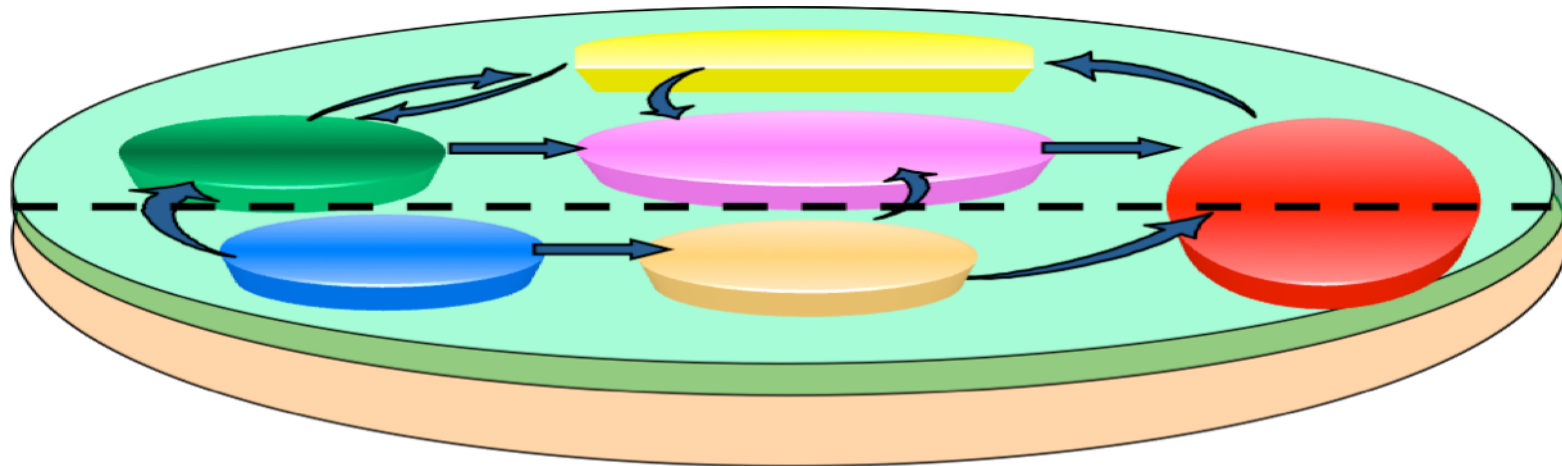


Park Ridge-Niles District 64 System Assessment Executive Summary Report

The following system assessment feedback report was developed for Park Ridge-Niles District 64 by the System Assessment Review Team of the Consortium for Educational Change.

Using the best practice criteria of a correlation between the Baldrige Performance Excellence Education Criteria and the Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities as a lens, the System Assessment Review Team reviewed information provided by the district and interviewed administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents in order to identify strengths and opportunities for system improvement.



This feedback report was developed reflecting on the indicators described on the next few pages. It is a response to written information provided by the district as well as from information gathered from interviews. It is not intended to represent the perspective of all school administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents. Its accuracy is dependent on the information presented and discussed. The criteria around which we conducted our visit are listed below. It is a synthesis of the research from the Baldrige Performance Excellence Criteria and the Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities. They represent the best practice, continuous improvement frameworks.

The system assessment process is built on values/beliefs:

1. *The district or school must believe in **continuous improvement**. A belief that every student, every staff member, every team, every school, every department and the district itself can be better tomorrow than it is today is necessary.*
2. *The district or school must believe strongly in the power or effective **labor-management collaboration**. The board of education, district leaders, union leaders, and family/community leaders must get on the same page through clear communication and collaboration to pull the improvement rope in the same direction. There must be trust, respect and a focus on learning for what is best for learners that guides shared decision-making.*
3. *The district or school must **be familiar with the best practices of a continuous improvement framework** and believe in systems thinking. The best practices originate from the Baldrige Performance Excellence Criteria for Education. Those practices were translated into the Professional Learning Community framework. These best practices are research-based and are to be used to benchmark against in striving for continuous improvement. It is clear when these practices are executed with a high level of fidelity, performance grows and improves.*
4. *The district or school must believe that **all children can grow and learn at high levels and should have equal access to quality education**. It supports recent federal requirements in placing an emphasis on the growth for all learners toward a set of expectations. It celebrates districts and schools who demonstrate growth in their performance results.*
5. *The district or school must believe their organization must **define how to measure success and both progress monitor and report performance periodically to their stakeholders** to demonstrate responsibility and accountability.*

Park Ridge-Niles District 64 asked to use the Professional Learning Community Framework as its format. That framework with its 50 best practice Indicators is outlined below:

Focus on Learning: We acknowledge that the fundamental purpose of our district is to help all students achieve high levels of learning and therefore we are willing to examine all of our practices in light of their impact on learning.

A Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum

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| A. | Establishing the Curriculum: We set student learning outcomes across all schools and classrooms to build shared knowledge regarding common core state standards, district curriculum guides, trends in student achievement and outcomes for the next course or grade. |
| B. | Executing the Curriculum: We expect that each teacher give priority to the identified learning outcomes in every unit of instruction to guarantee that each student has equal access to those learning outcomes in all classrooms for the grade level or course. |
| C. | Clarifying and Communicating the Curriculum: We expect that every teacher is able to assist each student and their parents (families) know the essential learning outcomes so they can assist in monitoring performance in relationship to those outcomes. |

Formative and Summative System of Assessments

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| D. | Defining the Assessment System: We ensure there is alignment and balance between common, formative assessment data to guide instruction and learning; and common, summative assessment data to reflect on teaching, programs, interventions, and periodic student progress reporting. |
| E. | Assessing What Each Student Knows and Needs to Learn Next: We expect each teacher to monitor the learning of all students, aligned to the learning outcomes per unit, to identify what each student knows, is able to do, and needs to learn next. |
| F. | Providing Frequent and Timely Descriptive Assessment Feedback: We ensure there is frequent and timely feedback regarding the performance of our students on classroom, team, school, district, and state assessments. |
| G. | Using Assessment Data and Information to Drive Instruction: We expect teachers to use assessment data aligned to student learning outcomes per unit to differentiate instruction and respond to students when they either demonstrate they have not learned or are ready for more challenge. |
| H. | Using Assessment Data and Information to Recognize Growth and Achievement. We regularly recognize and celebrate individual and collective student growth, mastery, and success aligned to appropriate unit learning outcomes. |

Differentiation: Instruction, Interventions and Enrichments

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| I. | Differentiating Instruction: We expect instructional activities are engaging and differentiated to meet individual and small group needs within the classroom. |
| J. | Aligning Interventions: We ensure a system of interventions that guarantees each student will receive additional time and support for learning if he/she has not demonstrated mastery of grade level or course unit learning outcomes. |
| K. | Aligning Enrichments: We ensure teachers extend and enrich the learning of students who have mastered common learning targets so every student is challenged. |

Ensuring a Focus on Learning

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| L. | Providing Conditions for an Optimal Learning Environment: We expect all learning environments to be safe, respectful, and engaging while supporting a climate of high expectations for social emotional learning. |
| M. | Examining Learning Practices: We provide opportunities for teachers to examine homework, grading, report cards, etc. to ensure there is clarity and consistency across all classrooms, teams and schools. |
| N. | Judging Quality Work: We expect all teachers to clarify the criteria by which they will judge the quality of student work and practice applying those criteria until they can do so consistently. |
| O. | Providing Training and Support: We provide sufficient training and follow-up support to assist teachers with expectations in the alignment of assessments, and instruction within a standards-driven curriculum. |
| P. | Organizing and Allocating Resources: We organize and allocate resources of people, time and money with a focus on learning as opposed to a focus on teaching. |

Focus on Collaboration: We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose of learning for all students. We cultivate a collaborative culture through the development of high performing teams.	
Building Shared Knowledge and Leadership: Mission, Vision, Values, Goals and Strategies	
A.	Clarifying the “Big Picture”: We have developed and deployed mission, vision, values (collective commitments) and goals to establish clear direction.
B.	Communicating the “Big Picture”: We set clear direction by communicating a “Big Picture” so that everyone sees how current and new initiatives connect to that direction and how those initiatives align with district and school direction.
C.	Reinforcing the “Big Picture”: We expect that common behaviors and actions of all staff support the vision, mission, values, goals and strategies of both the school and the district.
D.	Living the “Big Picture”: We set strategies & action plans to describe the steps to be taken toward attainment of goals. The improvement planning process serves as the centerpiece for examining how the organization performs.
Enabling High Performing, Collaborative Teams	
E.	Setting Expectations for Team Function: We expect work to be done through collaborative teams in which members work together interdependently to achieve common goals.
F.	Providing Time & Purpose for Teams to Meet: We provide time during the contractual day and school year for teams to meet. Team meetings always focus on improving student learning.
G.	Determining Accountability Criteria for Teams: We expect teams to be accountable for the decisions they make and the results they achieve.
Creating a Culture of Intentional Collaboration	
H.	Implementing a High Performance Culture: We promote a culture/teaching environment of personal growth and high performance.
I.	Providing a Safe Data Culture for Effective Team Function: We create a safe environment to report and compare data so as to learn from one another and share effective practices.
J.	Providing a Culture of Collective Inquiry & Learning: We expect team time to be used engage in collective inquiry on questions specifically linked to gains in student achievement.
Fostering Strong Partnerships	
K.	Fostering Collaborative Internal Staff Partnerships: We foster collaborative staff partnerships between and across all organizational levels to ensure decisions are made in the best interests of students.
L.	Fostering Collaborative External Family Partnerships: We foster collaborative partnerships with parents (families) to engage them in decisions about the progress of school, school and student goal attainment.
M.	Fostering Collaborative External Community Partnerships: We foster collaborative partnerships with the community to engage them in decisions about the progress of school, school and student goal attainment.
Ensuring a Focus on Collaboration	
O.	Providing Meaningful, Aligned Evaluation Systems: We enforce district job expectations and provide meaningful evaluation systems.
P.	Providing Job-embedded Training: We ensure professional development is job-embedded and ongoing.
Q.	Organizing and Allocating Resources: We organize and allocate resources of people, time and money with a focus on collaboration.

Focus on Results: We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions. Individuals, teams and schools seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement.

Data Transparency and Efficacy: Measuring What Matters Most

- A. **Measuring What Matters:** We align key data indicators, measures, and targets throughout the system—district to school to grade level team/department to individual--- to establish effective ways to monitor and report progress.
- B. **Setting SMART Goals:** District, school, team, and individual staff goals are specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and timely (SMART). They address gaps identified through key data sources that focus improvement efforts.
- C. **Aligning Leader Performance Evaluation:** Administrative performance goals align with the district and/or school improvement plan.
- D. **Aligning Teacher Performance Evaluation:** Teacher performance goals align with district, school, and/or team improvement plans.
- E. **Aligning Student Performance Evaluation:** Student performance goals align with unit plan learning outcomes and other assessment data and information.

Creating a Results Orientation

- F. **Using Data Effectively:** We expect all staff to use assessment data to: a) identify students who need additional time and support for learning; b) discover strengths and weaknesses in their own job performance; c) measure and report progress toward goals, and d) define action plans.
- G. **Inspiring Shared Accountability:** We create a safe data culture so students and staff feel comfortable sharing their results in an effort to learn from others and improve results.
- H. **Monitoring and Reporting Progress:** We view, monitor, and report progress to all stakeholders on a regular basis to identify what to celebrate and what to focus on next in terms of improvement.
- I. **Promoting Student Responsibility for Their Own Learning:** We expect staff to assist students take responsibility for their own learning by collecting data to monitor and track their performance compared to high expectations and performance results of others.
- J. **Reporting and Acting on Satisfaction Data:** We collect, analyze, prioritize, and act upon student, parent, and staff satisfaction data to be certain it is addressing the needs and requirements of our stakeholders..

A Data-Based Picture of Results

- K. **Examining Trend Data:** We have evidence to show our trend achievement results are improving compared to the past. Our achievement results include measures of growth.
- L. **Examining Cohort Data:** We have evidence to show our student cohort achievement results are improving from grade to grade. Our achievement results include measures of growth.
- M. **Examining Comparative Data:** We have evidence to show our achievement results are improving compared to others (state and other benchmark districts).
- N. **Closing Achievement Gaps:** We have evidence to show our results have narrowed or closed achievement gaps between groups of students.
- O. **Meeting Adequate Yearly Progress:** We meet adequate yearly progress requirements as defined by federal and state legislation. Our students are ready for the next level. (elementary to middle, middle to high school, high school to college/career readiness)

Ensuring a Focus on Results

- P. **Managing Data:** We examine policies and processes related to data collection, management and analysis to be certain they are effective and efficient. Data is easily accessible and user-friendly in its format.
- Q. **Providing Training and Support:** We provide sufficient training and follow-up support to assist teachers with expectations in the alignment of assessments, and instruction within a standards-driven curriculum.
- R. **Organizing and Allocating Resources:** We organize and allocate our resources of people, time and money with a focus on results.

SYSTEM ASSESSMENT SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

The district responded to a set of questions aligned to the criteria research best practice areas listed above. ***There were 50 best practice indicators around which the district leaders benchmarked their current progress.***

The external team reviewed the Professional Learning Community effective practices and identified district strengths and opportunities for improvement. The district self-assessed itself as to where they viewed their progress toward implementation of the criteria. The purpose of the visit was to provide the district with gap information in areas where the external team did not agree with the district self-assessment.

The Review Team examined the information and data prior to the site visit. They developed a list of questions to explore as part of the site visit. The Review Team interviewed all stakeholder groups.

On the first and second day the Team interviewed:

- Superintendent and Superintendent's Cabinet
- Parent Organization Leaders
- Association Leaders
- Instructional Support Team- paraprofessionals
- Secretaries
- Custodians
- Teaching Assistants
- Curriculum Leaders
- Human Resource Leaders
- Business Office Leaders
- Facilities/Operations Leaders
- Technology Leaders
- Student Services Leaders (SP ED, Rtl, Support Certified)
- Principals and Assistant Principals

On the second day, the Team interviewed:

- Quality Improvement Teams
- Middle School Team Leaders
- Parents
- Students
- Teachers

The schedule was set by district leaders. Representatives interviewed reflected the demographics of the school. Approximately 980 stakeholders were interviewed.

Following interviews, the Team reviewed its findings and prepared an oral report to give the district a preview of overall strengths and opportunities for improvement aligned to the framework and criteria. The week following the visit, the Team communicated electronically to prepare the final written feedback report. This final report was sent to the district within seven days of the visit.

CEC is available to assist the district in any way it chooses to follow up with suggested next steps. The district has committed to use the information to update its strategic plan. It also has committed to allow staff members to serve on a Review Team for another district's system assessment visit in the future.

Team Leader Contact Information

Park Ridge-Niles District 64 System Assessment Leader		
Name	Position	Email Address
Perry Soldwedel	Team Leader Consortium for Educational Change	Perry.soldwedel@cecillinois.org

The 29-team members that participated served as auditors and worked as volunteers. They practice the continuous improvement framework and are familiar with best practice criteria.

This report summarizes the strengths and opportunities aligned to the continuous improvement criteria.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL STRENGTHS

Among all of the strengths within each category and for all core values, the assessment team finds these strengths to be highest in priority. It is hoped that recognizing and celebrating these strengths will showcase past investment of resources in improving performance results.

Focus on Learning Strengths:

- ++ Students enjoy school. They feel their teachers care about them. They feel their teachers are approachable and will help them learn and grow. There is high student satisfaction. Students feel safe and secure in their schools.
- ++ The district is transitioning to standards-based instruction and to the requirements of the Common Core State Standards.
- ++ Parents of students in the Channels of Challenge program are happy with the rigor of the curriculum. Students feel challenged.
- ++ There is a strong emphasis on fine arts and physical education.
- ++ There is a vast array of special education services available.
- ++ Students in 7th and 8th grade have choices in electives to enrich their core curriculum.
- ++ Classroom teachers are beginning to experiment with instructional strategies to

differentiate instruction within the classroom. (examples: guided reading, guided math, and strategies of assessment for learning)

- ++ The district provides a strong system of support through curriculum specialists, reading specialists, library/media specialists, technology integration specialists, instructional coaches, team leaders, resource and self-contained special educators and a problem solving team to name a few. In addition, there are a number of high quality paraprofessionals.
- ++ The district has a one-to-one technology initiative and provides a chromebook to each student beginning in grade three to assist them in integrating the use of technology to accelerate their learning. Teachers use technology to enhance both learning and teaching.

Focus on Collaboration Strengths:

- ++ There is an internal and external culture that supports educating “the whole child.”
- ++ People are the greatest resource. There are great students, hard working staff members, supportive families; and a strong sense of community.
- ++ Students and families hold the teaching staff in high regard. Families have a high level of trust and a feeling that the district is providing a high quality education.
- ++ School environments are welcoming, warm, caring, and generally collegial. Staff

morale is high within each school. There appears to be a strong sense of “family” and “community.”

- ++ A new strategic planning process is eminent to set clear and prioritized future direction. The process will enlist the voices of all stakeholders.
- ++ Early release Wednesdays provide collaboration time for staff. In addition, middle school teachers have daily collaboration time.
- ++ The Parent Teacher Organization at each school is a partner in providing people, time, and money resources to make each school a great place for learning and teaching.

Focus on Results Strengths:

- ++ Park Ridge District 64 has a reputation for high student performance results. Many families move to the community for the school system. Many families stay in the community for the school system.
- ++ There are sufficient resources- people, time and money- to provide an optimal learning environment.
- ++ Student achievement results are high as shown on the district state report card and on the NWEA-MAP assessments.
- ++ Student attendance is high as shown on the district state report card.

- ++ Student mobility is low as shown on the district state report card.
- ++ Student discipline problems are relatively low as shown on the district state report card and through referral rates.
- ++ The student population is growing. The student population is becoming more diverse.
- ++ The district has a history of sound fiscal management practices. Reserves, audits, and expenditures-to-revenues have been positive. The community supported a referendum several years ago.
- ++ The district will begin a long-range facilities plan later this year.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES

Among all of the opportunities for improvement within each category and for all core values, the assessment team finds these opportunities to be highest in priority. It is hoped that addressing these opportunities will yield a high future return on investment of resources in improving performance results.

Focus on Learning Opportunities for Improvement:

- △△ There is not consistent practice of articulating clearly defined learning outcomes based on state standards so students and their families can identify what a student is to know and be able to do by the end of each unit.
- △△ There is not consistent practice of using formative assessments aligned to those unit learning outcomes so students and their families can identify what each student has mastered and what is next to learn. This assessment data is critical to differentiate instruction through flexible grouping.
- △△ Teachers are concerned with the number and timing of assessments that negatively impact instructional time. There are concerns of why certain assessments are administered and if the data provided is critical to teaching and learning.
- △△ There is a need for equal access to learning standards to assist each learner be college and career ready. A federal requirement is to hold high expectations for all children. Parents of students not in the Channel of Challenge program need

assurances that their students are being challenged. It is unclear if students with disabilities are meeting least restrictive environment special education requirements.

△△ There is little understanding that student performance on unit assessments should be a predictor for performance on NWEA-MAP and that performance on NWEA-MAP should be a predictor for performance on PARCC. All should be aligned to college and career readiness standards.

△△ It is difficult within the current schedules to provide additional time and support for students who are struggling, especially in reading and mathematics.

Focus on Collaboration Opportunities for Improvement:

△△ The district is currently more of a system of schools than a school system. Autonomy is valued at the school level. The district is not clear in communicating clear expectations for what everyone is to know and do across the system and then letting the uniqueness of each school use creativity and autonomy to implement those expectations with fidelity. There is not a real sense of district as in “What do we guarantee will happen in every school, in every classroom?” The district has not worked with its stakeholders to determine what will be guaranteed.

△△ There appears to be a culture in place that does not embrace change and improvement. There is a feeling that, “If it isn’t broke, why attempt to fix it.” This feeling does not embrace a value of continuous improvement. It also does not embrace a requirement of growth.

- △△ Site-based management and decision-making over the course of many years has promoted inconsistencies in the fidelity of implementation of district initiatives. There has been a strained relationship between staff, administration and board of education.
- △△ Decision-making structures lack clarity in their roles, responsibilities, and purposes to ensure consistencies, effectiveness, and efficiencies (examples: District committees, Quality Improvement Teams, Grade Level/Department Teams, School Improvement). It is not always clear when groups meet what their charge is, what parameters must be adhered to, and who makes what decision.
- △△ There are currently too many initiatives. Staff are stressed and overwhelmed. Many new initiatives are being addressed at a low quality level with insufficient training and support as opposed to prioritized initiatives being addressed at a high quality level. Staff morale is low when it comes to the relationship between school and district. There has been great turnover in administrators in the district over the last five years.
- △△ Staff and families want to be certain their voices are heard before decisions are made that impact them. Communication both internally and externally was identified as needing attention.

Focus on Results Opportunities for Improvement:

- △△ Several of the newly required state and federal mandates are not being implemented consistently. In some cases, failure to implement those rules and

regulations could eventually lead to compliance and funding consequences.

- △△ There is not collective ownership of data review to close achievement gaps among English language learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families. There is a high number of students being identified for special education services as measured by state guidelines. Students in the top quartile are high achievers-but not demonstrating sufficient growth as measured by standardized assessments.
- △△ Data is not always viewed as a critical friend to assess what is working and what needs attention. In some cases there is a fear of data, especially as it might relate to job performance. The current teacher evaluation tool will not meet the new requirements of PERA and state rules and regulations.
- △△ The current strategic plan lacks goals that have indicators, measures and targets so that the organization can progress monitor and report its progress to its stakeholders. Schools, grade level teams, and district departments have not collectively identified the key indicators and measures to progress monitor and report their progress aligned to the district's strategic plan goals. Targets are not set. Most improvement action plans are activity-oriented rather than results-oriented. The district does not benchmark and report to its stakeholders how it is performing compared to other districts with similar demographics and to the highest performing districts.
- △△ Students are not goal setting in the classroom aligned to what they know and are able to do and what they need to learn next during units of instruction. Ensure

students and their families are comfortable and have what they need to take ownership and responsibility for their learning.

△△ Facilities are aging and there is not currently an updated plan for addressing facility needs. Finances are becoming more challenging with increases in benefit costs, pension possibilities, property values, etc.

NEXT STEPS

While this report is not intended to be prescriptive, this section provides some suggestions for addressing key opportunities for improvement. It provides suggestions that could serve as next steps. The strengths and areas of opportunity are based on set criteria framed by continuous improvement research. The priorities are not listed in any order. Each is equally important. Next Steps are framed by the experiences and opinions of the assessment team.

Priority: Focus on Learning

Develop with stakeholders clear district-wide expectations to ensure that for each unit of instruction, each student and their family can:

✓✓ Identify what each student is to know and be able to do.

- ✓✓ Assess what each student knows and what he/she still needs to know.
 - ✓✓ Assist staff in collaboration to provide individual time and support for those who have not mastered expectations.
 - ✓✓ Assist staff in collaboration to provide individual time and support to further the learning of those who have mastered expectations and need additional challenge.
 - ✓✓ Ensure clarity for consistent understanding and execution of the learning expectations.
- Provide a learning environment where students, staff and families want to be responsible and accountable and are comfortable progress monitoring and reporting results of these expectations.

Priority: Collaborative Culture

Develop a culture of trust and respect among labor and management to improve communication, collaboration, shared decision-making and continuous improvement.

- ✓✓ Develop with stakeholders consistent parameters for all decision-making structures to better define expectations, purpose, roles, and responsibilities.
 - ✓✓ Ensure there are opportunities for input into decisions before final decisions made been made.
 - ✓✓ Don't ask for input if a decision has already been made.
 - ✓✓ Set ground rules and norms for meetings.
 - ✓✓ Communicate clearly rationale for why an initiative or decision is being considered.
 - ✓✓ Make sure there is good communication between those participating in the meeting and those they represent.
 - ✓✓ Ensure training and support for consistent understanding and execution of the expectations.
- Provide a culture where staff and families want to be responsible and accountable and are comfortable progress monitoring and reporting results of these expectations.

Priority: Results Orientation

Close Performance Gaps between where you are and where you want to be.

- ✓✓ Develop with stakeholders a critical, essential data system that aligns district goals with indicators, measures and targets that provide students, classrooms, teams, schools and departments to see how their performance impacts organizational performance.
- ✓✓ Collect, analyze, progress monitor and report performance results periodically to identify which of the indicators are going well and which might need attention.
- ✓✓ Use this data system to drive department, school and team/department goals. Set reasonable and stretch targets based on trend data.
- ✓✓ Align this data system to leader and teacher goals and performance evaluation.
- ✓✓ Use this data for continuous improvement and in ways where growth is emphasized and individuals and teams take risks in a climate of continuous improvement.

Provide a culture where staff and families want to be responsible and accountable and are comfortable progress monitoring and reporting results of these expectations.