Individual Item Prompts

School Leadership

7.1a: The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.

What is the vision of your school? While seemingly easy to answer, this question can have a wide variety of interpretations across a school organization when left unattended. A variety of interpretation leads to inefficiency and disconnectedness in school staff. An unaligned staff can lead to conflicts of interest, duplication of services, omission of services, and damage the relationships and perceptions of the faculty and administration.

To develop a well-aligned faculty, set goals, and solidify objectives, time must be allocated to discuss the intentions of the school, reflect on the existing processes that are in currently place, and discuss strategies to get the school moving towards the identified vision. Participation in the design and discussion of a shared vision also encourages ownership and buy-in of the process and outcomes generated.

Table Group Activity
The point of this activity is to identify collectively agreed upon school components which can lead to the development of a succinct, shared vision. Addressing this topic will take time. Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented. Assign a recorder. The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above. Work individually at first on the prompts, and then share your thoughts in a group to further refine the work. Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts Use the tools provided in this item to record important points brought up in your individual work and then again when you work in a group

7.1a: Reflections

Compressing the work into a vision statement.

* Using the ideas generated from the first part of the exercise, place the various ideas participants have generated into general topics based on similarity.
* Use the tool provided to organize your topics and ideas
* Assign each participating group to a topic and have them try to capture the essence of the ideas placed in that topic in one or two sentences.
* Share the sentences out to the rest of the participants to get feedback and further refine the work.
* Assemble the sentences designed from the group work into a cohesive school vision.

Five years from now, this school has developed into the most admired school in the district. So much so, in fact, that administrators and educators from other schools have been coming into your school to learn from your successes.

* What programs are in place and how are they managed?
* What does the discipline system look like and how is it managed?
* In what ways is our school a great place to work?
* What does the communication between the administration and faculty look like?
* What does the communication between teachers look like?
* What support systems are in place for teachers and how are they managed and utilized?
* How are positive aspects of our school recognized?
* How are challenging aspects of our school addressed?
* What role do parents have in the school and the learning process?
* How is the school involved with the local community?
* How do we support the development of new teachers and the continued development of career teachers?
* What additional areas would you like to add here that are not already listed above?

7.1b: There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.

Developing and maintaining a trusting relationship between the administration and staff is a critical component to school culture. Interpersonal trust promotes creativity, conflict management, empowerment, teamwork, and teacher leadership during times of uncertainty and change. It is also one of the more difficult challenges facing school staff because of the wide diversity of group dynamics and many variables in constant change within the school community. From the results of the survey, there is evidence that having a trusting leadership was the most important determinant to teachers' decision to stay on the faculty of their schools.

Building mutual respect between the administration and faculty, as with any relationship, requires commitment from both sides. They must bring integrity, reliability, and consistency to their work, along with performing their job duties with high competence. Both must be open and willing to share information, ideas, and concerns, and also be willing to look critically at their own limitations. Effective communication and common goals are essential.

Table Group Activity
Work individually through the prompts on the following page to reflect on your own Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion

7.1b: Reflections

How do you perceive the faculty? How do they perceive you?

* Do you perceive them as highly competent, or at least striving for high competence?
* Do you think they see you as consistent? Why or why not?
* If you do, do they know this? How do you let them know?
* If you do not, do they know this? How are you addressing this challenge?
* Do you think they are open with you? Why or why not?
* Do you share common goals?
* Do you think they care about you and your well-being? Why or why not?

How are you contributing to the building of trust in the school?

* How reliable are you?
* How consistent are you?
* What is your policy with the staff about communicating concerns to you?
* Are you equitable with your time and evaluation among staff?
* Do you evoke a genuine interest in the well-being and care of the staff?
* Are you in frequent communication with groups and individuals across the school?
* What is your ratio of positive to negative comments to staff?
* An effective ratio is 4:1 positive:negative

What about the tough times?

* How do you address conflict and the fierce conversations?
* What do you do to repair damaged relationships?
* Do the staff know how you feel?
* How might you be limiting the development of trust among your colleagues?

7.1c: Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.

The ability to speak candidly about issues and concerns that teachers are facing—amongst themselves and with school leadership—is essential to identifying and addressing classroom and school challenges. Whether these issues are raised is contingent on the response to other questions in this section: an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, respect as an educational professional, and belief that other educators and the community are supportive are necessary preconditions to teachers' comfort. Having clear, consistent, and effective systems in place to promote and facilitate these communications will improve the likelihood that teachers can raise concerns appropriately and safely.

What systems are in place at your school to support and encourage the discussion of teacher issues and concerns? How do you know those systems are effective?

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7.1c: Reflections

Do teachers trust each other, school leadership and the communication systems in place to feel comfortable raising concerns?

* Do all teachers trust these systems or are some groups consistently under represented or not willing to share concerns? How do you know?
* Are there ways the existing system(s) can be improved?
* What happens to these issues? Are they ever addressed? How?

What systems are in place at your school to encourage and support the discussion of teacher issues and concerns?

* How are teacher leaders incorporated in these systems?
* Is time set aside to allow for these conversations?
* Are all the leadership staff providing consistent support of these systems? How do you know?
* How are new teachers supported in this area?

7.1d: The school leadership consistently supports teachers.

Consistency is an essential component of developing trusting working relationships, and it takes both the administration and the teachers to make it successful. School leadership must strive to follow through with every aspect of teacher support it promises. To achieve this, leadership must be careful not to commit to unrealistic or unachievable expectations given all the other responsibilities and obligations they already face in a work day. Leadership must be aware of the work of teachers and ensure they are attentive to their needs.

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Table Group Activity
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7.1d: Reflections

Have roles and responsibilities been clearly outlined for both groups and are they both honoring those obligations? How do you know?
What systems of communication do the administrators and teachers have in place?
* Are there ways teachers can communicate their needs and concerns to school leadership in a safe manner? * Does school leadership have an effective way of communicating needs and concerns to teachers?
Are teachers in the school treated differently? How and Why?
* Are the access policies to school administrators the same for all teachers?

7.1e: Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.

Holding the quality of instruction to the very highest standards is critically important to the success of all children. It can also be a very challenging level to meet and maintain. Difficulties exist in the interpretation of professional standards across faculty. Often, there can be multiple expectations across state, district, school, and even team and grade levels. Beginning teachers or teachers new to the school may not be aware of certain standards. Some teachers may not be able to achieve high professional standards without professional development, instructional support and continuous formative feedback. Additionally, some school leadership may also need additional professional development to be able to provide this support and feedback.

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7.1e: Reflections

What systems are in place to support teachers in their development and maintenance of high standards?

* What staff development is in place for improving instructional delivery of teachers?
* What systems are in place to support beginning teachers and teachers new to the district?
* What staff development is in place for school leadership?
* What kinds of feedback do teachers receive about their instructional standards and how often does it occur?
* How are support professionals throughout the district involved in the support of high standards?

What standards are in place at the national, state, district and school level about the quality of instruction and student learning?

* Who determines the standards?
* How are standards communicated to teachers?
* How are standards incorporated into evaluation/
* How are standards incorporated into instructional support?
* Are the different support professionals that work with teachers all framing their work in the same standards? How do you know?
* Are standards equally high across subjects or are their differences?
* Are standards held high for the most challenging classrooms and schools? How do you know?

7.1f: The school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning.

In today's educational environment, there is high demand for accountability through standardized testing and measureable results. Data systems and resources need to be in place for schools to make informed decisions based on student learning needs and results. Teachers need access to assessment results in a timely manner. Data, if it is to be used to impact instructional practice, must be recent enough to apply to lessons and relate to immediate student work. It is not enough to provide data to teachers. They must also be properly trained on how to interpret the data results, along with how to apply that knowledge to design and modify instruction. Teachers need to know how to design effective measures of student work and use resulting data to improve instruction.

Effective leadership can model the proper use of this data, support and promote the use of this data throughout the school year, and encourage dialog on teacher practice in professional learning communities to make the most out of available data to improve student learning.

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7.1f: Reflections

How does the school administration promote the use of data at the school? What systems are in place?

* Are there additional steps that could be taken?
* Are there ways to include teacher recognition or teacher empowerment into this school condition?

How does school leadership monitor and document data use?

* Is it efficient?
* Do teachers view the process as efficient or laborious?
* Are there ways the system could be improved?

What systems and resources are currently in place to effectively capture, interpret, and apply data to drive student learning?

* Do all teachers know how to use these resources? Across all grades/subjects? New teachers and veterans? How do you know?
* Do all administrators know how to use these resources?
* Are these systems effective? How do you know?
* What additional resources are in place for new teachers?

7.1g: Teacher performance is assessed objectively.

Teacher performance evaluations should not just be a formality for state compliance. When properly utilized, they can provide important, informative, intervallic feedback on the successes and areas for improvement of a teacher. When considered across an entire staff, topics for future staff development can emerge. It can also be an opportunity for administrators and teachers to have meaningful discussion about school conditions, challenges, and successes in their work.

In reflection of this survey item, consider what the definition of 'fairly' may mean. Who at the school does the evaluations of teachers? Is there consistency across all of the evaluators in the definitions and expectations of staff? Do teachers get feedback from evaluators and is it meaningful? Are expectations set following evaluations for future areas teachers can focus on? How are new teachers trained in these procedures and expectations?

Table Group Activity

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7.1g: Reflections

The evaluation process is consistent and efficient.
Teachers are given ample notice prior to an evaluation (if they need to be notified)   All teachers understand the evaluation process.   Administrative staff have an internal process in place to maintain equality and consistency in evaluations across school staff.   Peer observers are trained in the evaluation process.   New teachers are trained on the process.
The process for feedback to teachers is sufficient.
Does the evaluation tool used effectively capture the role of the person being evaluated?   If not, how can the evaluator supplement?   Is the evaluation process valued? why or why not? What can make it more valuable to teachers?   Is feedback timely?   Feedback discusses the range of a teacher's work, including strengths and areas of need   Teachers feel like they can discuss the evaluation process with their administrators   Feedback from administrators often leads to follow-up interaction at a later time to revisit areas of focus which were identified in the evaluations.

7.1h: Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.

The complexity of teaching necessitates consistent feedback to improve teacher practice. Feedback can help teachers to reflect on their practice, consider alternative teaching approaches, and ultimately enhance teacher effectiveness.

The messenger, manner, delivery, and context in which this feedback is provided are critical to move from feedback to improved practice. Care must be taken by leadership and those who provide teacher feedback that their input is constructive, timely, and specific. A well-developed professional rapport built on effective communication, common goals, and frequent interaction between leadership and teachers is critical. Follow up from feedback can encourage teachers to modify their teaching practice.

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7.1h: Reflections

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What sorts of input do teachers have in the feedback process?

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* Have they been included in the design of this process?
* Do they have access to leadership for further discussion of feedback?
* Do they have a safe way to provide leadership with their thoughts on the feedback process?
* Are they given time to work independently or in PLCs on the feedback?

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How are new teachers supported with feedback?

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What is in the feedback?

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* Does the feedback contain very specific information which can be used for refinement of teacher practice?
* Is the feedback based on data and evidence?
* Is feedback usually positive, negative, both, or neither?
* Would teachers' perceptions of feedback be similar to leaderships'? Is it similar across different subjects, grades, etc.? Is it consistent across types of teachers and leaders?
* How does this impact the intent of the feedback? How does it impact utilizing it to change practice?

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What systems are in place to provide teachers with feedback about their practice?

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* How often are teachers observed and how often do they receive feedback about their work?
* Is there a difference between formal and informal observations? Are teachers aware of these differences?
* Who provides feedback to teachers? Who follows up on this feedback?
* Is time set aside to meet with teachers about their practice?
* Is the feedback given in a timely manner with regard to when the teachers were

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observed?
* Is there consistency across all of the leadership with this process and implementation?

7.1i: The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent.

Teacher performance evaluations are not just a formality for state compliance. When properly utilized, they can provide important, informative, intervallic feedback on the development and sustainability of a teacher. When considered across an entire staff, topics for future staff development can emerge. It can also be an opportunity for administrators and teachers to have meaningful discussion about school conditions, challenges, and successes in their work.

In reflection of this survey item, consider what the definition of 'consistent' may mean. Who at the school does the evaluations of teachers? Is there consistency across all of the evaluators in the definitions and expectations of staff? Do teachers get feedback from evaluators and is it meaningful? Are expectations set following evaluations for future areas teachers can focus on? How are new teachers trained in these procedures and expectations?

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7.1i: Reflections

The evaluation process is consistent and efficient.

* Teachers are given ample notice prior to an evaluation (if they need to be notified)
* All teachers understand the evaluation process.
* Administrative staff have an internal process in place to maintain equality and consistency in evaluations across school staff.
* Peer observers are trained in the evaluation process.
* New teachers are trained on the process.

The process for feedback to teachers is sufficient.

* Does the evaluation tool used effectively capture the role of the person being evaluated?
* If not, how can the evaluator supplement?
Is the evaluation process valued? why or why not? What can make it more valuable to teachers?
* Is feedback timely?
* Feedback discusses the range of a teacher's work, including strengths and areas of need
* Teachers feel like they can discuss the evaluation process with their administrators
* Feedback from administrators often leads to follow-up interaction at a later time to revisit areas of focus which were identified in the evaluations

7.1j: The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school.

School improvement planning provides a mechanism for identifying needs and establishing a common approach to meeting those needs at the school level. Effective school improvement planning contributes to overall school performance by:

* Establishing an understanding of the "big picture" of a school's current state, including student achievement, school environment, teacher community, parent community, and administrative issues.

* Reaching consensus across the school community on which needs represent the highest priorities for action based upon the potential to improve overall student and school performance.

* Identifying for implementation goals and strategies, including specific targets, indicators and milestones required to address the school priorities.

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7.1j: Reflections

Is the SIT the primary way that teachers participate in making collective decisions that impact the school?
Are there reasons that can be identified as to why the SIT is not providing effective leadership?
Is there a formalized School Improvement Team (SIT) and what role does it play in developing school policies and practices?
* What decisions is it empowered to make? * On what issues does it provide input and guidance to administrators? * Are there requirements at the state or district level that are being followed that explain the role of the site councils? Are they being followed?

7.1k: The faculty are recognized for accomplishments.

Staff members need to be acknowledged and recognized for the accomplishments they make throughout the school year. This includes not just teachers, but support staff and school leadership as well. Recognition from colleagues and leadership can have meaningful and lasting effects on staff morale, confidence, and motivation. It is an important component of collegial interaction.

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7.1k: Reflections

Who gets recognized for their work at the school?
* Is it always the same people?   * Are support staff recognized?   * How is school leadership recognized?
What are some ways staff can be recognized that would be meaningful and cost effective?
How often does recognition occur?
* is it public or private? Are their advantages or disadvantages to either?
Who is included in recognition of staff?
* Do teachers have input into who is recognized?   * Who selects teachers for recognition?
What are school staff's expectations for recognition? How do you know?