

Individual Item Prompts

Instructional Practices and Support

9.1a: State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.

Receiving state assessment data in a timely manner is important for teachers to be able to identify and address gaps in student learning. Ideally, results should be used to assess, and if necessary, revise instructional practices to ensure that all students meet or exceed state standards. If this data is not provided in time to impact instruction—either from the state or through schools and districts in getting it to teachers—then its benefits may be limited. In some states, assessment data may not be returned until the following school year when students are no longer with the same teachers or are even studying the same content.

Table Group Activity

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.

Read and discuss the prompts as a group.

Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts

Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion

9.1a: Reflections

Is the data arriving in a format that is easily manipulated?
Is the data easily understood?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* What systems are in place to train teachers on how to interpret assessment data results?* What systems are in place for new teachers?
What systems are in place to get assessment data into the hands of teachers in a timely manner?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Are they effective?* When is state assessment data reaching teachers?* When would be ideal for teachers to receive this data?
In what ways are teachers using the assessment results to drive instructional design?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Is professional development needed to support teachers in using data results to inform their practice?* Is there a collaborative format for teachers to share best practices on their use of assessment data?

9.1b: Local assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.

Benchmarks and other local assessments can prove valuable provided that they accurately measure student achievement and are reported in a timely manner. When local assessment data is not available in time, they provide little or no support to teachers in their instructional design and remediation strategy. Additionally, teachers may lose valuable instructional time for teaching content when they must stop and prepare for local assessments. If local benchmarks are to be used, care must be taken to assure that the data is returned to teachers quickly, in a format that is easy to manipulate for teachers, and adequate professional development is offered to train teachers on how to interpret and utilize the information they provide.

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9.1b: Reflections

In what ways are teachers using the assessment results to drive instructional design?

- * Is professional development needed to support teachers in using data results to inform their practice?
- * Is there a collaborative format for teachers to share best practices on their use of assessment data?

Is the data arriving in a format that is easily manipulated?

- * Is it electronic?
- * Have statistics already been run?

Is the data easily understood?

- * What systems are in place to train teachers on how to interpret assessment data results?
- * What systems are in place for new teachers?

What systems are in place to get assessment data into the hands of teachers in a timely manner?

- * Are they effective for all schools across the district and how do you know?
- * What is an optimal turnaround time for teachers to receive this data?
- * When are teachers getting results and is it consistent across all subjects and grade levels?

What are the expectations of teachers to prepare for local assessments?

- * How much instructional time should be used to prepare for them?
- * Do the assessments align with course content and pacing guides?
- * What supports are in place to help beginning teachers or teachers new to the school with local assessments and expectations?

9.1c: Teachers use assessment data to inform their instruction.

Assessment data is not just a measure of student achievement, but an important driver of instructional design. Effective use of assessment data can inform a teacher of where lessons need to be modified, differentiated, and reviewed to improve student achievement.

A number of factors impact teachers' ability to be able to effectively use assessment data to inform their instruction. Data must be returned in a timely manner. Teachers must be trained on effective assessment design as well as interpretation of results and strategies incorporating findings into lesson planning and design. Time must be allocated to ensure teachers have enough time to do these activities in an effective manner. Having these conditions in place can help to improve the differentiation and quality of instruction to enhance student learning.

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9.1c: Reflections

What staff development is in place to train teachers on assessment design, interpretation of results, and strategies incorporating findings into lesson planning and design?

- * Are there different trainings offered for different skill levels of teachers?
- * Are there opportunities for teachers to collaborate on best practices of assessment design and use?
- * What supports are in place for new teachers?

Are assessment results consistently returned to teachers in a timely manner?

What time is protected for teachers to use assessments to inform their teaching practice?

- * Is it enough time? How do you know?

What sorts of formal and informal assessments are in place to measure student learning?

- * Are those assessments accurately measuring standards and intended outcomes? How do you know?
- * Are assessments common across grade level? Content areas?
- * What are advantages to common assessments? What are disadvantages?

9.1d: Teachers work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices.

Effective professional learning communities—defined on the survey as a formalized grouping of teachers within or across grade and subject areas that meet regularly to plan and assess instructional strategies for student success—are not achieved by simply assigning common planning time. Creating a successful community of practice involves careful training on the expectations of the work, modeling what the interactions should include, establishing norms, protocols and equity of voice, supporting beginning teachers, providing resources to support the work, and consistent follow up.

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9.1d: Reflections

What professional development and systems are available to support effective professional learning communities?

- * What supports are in place for beginning teachers or teachers new to the school?
- * Are there systems in place to establish expectations, processes, and accountability for the community?
- * Are there systems in place to establish and maintain norms and equity of voice?
- * What resources have been allocated to support professional learning communities?

How does the school leadership support the work of professional learning communities?

- * Is there consistent follow up?
- * Are expectations across grade levels, teams, and subjects the same? How are they different?

Is scheduled time allotted for teachers to work in professional learning communities?

- * Does school scheduling allow teachers to meet in the most useful teams (i.e. similar subject, grade level) for professional learning communities?
- * Is that time being utilized as it was intended? How do you know?
- * Is that time used for PLC work on student learning or do other activities often get assigned?

9.1e: Provided supports (i.e. instructional coaching, professional learning communities, etc.) translate to improvements in instructional practices by teachers.

For support systems such as PLCs, coaches, mentors, etc., to impact teaching and learning, sufficient time, professional development and supports must be in place. Faculty in these roles should be well prepared and able to individualize supports to ensure that all teachers benefit. Faculty should be made aware of available supports and encouraged to utilize them. Effective, trusting, professional working relationships are critical as teachers will need to open up their classroom and instruction for feedback. School leadership must be accessible to those providing instructional supports, endorse their role, and make sure they have the time and resources necessary to be effective.

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9.1e: Reflections

Are teachers aware of the support systems and personnel that are in place?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* How are new teachers made aware of supports?* Are teachers encouraged to utilize personnel and supports? By whom?
What professional development is in place for support personnel?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Are support systems aware of current school and district initiatives? How do you know?
In what ways are support programs enhancing teachers' instructional practices?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* How are support systems and programs measured?* Are there ways these support systems can be improved?* Are there systems that are underutilized?* Are there systems that are ineffective?* Are there areas where additional supports could be beneficial?
What support services and programs are in place to help teachers?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Are they accessible to all teachers? Across grades? Across subjects (core/non-core, etc.)?* Do they maintain contact hours that all teachers can gain access to the support?
What steps have school administrators taken to improve the use, functionality, or scope of support systems?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">* Are there areas where more can be done?

9.1f: Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction.

Developing a school culture that embraces teacher innovation, encourages experimentation with new techniques, and celebrates teachers who take reasonable risks to improve instruction is an important component of teacher empowerment and establishing a high level of trust and mutual respect between school leadership and faculty. This promotion of innovation can be enhanced through a number of supports. Having effective staff development can equip teachers with new techniques and teaching strategies. Engaging teachers after observations with constructive and formative dialog about instructional delivery can provide them with feedback to reflect on their practice. Allocating time for teachers to visit other teachers' classrooms to observe practice can promote new learning. Reserving time for teachers to collaborate in professional learning communities to share ideas and best practice is also important. With proper supports in place, schools can promote teacher innovation and development which ultimately can improve student learning.

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9.1f: Reflections

How does school leadership promote teacher innovation throughout the school year?

- * What kind of feedback follows observations?

In what ways are teachers encouraged to be creative and innovate?

- * What are some examples where teachers were empowered to try new things in their teaching?
- * What additional supports do teachers feel they need to try new methods?
- * Are there barriers in the school or district culture that inhibit teacher innovation? How can they be overcome?

What staff development is in place to provide teachers with new methods and practices?

- * Is it differentiated enough to support the growth of new and veteran teachers?
- * If new teaching methods are provided, is there follow up training to continue to support these new ideas, promote teacher participation and give feedback?
- * What professional development do teachers at the school need to embrace new ideas and be more creative with their practice?

Is time allocated for teachers to engage in activities that promote innovation?

- * Do teachers have time and the opportunity to observe other teachers' classrooms?
- * Is time available for teachers to work collaboratively?

9.1g: Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students.

Teacher assignment can be powerful influences on teacher effectiveness, teacher morale, and student achievement. Effort should be made to assign teachers to classes within their area of licensure in which they have deep content knowledge and an understanding of instructional strategies that can be differentiated to meet the needs of specific learners. Ensuring teachers are well prepared to work with students from differing backgrounds, perspectives and learning styles will help to ensure that teachers can be successful with all groups of students. Care must be taken to limit the workload of beginning teachers by lowering class size, giving fewer administrative duties, and a lesser concentration of students with special needs. Carefully considering teachers' unique skill sets, disposition, background, and student achievement record can contribute to successful placement.

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9.1g: Reflections

What staff development and systems are in place to support teachers in leadership positions?

What factors are considered in deciding the assignment of teachers at your school?

- * Are teachers' areas of expertise and interest taken into consideration?
- * What data is assessed and provided on previous success with students?

Who makes decisions about teaching assignments?

- * What role does school leadership play? What role do teachers play?
- * How are students assigned to teachers? What is considered?

What adjustments are made to accommodate the developmental needs of beginning teachers?

Are there teachers on staff who have skills that are being underutilized?

9.1h: Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e. pacing, materials and pedagogy).

While teachers are the instructional experts within a school, there is also may be a need to standardize the delivery content to ensure all teachers are using research-based, effective strategies. Current trends in education have increasingly limited teacher autonomy as standards have been developed and assessments offered across all classrooms in the state. While increasing teacher autonomy is preferred by most teachers, it may not be the ideal position for best practice. Decline in teacher autonomy can promote the emergence of a common language where teachers and school leadership can engage in more fluid discussion of challenges and successes in practice. Additionally, a faculty made up by novice teachers who have not been fully prepared may struggle to identify the most successful instructional approaches. The ideal degree of teacher autonomy likely falls somewhere on a continuum, depending on teacher skill, experience, and ultimately, effectiveness and should be discussed and considered by the faculty.

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9.1h: Reflections

Are there areas teachers would prefer more autonomy in their practice?

- * Are there areas teachers would prefer more structure in their practice? Why?
- * What professional development has been provided and what curricular materials are available to support autonomous teacher practice?

Are there differences between where school leadership and teachers believe teacher autonomy is in place? Why?

Where do teachers have the greatest autonomy in decision making about instructional practices?

- * Are these the best places for teacher autonomy?
- * What are some of the benefits of this autonomy?
- * What are some of the challenges?
- * Do all teachers have the same degree of autonomy? Should they? What factors are considered when deciding?

9.1i: The curriculum taught in this school is aligned with Kentucky Academic Standards.

The instructional standards are the expectations of what students need to know and be able to do at the end of each grade. They also stand as the values and content organizers of what is seen as the future skills and essential knowledge for our next generation to be more successful. State standards are the basis of the annual state assessment. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy.

Continuously examining lessons and providing feedback, engaging professional learning communities in conversations about standards, and supporting teachers in various levels of development in using them are all important steps to creating a school culture that embraces standards and their important place in the curriculum.

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9.1i: Reflections

What systems are in place to monitor the use of instructional standards across the school?

Are lesson plans reviewed for alignment with standards?
Is feedback provided to teachers about their lesson plans?
Do all teachers know what the instructional standards are? How do you know?
Do all teachers have access to instructional standards materials, tools, and resources? How do you know?
What are expectations in the school about the use of instructional standards, and do all teachers know these expectations?

How are professional learning communities utilized to promote the use of instructional standards?

In what ways are PLCs supported in using them?

How are beginning teachers, or teachers new to the school supported to learn these expectations?

What professional development is incorporated in to the school year to support the use of instructional standards?

Is it differentiated to meet the needs of different subjects or different levels of experienced teachers?
What follow up is provided?
Is it effective and how do you know?

9.1j: An appropriate amount of instructional time is spent on required local assessments in this school.

Assessment data is not just a measure of student achievement, but an important driver of instructional design. Effective use of assessment data can inform a teacher of where lessons need to be modified, differentiated, and reviewed to improve student achievement.

Devoting instructional time to local assessments can promote student learning if teachers are able to effectively use assessment data to inform their instruction. Data must be returned in a timely manner. Teachers must be trained on effective assessment design as well as interpretation of results and strategies incorporating findings into lesson planning and design. Time must be allocated to ensure teachers have enough time to do these activities in an effective manner. Having these conditions in place can help to improve the differentiation and quality of instruction to enhance student learning.

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9.1j: Reflections

In your discussion of specific facilities, personnel and resource issues, how do you and your staff define the term "appropriate" in this item's question?

Is that definition different between the administration and teachers?
How does the instructional time devoted to local assessments at your school compare to similar schools across the district?

What kinds of formal and informal assessments are in place to measure student learning?

Are those assessments accurately measuring standards and intended outcomes?
How do you know?
Are assessments common across grade level? Content areas?
What are advantages to common assessments? What are disadvantages?

What time is protected for teachers to use assessments to inform their teaching practice?

Is it enough time? How do you know?

What staff development is in place to train teachers on assessment design, interpretation of results, and strategies incorporating findings into lesson planning and design?

Are there different trainings offered for different skill levels of teachers?
Are there opportunities for teachers to collaborate on best practices of assessment design and use?
What supports are in place for new teachers?

Are assessment results consistently returned to teachers in a timely manner?

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