RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a strong school culture and supportive environment built on trust • Develop a shared vision • Communicate clear expectations • Ensure a viable curriculum for all students • Offer continuous support and ongoing professional development opportunities for all teachers • Build strong family and community ties <p>Effective leaders are those that motivate people to move in positive directions, despite the challenges and obstacles that permeate the work. They must be collaborative and integrate the thoughts and efforts of others into a unified, collective body of work. They develop a culture of trust and mutual accountability that ensures high expectations for all, utilizes equitable routines and procedures, and exercises distributive leadership practices to achieve goals. The result, then, is a collegial and collaborative environment where students and staff feel safe, valued and can learn.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share best practices with colleagues • Engage in ongoing professional learning with colleagues • Engage in thoughtful, collaborative planning • Are reflective practitioners • Foster communication and positive dialogue with outside stakeholders <p>Collaborative teachers work together on an ongoing basis to develop deeper levels of understanding about their students and to make better choices in planning instruction. They share information with colleagues and use one another as a support to deepen their practice. They see these professional responsibilities outside of the classroom as a natural extension of, and in direct connection to, what they do inside the classroom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demands clear expectations of outcomes • Creates opportunities for intellectual engagement and critical thinking by students, both collaboratively and independently • Embeds assessment opportunities with data-driven and goal oriented planning • Demands knowledge of content and pedagogy • Demands knowledge of students <p>Rigorous instruction challenges students and allows them to serve as leaders over their own learning. Students are provided with appropriate and complex texts and/or tasks that will support them in meeting content and language objectives. Student discussions, alongside artifacts and work products, demonstrate levels of mastery and understanding and serve as evidence of higher-order thinking and intellectual engagement.</p>

1. EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Effective leaders are those that motivate people to move in positive directions, despite the challenges and obstacles that permeate the work. They must be collaborative and integrate the thoughts and efforts of others into a unified, collective body of work. They must develop a culture of trust and mutual accountability that ensures high expectations for all, utilizes equitable routines and procedures, and exercises distributive leadership practices to achieve goals. The result, then, is a collegial and collaborative environment where students and staff feel safe, valued and can learn. So where do we even begin to do this work? Simply, we start with why.

“To lead requires those who willingly follow. It requires those who believe in something bigger than a single issue. To inspire starts with the clarity of WHY.”

—Simon Sinek

GETTING TO “WHY”

In his book *Start with Why* author Simon Sinek maintains that, “When most organizations or people think, act or communicate they do so from the outside in, from WHAT to WHY... We rarely say WHY we do WHAT we do (Sinek 40).” However, he believes that “You have to know WHY you do WHAT you do. If people don’t buy WHAT you do, they buy WHY you do it, so it follows that if you don’t know WHY you do WHAT you do, how will anyone else?” (Sinek 65-6).

Therefore, a solid starting point for any leader in building a successful school is to first establish the purpose of the school’s work. What do we believe and why? Why are we doing this work? These common values are the foundation – the piece upon which everything else is built. These values need to be shared by and understood clearly by all members of the school community. Once it has been established we can then determine:

- What we want to accomplish as a school (e.g., our goals)
- How we plan to accomplish our goals (e.g., our action plan)
- Ways to monitor progress in reaching our goals (e.g., benchmarks)

WHAT IS YOUR SCHOOL’S “WHY”?

Once we have established our purpose - our ‘why we do what we do’ - we can then focus on how we plan to do it. Often a good place to start is with the end in mind. By determining success – what it looks like and sounds like for you – we can better create a plan for getting there.

Success looks different from school to school and it is not easy to define. However, as Jim Collins reasons in *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, “A great organization is one that delivers superior performance and makes a distinctive impact over a long period of time” (Collins 5). The chart below, adapted from Collins’ work, helps us think about what success means in our particular setting.

Worksheet 1a

DEFINING SUCCESS¹

Directions: Take a moment to reflect on the work you wish to accomplish at your school. Answer the following three questions on success, impact, and longevity to help you establish a foundation from which to plan your next steps.

Success	What does success look like and sound like to you?
Impact	How will you know you have made an impact on the school community?
Longevity	How will this success be maintained over time?

¹ Chart Adapted from *Good to Great and the Social Sectors* by Jim Collins

Once we've determined the purpose, or why, for our work and gained a clear picture of what success means for us, we can now establish:

- A shared mission and vision statements aligned to our core purpose;
- The elements of effective teaching and leadership that are tied to these statements that will serve as the focus of our learning efforts;
- The goals, action plans and benchmarks that will guide our work.

The following template, aligned to the Framework for Great Schools¹, is a great place to start. It allows leadership teams to set their intentions for the year and begin to use data to set goals and benchmarks for success, as well as identifying how they will track and assess their progress over time. "What matters is not finding the perfect indicator, but settling upon a consistent and intelligent method of assessing your output results, and then tracking your trajectory with rigor. What do you mean by great performance? Have you established a baseline? Are you improving? If not, why not? How can you improve even faster toward your audacious goals?" (Collins 8).

As teams progress throughout the year and beyond, then, they should continually return to these statements and ask:

- Are all stakeholders aware of and working toward achieving our mission and vision?
- Are our goals and action plans still aligned to our mission and vision statements?
- Are our actions moving us closer to achieving our mission and vision?

¹The Framework for Great Schools serves as the vision for the NYC Department of Education. It incorporates 6 elements that lead to high student achievement and encourages collaboration between parents, educators, and community members.

Worksheet 1b

YEARLONG PLAN – AT A GLANCE

Directions: Now that you have established what success looks like to you, you can work towards developing an action plan to achieve that success. Complete the following charts that will help you develop a framework for your school vision and the goals you wish to achieve for instruction.

MISSION:	What is your purpose? What do you do, for whom do you do it and how do you do it? What value do you provide?
VISION:	What is your long-term desired future state? Where do you want to be? What do you want to become?
INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS:	What is your school’s priority area for classroom instruction?
RATIONALE:	How did you determine your instructional focus and why? What data supports it as a priority area for your school?

What goals will you set to support you in achieving your school’s mission and vision, and staying aligned to your instructional focus?

	GOAL #1 School Culture	GOAL #2 Effective Leadership	GOAL #3 Professional Learning and Support	GOAL #4 Curriculum and Instruction Collaboration	GOAL #5 Family/Community Connection
ACTION PLAN:					
TIMELINE/ CHECKPOINTS:					
FACILITATOR(S):					

IMPLEMENTING

As previously stated, effective leaders are those that motivate people to move in positive directions, despite the challenges and obstacles that permeate the work. At this point, we have determined the direction in which we need to move in order to create and maintain a successful school. The question now is how? How will we do this work?

No school leader can do this work alone – it takes a team and that team needs to be working together at all times. Defining success, a map for achieving success and ways to measure progress toward achieving success over time is a great place to start – but it’s not going to get us there on its own. We also need trust - and trust starts with the leader. As author Stephen Covey maintains in *The Speed of Trust*, “...You can say that you recognize people as your most important asset. You can say that you will comply with the rules, that you won’t engage in unethical practices, that you will respect confidence, keep a commitment or deliver results. You can say all of these things, but unless you actually do them, your words will not build trust; in fact, they will destroy it” (Covey 128).

Therefore, before implementing any of the action plans created for the school, the leadership team must ask itself:

- What are we doing to develop and maintain trust within our school?
- How will we develop clear systems and structures for effective communication?
- How will we invite all stakeholders to become active participants in the work?

EXPLORING EXPECTATIONS

In addition to trust, it's important to establish expectations and accountability protocols for the work. Having clear expectations of the roles and responsibilities for our individual positions and that of our team members goes a long way in achieving goals. It can not only help us to revise and refine our goals and actions plans, but also helps us to identify those best suited to the work of a specific goal. This, in turn, helps us to create shared accountability for the work, both individually and as a team.

Worksheet 1c:

EXPLORING THE ROLES OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP (School Leader)

Directions: Consider your role as a school leader. List all the responsibilities you have in this role. Then, list all the challenges you face in this role. Be as specific as possible – get it all down. Then, stop and reflect on your lists. Consider the areas that 1) are most important to your role and 2) over which you have control/power to change. List 3-5 of these items under “Focus Areas.”

MY ROLE: _____

Responsibilities	Challenges	STOP AND REFLECT	Focus Areas

Worksheet 1d:

EXPLORING THE ROLES OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP (Other Leadership Roles)

Directions: Now consider the roles of at least 2 other school leadership positions. These positions might be Principal, Assistant Principal, Coach, Dean, or Department Chair, to name a few. List all the responsibilities you can think of for this role. Then, list all the challenges someone in this role might face in meeting those responsibilities. If you haven't served in this position before, you may not know all of the responsibilities and challenges – just do your best. Then, stop and reflect on your lists. Consider the areas that you feel are most important for someone in this position and list 3-5 of these items under “Focus Areas.”

ROLE: _____

Responsibilities	Challenges	STOP AND REFLECT	Focus Areas

ROLE: _____

Responsibilities	Challenges	STOP AND REFLECT	Focus Areas

By examining our role as a school leader in this way, we can better understand our work, identify specific focus areas for our efforts, and create clear expectations for ourselves. Additionally, by examining the roles of other school leaders, we can better understand and create clear expectations of their work, as well as considering how our roles work together to meet the team’s goals.

ACTIVITY

Directions: Choose one leadership position (for example: Principal). Ask the person in that role to share their chart. Then, ask team members to share anything new or different from their charts in their exploration of that specific role. As a team, create a list of expectations for that role.

Do the same for all leadership roles (Principal, Assistant Principal, Coach, Dean, etc.) – sharing charts and creating a list of expectations for that role.

*It is important to note that while we have just created a general list of expectations for each role, there will always be additional tasks and situations that come up throughout the year to which specific roles must attend. Understanding this fact and allowing for the flexibility to address these matters is key; however, we must not let these items derail us from meeting our team’s goals.

COMMUNICATION and CHECK-INS

All members of the leadership team should submit check-ins weekly to keep the Principal informed of progress and next steps along specific areas related to school-wide goals. The template below is a sample for what it might look like, includes an opportunity to reflect on the week, share progress and areas of concern, ask questions, and establish next steps. Therefore, it can also serve as a form of regular communication between the team member and the Principal: particularly important when face-to-face meetings are not possible.

Worksheet 1e: WEEKLY CHECK-IN

<p>Reflection (General reflection on the week)</p>	
<p>Priority Areas (What did I work on this week? What am I trying to achieve?)</p>	
<p>Progress (Describe the progress made/lessons learned)</p>	
<p>Areas of Concern/ Questions (What challenges are ahead? What broader issues need to be considered if this action is to be successful? What questions do I have?)</p>	
<p>Next Steps (How will I continue the work? What specifically will I do in the next week and over the next month?)</p>	

The leadership team will meet monthly to discuss progress and challenges and to set specific next steps. While discussions will focus on progress and obstacles in meeting goals, they should also focus on the strengths and needs of the team in order to continue and/or adjust collaborative practices.

Worksheet 1f:

LEADERSHIP TEAM MONTHLY CHECK-IN: Schoolwide Goals

This template is designed for the Leadership Team to reflect on the progress of the goals established for the school. Together, the team should answer the series of guiding questions intended to help them understand their areas of strength, areas of need, and next steps. This document archives the journey the leadership team makes towards success.

	Strengths/Areas of Improvement	Needs	Specific Next Steps
<p>LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING</p> <p><u>Guiding Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What progress are we making along our goals? - What challenges are we facing in meeting our goals? (How might we overcome these challenges? What resources will we need to overcome these challenges?) - What strengths are emerging in our team? - What needs/areas for improvement are emerging in our team? - In which of the 3 pillars (<i>Effective Leadership, Collaborative Teachers and Rigorous Instruction</i>) are we seeing improvement? In which of the levers are we seeing continued needs? 			

SUMMARY

In summary, the goal of effective leadership is to create a collegial and collaborative environment where students and staff feel safe, valued and can learn. Leaders do this by developing a culture of trust and mutual accountability that ensures high expectations for all, utilizes equitable routines and procedures, and exercises distributive leadership practices to achieve long and short-term goals.

As leaders engage in this work by collaboratively establishing the purpose of the school's work, a definition of success, and goals aligned to these beliefs, and an action plan for meeting these goals, the following questions will guide leadership teams and support them in staying focused on the work:

- What are we doing to develop and maintain trust within our school?
- Have we developed clear systems and structures for effective communication?
- Are we clear about our strengths and our needs?
- Have we developed clear goals, and action plans aligned to these goals, that address the needs of our school?
- Have we provided staff members with the tools necessary to perform their roles effectively?
- Are we maintaining transparency in our work?

2. COLLABORATIVE TEACHERS

Successful schools look for learning opportunities within their own communities. They consider how teachers can learn with and from one another. They know that sharing their knowledge and skills with one another, directly or indirectly related to their roles in the classroom, will contribute to the improvement and overall effectiveness of the staff and foster collaboration.

When teachers collaborate on a regular basis, they develop deeper levels of understanding about their students and make better choices in planning instruction. They share information with colleagues and use one another as a support to deepen understanding about their practice. They acknowledge that a set of professional responsibilities exists outside the classroom and see them as a natural extension of, and in direct connection to, what they do inside the classroom.

“Creating a collaborative environment has been called the single most important factor in sustaining the effort to create a learning community.”

—Richard DuFour, Professional Learning Communities at Work

However, teaching has predominantly been an isolated profession. Therefore, it is up to school leaders to create opportunities for ongoing collaboration and to support teachers in doing so, especially those uncomfortable with it, by building a supportive team environment and providing guidance on the work at hand.

One way to do this is to support the creation and maintenance of professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs can be formed around multiple commonalities: grade level, content area, or a shared problem of practice. When scheduled into teachers’ programs, they allow teachers the chance to engage in ongoing professional conversations focused on sharing best practices and strengthening existing ones, improving student learning and building teacher leadership. No matter how this time is used (e.g., engaging in inquiry work around a shared problem, planning lessons together, analyzing data and sharing student work, discussing the academic and/or social emotional needs of students, etc.) the ultimate goal is the same: to collaboratively engage in discussions centered around the academic and social well being of the student population with the intent of meeting student needs to enhance their educational experience and improve student learning outcomes. The goal is to build and sustain a community of collaborative teachers.

SETTING THE STAGE FOR PLCs

Teachers unfamiliar with PLCs may have a hard time adjusting to the opportunity for collaboration and shared decision-making. That is where effective leaders come in. They need to help create the structures for an effective team and embed this type of community into the everyday at their respective schools. In *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, author Richard DuFour maintains that, “Collaboration by invitation is ineffective: meaningful collaboration must be embedded into the daily life of the school,” (DuFour 130). He suggests four steps to make collaborative teaching part of the school’s culture:

- 1) Time – The one thing teachers are always short of is time so asking them to collaborate without providing any opportunities for them to do so is simply throwing one more item on a very large to-do pile. It will not be valued and, therefore, will likely not happen. If we want collaboration to be a priority, we must treat it as a priority. Hence, PLCs must be programmed into teachers’ schedules.
- 2) Purpose – “Teams are most effective when they are clear about the results they are to achieve. This clarity of purpose is enhanced when teams are provided with clearly stated performance goals that indicate what the team is to produce or accomplish” (DuFour 123). Teachers need to know first why collaboration is important and how it will help them to do their jobs better. After that, they must understand why they were grouped to collaborate in particular way (e.g., grade, content, etc.) and what they are expected to accomplish throughout the year.
- 3) Training and Support – Collaboration doesn’t just happen. People need to be taught how to work together effectively and efficiently in order to achieve their shared goals. This includes understanding the purpose of their work, determining roles within the group, setting norms around shared expectations and accountability for all members of the team, a process/plan for the work, and check-in points for meeting goals and deadlines. “Sustaining an improvement initiative requires much more than congeniality. It requires the common goals, collective efforts, and shared insights of people deeply engaged in the analysis of their current practice and behavior” (DuFour 128). Effective leaders must support and guide teams in their efforts to work together.
- 4) Accept Responsibility – “Educators often bemoan their lack of opportunity to work together, but little will change unless they also acknowledge that they have contributed to the problem” (DuFour 128). Participants must recognize that this is their opportunity to engage in efforts that will change the way their school operates, allowing them a chance to work together to improve their instructional practices, get to know their students more deeply and in a way that can better support them in meeting student needs, and have a voice in school-wide decisions.

BEYOND THE PLC MEETING

In addition to PLC meetings, teachers can collaborate by conducting interclass visits and/or by participating in collaborative lesson planning – the purpose of both being to improve the capacity of teachers to plan and deliver quality instruction in an authentic way. It is important that this purpose is communicated and repeated, as neither of these learning supports should ever be used or discussed in an evaluative manner. They are simply to be used as cooperative learning opportunities for teachers to enhance and advance their practice. To be effective, both will need clear structures and protocols that should be designed at the school-level with and for teachers; however, a sample overview for each is provided below.

INTERCLASS VISITS

Interclass visits allow a teacher, or group of teachers, the opportunity to see a colleague teach a lesson by conducting a low-inference observation of that lesson, discussing the lesson with the teacher observed, and, with him/her, creating next steps for improvement. This streamlined approach to collaborating with colleagues pushes teachers to:

- Engage in professional conversations focused on instructional practices and student learning;
 - Build relationships with and learn from colleagues;
 - Monitor their own professional growth through ongoing observations and effective feedback.
- As stated earlier, the process should be designed by and for teachers. Here's an example of what a process might look like:

The Pre-Visit Discussion:

- a. Schedule a time for the interclass visit and debrief session;
- b. Discuss the focus of the lesson (goals and objectives/outcomes, teacher strengths and struggles in planning/meeting student needs, look fors, etc.)
- c. Review key parts of the process together (e.g., low inference observation, non-evaluative process, two-way discussion for establishing next steps, etc).

The Classroom Visit:

- a. Observer conducts a low-inference observation and begins to prepare key feedback statements/questions based on pre-visit discussion and observation;
- b. Teacher observed reflects on lesson and prepares talking points/questions to share during post-visit discussion.

The Post-Visit Discussion:

- a. Observed teacher shares reflection;
- b. Observer shares feedback statements/questions;
- c. Together, teachers look at samples of student work from the lesson;
- d. Together, teachers determine next steps.

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING

Collaborative planning allows pairs or small groups of teachers to collaboratively plan a lesson, see that lesson delivered, look at student work produced as a result of the lesson, debrief the lesson and its outcomes, reflect on the process and create clear next steps to improve future planning. It pushes teachers to focus on their planning – to pay attention to creating clear outcomes and objectives, aligning activities and assessments to outcomes, considering the order of activities and assessments, creating student groups, identifying tools and resources, and overall using data to inform planning. It also allows participants to gain new information about approaches to planning and provides a critical friend.

Once again, the process should be designed by and for teachers, but might look something like this:

Worksheet 2a:
PLC PLANNING DOCUMENT

1) Plan the Lesson – Participants spend the bulk of their time in this step of the process. Guiding questions include:

- *What do we want students to know or do at the end of this lesson?*
- *What activities will support students in achieving the lesson's outcome?*
- *What teaching strategies might we use?*
- *How much time will be devoted to each section of the lesson and why?*
- *What material or resources are needed?*
- *Are instructional groups intentionally organized to support student learning?*
- *Is the lesson designed to engage students intellectually?*
- *Are instructional materials and resources appropriate to the learning needs of the students?*

2) Deliver the Lesson – One teacher in the group will implement the lesson while the other participants will watch and take low inference observation notes. If teachers of the same grade and content area have planned the lesson, all participants might take a chance to teach the lesson to their own classes. In this case, everyone gets to teach and everyone gets to observe. Guiding questions include:

- *Am I following the plan as it was designed? Why or why not?*
- *Am I paying attention to student actions as a result of, and reactions to, the lesson?*
- *Am I clear in what I am asking students to do?*

3) Looking at Student Work – Together, participants assess student work produced as a result of the lesson. Guiding questions include:

- *What patterns and trends are emerging in the work?*
- *What are the strengths of students based on their work?*
- *What are the needs of students based on their work?*
- *Did students meet the intended learning objectives of the lesson? Why or why not?*
- *What is the work telling us?*

4) Reflection and Lesson Debrief – Participants reflect on the lesson design and implementation and discuss the process and outcomes of this lesson. Guiding questions include:

- *As a result of this process, which aspects of my planning and delivery of instruction do I feel were validated?*
- *As a result of this process, what questions do I now have about my own planning and delivery of instruction?*
- *As a result of this process, what new ideas do I have?*
- *What can I incorporate from the collaborative planning process into my own practice that will help me to improve?*

5) Next Steps – Participants determine clear and concise next steps for future planning and delivery of instruction. Guiding questions include:

- *How might I refine my instructional practices to increase the impact on student learning?*
- *How might I better support students who did not meet the learning goals of the lesson?*
- *How might I challenge students who met the learning goals?*

SUMMARY

Staff members who work collaboratively towards a shared outcome take greater ownership in their overall development as an educator. PLC's can strengthen this feeling of ownership and shared collaboration among school faculty. Further, ongoing collaboration allows teachers, administrators, and other school personnel to regularly engage in discussions centered around, and focused work on, the academic and social-emotional well being of students in order to improve learning outcomes and increase progress.

Increasing collaboration can be guided by the following questions:

- What opportunities exist for teachers to collaborate with their peers?
- How is collaborative time structured? What does it look/sound like?
- What are the expectations for collaboration and have they been communicated clearly?
- What are leaders doing to support teacher collaboration? What are participants doing to hold themselves and their peers on track and accountable for the work?
- How is collaboration improving our school (e.g., culture and environment, instructional practices, student outcomes, etc.)?

3. RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION

As we have maintained throughout this text, successful schools need effective leaders to develop and support collaborative teachers so that they can plan and deliver rigorous instruction to improve student learning. Rigorous instruction challenges students and allows them to serve as leaders over their own learning. Students are provided with appropriate and complex texts and/or tasks that will support them in meeting content and language objectives. Student discussions, alongside artifacts and work products, demonstrate levels of mastery and understanding and serve as evidence of higher-order thinking and intellectual engagement.

In *Schooling by Design*, authors Wiggins and McTighe maintain, “Schools exist to cause learning that is intellectually vital, generative of future self-directed learning, personally meaningful and productive, and socially valuable” (Wiggins & McTighe 12). Therefore, since students can only rise and perform to the learning opportunities to which they are exposed, the quality of a school’s curricula is of paramount importance.

“Effective practices are designed to achieve desired results. As educators expand their expectations for student learning to focus more on conceptual understandings and problem-solving skills, the instructional strategies used must correspondingly change.”

—Charlotte Danielson,
The Framework for
Professional Practice

As educators, we have all attended workshops on, professional development for, and/or read books about advancing our pedagogy or improving curriculum - separately. Yet we are all aware that we need both to truly build and maintain a successful school. Let us begin by discussing the realities of a viable curriculum.

What is a Viable Curriculum?

While most teachers have completed some coursework on designing curriculum, many are still lost on how instructional maps and pacing calendars should look, how to begin designing these resources and what components are really essential to them. Usually, teachers take what they have learned in their courses, combine it with what they know from their teaching experience, and add in a little common sense. Unfortunately, despite their best efforts, this does not always add up to challenging and credible instructional tasks that meet the needs of all learners and move students to high levels of achievement.

A solid, viable curriculum is both tight and loose, meaning that while there must be non-negotiable items, there must also be room for flexibility. For example, the non-negotiable of curriculum mapping lies in ensuring we answer the following questions:

1. What do we want to achieve?
2. How do we plan to achieve it?
3. How will we know we have achieved it?

We can think of each question as a phase of curriculum design - each phase requiring a set of steps for completion. The flexibility, then, comes later when bringing the curriculum to life in the classroom. For now, let’s stick with curriculum design.

[Note: Designing curriculum is a giant task – one that takes a considerable amount of time, strong content knowledge and pedagogical skills, and solid understanding of the design process. Your school may not be ready for this, not yet have the resources/capacity, or may simply choose to purchase an existing, research-based program. If so, you can choose to move to the next section *Bringing the Curriculum to Life*, or continue reading to see how instructional guides might be laid out.]

1. WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

To address this first phase of curriculum design, we need to start by looking at the big picture. What are our instructional expectations for the school year? This may, at first, seem like a loaded question. There are many things teachers expect to accomplish each year. However, we must be able to clearly and specifically articulate these goals. Often teachers confuse this idea of understanding instructional goals and expectations with the idea of covering content. However, "...making 'content' the focus of all teaching, learning and assessing gets the matter backward. Decisions about what to teach and how it should be learned and assessed derive from long-term learning goals related to mission. Content and pedagogy are means to ends" (Wiggins & McTighe 20). This is why effective leaders must lay the groundwork at the beginning of the year – identifying strengths and needs, establishing the instructional focus, and setting school-wide goals. It is from this work that teachers, both collaboratively and individually, prepare to engage with students.

Therefore, one of the most important first steps in the curriculum design process is to become familiar with the standards –the expectations for students within a given grade and content area. It is likely there are several that are quite challenging and will need to be addressed over more than one, if not all, units. However, we must decide which ones are most important and how many can realistically be addressed within one academic year. Remember, we are not here to merely "cover" the standards, but rather to teach to them, deeply and meaningfully, so that students can demonstrate mastery of these standards. Therefore, we must practically select those that hold the most weight, are critical to improving student outcomes, and will prepare students for their next level of education. To do so effectively, it is often helpful to also review the standards of lower and upper grades. What were the expectations of students before they came to us? What expectations will they be held to next, after they leave us? Our students may or may not come to us having mastered these previous standards. However, it is up to us to prepare them to enter the next phase of their educational careers - no matter how difficult that task may be – and informing ourselves of prior expectations is an important step in this work.

Once we have established the standards that will be addressed over the course of the year, aligned to our school's goals and priorities, we can now create our plan or map.

2. HOW DO WE PLAN TO ACHIEVE IT?

After the careful review and selection of standards, we must now think about how we plan to achieve these goals: What standards will we address within each unit and what are the key topics, content and concepts that align with these standards? What types of products or processes do we expect our students to produce in each unit that will demonstrate understanding and mastery of the standards? The final unit product or task is critical here because once we have established what we expect students to know and be able to do at the end of each unit, it can better guide

us in what we must teach in order to get them there. “Until we grasp the idea that a curriculum has no coherence or power divorced from vital accomplishments related to transfer and meaning, we will not avoid aimless coverage of content objectives. Nor will we have a mechanism for doing what we so badly need in order to achieve our goals: an effective method for prioritizing and pruning content” (Wiggins & McTighe 44).

3. HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED IT?

Often, we design units with a specific text, topic or concept in mind. We create lessons around our selections that lead students to produce a piece of work. We have an idea of what should be included within that piece and, possibly, a rubric for assessment that addresses each required element. Once the final task is completed and graded, we move on - new unit, new task.

However, what happens if a student didn't learn or accomplish what we wanted them to learn or accomplish? Do we push the whole class to move on and hope for the best next unit? Do we allow that student to try again? If so, how do we support them in being successful this time? Certainly students have a responsibility to not only complete the tasks assigned to them, but to share any barriers that prevent them from doing so. As educators, we also share this responsibility with them. While we always want to believe that we have been thoughtful about our work, this is not always true. When students fail to complete tasks and/or meet expectations, can we honestly say that we:

- Were clear about our expectations?
- Explicitly imparted to students the knowledge and skills necessary for them to complete the tasks assigned to them?
- Designed interim checkpoints to ensure that students were understanding and able to apply their learning along the way?

We can only assess students on what they have been taught. This is why establishing what we expect students to know and be able to do at the end of each unit is so important. By doing so, we can build into our units opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning along the way. These interim checkpoints, aligned to the unit's final task, are key to ensuring that we, as educators, accomplish our instructional goals. Therefore, establishing measurable goals and tracking student progress along these goals is essential to the curriculum mapping process. When we build such a system into our maps, we ensure that we do not reach the end of the unit and learn then that our students have not mastered the standards addressed. We ensure that we do not move on to a new unit, a new task. “...if there are no explicit learning goals and priorities outside the content...there is no basis for adjusting the curriculum; on it must go, then, in spite of results crying out for institutional and teacher adjustments (Wiggins & McTighe 56).

It is important to note here that we must apply the same message to designing curriculum as we do to improving instructional practices. Just as our students can only do as well as the tasks they are given, the same is true for teachers. Curriculum design is a challenging process and we cannot assume teachers know how to do it. We must show teachers what a viable curriculum looks like and explicitly support them in learning to develop the same. Therefore, administrators and staff developers must be knowledgeable of this process as well.

In addition, curriculum maps should be designed for teachers to use. Too many details and mandates embedded will likely overwhelm, and stunt the creativity of, teachers in bringing lessons to life. Too few and we face the risk of too much flexibility, which leads to inconsistencies across classrooms. Therefore, we need to ensure we find the right balance between the "tight and the loose" of curriculum design and classroom instruction.

Bringing the Curriculum to Life

While we know that great teaching is at the heart of a successful school, we also need to think about what makes teaching great in order to optimize the educational opportunities for all our students. We need to be thinking about, talking about and looking at what is happening inside classrooms.

Whether your school chooses to design their own units or purchase existing materials/programs, the job of the teacher is to bring that curriculum to life – adjusting it to meet the needs of the students while continuing to hold them to high expectations. The process of doing so is similar to the curriculum design process discussed in the section above. We must ask ourselves:

1. What do we want to achieve?
2. How do we plan to achieve it?
3. How will we know we have achieved it?

Each of these questions should be answered in the planning process. Then, once the plan is carried out during the delivery of the lesson, teachers can use data gathered throughout the lesson and from student work products produced during the lesson to determine whether or not the goals were achieved.

1. WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Just as we need to establish what we want students to know and be able to do at the end of each unit in our curriculum guides, we need to establish what we want students to know and be able to do at the end of each lesson. Therefore, clear learning outcomes are key to the lesson planning process.

2. HOW DO WE PLAN TO ACHIEVE IT?

Once we've established what we want students to know and be able to do by the end of the lesson, we need to create a plan to ensure we meet these learning objectives. Tasks and activities must align to and support the learning objective, while resources and materials must be carefully selected to support activities. "Of all the elements of an instructional plan, the most critical is the design of instructional activities. The important question to be answered is this: 'What could the students do in order to learn X?'" (Danielson 57). Presumably, there are many choices, no matter the learning objective and it is the teacher's job to determine which way will not only support students in achieving the lesson's goals but also ensuring alignment and coherence between the various components of the plan – learning objectives, activities, resources, and grouping, to name a few. Also, knowing how important it is to challenge and push students, the teacher must

"Even in classrooms where students assume considerable responsibility for their learning, the teacher is in charge of organizing the environment, managing the learning process, and establishing the framework for investigations."

—Charlotte Danielson,
The Framework for
Professional Practice

consider how to provide opportunities for intellectual engagement and critical thinking by students, collaboratively or independently. Finally, the teacher must ensure that everyone has an opportunity to meet the lesson's learning objective by considering and planning for ways to meet the needs of all students - and this may look different for different groups of students.

3. HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE ACHIEVED IT?

Assessment is a critical component to the lesson design and delivery process. Without it, the cycle of student learning is incomplete. Teachers need to know whether students are learning and planning opportunities both throughout the lesson to “check in” on learning, as well as at the end of the lesson to determine the knowledge and skills they are starting to master versus those with which they need additional time and support is key. “Rather than signaling the end of instruction, it has been incorporated as an integral part of instruction. Teachers have found that assessment is a highly valuable tool in their instructional repertoire” (Danielson 86). By assessing throughout the lesson, teachers will know, in the moment, what, if anything, students are learning and can adjust the rest of their lesson accordingly in order to best support students in achieving learning objectives. Assessing at the end of a lesson allows teachers to use this knowledge to plan for future lessons. The key, of course, is ensuring that all assessments align to the objectives and are assessing student learning.

Data Analysis

When we assess students, we are gathering information about what they know and can do at various stages of the learning process. The following assessment chart provides a quick reference for when and why to use different types of assessments.

Worksheet 3a:
ASSESSMENTS AT-A-GLANCE²

Type of Assessment	Diagnostic	Formative	Summative
When?	Before Teaching	During Teaching	After Teaching
Why?	To gain information that helps teachers understand their students and plan for instruction	To gain information that helps teachers modify instruction or make decisions about future instruction (revisit/reteach, move on, etc.)	To evaluate students; To affix a value, or grade, to student work

² Adapted from Learner-Centered Initiatives, Ltd.

At the start of each school year, as we meet our students for the first time, it is important to gather as much information about them as possible. We need to understand their strengths and weaknesses so that we can best meet their needs throughout the year. We do this through data analysis: looking at the previous year's test scores, a series of diagnostic assessments and/or formative assessments done in class. This helps give us a clear picture of where our students are and what they may need moving forward. It also helps us to set goals for them in order to monitor and track progress.

Goal-Setting

Setting class goals is an important part of the teaching and learning process for both teachers and students. This template is designed to support teachers in creating data-based goals and can also serve as a useful tool around which to hold discussions about progress and performance with students, parents, and other educators.

Creating class goals requires teachers to answer three main questions:

1. What do you want to achieve?
2. How do you plan to achieve it?
3. How will you know you have achieved it?

In addition, teachers must ensure that their goals are data-based and that there are distinct measures of progress along the way.

The chart below demonstrates how each question relates to a section of the attached template, along with a brief description of that section and an example.

Worksheet 3b:

CLASS GOAL – SAMPLE

Below is a sample of a class goal with interim goals, an action plan and evidence. Use it as a guide to support teachers in creating their own.

Goal	Interim Goal	Action Plan	Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By June 2020, all students will demonstrate 1.5 growth along their reading level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By December 2019, students will demonstrate a 0.5 growth along their reading level. By March 2020, students will demonstrate a 0.5 growth along their reading level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with lowest reading levels will receive additional support by attending sessions in the Reading Lab twice per week. Students will receive 2 periods of Academic Intervention Services (AIS) per week focused on decoding. Teacher will confer with students individually at least once per month to assess reading comprehension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student tracking document (attached below) demonstrates student growth along the goal over time. Teacher will attach student assessments as evidence of growth.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

Goals:

Goals should be S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely)

Goals should be based on data – Use diagnostic assessments, previous student scores, etc. as a baseline for where students are currently performing. Then decide where you want them to go next.

Interim Goals:

Break down your large goal into 2 or 3 small goals. This allows you to check at various points throughout the year whether or not you are on track for meeting your goal.

Action Plans:

Think about the instructional strategies, resources, and/or student groupings that will support students in achieving this goal and list them.

If, after your first interim goal check- point, you discover that students are not on track to meeting the goal, you may need to revise your action plan to include different strategies that will help them meet the goal.

Evidence:

It is not enough to define goals and to say that you have met, or are on track to meeting, them. You must select pieces of evidence that will demonstrate student progress along the specific goals that you have set.

Student work, test scores, and marking period grades can all be used as evidence, as long as they are aligned to student goals.

Worksheet 3c:

CLASS GOAL-SAMPLE

Directions: Use the template below to create your own.

Goal	Interim Goal	Action Plan	Evidence

Worksheet 3d:

CLASS GOAL – TRACKING DOCUMENT (Sample)

Below is a sample document to track progress along class goals.

Teacher	Diagnostic Score	Goal	Interim Goal #1	Interim Goal Score	Interim Goal #2	Interim Goal Score	Final Score
Student 1	4.5	6.0	5.0		5.5		
Student 2	5.0	6.5	5.5		6.0		
Student 3	5.5	5.0	4.0		4.5		
Student 4	4.0	5.5	4.5		5.0		
Student 5	3.0	4.5	3.5		4.0		
Student 6	4.5	6.0	5.0		5.5		

The Diagnostic Score column records the level at which the student starts the year. The Goal column records the score the teacher wants the student to achieve by the end of the designated time period.

Interim Goal #1 and Interim Goal #2 columns record the smaller goals set by the teacher that will determine whether or not the students are on track to meeting the final goal.

The Interim Goal – Score column records the actual score students receive at this point. The Final Score column is the final assessment score. Does the Final Score column align with the Goal column?

Worksheet 3e:

LEADERSHIP TEAM MONTHLY CHECK-IN: Instruction and PD

This following template is designed for the Leadership Team to reflect on instruction and professional learning. Together, the team should answer the series of guiding questions intended to help them understand their areas of strength/improvement, areas of need, and next steps. This document will archive the journey the leadership team makes towards success.

	Strengths/Areas of Improvement	Needs	Specific Next Steps
<p>Classroom Observations</p> <p><u>Guiding Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What patterns/trends emerged as strengths in the school’s instructional practices? • What patterns/trends emerged as needs in the school’s instructional practices? • What implications might this have on opportunities for professional learning? 			

Worksheet 3f:

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN

Professional Learning Plans (PLPs) can follow many formats, but it is important to remember to plan opportunities in cycles so that participants can learn and try out new strategies over time. In addition, it is necessary to consider the outcomes and next steps for each cycle, which will help focus facilitators when planning learning sessions.

Focus Area Topic	Description	Facilitator	Participants	Cycle	Outcomes	Next Steps/ Follow-up

SUMMARY

In summary, the goal of instruction is to intellectually engage and challenge students, pushing them to build independence and serve as leaders over their own learning. Teachers do this by guiding students through complex content and concepts aligned to grade-level standards and through utilizing research-based instructional strategies that support all students in gaining access to the learning.

School leaders, then, support teachers in developing or gaining access to rich curricula, building their instructional practices, and utilizing student data to make better decisions in both the planning and implementation of lessons. The following questions guide teachers and leaders in staying focused on this work:

PLANNING FOR INSTRUCTION

- Do we have standards-aligned curriculum guides across grades and content areas?
- What knowledge/skills do teachers need to impart the curriculum effectively? Are we addressing these areas in our professional learning offerings?
- Are we clear about the components of quality instruction? What does it look like/sound like in practice?
- Are we supporting teachers in developing their instructional practices to meet student needs?

IN THE CLASSROOM

- Is there alignment between stated objectives and class activities?
- Are students intellectually engaged? How do you know? What evidence suggests this?
- Are students learning? How do you know? What evidence suggests this?
- Are there opportunities for student collaboration/discussion?
- Is there a focus on what students are learning and/or producing as a result of their learning?

MONTH-BY-MONTH GUIDE¹

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
July	<p>Leadership Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Building <p>Culture and Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define Success • Mission and Vision Statements • Core Beliefs • Set Goals <p>Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development/ Revisions 	<p>Leadership Development: Create a leadership team that will serve as the core group guiding all initiatives for the year. Select participants that will bring various perspectives and have a desire to lead, or learn to lead, the work. Establish norms within the team and accountability measures for all participants.</p> <p>Culture and Expectations: Core team collaboratively defines success for the school (<i>e.g., What does it look like and sound like? How will we know we are successful?</i>) Once the team has formed their definition of success, they create their mission and vision statements, establish their core beliefs, and set goals for the year.</p> <p>Curriculum: Instructional leaders develop and/or revise curricula across grades and content areas to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment to CCLS; • Integration of instructional shifts; • Evidence of higher-order thinking and meaningful student work products. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Team Norms • Core Team Goals • Accountability Procedures • Mission and Vision Statements • School Goals • Instructional Focus • Unit maps • Course Syllabus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish leadership team check-ins and meetings • Parent, Student and Teacher Handbook(s) • Plan to communicate beliefs and expectations • PD on implementing curriculum

¹This is far from everything that must be done throughout the year. However, it is meant to serve as a reference for mapping out the key tasks school leaders may focus on month by month.

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/NEXT STEPS
August	<p>Culture and Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate core beliefs <p>Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit Revisions • Resources/ Materials <p>Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional practices in Unit 1 	<p>Culture and Expectations: School leaders will engage all staff in professional conversations focused on the relationship between school culture, safety, and student learning. Core beliefs will be shared, alongside mission and vision statements.</p> <p>Curriculum: Instructional leaders/coaches guide teachers through curriculum revisions. They identify the instructional practices needed to fully engage students in the unit, as well as the necessary resources/materials required.</p> <p>Pedagogy: Instructional leaders begin to provide professional development (PD) on the instructional practices necessary to fully engage students in each unit and meet individual needs, as well as making a plan for future PD opportunities to continue to support strong classroom instruction. Specific topics may include: differentiated instruction, critical thinking skills, close reading, and Socratic Seminar, to name a few.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent, Student and Teacher Handbook(s) • Unit 1 Lesson Plans • Professional Learning Plan (yearlong) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate School Goals and Action Plans • Norm Observations • Focus on Utilizing Data

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
September	<p>Curriculum and Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on Planning • Norming observations <p>Culture and Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Goals and Action Plans <p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Gathering 	<p>Curriculum and Pedagogy: Coaches focus content teams on the importance of planning and the role it will play in future content meetings. Specifically, teachers will work to ensure that lessons include alignment between learning outcomes tasks and assessments, data is used to inform groupings, activities and scaffolds, and opportunities for student collaboration and higher-order thinking.</p> <p>School leaders will also conduct class walk-throughs to norm observation data and feedback.</p> <p>Culture and Expectations: School leaders engage all staff in professional development focused on establishing a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for all and support to meet goals and expectations. Policies and procedures will be communicated and teachers will consider how their actions and reactions can affect the school's culture and environment. All staff set professional goals aligned to school goals.</p> <p>Assessment: Teachers will begin administer diagnostic assessments/ baselines and gathering existing summative student data. To continue to support strong classroom instruction. Specific topics may include: differentiated instruction, critical thinking skills, close reading, and Socratic Seminar, to name a few.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content Team Minutes and Agenda • Lesson Plan Template • Process for Collaborative Planning • Professional Goals • Formative and Summative Student Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing Data • Data Discussions • Using Data to Inform Instruction

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
<p>October</p>	<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Analysis and Goal-Setting • Using Data to Inform Instruction 	<p>Assessment: Teachers use multiple sources of data to identify students below, on and above level and set specific goals for student progress, along with an action plan that addresses individual needs. They then engage in professional conversations focused on this data with colleagues and administrators during the first round of data discussions.</p> <p>Coaches/Leaders engage teachers during content meetings in how to use data to inform instruction (e.g., groupings, scaffolds, assessments, etc.) thinking skills, close reading, and Socratic Seminar, to name a few.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Data Analysis – Goals and Action Plans • Data Discussion Notes • Samples of Differentiated Instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Instruction – Observations, Feedback and Next Steps • Aligning Observation Feedback to PD Offerings

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
November	<p>Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Delivery of Lessons • Professional Learning Opportunities 	<p>Pedagogy: School leaders conduct rounds of informal and formal observations looking closely at classroom environments to ensure they are conducive to learning and that teachers are planning targeted lessons and intellectually engaging students in meaningful work. They will provide actionable and effective feedback to teachers and ensure it is aligned to professional learning opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Plans • Observation Feedback • Differentiated PD • Content Team Agenda and Minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Instruction – Observations, Feedback and Next Steps • Aligning Observation Feedback to PD Offerings

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
December	<p>Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Delivery of Lessons • Professional Learning Opportunities 	<p>Pedagogy: School leaders conduct rounds of informal and formal observations looking closely at classroom environments to ensure they are conducive to learning and that teachers are planning targeted lessons and intellectually engaging students in meaningful work. They will provide actionable and effective feedback to teachers and ensure it is aligned to professional learning opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Plans • Observation Feedback • Differentiated PD • Content Team Agenda and Minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Discussion #2 – Using Data to Revise/ Set Goals and Inform Instruction • Revisit School Goals, Policies and Procedures, Rituals and Routines, etc. • Revisit Professional Learning Plan

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
January	<p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Analysis and Goal Setting/ Revisions <p>Culture and Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Core Beliefs and Norms • Review Rituals and Routines <p>Systems for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Goals • Professional Learning Plan • Leadership Opportunities 	<p>Assessment: Teachers engage in the second round of data discussions, revisiting their student learning goals and assessing progress in order to revise/set new goals. Teachers will provide leaders with sample student work and an analysis of assessment data.</p> <p>Culture and Expectations: School leaders review core beliefs and expectations with all staff. Teacher teams review meeting norms and focus of their work. Teachers review classroom rituals and routines with students.</p> <p>Systems for Improvement: School leaders revisit school goals and action plans to ensure the school is on track to meeting these goals. Instructional leaders review and revise the professional learning plan for the second half of the year, ensuring alignment to needs identified during observation rounds. Administrators review and ensure teacher leaders are engaged in professional learning experiences that support their growth and development as leaders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Data Analysis – Goals and Action Plans • Data Discussion Notes • Meeting Agendas and Minutes • Revised Professional Learning Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Instruction – Observations, Feedback and Next Steps • Aligning Observation Feedback to PD Offerings

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
February	<p>Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Delivery of Lessons • Professional Learning Opportunities 	<p>Pedagogy: School leaders conduct rounds of informal and formal observations looking closely at classroom environments to ensure they are conducive to learning and that teachers are planning targeted lessons and intellectually engaging students in meaningful work. They will provide actionable and effective feedback to teachers and ensure it is aligned to professional learning opportunities.</p> <p>Teacher Leaders develop a process for interclass visits and begin conducting observing colleagues' classrooms as a form of professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Plans • Observation Feedback • Differentiated PD • Content Team Agenda and Minutes • Interclass visit protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Instruction – Observations, Feedback and Next Steps • Aligning Observation Feedback to PD Offerings • Interclass visits

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
<p>March</p>	<p>Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Delivery of Lessons • Professional Learning Opportunities 	<p>Pedagogy: School leaders conduct rounds of informal and formal observations looking closely at classroom environments to ensure they are conducive to learning and that teachers are planning targeted lessons and intellectually engaging students in meaningful work. They will provide actionable and effective feedback to teachers and ensure it is aligned to professional learning opportunities.</p> <p>Teacher Leaders conduct interclass visits with colleagues as a form of professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Plans • Observation Feedback • Differentiated PD • Content Team Agenda and Minutes • Interclass visit feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom Instruction – Observations, Feedback and Next Steps • Aligning Observation Feedback to PD Offerings • Interclass visits

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
April	<p>Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and Delivery of Lessons • Professional Learning Opportunities 	<p>Pedagogy: School leaders conduct rounds of informal and formal observations looking closely at classroom environments to ensure they are conducive to learning and that teachers are planning targeted lessons and intellectually engaging students in meaningful work. They will provide actionable and effective feedback to teachers and ensure it is aligned to professional learning opportunities.</p> <p>Teacher Leaders conduct interclass visits with colleagues as a form of professional learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson Plans • Observation Feedback • Differentiated PD • Content Team Agenda and Minutes • Interclass visit feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Discussion #2 – Using Data to Revise/ Set Goals and Inform Instruction • Revisit Curricula across grades/ content areas • Review observation data to identify patterns and trends in teacher needs

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
May	<p>Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect and Revise <p>Pedagogy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Learning Needs <p>Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Analysis/ Review Goals 	<p>Curriculum: Instructional leaders develop and/or revise curricula across grades and content areas to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment to CCLS; • Integration of instructional shifts; • Evidence of higher-order thinking and meaningful student work products. <p>Pedagogy: Leaders will use this information to set goals and plan professional learning opportunities for the upcoming school year.</p> <p>Assessment: Teachers engage in a final round of data discussions and share an analysis of their student data. This information can be used to inform decisions for the following year (i.e., class placement, program offerings, etc).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Revisions • Professional Learning Needs (following year) • Professional Learning Plan (following year) • Data Discussion Notes • Student Data Analysis – Goals and Action Plans • Programming Changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Reflection

MONTH	FOCUS AREA(S)	DESCRIPTION	PRODUCTS/ OUTCOMES	FOLLOW UP/ NEXT STEPS
<p>June</p>	<p>Systems for Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect and Revise 	<p>Systems for Improvement: All staff will engage in reflection activities to assess what worked and did not work over the year related to curriculum and instruction, school culture and environment, and school-wide goals. Leaders will use this feedback to continue and/or revise existing practices or to develop new ones that will further support school achievement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff Surveys/ Reflections • Professional Goals • Portfolios • School Goals (following year) • Professional Learning Plan (following year) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise existing documents/ practices

References

Collins, Jim. *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*. New York: Harper Collins, 2011.

Covery, Stephen. *The Speed of Trust*. New York: Free Press, 2006.

Danielson, Charlotte. *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007.

DuFour, Richard and Robert Eaker. *Professional Communities at Work*. Bloomington: Solution Tree, 1998.

Sinek, Simon. *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action*. New York, 2009.

Wiggins, Grant and Jay McTighe. *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2005.

