

Developing a School Profile: An Analysis of Critical School Improvement Dimensions

The following information is provided as a basis for interpreting the seven dimensions assessed in this activity. Please respond based upon the assumption that the explanations provided below characterize a school that is a high-quality environment for students. In other words, a rating of “7” (solid, positive impact on students), “8,” or “9” (exceptional impact on students) would not be warranted unless the school clearly met (in the past) or meets (in the present) the concepts presented in each respective definition. **Use these specific definitions as you complete the exercise.**

Culture

The Culture of a highly effective school is characterized by continuous learning, student-centered decision making, collaborative decision-making, open communication, and trusting relationships. The school is a caring, collaborative learning environment for all students.

Professional Development

Professional Development in a highly effective school is characterized by a faculty who value inquiry, reflection, and continuous learning. Continuous learning is a norm for the school. Professional development, self-assessment, peer assessment, peer collaboration, and peer coaching are methods by which the individual educator enhances and improves current knowledge and practice. Professional development in the school is an individual, a small group, and a large group process.

Organizational Structure

The Organizational Structure in a highly effective school is characterized by decisions made with the best interest of students in mind. The day-to-day organizational practices of the school, from routine office procedures to instructional schedules, effectively facilitate the learning mission of the school. The methods of communicating and the processes for decision-making are efficient and effective

Organizational Resources

Organizational Resources in a highly effective school are characterized by efforts to provide the best possible services for students. The resources of the school are organized to promote the learning mission of the school. Adequate money is provided to support the instructional program, professional development, and effective communication with the school's public. School facilities are adequate to implement an effective instructional program and create a clean, safe, and pleasant environment for learning. The processes used in the building to allocate resources, both fiscal and physical, are fair, equitable, and collaborative. Teachers are selected because they bring to the school a high level of competence to implement the curricular and instructional practices most appropriate for students of this age level. All staff (teachers and non-teachers) understand and support the mission and vision of the school.

Curriculum

Curriculum in a highly effective school is characterized by programs designed to engage students in developmentally appropriate, meaningful, authentic learning that fosters life-long skills. Curricular programs are articulated vertically and horizontally. Integrated curriculum (across content discipline areas) is a common practice in the school. Curriculum development is a continuous process based upon a cycle of development, implementation, assessment, and revision.

Instructional Strategies

Instructional Strategies in a highly effective school actively engage all students across the school in the learning process. Higher-order skill development is common. Instructional practices promote reflection, inquiry, problem solving, and decision-making. Teachers serve as facilitators of learning, frequently using constructivist methods of instruction. Staff adapts learning strategies to meet the goals of the curriculum and the abilities of the learners. Integrated instruction (across content areas) and authentic learning experiences are common practices in the school.

Leadership

Leadership in a highly effective school is provided by a principal who is an active professional learner, who values quality instruction across the school, and who serves enthusiastically as the instructional leader of the school. The principal establishes strategies that promote collaboration among all staff. The principal is one of the most knowledgeable educators in the building about effective schooling, effective instruction, and student learning. Through the leadership of the principal, many assume leadership roles and use their abilities and talents to create an effective school.