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Learning Cultures School Implementation Criteria

The criteria presented here is a comprehensive summary of school-reform support high levels of student engagement and achievement. The relative fidelity of implementation of these strategies results in dramatic improvement in school performance and the quality of the school environment. These criteria form the basis of the Learning Cultures School Quality Review.

Organization

These criteria are organized into categories, each of which can be rated as *under-developed*, *developing*, *proficient*, or *well-developed*.

Leadership responsiveness and willingness to implement advice

- Leadership is responsive to Learning Cultures developer's recommendations and advice.
- Recommendations deemed necessary to bring implementation effort to fidelity are readily acted upon.
- Leadership successfully generates buy-in and support on the part of staff for Learning Cultures implementation initiatives.

Distributed Leadership

- System of distributed leadership exists through an organizational system of Teacher Leads. The Lead system serves to disencumber principals from the extensive leadership responsibilities of the Learning Cultures model and serves as a force to professionalize teachers through enhanced leadership opportunities.
- Evidence of Leads' initiatives indicate that the Lead system is active and functional (Responsibilities delineated under Assessment; Curriculum; Professional Development; School Culture/Discipline; Instructional Equity/Code Blue are assumed by Leads).

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Community education
- Community education about the Learning Cultures model is provided to parents and community through curriculum nights, open classroom days, web-based education, and newsletters.
- School staff host open house events to educate outsiders about the Learning Cultures model and to provide teachers professional development opportunities.

School culture and discipline
- The Social Contract Talk has been presented to all students.
- A school-wide Ladder of Response is established and adopted in all classrooms.
- Teachers attend to social norms in a consistent manner so that single teachers are not perceived by students as being overly-strict or permissive (Social Norms are a focus of beginning-of-year teacher evaluations).
- Evidence that teachers utilize the Ladder of Response (completed Behavior Conference Records, records of calls home, records of back-up/on-call support).
- School-wide disciplinary back-up/call system is functional and consistently utilized, and incidents requiring back-up are documented.
- Academic and Behavior Interventions are conducted routinely as needed in response to students who exhibit highly problematic behaviors or those who fail to make academic progress. These students and their teachers utilize tangible reminders of commitments made to secure new behaviors (e.g., laminated promises). Failure to uphold commitments consistently results in pre-determined consequences.
- Archives of Academic and Behavior Intervention Contracts indicate academic and behavior issues are proactively addressed and followed through with student accountability.
- Transformation narratives are conducted periodically to provide challenging students with positive self-competence feedback and opportunities to positively revise academic and identity goals and to refresh identity constructs.
- Hallway behaviors: Especially in middle and secondary schools, teachers and support staff assert a presence in hallways. Positive social norms are secured and negative behaviors are addressed. A system of documenting and monitoring hallway infractions is established (e.g., taking names, recording time of infraction, determining and responding to patterns of infractions).

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- Calls for principal intervention in behavior problems trend downward and/or are minimal.
- Reported unsafe incidents trend downward.
- Suspensions trend downward.
- School environment ratings trend upward.
- Tardiness rates trend downward.
- Attendance rates trend upward.

Instructional equity and Code Blue
- Instructional accounting
  - Instructional vs. non-instructional days are identified and opportunity mandates are calculated based on the former.
  - Evidence of educational opportunities are documented in tallies of instructional records. Records show evidence of consistent meetings.
  - Quarterly CUR Records and Conference records show evidence of higher distributions of opportunities for students with higher needs. CUR records indicate students meet at least three to four times weekly and each student has a conference once monthly, with high needs students receiving double quantities of conferences and increased CUR opportunities.
- Progress monitoring
  - Evidence of a comprehensive progress monitoring system exists to help staff identify and monitor students at risk of academic failure.
  - Data is analyzed to establish sub-categories of students in need (i.e., groups based on emergent literacy, language and/or dispositions).
  - Case loads are distributed to staff identified to oversee intervention/supplemental programs.
  - Progress monitoring data for students initially identified as non-progressing trends upward.
- Academic and behavioral intervention/supplemental instruction
  - Students in need of academic, behavioral, and ESL supplemental instruction receive frequent and consistent support and guidance in utilizing work time in all classes resourcefully. All students are provided with a daily "to-do" list or "workout plan," and their progress is monitored by case workers.

- An emergent literacy program exists to support minimally-literate students in catching up and meeting grade-level standards.
- A program exists to support ELLs in acquiring English and catching up to grade level standards.
- A program exists to help support the positive development of dispositions of oppositional, avoidant and resistant students and catching up to grade level standards.

Curriculum and instruction
- Planning
  - Progress monitoring assessment data is routinely utilized in Learning Conferences (teachers use planning time to prepare data for sharing with students)
  - Cooperative Unison Reading Records and Conference Records are analyzed for material appropriate and suited to large-group lessons. Planning time is utilized to analyze records.
  - Genre exposure lessons are planned in all subjects.
- Formats
  - Formats are implemented in all classrooms with fidelity.
  - Quality of Learning Conferences is improving across the school evidenced in quality of Content Shares.
  - Quality of CUR is improving across the school, evidenced by student investment, high quality reading selections, high levels of breaching, perspective-shifting and cooperative reasoning discourse, and highly-promotive behaviors.
  - Work Time quality is improving, evidenced by higher ratios of students on task and articulate about how their work relates to curriculum goals.
- Environments
  - Classroom environments are well developed.
  - Environment checks are done periodically throughout the year to ensure consistently high quality (responsibility of maintenance of environments is distributed to students).
- Student academic behaviors and outcomes
  - Students' independent work initiatives are increasingly focused, intentional and reasoned.
  - Quality of written work is improving.

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- o Social interdependence and cooperation are evident in classroom interactions.
- o If Responsibility Teams are employed, students follow established procedures and routines, which ensure even participation and effort.
- o Students demonstrate inclination and competence to engage in independent inquiry.
- o Students demonstrate independence, critical awareness and intentionality in their inquiry pursuits (i.e., minimal evidence of mindlessness in mindless tasks).
- o Unit post-test scores trending upward.
- Test preparation
  - o Time lost on test preparation is kept in check. Test preparation is constrained to genre exposure lessons that feature test items (no more than 10 days total throughout the year) and Cooperative Unison Reading cycles that feature text items in two week-long cycles prior to the state tests.
- Curriculum
  - o Activities in all subject areas are streamlined to support success for all students (worksheets, paperwork, logs, and other generally inane tasks are eliminated)
  - o Curriculum requirements provide ample opportunity for students to make choices about tasks they will accomplish to meet learning standards.
  - o Learning standards are available to students and incorporated into unit expectations.
  - o A course of action toward achievement of content mastery is made transparent to students.
  - o Students are expected to assume responsibility to determine, at least in part, how they will achieve content mastery.
  - o Self-determination and motivation are enhanced by the prevalence of choice and autonomy across the curriculum.
  - o Students are supported in development of background abilities. They are provided with baseline assessments of competence levels, informed of resources to develop skills, provided opportunities to raise grades by solidifying background abilities, and encouraged to take agency in determining the achievement of learning goals.
  - o Curriculum encourages students to assume initiative and independence in meeting learning goals.

- Resources and materials are sufficiently available to provide multiple routes to content coverage and ample choice/options for students' pathways of inquiry (where possible, online resources are made available through access to mobile devices).
- Students have adequate access to technology (tablets, laptops, desktop computers).
- Extra-curricular activities provide supplemental education opportunities (e.g., 'movie night' for canonical documentaries; after-school work support).
- Cultural artifacts and experiences are incorporated as learning resources. In elementary and middle school, routine field trips to cultural institutions provide students access to enriching educational experiences (a minimum of five per year). In secondary school, field trips are recommended in addition to the expectation that students will be encouraged to take advantage of cultural institutional resources independently. In additional, online cultural artifacts through museum websites are utilized in the curriculum.

Teacher evaluation and professional development

- Teacher evaluation
  - Teacher evaluations are targeted to address aspects of practice that promise highest leverage (e.g., social norms in poorly managed classrooms; in highly skilled teachers, quality of perspective-shifting discourse and cooperative reasoning in Cooperative Unison Reading).
  - Procedures for teacher evaluation are successfully leveraged to improve Learning Cultures practices through the following components:
  - Teacher observations strategically target high-impact formats and focus on areas of greatest need. Learning Cultures Rubric criteria serve as first-order frame of reference for observations.
  - Concrete, actionable feedback with deadlines is provided to teachers to assist them in developing highly functional formats.
  - Teacher evaluation process incentivizes participation in professional development. Internal peer coaching and mentoring is provided as a resource for developing and under-developed teachers. Evidence suggests teachers avail themselves of opportunities to for professional development (residencies, inter-visitations, coaching).

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- Coaching and peer support: A system to establish within-school coaching capacity and a system of peer support is in place through the following components:
    - Highly-developed teachers are identified to serve as mentors to their colleagues and provided expert coaching support to develop coaching capacity.
    - Consistent and frequent coaching opportunities are provided to teachers who need support.
    - An existential coaching approach is employed (e.g., feedback is provided in the context of action as a means to immediately improve practice as opposed to distanced observation with post-observation feedback).
    - Teachers have opportunities to visit mentor teachers' classrooms and to have visits from mentor teachers to improve targeted areas of professional practice.
- Professional development goals are strategically developed through the following components:
    - Beginning-of-year PD survey is administered and analyzed to assess for teachers' perceived areas of need, requests for support and learning goals.
    - Initial PD goals are determined through a cross referencing of teacher survey and supervisor's initial observations.
    - End-of-year PD survey is administered and analyzed to assess efficacy of the Framework for Professional Development.
- Individual professional development plans
    - Every teacher's professional development plan is documented with goals and accomplishments as they are achieved.
    - PD modules provided to teachers are documented with a timeline, goals and achievements.
    - Evidence that primary areas of need/weakness within each teachers' practice are resolving at a predictable rate of improvement (Teacher professional development plans reflect swift achievement of concrete goals).
- 'Broadcast' PD
    - School-wide PD needs and concerns are noted and addressed through weekly communication from principal or Professional Development Lead (needs are identified through observations, walk-throughs and information supplied by Teacher Leads).

- Study groups are organized to support deep exploration of issues staff identify necessary for further professional study, and resources are provided to support learning.
- Inter-school visitation opportunities are provided for teachers to learn from colleagues in other schools.

Student assessment and grading
- Baseline and progress monitoring data assessment data are made available to all students so that they have a clear understanding of where their competencies lie in relation to learning targets.
- Progress monitoring assessments are administered on an established routine. Data are compiled in a usable format. Pre-established progress benchmarks signal intervention response. Data is routinely referenced to inform instructional and behavioral responses. Progress monitoring data is made available to students through Learning Conferences.
- Progress monitoring data is usable to all staff (centrally accessible and up-to-date).
- Coherent grading criteria are applied across subjects, courses and departments.
- The system of grading reflects weight given in the domains of content mastery, growth in background abilities and social/emotional/dispositional factors, responsibility to classroom/community responsibilities, and achievement of independent learning goals.
- If Responsibility Teams are employed, Social Assessments are administered, data are made available to students, and social assessment aims are a reference within the context of curriculum and instruction.
- Surveys of incoming students are conducted to ascertain the nature of prior school experiences.