

Accelerated Practices for School Improvement



Core Practices — Overview

A practitioner-focused framework for district and school leaders driving accelerated improvement.

Core Practice 1: Leadership, Shared Responsibility, and Professional Collaboration

The school has established a community of practice through leadership, shared responsibility, and professional collaboration.

Component A: Teaming, Shared Leadership and Responsibility, and Collaboration

Collective, distributed leadership structures and practices are apparent throughout the school building in the form of an active and well-represented Instructional Leadership Team and grade-level or vertical teams. Administrators and teachers are jointly committed to and have assumed shared ownership and collective responsibility for improving student achievement. Clear, consistent processes for communication, decision-making, and shared problem-solving are in place across the school, enabling leaders and teachers to respond effectively to emerging needs and maintain a unified focus on improvement.

Component B: Using Teams, Shared Leadership, and a Collaborative and Trusting Environment to Accelerate Improvement

Administrators and teachers (through teacher teams or the school's Instructional Leadership Team) are actively monitoring and assessing the implementation and impact of key improvement strategies, use of resources, classroom instructional practices, and non-academic supports on student achievement. School leadership and teacher teams engage in regular, structured improvement cycles — setting goals, collecting and analyzing data, identifying root causes, and implementing targeted actions — to ensure continuous progress toward student achievement goals.

Core Practice 2: Intentional Practices for Improving Instruction

The school employs intentional practices for improving teacher-specific and student-responsive instruction.

Component C: Defined Expectations for High Quality Instructional Practices

School leadership has identified and shared a clear instructional focus and shared expectations for instructional best practices that address clearly identified student-specific instructional needs.

Component D: Administrative Observations Leading to Constructive, Teacher-Specific Feedback, Supports, and Professional Development

There is a well-defined and professionally valued system for monitoring and enhancing classroom-based instruction across the school and for individual teachers. The system includes frequent observations of instructional practice, the provision of valuable feedback to teachers, team-based and job-embedded professional development, and teacher-specific coaching, when needed.

Component E: Teachers and Teacher Teams Use Student Data to Adapt and Improve Instructional Strategies

Teachers engage in collaborative teaming to use and analyze a variety of student-specific data to assess the effectiveness of their instructional strategies and practices and modify instruction to meet their students' needs as identified.

Foundational: The school is using aligned and high-quality curricula, assessments, and common instructional practices — vertically- and horizontally-aligned instructional material and strategies that include common units, lessons, assessments, and instructional strategies and language within and across grades and content areas — that will ensure that all students have access to content, instruction, and learning tools necessary to take and succeed in advanced and college-level coursework.

Core Practice 3: Providing Student-Specific Supports and Instruction to All Students

The school is able to provide student-specific supports and interventions informed by data and the identification of student-specific needs.

Component F: Using Data to Identify Student-Specific Academic and Non-Academic Needs

Administrators and teachers use a variety of ongoing assessments (formative, benchmark, and summative) to frequently and continually identify students' individual academic needs in order to provide student-specific interventions and supports.

Component G: Providing Targeted Interventions and Supports to Students and Monitoring for Effectiveness

The school employs a system (structures, practices, and use of resources) for providing targeted instructional interventions and supports to all students, including the ongoing monitoring of the impact of tiered interventions and the ability to adapt and modify the school's structures and resources to provide interventions to students throughout the year.

Core Practice 4: School Climate and Culture

The school has established a climate and culture that provides a safe, orderly, and respectful environment for students and a collegial, collaborative, and professional culture among teachers.

Component H: Shared Behavioral Expectations that Support Student Learning

Administrators and teachers have clearly established and actively pursue a set of behavioral expectations and practices that supports students' learning and efforts to increase student achievement.

Component I: Targeted and Effective Social-Emotional Supports

The school has identified, established, and proactively provides effective social-emotional resources and supports for students in need of such supports and assistance. Social-emotional supports include practices designed to improve students' social-emotional competencies (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision making, relationship skills, and social awareness) and context-specific strategies or services, such as counseling, wraparound services, and parent outreach.

Component J: Establishing a Collegial, Respectful, and Trusting Professional Environment

A climate of respectful collegial communication, relationships, and leadership has been established by leadership, teacher leaders, and teachers allowing for a positive, productive, and collective effort to increase student achievement throughout the school. Communication and interactions between adults and students and among students: (1) actively promotes high academic expectations for all students; (2) provides opportunities for students to share, express, value, and maintain their unique backgrounds and experiences; and (3) ensures that students have the opportunity to inform, critique, and improve how the school is supporting their academic and social experience.

¹ Adapted from Lane, B., Unger, C., & Stein, L. (2016). *Massachusetts Turnaround Practices Field Guide*.