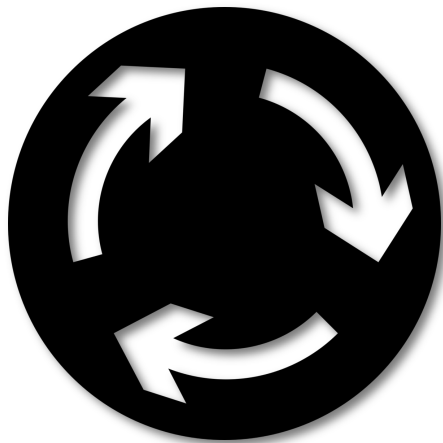




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Quality School Development

What is the Continuous Improvement Process?
How are ALL schools supported to become quality?



- Networks
- School Improvement Partners
- Cycles of Inquiry
- Data-Driven Decision-making
- Communities of Practice

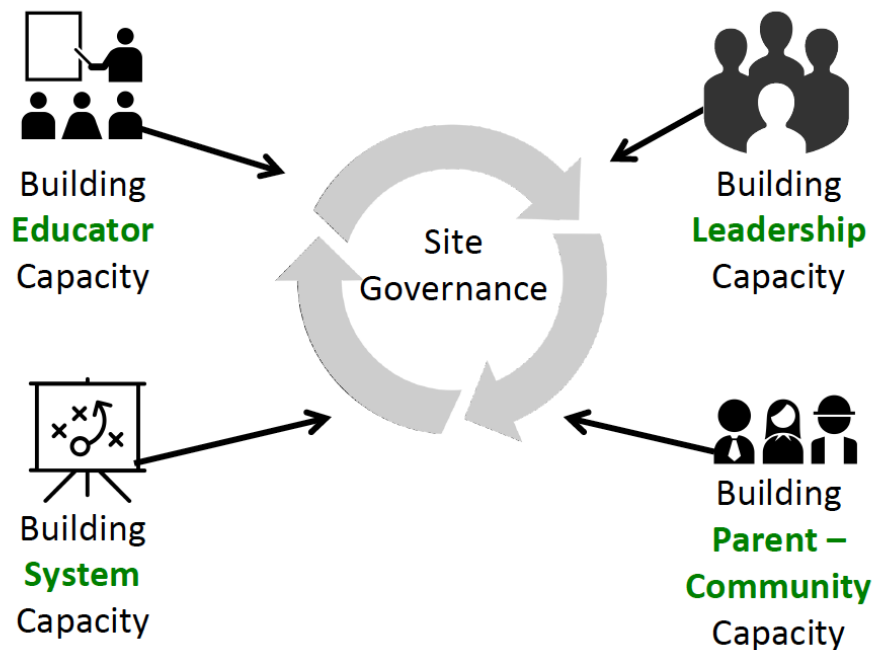


Quality School Development

Ensuring all students have access to a quality school in their neighborhood is a core function of the District. In order to ensure the continuous development of school quality, the district is implementing a set of inter-dependent and coordinated set of structures, supports and services.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

Continuous School Improvement must be the priority at all levels of the organization. In order to do so, the District must build the capacity of Site Governance.



Capacity for Continuous Improvementⁱ

What does the research say about Continuous Improvement in Schools? The following excerpt from the Science of Continuous Improvement research tells the story of what needs to be true.

The factors related to a school’s capacity for continuous improvement are organized into 3 domains: 1) **Leadership Practices for Instructional Improvement**, 2) **Organizational Processes**, and 3) **Efficacy Beliefs**. The connections among these domains are supported by recent quantitative research. Goddard found that principals’ instructional leadership was a significant, positive predictor of teacher



collaboration, higher levels of teacher collaboration predicted stronger teacher collective efficacy beliefs, and these efficacy beliefs were a significant, positive predictor of student achievement.

Leadership Practices

School leaders can drive improvements in instruction and student performance by communicating a vision for teaching and learning, creating a safe environment for teachers to talk openly about instruction, and fostering opportunities for professional. When school leaders develop a compelling vision for teaching and learning and provide the support needed for teachers to realize this vision, teachers are more motivated to contribute to school-wide improvement efforts.

Although school leaders play an important role in initiating improvement efforts, researchers find that school leaders are more likely to share leadership with teachers as their schools develop higher levels of capacity for improvement. Schools with principals who work collaboratively with teachers toward shared improvement goals and support the teacher professional growth needed to meet these goals are associated with higher quality instruction and higher levels of student achievement than schools with principals who do not engage in these practices.

The collaborative nature of these leadership practices demands a “psychologically safe” environment, one in which people acknowledge the dynamic nature of knowledge, encourage experimentation, and consider failure a part of the learning process. School leaders can actively cultivate a psychologically safe learning environment by acknowledging the limits of their own knowledge and encouraging teachers to speak openly about their instructional practice.

Organizational Processes

School leaders can establish organizational processes that foster teacher involvement in instructional decisions at the whole-school and team level. Whole-school processes can serve as opportunities for negotiating beliefs about effective instruction and aligning work with school-wide improvement goals. Team processes that focus teachers’ work on the specific issues of instructional practice and student learning are also essential for improvement.

In schools with high levels of internal coherence for continuous improvement, whole-school structures, such as faculty meetings, and team structures, such as grade-level or content meetings, can support the process of learning for improvement; however, in schools that lack coherence, processes for collaborative work may be disconnected from goals for improving teaching and learning.

Efficacy Beliefs

While school leaders cannot directly influence teachers’ efficacy beliefs, they can create a psychologically safe environment for learning and put in place processes for collaboration. Teacher collaboration can encourage teachers to experiment with new approaches, reflect on their instruction, enhance teachers’ efficacy beliefs, and, ultimately, lead to improved student. Teachers’ individual and collective efficacy



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beliefs measure their perceptions of their ability and the ability of the faculty as a whole, respectively, to plan and execute effective instruction. Positive efficacy beliefs are fostered through experiences of mastery—trying a new instructional strategy and witnessing improvements in student learning—and encouragement from colleagues to experiment with new practices. Teachers with high levels of individual efficacy are more likely to exert sufficient effort to improve, implement effective teaching practices, and foster higher levels of student achievement.

While individual efficacy is an individual trait, collective teacher efficacy resides in the school, which makes it essential for continuous improvement. Schools with high levels of collective efficacy have greater potential for meeting improvement goals because these beliefs establish shared expectations for success that make teachers more likely to experiment with new practices and persevere in the face of challenges.

Citation: Elizabeth Leisy Stosich (in press). *Measuring School Capacity for Improvement: Piloting the Internal Coherence Survey*. **BASED** on the research of Richard Elmore and Michelle Forman.



Research on various attempts to “turn around” low-performing schools suggests that there are no quick fixes. The causes of low-performance are deeply rooted in the beliefs, knowledge, and skill of adults, in the content and pedagogy present in classrooms, and in the organizational processes by which educators decide how to coordinate their work. In most instances, the patterns of practice that are producing low performance are invisible to the people who work in low-performing schools, even when they acknowledge the need for improvement. Challenges like whole-school improvement require organizational responses, and therefore their success depends not only on the knowledge and skill of the people in the organizations but also on the integrative structures and processes of those organizations.



NETWORKS

In order to organize school for Continuous Improvement, the District established **five networks**. They represent one High School, one Middle School, and three Elementary Networks. Schools of similar type have been grouped in the same network such as new K-8 schools together, and dual language schools together in the same networks. Previously middle schools and elementary schools were in the same network, and schools of similar type like those named above were spread out across several different networks.

SUPERVISION

The District has established not only a **Network Superintendent** (previously a Regional Network Officer) to supervise the network of schools, but the network structure now includes a **Deputy Network Superintendent**, so that the supervision of schools can be divided within the network and thus provide more attention and focus to each individual school. The high school network includes a Director of Alternative Education, supervising a number of Alternative Education high schools. The average supervision load is approximately 9 schools. Previously a single Regional Executive Officer may have supervised as many as 26 schools alone.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT and DATA ASSESSMENT PARTNERS

The District has introduced **School Improvement Partners and Data Assessment Partners** within each network. The District has launched this new and exciting role to support schools in their continuous school improvement efforts. These positions report directly to their assigned Network Superintendent and work as part of the core Network Leadership Team. This is essential, because it ensures that partners are pushing into schools without having first been integrated into the vision and goals for their network team.

Two Partners are assigned to each network. Their roles and responsibilities are equitably distributed to support school based on a collaborative analysis of needs to ensure all schools are developing on pace towards becoming high quality community schools.

School improvement Partners will assist in the following ways:

- Strong instructional (pedagogical and curriculum) knowledge.
- Strong communication skills.
- Has the ability to build relationships and work collaboratively.
- Understands or has the ability to learn continuous school improvement.
- Understands the school site plan process.
- Has the capacity to help schools keep track of their school site plan on the tracker, as well as think through documentation.



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- Ability to think critically.
- Serve as a thought-partner to principals (and ILT's) and Network and Deputy Network Superintendents.
- Serve as critical friends to school leaders and ILT's to help them improve overall API and school/student performance.

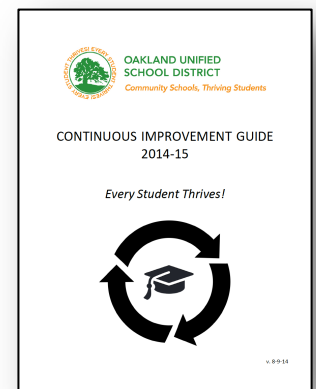
* ILT = Instructional Leadership Teams

Data Assessment Partners will assist in the following ways:

- Ability to gather needed data and present it in a clear way to stakeholders, including but not exclusive to school leaders, teachers, and community.
- Ability to inform and support schools use of formative and interim assessments to inform instruction and improvement strategies.
- Ability to analyze trends and suggest ideas to improve performance based on academic data, student engagement data, educator effectiveness data, social/emotional data, and college and career readiness data.
- Should understand the continuous improvement process and have the ability to learn more about it.
- Strong ability to work vertically and horizontally in the organization.
- Serve as thought partners and critical friends to school leaders and ILT's to help them improve overall API and school/student performance.

GUIDE

These changes include the introduction of a **Continuous School Improvement Guide**. This guide was developed by almost 20 principals and an additional team of central office leaders during the summer 2014 and introduced at the August Leadership Institute. The guide asks a Big Question each month that is intended to be grappled with by all schools. No matter where they are in the Cycle of Inquiry that month, the question should act as a guide to consider what the school's ongoing needs are and/or what progress the school is making towards its goals. Previously a guide like this, used uniformly across the district, did not exist.



INQUIRY & PLANNING

These changes include an **Inquiry and Planning Tool**. This is a web-based Google Doc tool designed to support schools in documenting their analysis of data and information about student performance; record likely root causes; and action plan any changes they intend to make to their improvement plans as a result of



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their analysis. The tool is designed to be used at least on a monthly basis to record their engagement of the monthly Big Question, but may also be used under any circumstance. It may be that the principal, teacher collaboration teams, ILT, SSC, or other small or large groups are looking at data and information to determine what is needed or how things are going. Previously a consistent tool accessible broadly and used across the district to capture and record this part of the improvement process did not exist.

CYCLES OF INQUIRY

“There are too many moving pieces in a school year to expect effective data-driven instruction to just happen; schools must consciously craft a calendar that lays the foundation for genuine progress.”

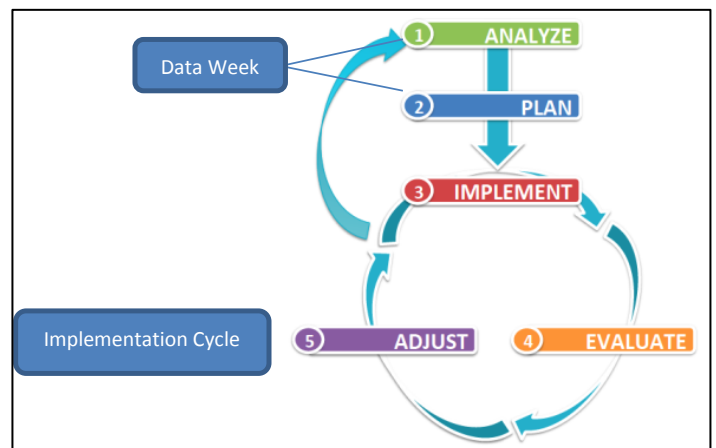
-- Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, *Data Driven Instruction*

Across all schools in every network, schools will incorporate a **Cycle of Inquiry** process to implement Continuous School Improvement. That process includes:

- Looking at data and information to assess what is working and not working;
- Identifying areas to focus; planning strategies for improvement;
- Implementing and monitoring the implementation of those improvement strategies; and
- Reflecting on the results to make adjustments to the improvement plans

Previously only a handful of schools engaged such processes effectively and consistently. Not all schools were expected nor supported to engage in cycles of inquiry. Today, the Cycle of Inquiry is the primary focus of school site planning and school improvement.

Effective leaders leverage the power of teams to engage in cycles of continuous improvement. A critical practice of these leaders is the strategic use time and resources to build a calendar that prioritizes data-driven collaboration above all else. The District has developed a “roadmap,” which guides leaders in planning the course their schools will travel to implement plans and meet goals for the year.



This tool is designed to

- Break the year into 6 approximately **six-week cycles** (5 cycles prior to state testing).
- Provide time for teachers to score, analyze, and plan from assessments by placing protected “**data weeks**” around district PD days and using minimum days to increase collaboration time.



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- **Clarify what is tight**—district required assessments, **and what is loose**—site choice assessments. We recognize that too many assessments can limit schools’ ability to focus and use data to drive change. Assessment plans must be owned by school leaders and teachers to impact achievement at sites.
- **Focus collaboration on Common Core Writing**—narrative, informational, and opinion writing in elementary, and text-based argumentation in secondary
- **Align curriculum** to assessment cycles so teachers can plan backwards from benchmarks and evaluate student learning of the Common Core Standards they are teaching.
- Guide schools in aligning **professional development** to a focus for each cycle so teachers are able to go deep in one area and share learning during and at the end of the cycle.
- Align **district supports** to school assessment cycles by providing professional development, coaching, and support to schools in implementing their plans

Example of a single secondary Fall Cycle (grades 6-12)

Screening/Diagnostics		Cycle 1					DATA WEEK
Aug 25	Aug 31	Sep 7	Sep 14	Sep 21	Sept 28	Oct 5	Oct 12
<u>Required:</u> Reading: SRI Math: SMI <u>Site Choice:</u> Site-based diagnostics F&P: Focal Students Minimum Days		1-1 Data Conferences			<u>Required:</u> Reading: SRI 6-8 only Writing Task: SBAC task Math: Curr. Embedded Performance Task <u>Site Choice:</u> SBAC Interim Block(s) Site-based unit assessments Reading: Fountas & Pinnell CELDT Grade Reporting (Oct. 9)		Scoring & Analysis Planning PD Day 10-16

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND PAIRING STRATEGIES

Communities of Practice are small groups of 3-4 schools that have a common focus area of improvement. They work together over the course of the year to collaborate around the school improvement process. A focus area may be the improvement of reclassification rates of English Language Learners; or an increase in the active engagement of African American families in the school’s activities; or it may be developing common practices for the use of evidence in student writing.

Communities of Practice meet in teams comprised of teachers, leaders, site support staff, and possibly parents. These Communities of Practice will have opportunities to meet as teams in at events sponsored by the District, such as the Site Governance Summits, which are scheduled to occur at least three times this school year. Additionally, principals of schools working together in a Community of Practice will meet with one



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another independent of their teams to get additional support and guidance. Beginning 2014-15, all networks are sponsoring time and supports within their Monthly professional learning structures so that every school is a member of a Community of Practice focused on at least one of their Priority improvement areas.

Additionally, resources permitting, school teams schedule additional opportunities to come together as Communities of Practice in order to work collaboratively on a common focus of improvement. This can include a shared reading; a presentation by an expert; and protocol to look at common data or student work; or conduct structured site visits at one another schools or a model school. Communities of Practice are one of the strategies outlined in the ESEA Waiver to be used with Focus Schools and AMO Schoolsⁱⁱ.

Pairing is the program in which schools that are identified under the ESEA Waiver School Quality Improvement System as Priority Schools are paired with Partner schools from other ESEA Waiver Districts. These Partner schools have been designated as Reward schools under the Waiver because of their successful outcomes. The goal is to provide collaborative support and real world examples of how to address the specific priority improvement areas designated by the school. A Facilitator is identified; in the case for Oakland the facilitator is the Network supervisor for that school, who assists the school in their participation in the program. The program includes a sponsored Institute in the fall to learn strategies for effective Pairing practices. Schools are supported to have monthly interactions, typically virtually or tele-conferencing, as well as at least two site visitations at one another's schools over the course of the year.

A website with key information has been created and can be access <http://qualitycommunityschools.weebly.com/esea-waiver-support.html>

DATA ACCESS

The District has made dramatic improvements in the **accessibility of data**. Currently the district has launched a data website at www.ousddata.org. Located there are internally and publicly accessible data reports for all schools and the district. These reports link back to the Balanced Scorecard and provide a wealth of information about student and school performance. Previously most of this information was not publicly accessible and often very difficult for school leaders and school communities to access. The increased access to data on student performance and school quality reported here is still not where the District needs to be and the procurement and development of more real-time dashboards and data tools will remain a priority.

