



School Improvement Diagnostic Indicators

The Diagnostic Review Process evolved from the longitudinal studies of *Ohio Schools of Promise*, and is aligned with the themes, which emerged from the case studies and are consistent with the existing literature on effective schools. The *Ohio Schools of Promise* themes include:

- Rigorous Standards and Instruction
- Strong Instructional Leadership
- Instruction Designed for All Students' Success
- Parent and Community Involvement
- A Positive School Culture

A review of the research on high performing districts and schools reflects and expands in greater detail the themes from the *Schools of Promise* research. The expanded review of the research identified the following **six critical components** as essential for achievement:

- 1. Alignment with Standards
- 2. Instructional Practices
- 3. Environment/Climate
- 4. System of Leadership
- 5. Professional Development
- 6. Data Driven Decisions

These six critical areas serve as the foundation and organization for the Ohio School Improvement Diagnostic Review Process. Within each of these six critical areas are **diagnostic indicators**, which describe effective practices that are critical to improving academic achievement for all students. Using the diagnostic indicators, review team members determine the degree to which a school or district demonstrates these effective practices. The indicators of effective practice used in the school and district diagnostics are aligned to Ohio's standards and guidelines.¹

Examples of evidence provide lists to help the reviewers determine the presence of various indicators. These are examples of what one would expect to find in a district or school implementing effective practices. There may also be additional concrete examples of evidence not listed in the diagnostics.

Sources of data provide various sources of evidence to support the presence of an indicator of effective practice for review team members. These sources include specific observations, interviews, and document reviews. Data sources are prioritized first by observation, then by interview, and last by document review.

¹ Ohio Academic Content Standards; Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession; Ohio Standards for Principals; Ohio Standards for Professional Development; Ohio School Climate Guidelines; and, Comprehensive System of Learning Supports Guidelines.

Alignment with Standards

Indicators of Effective Practice

- The Ohio Academic Content Standards (and Early Learning Content Standards as applicable) provide the foundation for curriculum, assessment, and instruction.
- Benchmarks and Grade Level Indicators are used to guide students' progress toward meeting Ohio's Academic Content Standards.
- User friendly displays of Ohio's Academic Content Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level Indicators are readily available for reference.
- The curriculum is aligned to Ohio's Academic Content Standards.
- The curriculum is aligned horizontally and vertically.
- User friendly displays of the Standards-Based Curriculum are readily available for reference.
- Textbooks and instructional materials are aligned with the Standards-Based Curriculum.
- Lesson plans are aligned with the Standards-Based Curriculum.
- Formative and summative assessments are aligned with the Standards-Based Curriculum.
- Student report cards are aligned with Ohio's Academic Content Standards.
- The Standards-Based Curriculum is continuously reviewed and revised.

- User friendly displays of standards related reference information are used to orient staff, students, and parents to learning outcomes (e.g., "I CAN" statements, grade-level "placemats").
- The school has a written document that defines the curriculum and includes a coding system that shows the alignment with Ohio Academic Standards.
- All teachers can explain the scope and sequence of the curriculum within each grade level and across grade levels in each content area.
- Teachers focus on benchmarks, NOT grade-level indicators without overall focus on benchmarks.
- Curriculum material is appropriate and challenging for all students.
- Teachers' lesson plans include learning experiences that are aligned with state standards.
- Teachers meet on a regular basis to ensure that there is clear curricular articulation and



- continuity within and across grade levels and programs, including Bilingual/English as a Second Language and Special Education programs.
- Results from the analysis of student performance on multiple assessments are used in the annual curriculum review process.
- The curriculum includes multidisciplinary integrated thematic units that focus on everyday life applications.
- Students are able to explain what is expected of them in terms of learning outcomes.
- Parents are able to explain what is expected of their child in terms of learning outcomes.
- Students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum through the appropriate use of accommodation and modification strategies, as specified on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).

- Classroom observations
- Interviews:
 - Principal
 - School leadership team
 - Teachers
 - Superintendent
 - District leadership team
- Documents:
 - Standards based curriculum (course of study)
 - Curriculum maps
 - Pacing guides
 - Scope and sequence charts
 - Quarterly/short-cycle assessments
 - Student report card templates

- Individualized education plans (IEPs)
- Procedures for testing accommodations
- Alternate assessment procedures
- Records/reports of curriculum planning meeting
- Guidelines for textbook adoption and instructional materials selection
- Records/reports of gradelevel and cross-grade level meetings
- Records/reports of departmental or cluster meetings, etc.



Instructional Practices

- Teachers engage in classroom practices consistent with "standards-based" teaching...
 - Teachers communicate clear learning goals and explicitly link learning activities to those defined goals;
 - Teaching and learning activities align with and support learning outcomes;
 - Teachers differentiate instructional activities, materials, and procedures to support the learning needs of all students, including students identified as gifted, students with disabilities, and at-risk students;
 - o Teachers vary content, and engage students with content, to help them in their learning;
 - Teachers monitor student work to adapt instruction;
 - Teachers provide feedback to students about their work;
 - Teachers create a classroom environment that supports student learning to high standards.
- School and class schedules are organized to provide maximum and uninterrupted instructional time.
- Teachers implement instructional practices that are research and evidence based.
- Teachers use a variety of instructional methods to help students master the academic content standards. (e.g., direct instruction, whole class, small group, grouping/regrouping, independent work, cooperative learning, team teaching)
- Teachers use resources effectively, including technology, to enhance student learning. (e.g., age and developmentally appropriate materials, textbooks, software, web access, overhead projectors, smart boards, TV/DVD/video, libraries with books coded by reading/interest level, computer labs, laptops)
- Teachers use a variety of methods to assess progress toward mastery of standards. (e.g., a variety of formative and summative assessments: short cycle/quarterly assessments, curriculum based assessments, portfolio assessment, projects, student work)
- Students play an active role in tracking their own progress toward mastery of standards. (e.g., student folders/notebooks, student led conferences)
- Students are able to access extra help and support when needed. (e.g., in class, out of class, study halls, before and after school, summer)Instruction builds on students' strengths and meets the needs of diverse learners. (e.g., cultural proficiency, multiple intelligences, cooperative learning)



- Teachers collaboratively develop and implement learning plans to teach core content to students from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds. (e.g., culturally relevant, language appropriate)
- ❖ Teachers maintain ongoing communication with parents/families to extend the students' instructional program into the home. (e.g., daily/weekly student take-home journals, phone, email, classroom website, open door policy, open house, parent room, parent/teacher conferences, opportunities to learn about standards based education and how to set high expectations and support student learning at home)

Access:

All students, including those with disabilities, have access to the general education curriculum including the same content and rigorous instruction.

Students with Disabilities:

Teachers collaboratively develop and implement learning plans to teach core content to students with disabilities. (e.g., accommodations, modifications, regular/special education teachers' working relationships)

Students with Limited English Proficiency:

Teachers collaboratively develop and implement learning plans to teach core content to ESL students. (e.g., language accessible, regular/ESL teachers' working relationships)

Extended Learning Opportunities:

A variety of opportunities for targeting a student's performance are available and aligned with classroom instructional priorities.

Student Intervention / Extra Learning Supports for Struggling Students:

- Academic and non-academic interventions are developed in collaboration with parents and community organizations.
- Multiple approaches to intervention are available for diverse learning needs (e.g., technology, flexible grouping, responsive to various learning modalities and intelligences) and intensity required for students who fall below or at risk of falling below grade-level expectations as well as for advanced learners.
- The school leverages community resources, service providers and families to provide instructional and student support interventions to complement existing school-based foundation services and interventions.

- Classroom observations show teachers using research-based instructional strategies that are developmentally appropriate and provide students with tasks that require them to use higher-order thinking strategies.
- Classroom observations show that all students are actively engaged in the learning activities and tasks, and that all students can work cooperatively with one another across sociocultural backgrounds and academic abilities.



- Classroom observations show that students independently use technology for a variety of purposes.
- The computer centers are staffed and open to student before, during, and after school.
- Classroom observations show special education students and English language learners successfully participating in regular classroom activities.
- Teachers can describe how students who have difficulty meeting standards are provided with individualized instructional support.
- Teachers can describe how learning outcomes for under-performing student groups is monitored, and how interventions are provided when needed.
- The school schedule provides time for teachers to work together.
- Instructional collaboration and coordination is a topic on the agenda at regularly scheduled grade-level and/or cross-grade meetings.
- Schedules show uninterrupted blocks of time devoted to instruction (time on tasks, effective use of instructional time, etc.)
- Teachers' lesson plans explicitly include differentiated instruction that addresses the needs of all learners.
- Teachers' lesson plans explicitly integrate technology in teaching and learning activities, where appropriate.
- Bilingual and bicultural staff reflects the composition of the student population and provide support services to students and their families.
- Staff can describe a continuum of support options (e.g., individual/small group; pull-out, regular classroom) are provided by special area teachers (special education, ESL, Title I) based on student learning needs.
- Teachers can describe how students with disabilities receive instruction in the regular education environment to the maximum extent appropriate.
- Summer enrichment programs and parent resources are provided for disadvantaged students.



- Classroom observations
- Interviews:
 - Teachers
 - o Parents
 - Principal
 - School leadership team
- Documents:
 - o Sample lesson plans
 - School/class master schedules (showing instructional and planning time)
 - Documentation of extended learning opportunities (e.g. type, schedule, participation, evaluation)
 - Learning resources
 - o Records/reports of grade-level, cross grade, departmental, or cluster meetings
 - o Documents related to parent engagement (e.g., daily take home journal)
 - o Individualized education plans (IEPs)



Environment / Climate

- Becoming an effective school is the central mission of the school.
- ALL students are expected to meet high academic standards.
- ALL teachers are expected to meet Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession.
- Teachers motivate students to work productively and assume responsibility for their own learning.
- Relationships between teachers and students are respectful and productive.
- Relationships between members of the staff are collegial.
- Relationships between students are supportive and cooperative.
- Relationships between parents and teachers are positive and collaborative.
- A variety of incentives and rewards are used to motivate student performance.
- Student work and accomplishments are displayed throughout the school.
- Staff members are publicly recognized for high performance.
- Behavioral expectations and sanctions support a productive learning environment.
- The school works actively with parents/families to make the home a center of learning so that the mission of the school is extended into the home.
- The school shares responsibility with parents and caregivers to support student learning, emotional and physical development and mental health.
- Communication between home and school is regular, two-way, and meaningful.
- The school works actively with the community to support student learning.
- School successes are celebrated regularly.
- The school maintains an environment that is conducive to learning for all students.



- The school's vision, beliefs, and values are prominently displayed in public areas and in every classroom.
- Staff, students, and parents can explain in their own words the school's vision and mission.
- Parents and community members are seen in the school throughout the day working with students or helping with a variety of projects.
- School administrators are seen throughout the school, engaging in dialogue with teachers, students, staff, parents, and community members.
- Visitors are greeted and assisted when they enter the school.
- Bulletin boards, wall space, and hallways display illustrations that are representative of different ethnic groups, races, gender, and ages, and include samples of student's work, regardless of ability.
- Examples of student incentives and rewards such as prizes, field trips, certificates, awards, assemblies, recognition events, days off, and scholarships.
- Parent education activities occur on a regular basis.
- Parent participation activities show broad representation.
- Comprehensive support services, including connections to health and social services, are available to students and their families; these school-linked or school- based services are a fully-integrated component of the school's education program.
- Leadership team engages families and key community leaders in the governance of and planning for the school.
- Community partners, including businesses, to help schools align education programs with the realities of the 21st century workplace
- Community and faith-based services help address the non-academic barriers to learning.
- Leadership team is engaged with youth development organizations to increase academic learning time in the non-school hours.
- Leadership team encourages volunteers to enrich the learning environment through mentoring and tutoring.
- The school's physical plant is well maintained; unsafe places are closely monitored.
- The school's facilities are in frequent use after school, on the weekends, and during the summer by various community groups and organizations.



- Building tour
- Classroom observations
- Interviews:
 - Teachers
 - o Parents
 - o Principal
 - School leadership team
- Documents:
 - Student handbook
 - School/district mission/vision statements
 - Parent handbook
 - Documentation of special recognition/events
 - Documentation of parent engagement strategies
 - Documentation of behavioral management strategies
 - School discipline policies and procedures
 - o Data on attendance and behavior incidents
 - o Teacher, student, parent surveys
 - o Documentation of community engagement activities, etc



System of Leadership

- Leadership responsibilities are shared across faculty and staff.
- The Leadership Team develops and monitors the school's improvement plan.
- The Leadership Team leads the process of setting, monitoring and achieving specific and challenging goals that reflect high expectations for all students and staff.
- The Leadership Team is held accountable for the effective use of data to implement and monitor the school's instructional program.
- The Leadership Team prioritizes the allocation of resources toward the goal of improving the instructional management process.
- The Leadership Team allocates resources, including technology, to support student and staff learning.
- The Leadership Team facilitates ongoing opportunities for communication among key instructional staff and provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work together.
- The Leadership Team protects the instructional management process by keeping distractions to a minimum.
- The Leadership Team facilitates ongoing professional development consistent with school improvement priorities.
- The Leadership Team recognizes and reward individual and collective accomplishments.
- The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction.
- The Leadership Team recruits, develops, and retains qualified/high quality teachers and support personnel aligned with the goals of the school.
- The principal evaluates teacher performance based on classroom practices consistent with standards-based teaching.
- The school board sets policies that facilitate high performing schools.
- The teachers union supports the school/district continuous improvement plans.
- District and school administrators are focused on improvement priorities.
- Strong lines of communication exist between the district and schools.



Examples of Evidence

- The principal and school leadership team articulates a shared vision and clear goals for the school and how progress is continuous toward achieving the goals.
- The principal and school leadership team can explain how resources are allocated and school operations are managed toward the goal of improved student outcomes.
- The principal and school leadership team can describe how school schedules support teaching and learning goals.
- The principal and school leadership team can describe how teacher assignments are based on student needs.
- The principal uses classroom "walk-through" observation strategies and tools.
- The principal can describe an effective staff recruitment process.
- Teachers are certified to teach in their content areas and/or grade level.
- The principal can describe various staff recognitions.

- Interviews:
 - Principal
 - o School leadership team
 - o Teachers
 - Superintendent
 - District leadership team
 - School board members
 - Union representative
 - Treasurer
- Documents:
 - Monitoring procedures for curriculum / instruction/ assessment processes (e.g., School Walk Through)

- Classroom observation tools (e.g., peer evaluation)
- Principal evaluation template
- Teacher evaluation template
- Paraprofessional evaluation template
- School schedule
- Staff recruitment / retention procedures
- Teacher credentials
- Teacher mobility data
- School board adopted policies
- Documentation related to union activities, etc



Professional Development

Indicators of Effective Practice

- The goals and vision for professional development are clear, focused, and aligned with school and district priorities.
- The professional development plan supports the understanding and use of local, state, and national standards as well as school and district curriculum priorities.
- Professional development is designed to help principals and teachers use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals and for improved school and student outcomes.
- Professional development supports the study, evaluation, and integration of relevant and current best practices and research into practice.
- Professional development enhances understanding of instructional strategies appropriate to specific content, and addresses the needs of diverse learners.
- Professional development ensures that all teachers understand and use various types of assessments to measure student learning.
- Professional development provides faculty and staff with tools to engage students, families, and communities in improving student achievement.
- Diverse teams of faculty and staff work collaboratively to plan, deliver, and evaluate professional development.
- Professional development is evaluated by assessing levels of participant satisfaction and learning of content, and by evidence of new skills applied to practices.
- Professional development and evaluation of faculty and staff are aligned and overlap.
- Professional learning opportunities are based on identified needs of students and teachers.

- Dedicated professional development staff members are embedded into the professional learning community.
- There is a professional development planning team.
- The professional development team is provided with time and access to research.
- The school's professional development plan is based on an analysis of student performance and program effectiveness, incorporates the most current research on content and methodologies, and is linked to the school's improvement goals.



- Staff members have individual professional development plans that complement the school's improvement plan, and that includes an assessment of that staff member's strengths and weaknesses.
- The school schedule provides sufficient time to implement the professional development plan.
- The school schedule provides ongoing dedicated time for teachers to work together within grade level and by subject area/department (i.e., embedded professional development).
- Teachers serve as mentors to one another.
- Staff can identify the in-school experts for specific content areas and particular skills.
- The principal regularly visits classrooms to give direct feedback to teachers regarding student learning and the teacher's identified professional development goals.
- Teachers' evaluations are aligned with both school wide and individual professional development plans.

- Interviews:
 - Principal
 - School leadership team
 - Teachers
 - Superintendent
 - District leadership team
 - School board members
 - o Union representative
- Documents:
 - School professional development plan
 - Individual professional development plan
 - o School schedule (e.g., dedicated time to work together, release time)
 - Participation records
 - o PD evaluation protocols / results
 - District professional development plan



Data Driven Decisions

- Student achievement data are analyzed by grade level for each content area to determine gaps in performance, and for identifying the specific root causes for each content area to be explored.
- Disaggregated student achievement data by race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, Limited English proficiency, disability status, migrant status, and other demographic variables to determine who is and who is not succeeding and in what content areas.
- A variety of types of student performance data and comparison analyses are used to design and improve the curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes.
- Student behavioral data related to attendance, mobility, expulsion, suspension, promotion, drop-out, graduation, and post secondary options are used for purposes related to improving student outcomes.
- The school collects and uses assessment data including assessment of nonacademic barriers – to identify students and to provide appropriate interventions in the intensity required to ensure academic success for each student.
- Data are used to monitor student progress over time, to make numerous comparisons over time, and to continuously update the school's understanding of progress.
- Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.
- Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.
- Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.
- Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve student outcomes.
- Programmatic decisions related to improving student outcomes are guided by program evaluation data.
- Community data are used for making decisions related to improving student outcomes.



- The school improvement plan is based on data from a comprehensive needs assessment.
- School improvement goals are aligned to the vision and mission statement and to needs assessment outcomes.
- School improvement goals incorporate criteria from the AYP (adequate yearly progress).
- The principal and school leadership team can explain how data are used to make decisions related to the school improvement plan and improving student outcomes.
- Data are analyzed from a variety of assessment tools including formal and informal, classroom, school district, and state measures.
- The use of a variety of types of student performance data to design and improve the curriculum, instruction, and assessment processes (e.g., achievement test results, item analysis, short cycle/quarterly assessments, curriculum-based assessments, value added assessments, growth models).
- User friendly displays of student performance data are readily available for reference (e.g., data charts, wall displays, student notebooks, student performance records, electronic/online access).
- User friendly displays of school performance data readily available for reference (e.g., teachers lounge, conference room, administrative offices, electronic/web).
- Program and curricular effectiveness are evaluated regularly and used to inform decisions.
- The school has a system for performance evaluation of all staff, aligned with the school improvement plan.
- There are public forums on student achievement appropriate for different audiences.
- There are periodic and annual evaluations of progress in meeting the school's performance goals, and the data are used to revise the school improvement plan.



Interviews:

- Principal
- School leadership team
- o Teachers
- Superintendent
- District leadership teamSchool board members
- Treasurer
- o Union representative

Documents:

- o School improvement, corrective action, or restructuring plan
- o District comprehensive continuous improvement plan
- o District/school report cards
- o District/school data profiles (disaggregated student performance data by content area)
- District finance reports
- District/school budget

