

GRADUATION SUCCESS RESOURCE PACKET

What works to improve student success? This packet was created based on the experiences shared by four outlier school districts in Washington State that had positive impacts on graduation rates. Districts included Franklin-Pierce, Kelso, Spokane, and Sunnyside. For over a year these districts shared documents, made presentations, and were visited by researchers who worked to identify common elements of their work to inform the efforts of others. Researchers collaborated with representatives from outlier districts, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Educational Service Districts, and professional organizations to create and refine documents to describe efforts to increase graduation success.

The following documents can be found in this packet:

DOCUMENT	PAGE NUMBERS
1. Key Practices Guide: Identifies common themes, factors, and indicators of efforts towards school change	p. 2-5
2. Implementation Guide: Describes the nature of the work in implementing both the conceptual and action frameworks	p. 6-9
3. Conceptual Framework – Image	p. 10
4. Action Framework – Image	p. 11
5. Conceptual Framework Survey	p. 12-13
6. Action Framework Survey	p. 14-15
7. Current Reality Instrument	p. 16-19

Each is in draft form and will be refined in the coming year.

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KEY PRACTICES GUIDE

This document identified thematic elements across outlier districts' efforts to improve graduation rates. Themes include culture, leadership, data, systems, and instruction. Factors that contributed to each thematic element are identified and given indicators to elaborate.

Theme > Definition > Factor > Indicator

Future work may employ this document as the basis of a readiness to benefit diagnostic or planning instrument. Many ideas overlap and nuanced ideas are repeated as appropriate. Likewise, not all district practices are represented below only those that were repeated across most outlier districts.

THEME 1: Culture

Establish an environment with a clear belief that through a collaborative process and systemic supports each student and staff will be successful in doing the work.

- There is trust at all levels of the organization that each person will fulfill his/her responsibilities.
 - Efforts are grounded in the mission of the organization.
 - People are committed to each other's successes.
 - Staff is supported in direct ways that help them serve students.
 - It is safe to try and fail.
 - Behaviors are aligned to beliefs.
 - Supports are present and delivered on a timely basis.

- You know those you serve and begin with the "why" behind the work.
 - Understand student demographics: academic, social-emotional, and behavioral.
 - Accept who you have, and embed your work in social justice.
 - Failure is not an option; continuous supports ensure success.
 - Spend your time in purposeful work.

- Embrace an ownership of all students; they each belong there.
 - Connect each student to the school through outside activities.
 - Build relationships with each student.
 - Help students envision their future.
 - Keep what is best for the student in front of all decisions.
 - Never give up on the student; there is always another alternative for success.
 - Mission provides the energy to do the work even when we get tired.
 - Keep visuals present to remind each other – and yourself - what is important.
 - Establish a supportive transition for students between middle and high schools.

- All players have a voice.
 - Students play an important role in moving the institution toward the ideal and should be engaged in decision-making at more levels.

- Students understand graduation requirements and are given frequent progress updates with suggested supports.
 - Gain regular ongoing feedback from staff.
 - Cultivate continual *informal* two-way communication with staff via one-on-ones and small groups.
 - Give teachers permission to lead.
 - Use language to create an inclusive environment.
 - Act on feedback.
 - Attempt total transparency to demonstrate equity and that all are doing the work.
 - Collaborations, not programs, are primary venues for the pursuit of equity.
- Leadership is accountable, and staff is responsible, for ultimate success.
- Put supports in place for staff success.
 - Embrace autonomy with accountability.
 - Collaboration is embedded in all work.
 - Informal and formal norms are established that support problem solving and are focused on the success of the student.
 - Formal leadership is visible and present for both staff and students.

THEME 2: Leadership (Formal and Informal)

Implement a vision of success for staff and students by reengaging them to their missions through the use of data, collaboration, systems of supports, and resources.

- Vertical efforts by the board, district office and building leadership level align to the belief that we own our all our students and each of them can be successful.
- Policies are in place that define and support the work.
 - District goals and measures are clearly focused and defined.
 - Ongoing communication from the school occurs on a regular basis to the district office and board, providing data on progress toward targets.
 - The district office provides resources based on building needs – sometimes thinking outside the box on time use, training, and realignment of resources to support the work.
- With a growth mind set that focuses on the “why” of the work, efforts occur from both the top-down and bottom-up.
- Autonomy with accountability occurs when policies are clear and there are procedures to support the work.
 - The work is embedded in equity and social justice to meet the needs of today’s student demographics.
 - Capacity building of the staff is necessary for success to occur, and happens by
 - Working to each person’s strength,
 - Believing each staff member has something to offer,
 - Allowing leadership possibilities for staff.
 - Leadership is not afraid to face its own problems, recognize when something is not working, and change course.
- Collaboration occurs at all levels.

- Leadership models the way for collaboration.
 - The role of counselors is redefined and overlaps with other collaborative practices in the building.
 - Feedback loops are established at all levels to ensure progress toward targets.
 - Open, two-way communication between buildings and the district office is timely, systematic, and move to action that supports the work.
- Leadership teams use data to continually monitor the change process and inform planning.
- Team members include both formal and informal leaders (i.e. counselors, teachers, students).
 - Planning, informed by evidence, occurs on a regular basis.

THEME 3: Data

Continuously collect, analyze, and report evidence using an inquiry process to inform the work at all levels of the district in implementing change that aligns to the mission of helping each student be successful.

- Data is collected through a thematic approach and seen as a whole rather than isolated points.
- Develop Early Warning Systems that include elements of:
 - Grades/Failures,
 - Attendance,
 - Suspensions, and
 - Course Completions.
 - Create an easily visible classification to display results (ex. by color).
 - Data is for more than contemplation; it leads to action.
 - Demonstrate how you use data on a daily/weekly basis to make decisions.
 - Utilize the state analytics to augment district/building data and pursue issues of equity.
- Employ principles of action research.
- Use data to put a spotlight on the right problem.
 - Focus vertical and horizontal team thinking.
 - Show progress by analyzing your current reality as you move toward a new ideal.
 - Look for trends over time.
 - Harvest a variety of data points and sources; but do not overwhelm with more for more's sake.
- Key players at all levels analyze data on a routine basis.
- Administrators and counselors review data on a regular basis as part of their jobs.
 - Building level teams align their data reviews.
 - Data protocols are used in the work of staff collaboration.
 - Assistant principals use data to inform and measure improvement in their assigned areas of responsibility.
 - Students have access to data and provide voice.
 - Successes are measured in both the short and long term - to monitor and adjust systems and celebrate along the way.

THEME 4: Systems

Provide supports to students and teachers by meeting academic, social-emotional, and behavioral management needs in an integrated and leveled manner.

- Systems of supports are grounded in real-time needs rather than programs.
 - Take time to study data before implemented programs; make sense of the work before acting.
 - Engage staff to ensure complete understanding and buy in.
 - Identify needs and solutions through a problem/opportunity of practice.
 - Continually review monies/resources and their alignment to student needs.
 - System development is dynamic in connecting each student to the school in an integrated approach within the context of the school.
 - Mental health is supported through external and internal supports.

- The cycle of improvement through the development and implementation of systems is never “done” as long as your students are changing.
 - Continually review and apply new learning to support systems that support teaching and learning.
 - Ground development work in levels of intervention that are integrated through the data themes of attendance/behavior, social-emotional and academic needs.

- Professional development is intentional and aligns to systems development.
 - Dedicate time to the process to ensure success of systems implementation.
 - This process is often directed by staff.

- Accountability of systems resides with formal leadership.
 - Evidence of success of systems is through data.
 - Action teams review emergent issues as they occur in systems development and implementation.
 - Accountability is evident at all levels of the district, with wide range of staff engaged in the process of plan/do/study/act cycle.

THEME 5: Instruction

Engage in collaborative action research to improve teaching and learning through inquiry.

- A cycle of inquiry supports improved learning and teaching.
 - Short cycles of learning are monitored and reported.
 - Curriculum, instruction and assessment frameworks guide collaborative efforts.

- Resources are provided to support instructional practice, which might include:
 - Release time to support collaboration,
 - Learning coaches,
 - Title and LAP dollars,
 - Specialized and alternative programs support high school graduation, and
 - Multiple academic options are available to all students.

Implementation Guide

The intent of this document is to begin to describe the nature of the work in implementing the conceptual and action frameworks in a building. Each component described below needs to be more fully developed into a training/support process that will assist coaches in becoming learning partners with their districts.

Readiness to do the work

A reflective process in place that will allow district leadership to analyze their ability to engage in the nature of the work in the areas of culture, leadership, data, systems, and instruction.

- An understanding and ‘buy in’ of the conceptual and action framework that is focused on developing a **culture for learning**.
 - There is trust at all levels of the organization that each person will fulfill his/her responsibilities.
 - Everyone knows those they serve and begins with the “why” of the work.
 - People embrace an ownership of all students in the district.
 - All stakeholders have a voice.
 - Everyone in the organization is capable of being successful if the right supports and systems are in place.
- A willingness for **leadership** to try new behaviors to reengage people in the work.
 - Vertical efforts by the board, district office and building leadership level align to the belief that we own our all of our students and each of them can be successful.
 - With a growth mind set that focuses on the “why” of the work, efforts occur from both the top-down and bottom-up.
 - Leadership teams use data to continually monitor the change process and inform planning.
 - Leadership is engaged in the real work of supporting those who do the work.
 - Equity and social justice guides all work.
- The use of **data** that inform decisions to meet the behavioral, social emotional, and achievement needs of students.
 - Data is collected through a thematic approach and seen as a whole rather than isolated parts.
 - Key stakeholders analyze data that leads to action to support student learning.
- **Systems** work to align people and resources to meet the needs of students and teachers.
 - Systems of supports are grounded in real-time needs rather than programs.
 - The cycle of improvement through the development and implementation of systems is never “done” as long as your students are changing.
 - Professional development is intentional and aligns to systems development.
 - Accountability of systems resides with formal leadership.
- Engage staff through the collaborative inquiry process and action research that supports improved **instruction**.
 - Collaboration occurs at all levels.

- A cycle of inquiry supports improved learning and teaching.
- Resources are provided to support instructional practice

Redefining the role of the coach to Learning Partner (LP)

To better support districts and schools, the role of the coach can be redefined as more of a learning partnership to explore and the implement processes that support the major themes above. Best practices are understood to only be the best within the context where the desired changes are to take place. Consequently the themes of culture, leadership, data, systems, and instruction stay somewhat constant but how they play out in given districts may look quite different. A one-size fits all approach will not work.

Consequently, the role of the Learning Partner is not prescriptive, rather – LPs become colleagues engaged in the collaborative inquiry process. Principles of action research informed by the conceptual and action frameworks guide the work, as well as the beliefs that:

- Each team member is capable of doing the work.
- Themes/Frameworks guide the work.
- Data is used to inform not to punish.
- Schoolwide systems need to be in place to shift the culture of a school.
- Connecting each staff member to the well-being of the school requires a skill set of formal leaders that begins the change process.
- Leadership needs to demonstrate new behaviors to change old beliefs of staff.

As a result, the Learning Partner is not seen through the typical lens as a coach or trainer. Rather the LP is engaged in assisting, collaborating, and joining forces with the building in fostering a culture for learning. We suggested term as Learning Partner to better describe the nature of the work to assist districts in the work being done in the field.

This role of the Learning Partner is a long-term commitment to the Leadership Team. The LP is a teammate who helps implement structures and systems to improve graduation rates for all students. All work is grounded in relational trust in which people working with the LP feel safe yet not necessarily comfortable, that he/she is willing put in time with the Leadership Team, and has something to contribute to the well-being of the organization. The time commitment to ensure the relationship between the Leadership Team and the Learning Partner is effective will necessitate a different model of partnership via a combination of the use of technology such as Skype and site visits that are much more frequent and intentional, based in the planning process that will be further discussed later in the document.

Key principles guide the work

Four key principles guide the work and inform the strategies pursued in a school embedded in the work of the Learning Partner and the Leadership Team.

Principle 1 – Ensure Success for Everyone. (C-B-E: Connect, Build, Envision)

▶ Connect to the School

Adults and students understand how they contribute to the well-being of the school, which provides a **sens of self-worth.**

- ▶ **Build Powerful Relationships**
Adults and students support each other in achieving individual and group goals that result in a **sense of belonging**.
- ▶ **Envision Their Future**
Adults and students have a clear understanding and a positive outlook for what their futures hold that leads to **sense of hopefulness**.

Principle 2 – A Conceptual Framework is Foundational for the Change Process.

Interdependent factors foster a culture for learning:

Academic Press provides specific direction for *students and adults* embedded in high standards/goals and the belief that everyone can achieve success.

Supports provide assistance for *students and adults* in meeting goals articulated in external standards.

Relational Trust results when *students and adults* feel safe; understand that they and others have something to offer; and know that others are willing to provide time and expertise to help others experience success.

Relational trust acts as both a catalyst for and an outcome of the union of academic press and support. Relational trust grows when roles and responsibilities have been clarified in an environment in which people have **high expectations, believe that each other will perform, and know that support will be provided.**

Principle 3: Change Begins With Systems Development.

The school change process is initiated through systems work. Building school-wide systems that are grounded in the conceptual framework and that support the work of teachers and students is the foundation for **connecting teachers and students to the school, building positive relationships between staff, students and leaders, and allowing staff and students to envision their futures.**

Principle 4: The Culture of Learning is Developed through the Interaction of Leadership, Data, Systems and Instruction AKA use of the Action Framework.

The **Leadership** team *acts* on the planning process; **Data** is *monitored* and used to *connect* teachers and students to **Systems**; teachers *act* on their **Instructional** goals through their collaborative work.

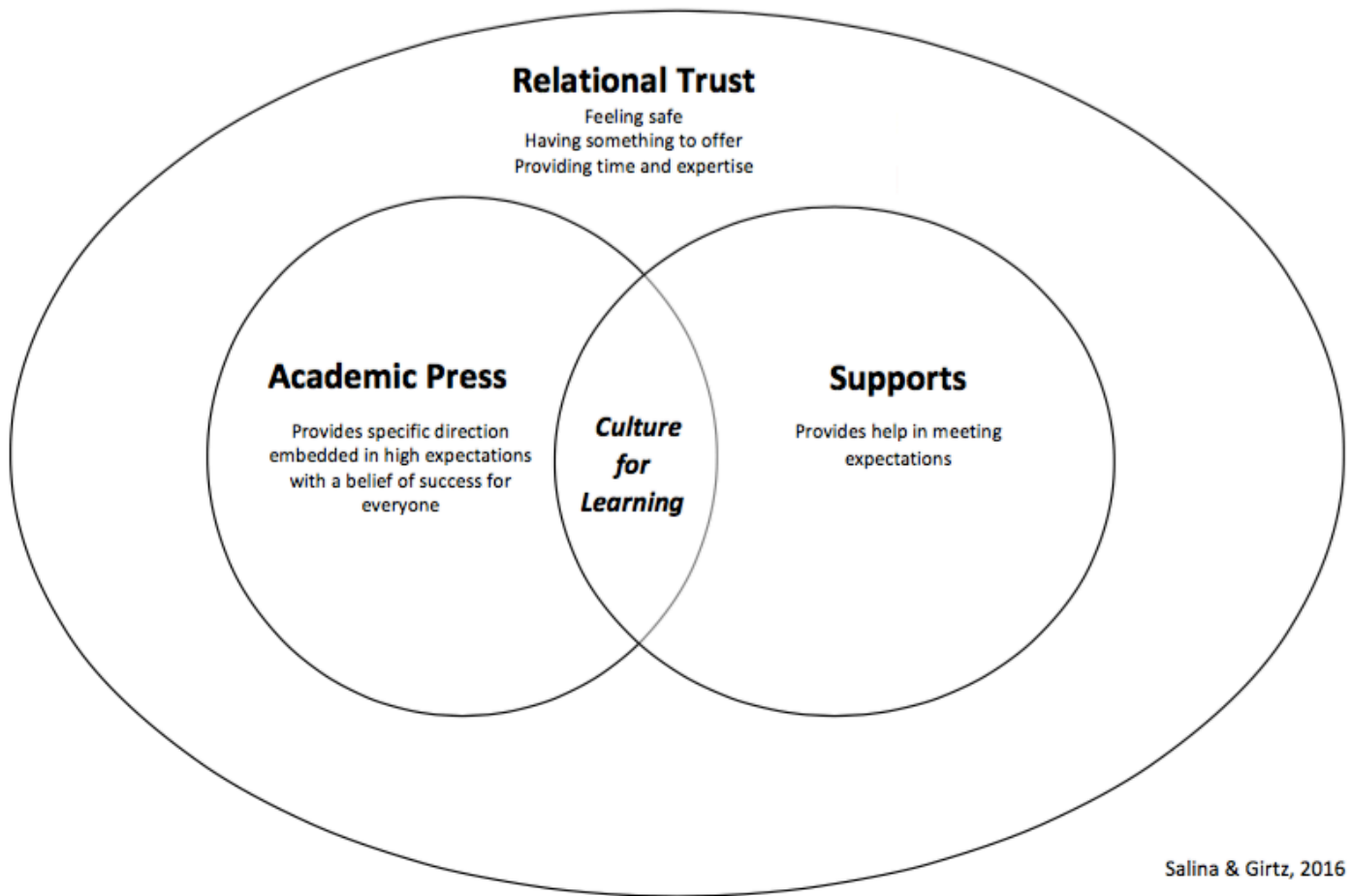
New Behaviors and Strategies Actualize the Four Principles

The four principles drive new behaviors. Each of the new behaviors and related strategies are developed during ongoing collaboration with the Learning Partners and OSPI as leaders engage in the following work.

1. Conversations between leaders and staff must be intentional and focused. Their purpose is to:
 - Create understanding of the current reality,
 - Facilitate problem solving,

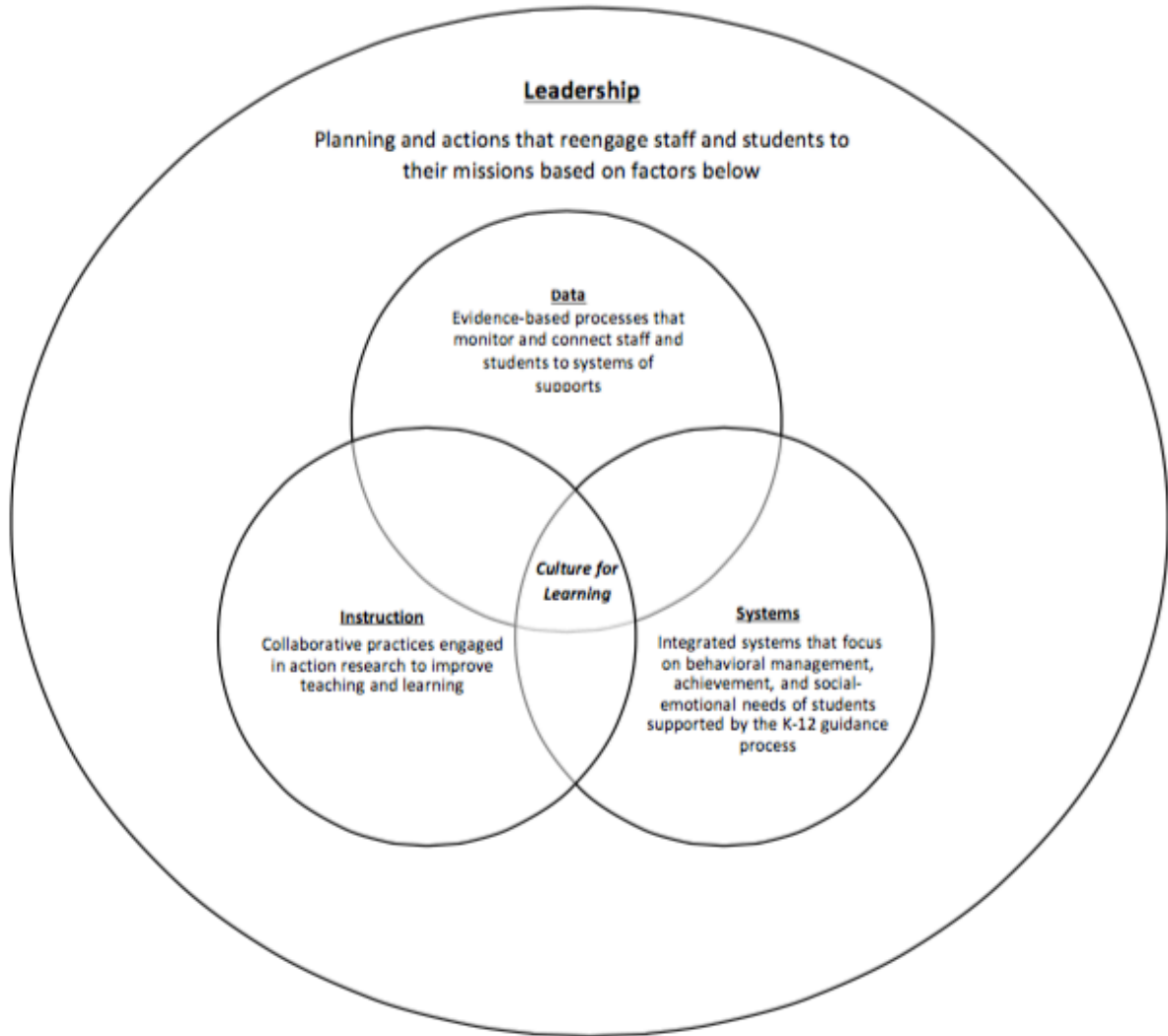
- Connect each person’s talents to the vision of the school,
 - Increase buy-in, and
 - Foster a safe environment in which people take risks and become accountable.
2. Leaders create a living plan of action. The plan:
 - Integrates what has been learned from effective two-way conversations,
 - Identifies who is accountable,
 - Leads to intentional actions and systems that align with and support the work of the staff, and
 - Spotlights the right problems.
 3. Use time wisely as a leader so that school-wide plans can be:
 - Identified,
 - Implemented,
 - Supported, and
 - Evaluated.
 4. Develop action teams that engage teachers in creating, implementing, and improving school-wide and classroom/departmental level systems through action teams. Action teams are small groups that:
 - Identify their current reality, and
 - Design a course of action to attain a newly defined ideal.
 5. Be relentless in using the correct and simple sources of data that drive intentional, continuous improvement of school-wide systems. Improve your school through data-based decision making. Collect appropriate evidence intentionally.
 6. Language makes our thinking visible and shapes how we see the world. Use it as a powerful tool that can move your school forward to a new ideal. Language used to shape the school’s identity must be positive, proactive, and shared.
Developing a school-specific language leads to a focus on possibility rather than deficit. It also increases a sense of belonging.
 7. Work with the district office in a way that elicits active support. Put structures in place that allow people to:
 - Engage in the problem-solving process,
 - Develop meaningful leadership plans, and
 - Act intentionally toward the desired outcome.
 Help the district office to focus on its commitment to support work in the building. If leaders describe the work clearly to key district office personnel, support will follow.
 8. Support staff often feel alone and underappreciated. Leaders can:
 - Listen to the perspective of support staff,
 - Act on their wisdom, and
 - Involve them in the change process while building their capacity.

Conceptual Framework



Salina & Girtz, 2016

Action Framework



Salina & Girtz, 201

Conceptual Framework Survey

Rate the following statements below on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 representing “rarely,” 2 representing “seldom”, 3 representing “sometimes,” and 4 representing “frequently”.

Elements of the conceptual framework for cultural change in schools (relational trust, academic press, and support) are evaluated with eight questions each.

Relational Trust

Indicator	Rating (1-4)
1. Provides me with valuable insight that helps me grow.	
2. Encourages me to take risks.	
3. Puts in time and energy to support me in my work.	
4. Takes time to solve problems with me.	
5. Challenges me in a safe manner.	
6. Knows my strengths and interests that support the school vision.	
7. Is available to discuss difficult issues.	
8. Respects and draws upon my expertise.	
TOTAL	

Academic Press

Indicator	Rating (1-4)
1. Expects teachers to teach the agreed-upon curriculum that supports student learning.	
2. Holds me accountable for my performance.	
3. Organizes the school to maximize teaching and learning.	
4. Provides me a clear understanding of what I am expected to accomplish.	
5. Provides accurate and helpful feedback to help me grow.	
6. Believes that I can achieve the expected outcomes with all my students.	
7. Continually pushes me to be my best self.	
8. Allows me to take risks as I experiment to improve my pedagogical style.	
TOTAL	

Support

Indicator	Rating (1-4)
1. Offers specific supports when I need them.	
2. Listens carefully when I express my opinions or concerns.	
3. Provides supports for teachers and students through school-wide systems.	
4. Helps me connect to the school.	
5. Treats me fairly.	
6. Helps teachers believe in each other.	
7. Helps me believe in myself.	
8. Fosters an atmosphere of respect among teachers.	
TOTAL	

Summary Table

Conceptual Framework Element	Total
Relational Trust	
Academic Press	
Social Support	

So what?

Action Framework Survey

Rate the following statements below on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 representing “rarely,” 2 representing “seldom”, 3 representing “sometimes,” and 4 representing “frequently”.

Elements of the action framework (Culture, Leadership, Data, Systems, and Instruction) are evaluated with four questions each.

Culture

Indicator	Rating (1-4)
1. There is trust at all levels of the organization that each person will fulfill his/her responsibilities.	
2. You know those you serve and begin with the “why” behind the work.	
3. Embrace an ownership of all students; they each belong there.	
4. Leadership is accountable, and staff is responsible, for ultimate success.	

Leadership

Indicator	Rating (1-4)
1. Vertical efforts by the board, district office and building leadership level align to the belief that we own our all of our students and each of them can be successful.	
2. Collaboration occurs at all levels of the organization.	
3. Leadership teams use data to continually monitor the change process and inform planning.	
4. Leadership is not afraid to face its own problems, recognize when something is not working, and change course.	

Data

Indicator	Rating (1-4)
1. Data is collected through a thematic approach and seen as a whole rather than isolated points.	
2. An Early Warning Systems is in place that include elements of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Grades/Failures, ii. Attendance, iii. Suspensions, and iv. Course Completions. 	
3. Collaborative inquiry between teachers uses data to identify next steps for improvement.	
4. Key stakeholders at all levels analyze data on a routine basis.	

Systems

Indicator	Rating (1-4)
1. Systems of supports (social emotional/behavioral/achievement) are grounded in real-time needs rather than programs.	
2. The cycle of improvement through the development of systems is never “done” as long as your students are changing.	
3. Professional development is intentional and aligns to systems development.	
4. Accountability of systems resides with formal leadership.	

Instruction

Indicator	Rating (1-4)
1. A cycle of inquiry supports improved teaching and learning.	
2. Resources are provided to support instructional practice.	
3. Basic principles of action research are followed.	
4. There is interdependence between the classroom teacher and support programs.	

Summary Table

Action Framework Element	Total
Culture	
Leadership	
Data	
Systems	
Instruction	

So what?

Current Reality Instrument

This document facilitates a reflective process, either individually or within a group, to identify the current status of thematic issue that promote change in a school. You will contribute both numerical and anecdotal responses. This tool can be used to collect perceptions in a pre/post manner, or to jumpstart conversations around goal setting and action-planning. Further, indicators for the themes/factors below are found in the **Key Practice Guide** and can be referenced to inform future work. Think first on how you want to use it and for what purpose.

Then, read through the five themes and rate factors on a scale from one to four under each theme based on your perception of the **current reality** within your school. The scale is described this way:

1. Not Present.
2. Emerging.
3. Operational.
4. Optimizing.

After rating a factor, provide **anecdotal evidence** to support your rating in the next column. Consider multiple types of evidence, like:

- Perceptual – what you see and hear,
- Contextual – processes/structures or systems that support the indicator,
- Achievement – scores that support the indicator, and
- Demographic – descriptions of groups, closing the achievement gap.

Realize that not all forms of evidence may be appropriate for every theme or related factors, but be aware if you are only relying on one type to inform perceptions.

When you have completed the instrument, compare and contrast your responses to the indicators in **Key Practice Guide** to guide planning and future work. Additionally, this instrument can be the basis of team conversations as you begin to understand terminology and processes in more similar ways – and therefore work with greater impact.

THEME 1: Culture

Establish an environment based on a clear belief that through a collaborative processes and systemic supports each student and staff will be successful in doing the work.

Factors	Current Reality (1-4)	Anecdotal Evidence
There is trust at all levels of the organization that each person will fulfill his/her responsibilities.		
You know those you serve and begin with the “why” behind the work.		
People embrace an ownership of all students; they each belong there.		
All stakeholders have a voice.		
Leadership is accountable, and staff is responsible, for ultimate success.		
There is evidence that the conceptual and action frameworks are in place.		

THEME 2: Leadership (Formal and Informal)

Implement a vision of success for staff and students by reengaging them to their missions through the use of data, collaboration, systems of supports, and resources.

Factors	Current Reality (1-4)	Anecdotal Evidence
Vertical efforts by the board, district office, and building leadership level align to the beliefs that we own our all of our students and each of them can be successful.		

A growth mind set is present that focuses on the “why” of the work; efforts occur from both the top-down and bottom-up.		
Collaboration occurs at all levels of the organization.		
Leadership teams use data to continually monitor the change process and inform planning.		
Leadership is not afraid to face its own problems, recognize when something is not working, and change course.		

THEME 3: Data

Continuously collect, analyze, and report evidence using an inquiry process to inform the work at all levels of the district in implementing change that aligns to the mission of helping each student be successful.

Factors	Current Reality (1-4)	Anecdotal Evidence
Data is collected through a thematic approach and seen as a connected whole rather than isolated points.		
Data is used to support the principles of action research.		
Key people at all levels analyze data on a routine basis, which leads to action.		
Data is used on a daily/weekly basis and supports an early warning system.		
A variety of data is collected that includes contextual, perceptual, demographic and achievement elements.		

THEME 4: Systems

Provide supports to students and teachers by meeting academic, social-emotional, and behavioral management needs in an integrated and leveled manner.

Factors	Current Reality (1-4)	Anecdotal Evidence
Systems of support are grounded in real-time needs rather than programs.		
The cycle of improvement through the development and implementation of systems is never “done” as long as your students are changing.		
Systems are grounded in meeting the behavioral, social-emotional and academic needs of students.		
Professional development is intentional and aligns to systems development.		
Accountability of systems resides with formal leadership.		

THEME 5: Instruction

Engage in collaborative inquiry via action research to improve teaching and learning.

Factor	Current Reality (1-4)	Anecdotal Evidence
Collaboration occurs at all levels.		
A cycle of inquiry supports improved teaching and learning.		
Resources are provided to support improved instructional practices.		

Summary Results and Reflection: