



**School Quality Review
Trace Crossings Elementary School
Hoover City Schools
Hoover, AL**

Prepared by:
Learning Forward School Quality Review Team

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April 2011

Acknowledgements

The Learning Forward (formerly known as National Staff Development Council—NSDC) school quality review team wishes to thank Hoover City Schools' Dr. Deborah Camp, Director of Elementary Curriculum, Teaching, and Technology, and Robin Litaker, principal of Trace Crossings Elementary School, for commissioning a review of the elementary school. We are grateful to Litaker for scheduling interviews/focus groups, providing documents for review, scheduling a faculty meeting after school for staff to complete a teacher survey, setting expectations for classroom observations, and extending support during the site visit.

The school quality review team appreciates the openness and willingness of the participants who shared their perspectives during the interviews and focus groups as well as the welcoming environment we encountered during our classroom visitations. We are grateful for the time that was given to us by the principal, assistant principal, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, parents, and students during our three-day site visit.

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Executive Summary

Section One: Overview

Learning Forward (formerly known as National Staff Development Council—NSDC), at the request of Hoover City Schools and Trace Crossings Elementary School, conducted a three-day school quality review on February 28 through March 2, 2011.

Purpose

The purpose of the school quality review was to identify the current status of the school in addressing the diverse needs of all students.

Goals

The following goals guided the planning and the selection of the procedures to follow and the measures to use during the review:

- Identifying strengths and areas for improvement in meeting the needs of all learners in the school; and
- Making recommendations for continuous improvement at the school level.

Organization of the Report

This report is organized into six sections:

- Section 1 includes an overview of the purpose of the school quality review, components of the district balanced scorecard, a list of indicators for high-performing schools, and the school profile related to identified needs of students.
- Section 2 includes the methodology.
- Section 3 includes commendations that emerged from the data based on multiple measures. Each commendation is supported by evidence gathered from focus groups/interviews, document analyses, classroom observations, a teacher survey, and an Innovation Configuration (IC) map for NSDC's Standard for Staff Development (Equity).
- Section 4 includes the areas of improvement that emerged from the data based on multiple measures. Each area for improvement is supported by

evidence gathered from focus groups/interviews, document analyses, classroom observations, a teacher survey, and an Innovation Configuration (IC) map for NSDC's Standard for Staff Development (Equity).

- Section 5 includes a conclusion.
- Section 6 includes the recommendations that specifically align with identified areas for improvement in moving toward high-performing characteristics and traits for identified indicators.

Effectiveness Indicators of High Performing Schools

Mardale Dunsworth and Dawn Billings (2009) summarized research and developed rubrics and tools aligned with 10 themes identified for school effectiveness to use in a school review process. Based on the purpose of this school review and aligned with many of the objectives and indicators of the Hoover City Schools (HS) Balanced Scorecard, eight of the 10 indicators were chosen to guide the selection and design of instruments that would be used during the school review process.

- Effectiveness Indicator 1: Written Curriculum
- Effectiveness Indicator 2: Instructional Program
- Effectiveness Indicator 3: Student Assessment
- Effectiveness Indicator 4: School Leadership
- Effectiveness Indicator 5: Strategic Planning (not included in this review)
- Effectiveness Indicator 6: Professional Development
- Effectiveness Indicator 7: Student Connectedness, Engagement, and Readiness
- Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment
- Effectiveness Indicator 9: Family and Community Involvement
- Effectiveness Indicator 10: District Support (not included in this review)

School Profile

The following two tables identify the indicators, data sources, and percentile (%) for objective 1.1 (students meeting state proficiency standards in math and reading) and objective 1.4 (at-risk students with AYP achievement gaps in math and reading) according to the 2009–2010 HCS Balanced Scorecard for Trace Crossings Elementary School.

Table 1. Objective 1.1—Students Will Meet State Proficiency Standards (NCLB)

Indicator	Data Source	Type	Time	GL	08-09	09-10	Target
Math	ARMT: Level 3/4	%	Summer	3	80	86	>90
				4	68	85	>90
				5	88	72	>90
Reading	ARMT: Level 3/4	%	Summer	3	84	92	>92
				4	83	91	>91
				5	86	86	>92
Attendance	Attendance Rate (year)	%	Summer	K-5	97	94	>95

Note: ARMT means Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test.

Table 2. Objective 1.4—At-Risk Students Will Make Progress Toward Achieving Standards

Indicator	Data Source	Type	Time	GL	08-09	09-10	Target
Math	Asian/White	% diff. in AYP prof. index	Summer	3-5	2.12	2.65	<5
	Black/White			3-5	10.01	9.82	<5
	Hispanic/White			3-5	4.46	10.37	<5
	Special Ed/			3-5	21.91	24.42	<15
	ELL/Non-ELL			3-5	7.52	7.69	<10
	Poverty/Non-Poverty			3-5	10.88	9.19	<10
Reading	Asian/White	% diff. in AYP prof. index	Summer	3-5	1.57	-0.55	<5
	Black/White			3-5	16.49	14.91	<5
	Hispanic/White			3-5	12.0	9.3	<5
	Special Ed/			3-5	21.62	30.52	<15
	ELL/Non-ELL			3-5	6.45	2.57	<10
	Poverty/Non-Poverty			3-5	11.69	10.90	<10

Note: A lower number is better.

Section Two: Methodology

The Learning Forward school quality review team used a mixed-method design, which included both quantitative and qualitative measures, to gain insight into participants' perspectives about their school. They relied on the eight selected effectiveness indicators for high-performing schools to guide the school review.

Data collection methods included

- Reviewing documents (e.g. HCS Balanced Scorecard, district RTI plan, student performance data, curriculum maps for reading, and pacing guides for mathematics);
- Interviewing the principal and assistant principal;
- Holding focus groups with grade-level teams of classroom teachers (K–5), specials and instructional staff (e.g. PE, music, art, and enrichment teachers; librarian; reading coach; special education teachers; preschool staff) and non-instructional staff (i.e. custodians, nurse, lunchroom manager), parents, and 3rd- and 4th-grade students;
- Having instructional staff complete a teacher survey;
- Having teachers and administrators complete an Innovation Configuration map for NSDC's Standard for Staff Development (Equity) for the role groups of principal and teacher; and
- Conducting classroom observations.

Participants

Eighty participants were involved in providing the school review team with valuable information and insight into what is happening at the school. The participants included administrators, teachers, specials, non-instructional staff, parents, and 3rd-and 4th-grade students. To maintain the anonymity of informants when providing evidence (e.g. observations, quotes) in this report, the groups are identified as administrators, teachers, specials, non-instructional staff, parents, and students.

The following table identifies the number of participants per identified group.

Table 3. Number of Participants per Identified Group (n=80)

Groups	Faculty/Staff	Number
Administrators	Principal, assistant principal	2
Preschool	Preschool staff (teachers and assistants)	8
Primary	Kindergarten	6
Primary	First grade	6
Primary	Second grade	5
Intermediate	Third grade	5
Intermediate	Fourth grade	5
Intermediate	Fifth grade	5
Instructional Support	Homebound teacher, speech-language pathologist, K-2 special education teacher, 3-5 special education teacher, reading coach	5
Specials	PE (2), music, art, librarian, enrichment	6
Non-instructional Staff	Custodians, nurse, lunchroom manager	6
Parents	Parents	13
Students	3rd- and 4th-grade students	8
Total		80
Leadership Team	Planning Committee and CIP Team	21
	Note: Members were included in the total count above per their identified group.	

Section Three: Commendations

Based on multiple measures and sources, the review team identified the following five indicators with specific characteristic traits as commendations. These indicators are reported using the specific characteristics and traits from Tool 46 (reproducible), Effectiveness Indicator Map (Dunsworth & Billings, 2009).

The five indicators include Written Curriculum (Indicator 1), Student Assessment (Indicator 3), School Leadership (Indicator 4), School Environment (Indicator 8), and Family and Community Involvement (Indicator 9). A rubric score of “effective” or “high performing” was given for the identified characteristics and traits for each indicator based on strong evidence from multiple sources to support the claim. Direct quotes from informants in the identified groups, quotes from

documents, descriptions from classroom observations, and results from the teacher survey and IC maps are provided as evidence for the scores.

Effectiveness Indicator 1: Written Curriculum

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum
1C	1C1	Rubric Score: High Performing
Textbooks and other instructional materials are aligned with the written curriculum.	Identification of instructional materials	The written curriculum identifies specific pages or units from instructional and supplemental materials that address each learning objective or standard.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 2.

Effectiveness Indicator 3: Student Assessment

Characteristic	Trait	Effective Continuum
3C	3C1	Rubric Score: Effective
Diagnostic assessments are used to identify student skill levels and to determine appropriate interventions or remediations.	Assessment of knowledge and skill levels	All students participate in diagnostic assessments to identify current knowledge and skill levels in reading and mathematics.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 9.

Effectiveness Indicator 4: School Leadership

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum
4C	4C1	Rubric Score: Effective
School administrators see student learning as the foremost priority for the school.	Priority assigned to student learning	School administrators see student learning as the highest priority in all decision-making.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 12.

Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum
8B	8B1	Rubric Score: Effective
The school and its physical environment are safe, welcoming, and conducive to learning.	Overall feeling of safety	Students, staff members, and families feel safe at the school.

Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment (cont.)

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum
8B	8B2	Rubric Score: Effective
The school and its physical environment are safe, welcoming and conducive to learning.	Overall atmosphere	Students, staff members, and families view the school as welcoming to students.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 30.

Effectiveness Indicator 9: Family and Community Involvement

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum
9B	9B1	Rubric Score: Effective
The school maintains high levels of communication with families and the community.	Communication about school events and programs	There is frequent and varied communication with families and the community about school events and programs.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 36.

Section Four: Areas for Improvement

Areas for improvement emerged through trends and patterns from multiple sources. These identified areas for improvement represent gaps or inconsistencies within grade levels and/or across the school. The areas of focus are curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development and the impact of these areas on student achievement for all students.

Effectiveness Indicator 2: Instructional Program

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that “in effective schools, instructional practices challenge and support all students. ... Their deep content knowledge, mastery of a broad range of instructional strategies, and commitment to student achievement are essential to the delivery system” (p. 25).

Effectiveness Indicator 2: Instructional Program

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
2E	2E1	Move toward High Performing
Teachers provide students with activities and assignments that are rigorous and engaging and that extend their learning.	Student engagement	Students are attentive during instruction and engaged in classroom activities. Activities are varied for the range of student skill levels, and enrichment activities are readily available.
2E	2E2	Move toward High Performing
Teachers provide students with activities and assignments that are rigorous and engaging and that extend their learning.	Rigor of activities and assignments	Activities and assignments are rigorous and extend concepts addressed in the lesson. Assistance and supports are readily available to enable all students to complete assignments.
2F	2F3	Move toward High Performing
Teachers have deep knowledge of their subject matter, possess expertise in a wide range of effective instructional strategies, and are committed to closing achievement gaps.	Teacher commitment to closing achievement gaps	Teachers' commitment to raising achievement has narrowed or closed achievement gaps between groups of students.
2G	2G1	Move toward High Performing
Teachers plan together to ensure that instruction and assessment meet the needs of all learners.	Extent of collaborative planning	A formalized process exists and sufficient time is allocated for teams of grade-level teachers to plan common lessons and assessments. Planning time is used effectively, and teams document strategies and results.
2G	2G2	Move toward High Performing
Teachers plan together to ensure that instruction and assessment meet the needs of all learners.	Scheduled time	The school schedule fosters collaboration and planning within and across grade levels and programs (for example, ELL, special education).
2J	2J1	Move toward High Performing
School administrators ensure that the taught curriculum reflects the written curriculum and aligns with the pacing charts.	Match between the taught and written curriculum and pacing charts.	School administrators and all instructional staff members hold one another accountable to ensure that the taught curriculum matches the written curriculum and pacing charts.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, pp. 5–8.

Effectiveness Indicator 4: School Leadership

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that the role of school administrators is to “ensure that a culture of high expectations nurtures student and teacher efficacy. ... These administrators maximize their influence by increasing leadership capacity schoolwide and widely distributed leadership responsibilities.” (p. 65).

Effectiveness Indicator 4: School Leadership

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
4H	4H1	Move toward High Performing
School administrators address existing and potential conflicts.	Efforts to resolve conflicts	School administrators work toward resolution of conflicts, addressing both the immediate concerns and the underlying issues.
4H	4H2	Move toward High Performing
School administrators address existing and potential conflicts.	Anticipation of conflicts	School administrators anticipate where and when conflicts, including workplace or community dissatisfaction, might arise and intervene to address both the problems and the underlying issues.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, pp. 14–15.

Effectiveness Indicator 6: Professional Development

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that “in effective schools, professional development deepens and refines teachers’ knowledge and skills in content and pedagogy ...[,] is based on student outcome data and is collaborative, sustained, intensive, and closely tied to the classroom” (p. 105).

Effectiveness Indicator 6: Professional Development

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
6B	6B1	Move toward High Performing
The professional development program is based on an analysis of student achievement data and learning needs, is coherent with state standards, and complements the instructional program.	Connection to student learning	The professional development program is based on an analysis of student achievement data and learning needs, as well as discipline, attendance, and dropout rates.

Effectiveness Indicator 6: Professional Development (cont.)

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
6C	6C1	Move toward High Performing
Professional development is collaborative, is job-embedded, and addresses both individual and schoolwide needs.	Teams focused on improving achievement and learning	All instructional staff members participate in collaborative work teams focused on improving student achievement and learning.
6C	6C2	Move toward High Performing
Professional development is collaborative, is job-embedded, and addresses both individual and schoolwide needs.	Job-embedded opportunities	All instructional staff members participate in professional development that is embedded in the work of teaching, providing opportunities for practice, analysis, and refinement.
6E	6E1	Move toward High Performing
Professional development builds cultural proficiency.	Effect on staff members' cultural proficiency	Professional development has increased staff members' confidence in their level of cultural proficiency.
6E	6E2	Move toward High Performing
Professional development builds cultural proficiency.	Effect on beliefs	All instructional staff members engage in professional development addressing beliefs about and building schoolwide insight into culture, race, and learning.
6E	6E3	Move toward High Performing
Professional development builds cultural proficiency.	Effect on equity	Professional development has resulted in a reduction of the identified barriers to racial, ethnic, and cultural equity.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, pp. 22–25.

Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that a positive school environment is strongly associated with student success. In such an environment, staff meets the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Behavior management systems focus first on instruction and intervention. It is important, they note, to

address and establish “trust between staff members and administrators in order for lasting, meaningful improvement to take place” (p. 172).

Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
8C	8C1	Move toward High Performing
A culture of trust and respect exists at all levels of the school community.	Level of trust	A culture of trust exists at all levels of the school community. School administrators listen to and act upon ideas, thoughts, and concerns regarding trust.
8C	8C2	Move toward High Performing
A culture of trust and respect exists at all levels of the school community.	Level of respect	A culture of respect exists at all levels of the school community. School administrators listen to and act upon ideas, thoughts, and concerns regarding respect.
8D	8D1	Move toward High Performing
Staff members work effectively with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students.	Degree of staff effectiveness with diverse students	Staff members work effectively with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students, resulting in high and equitable achievement levels across all student populations.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, pp. 31–32.

Effectiveness Indicator 9: Family and Community Involvement

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that “communication is the key to trust, positive relationships, and strong family and community involvement” (p. 174).

Effectiveness Indicator 9: Family and Community Involvement

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
9B	9B2	Move toward High Performing
The school maintains high levels of communication with families and the community.	Communication about student achievement	Families regularly receive clearly presented data in their native languages on both achievement of their children and overall school performance.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 36.

Section Five: Conclusion

The two indicators emerging that need the most emphasis for improvement are the instructional program and professional development. Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that “investments in professional development are an effective strategy to improve the delivery of the instructional program for all students, particularly those in high-poverty and high-minority schools” (p. 117).

Teachers’ perceptions from multiple measures indicated they felt they had a deep knowledge of their subject matter and a repertoire of instructional strategies that they used to meet the diverse needs of their students. However, the ARMT results and the number of students identified for Tier II interventions using district assessments indicate a need to continue to focus on narrowing the achievement gap between groups of students.

It is not evident that teachers are teaching the written curriculum for reading and math as designed, using a variety of strategies, and using formative assessments to guide planning and differentiation during core instruction (Tier I). Teachers are using what they believe are best practices and are not necessarily using the results from student data to guide their decisions about what are best practices to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. Although teachers are attempting to meet the needs of struggling students through interventions (Tier II), there was little evidence that many teachers are differentiating for independent practice for the majority of students during intervention time. Dunsworth and Billings (2009) note that “to meet the learners’ diverse needs and learning styles, Tomlinson advocates varying four components of classroom instruction, based on what is most effective for each child. She labels these components content, process, products, and the learning environment” (p. 39).

Alabama adopted professional development standards and a definition for high-quality professional development (see Appendices I and J). There is no evidence that professional development at the school level is aligned with the standards or following the definition of professional development. The definition of quality professional development proposes that teachers engage in a cycle of

continuous improvement focused on teacher effectiveness and student achievement. The current focus of professional development appears to be based on activities with speakers or volunteer participation at the district level, which are not necessarily aligned with the needs of the school. It appears that many teachers engaged in district professional development focus on the curriculum areas of reading (*Making Meaning*) and math (*Investigations*) as well as differentiated instruction. However, there is little evidence of transfer of the learning through implementation of the written curriculum and differentiated instruction as designed.

Section Six: Recommendations

There are specific characteristic traits identified for five indicators that the school quality review team suggests for areas of improvement. The five indicators include Instructional Program (Indicator 2), School Leadership (Indicator 4), Professional Development (Indicator 6), School Environment (Indicator 8), and Family and Community Involvement (Indicator 9). The suggestions are meant as a guide for engaging a collaborative dialogue among key stakeholders relevant to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

The overall recommendation of the school quality review team is to determine a collective focus as a school on the highest academic priority need of targeted students, such as reading or math with specific subgroups. Then, design and implement ongoing professional learning through grade-level teams to examine teacher practice and the impact of that practice on student achievement. Part of examining teacher practice would be to ensure that teachers are culturally responsive to the diverse needs of students through differentiation during the Tier I core instruction. This would require teaching all students the written curriculum, assessing students in a variety of ways, and using the results from the assessments to guide instruction.

1. Identify underlying issues related to teacher autonomy versus a collective focus on meeting the diverse needs of all students. This will require more consistency

in all teachers teaching the written curriculum as designed, using research-based best practices, and using a variety of assessments to guide differentiation of instruction, especially during core instruction (Tier I). Development of and accountability for a collective responsibility for all students has the potential to yield greater results in narrowing the achievement gap across all student groups.

2. Ensure all teachers teach the written curriculum, especially in reading and math.
 - Hold each other accountable through planning, implementing, and assessing the impact of teaching practices on student achievement.
 - Engage in reflective practice with constructive feedback based on student results for students across all groups.

The school has begun this process by organizing all teachers into curriculum teams (i.e. reading, math, history/social studies, science, technology) as well as teams for fine arts, preschool, and instructional support. There is a representative from each grade level on each curriculum team, which allows for two-way communication as well as building in-depth knowledge and skills to facilitate the transfer of learning to colleagues.

3. Identify and agree on the indicators of quality instruction.

One instructional model closely aligned with the workshop model is the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework (Fisher & Frey, 2008; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). The four components of gradual release of responsibility include

- Focus lessons in which the teacher clearly communicates the expected learning outcomes based on standards and models his or her thinking;
- Guided instruction in which the teacher uses higher-order thinking questions, prompts, and cues to facilitate students' thinking. During this time, the teacher provides instructional scaffolds to ensure student success;
- Productive group work in which students engage in collaborative groups to increase understanding and be individually accountable for contributions to the group; and

- Independent practice in which students independently apply what they have learned. Formative assessments occur during this time to check for understanding and to identify needs for interventions.
4. Establish learning teams (grade-level teams) to enable teachers to engage in ongoing, job-embedded professional learning focused on the highest priority need of students. Aligned with the definition of quality professional development adopted by Alabama Board of Education, teachers would engage in a cycle of continuous improvement by
- Analyzing student and teacher learning needs through a review of teacher and student performance data;
 - Establishing student and adult learning goals;
 - Improving teacher effectiveness and student achievement through multiple designs of professional learning (e.g. lesson study, classroom observations, examination of student work);
 - Utilizing a coach or other colleagues to provide assistance in the transfer of new knowledge and skills to the classroom; and
 - Monitoring progress in improving teaching practices and increasing student achievement for all students (see Appendix I).
5. Link the focus on the instructional program and professional development to the Alabama teaching standards (i.e. content knowledge, teaching and learning, literacy, diversity, professionalism) and the Alabama professional development standards (see Appendix J). The following six professional development standards are recommended just as a starting point for planning and implementing quality school-based professional development.
- Standard 1: Effective professional development organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school, the district, and the state.

- Standard 2: Effective professional development requires knowledgeable and skillful school and district leaders who actively participate in and guide continuous instructional improvement.
- Standard 4: Effective professional development uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.
- Standard 10: Effective professional development prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students; create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments; and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.
- Standard 11: Effective professional development deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.
- Standard 12: Effective professional development provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.

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- Section 4 includes the areas of improvement that emerged from the data based on multiple measures. Each area for improvement is supported by evidence gathered from focus groups/interviews, document analyses,

classroom observations, a teacher survey, and an Innovation Configuration (IC) map for NSDC's Standard for Staff Development (Equity).

- Section 5 includes a conclusion.
- Section 6 includes the recommendations that specifically align with identified areas for improvement in moving toward high-performing characteristics and traits for identified indicators.

Appendix A provides an overview of the eight effectiveness indicators and selected characteristics examined. Appendix B lists the documents that were reviewed. Appendix C provides the schedule for conducting interviews/focus groups and classroom observations during the site visit on February 28 through March 2, 2011. Appendices D and E provide the protocol that was followed and the interview/focus group questions. Appendix F provides a copy of the Innovation Configuration maps for principals and teachers for the professional development standard Equity. Appendix G provides a description of the two programs adopted in the district, *Making Meaning* and *Investigations*. Appendix H provides the best practices for reading and math for Tier I core instruction. Appendices I and J provide the Alabama definition of and standards for effective professional development. Appendix K provides the list of references used in this report. Appendix L provides a list of resources to help the school continue its learning in a cycle of continuous improvement as outlined in the Alabama definition of high-quality professional development. Appendix M provides the names and contact information for members of the Learning Forward school quality review team.

Hoover City Schools Balanced Scorecard

Trace Crossings Elementary School uses the results from its balanced scorecard to guide decisions at the school level. The following goals and objectives are included in the scorecard:

Strategic Goal 1: Increase student achievement and learning.

- Objective 1.1: Students will meet state proficiency standards (NCLB).

- Objective 1.2: Students will excel in national benchmarks of academic achievement.
- Objective 1.3: Students will be prepared for acceptance and success in their college and/or career of choice.
- Objective 1.4: At-risk students will make progress toward achieving.

Strategic Goal 2: Support a positive and collaborative learning culture.

- Objective 2.1: School climate is safe and orderly.
- Objective 2.2: School culture is nurturing and enriching.
- Objective 2.3: School actively engages and communicates with stakeholders.

Strategic Goal 3: Improve organizational effectiveness.

- Objective 3.1: Transportation is safe and efficient.
- Objective 3.2: Facilities are safe and well maintained.
- Objective 3.3: High-quality employees are recruited and retained.
- Objective 3.4: Technological resources support learning and organizational activities effectively and efficiently.
- Objective 3.5: Fiscal management represents effective and efficient accounting practices.

Effectiveness Indicators of High-Performing Schools

Mardale Dunsworth and Dawn Billings (2009) researched and developed rubrics and tools that are aligned with 10 themes identified for school effectiveness to use in a school review process. Based on the purpose of this school review and aligned with many of the objectives and indicators of the Hoover City Schools (HCS) Balanced Scorecard, eight of the 10 indicators were selected to guide the selection and design of the instruments that would be used during the school review process.

- Effectiveness Indicator 1: Written Curriculum

During the review process, the team used multiple measures to explore the horizontal and vertical alignment of the written curriculum, consider the alignment of instructional materials with the written curriculum, identify the assessments and interventions in the written curriculum, and assess the degree to which the written curriculum is taught in the classroom.

- Effectiveness Indicator 2: Instructional Program
During the review process, the team used multiple measures about the instructional program to explore access and support for all students, the engagement of all students in rigorous activities and assignments, opportunities for teachers to plan together instruction and assessments to meet the needs of all students, and the use of instructional time.
- Effectiveness Indicator 3: Student Assessment
During the review process, the team used multiple measures about student assessment to explore how teachers use a variety of formative and summative assessments to diagnose student skill levels to determine appropriate interventions, group/regroup students, and monitor student progress.
- Effectiveness Indicator 4: School Leadership
During the review process, the team used multiple measures about school leadership to explore how time and effort are devoted to ensuring a positive culture of high expectations for students and staff so all students are successful.
- Effectiveness Indicator 5: Strategic Planning (not included in this review)
- Effectiveness Indicator 6: Professional Development
During the review process, the team used multiple measures to explore how professional development is based on student achievement data; how adult learning is focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment to ensure student success; and whether professional development is collaborative and job-embedded to meet individual, team, and schoolwide needs.
- Effectiveness Indicator 7: Student Connectedness, Engagement, and Readiness
During the review process, the team used multiple measures to explore the extent to which students feel connected in school, the extent to which positive and caring relationships are developed with peers and adults throughout the school, and how the schoolwide system addresses interventions for targeted students to meet their learning needs.

- Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment

During the review process, the team used multiple measures to explore how a positive school environment ensures students and staff feel valued, students feel challenged to grow academically, and staff feel challenged to grow professionally.

- Effectiveness Indicator 9: Family and Community Involvement

During the review process, the team used multiple measures to explore to what extent families and community members feel positive about their school and feel welcomed at the school, the degree of communication between families and the school, and the encouragement to engage in working together to support student learning for all students.

- Effectiveness Indicator 10: District Support (not included in this review)

School Profile

The following two tables identify the indicators, data sources, and percentile (%) for objective 1.1 (students meeting state proficiency standards in math and reading) and objective 1.4 (at-risk students with AYP achievement gaps in math and reading) according to the 2009–2010 HCS Balanced Scorecard for Trace Crossings Elementary School.

Table 1. Objective 1.1—Students Will Meet State Proficiency Standards (NCLB)

Indicator	Data Source	Type	Time	GL	08–09	09–10	Target
Math	ARMT: Level 3/4	%	Summer	3	80	86	>90
				4	68	85	>90
				5	88	72	>90
Reading	ARMT: Level 3/4	%	Summer	3	84	92	>92
				4	83	91	>91
				5	86	86	>92
Attendance	Attendance Rate (year)	%	Summer	K–5	97	94	>95

Note: ARMT means Alabama Reading and Mathematics Test.

Table 2. Objective 1.4—At-Risk Students Will Make Progress Toward Achieving Standards

Indicator	Data Source	Type	Time	GL	08-09	09-10	Target
AYP Achievement Gaps (ARMT) Math	Asian/White	% diff. in AYP prof. index	Summer	3-5	2.12	2.65	<5
	Black/White			3-5	10.01	9.82	<5
	Hispanic/White			3-5	4.46	10.37	<5
	Special Ed/			3-5	21.91	24.42	<15
	ELL/Non-ELL			3-5	7.52	7.69	<10
	Poverty/Non-Poverty			3-5	10.88	9.19	<10
AYP Achievement Gaps (ARMT) Reading	Asian/White	% diff. in AYP prof. index	Summer	3-5	1.57	-0.55	<5
	Black/White			3-5	16.49	14.91	<5
	Hispanic/White			3-5	12.0	9.3	<5
	Special Ed/			3-5	21.62	30.52	<15
	ELL/Non-ELL			3-5	6.45	2.57	<10
	Poverty/Non-Poverty			3-5	11.69	10.90	<10

Note: A lower number is better.

The 2009–2010 ARMT results reported as disaggregated data indicate the subgroups per grade level not meeting expectations in reading and math. The data indicate the percentage per identified subgroup scoring less than the total percentage for all students in meeting or exceeding expectations in reading and math.

- Reading: total % for 3rd grade (92%), 4th grade (91%), 5th grade (86%)
 - 3rd grade—special education (45%)
 - 4th grade—Black (79%), poverty (67%)
 - 5th grade—special education (40%), Black (72%), poverty (74%)
- Math: total % for 3rd grade (86%), 4th grade (85%), 5th grade (73%)
 - 3rd grade—special education (40%), Black (67%), poverty (56%)
 - 4th grade—poverty (71%)
 - 5th grade—special education (30%), Black (59%), poverty (62%)

Section Two: Methodology

The school quality review team used a mixed-method design, which included both quantitative and qualitative measures, to gain insight into participants' perspectives about their school. They referred to the eight selected effectiveness indicators for high-performing schools to guide the school review.

Data collection methods included

- Reviewing the documents (e.g. HCS Balanced Scorecard, district RTI plan, student performance data, curriculum maps for reading, and pacing guides for mathematics);
- Interviewing the principal and assistant principal;
- Holding focus groups with grade-level teams of classroom teachers (K–5), specials and instructional staff (e.g. PE, music, art, librarian, and enrichment teachers; reading coach; special education teachers; preschool staff) and non-instructional staff (i.e. custodians, nurse, lunchroom manager), parents, and 3rd- and 4th-grade students;
- Having instructional staff complete a teacher survey;
- Having teachers and administrators complete an Innovation Configuration map for NSDC's Standard for Staff Development (Equity) for the role groups of principal and teacher; and
- Conducting classroom observations.

The team leader worked directly with an external consultant, Vivian Elliott, who has worked in the school prior to the school review. Together the two consultants reviewed the school's needs, selected appropriate measures, and developed questions for interviews/focus groups. Appendix A provides a list of the effectiveness indicators and characteristics selected for the school review.

Interviews/Focus Groups

The principal and assistant principal were each interviewed separately using a set of questions. The questions were coded using the eight indicators and selected characteristics identified in Tool 46 (reproducible), Effectiveness Indicator Map, from the book *The High-Performing School: Benchmarking the 10 Indicators of*

Effectiveness (Dunsworth & Billings, 2009). The other participants (i.e. instructional and non-instructional staff, parents, and students) were interviewed in focus groups. Their questions were coded using the eight indicators and selected characteristics identified in Tool 46 (reproducible), Effectiveness Indicator Map. The protocol and the questions, with the codes for effectiveness indicators, are in Appendices D and E, respectively. Appendix C provides the schedule that was used for conducting focus groups and classroom observations.

Teacher Survey

At the end of the second day of the site visit, all of the instructional staff gathered together to meet the review team and to individually complete a teacher survey. The teacher survey that was used was Tool 17 (reproducible), Teacher Survey, from *The High-Performing School* (Dunsworth & Billings, 2009).

The survey included questions that were coded according to the characteristic traits identified for the eight selected indicators of effectiveness for high-performing schools. The scale on the survey ranged from “always true” to “not applicable/no answer.” The survey was completed anonymously, but participants were asked to identify their primary teaching assignment (i.e. primary teacher [grades K–2], intermediate teacher [grades 3–5], or certified specialist [e.g. special education, art, media, PE, or music]).

Innovation Configuration Map for NSDC’s Standard for Staff Development (Equity)

According to NSDC’s Standard for Staff Development (Equity), “staff development that improves the learning of all students prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement” (Hord & Roy, 2003, p. 45). This standard aligns with Standard 10 adopted by Alabama State Board of Education on June 13, 2002. The adopted standards for professional development are meant to be used as a guide in the development of the LEA Professional Development Plan and as quality indicators when monitoring implementation to determine the impact of high-quality professional development on student achievement.

Standard 10: Effective professional development prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students; create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments; and hold high expectations for their academic achievement (see Appendix J for Alabama Standards for Professional Development).

The Innovation Configuration map describes what the professional development standard for equity looks like in practice for both a principal and a teacher. The IC map is based on a continuum, with “ideal” on the left as Level 1, followed by decreasing variations (increasing to larger-numbered levels) to “nonuse” as the last level. Each participant assessed where he or she perceived himself or herself to be on the continuum for implementing the standard for equity according to the following four desired outcomes for principals and teachers. Copies of the Innovation Configuration maps (Equity) for principals and teachers are provided in Appendix F.

Desired Outcomes for Equity: Principal

1. Communicates high expectations for self and for all teachers and students.
2. Works with staff to understand the impact of attitudes on instruction and to modify classroom practices.
3. Establishes a school environment that is emotionally and physically safe for teachers and students.
4. Demonstrates respect and appreciation for students and families and for their cultural backgrounds.

Desired Outcomes for Equity: Teacher

1. Analyzes the impact of attitude, background, culture, and social class on the teaching process.
2. Develops skills that communicate high expectations for each student.
3. Establishes a learning environment that is emotionally and physically safe.
4. Demonstrates respect and appreciation for students and families and for their cultural backgrounds.

Classroom Observations

During the three-day site visit, the review team observed 32 classrooms (K–5) for approximately 15 minutes each. Other observations included only a few of the specials (e.g. music, art, PE). The classroom observation tool was Tool 43 (reproducible), Classroom Observation Form, from *The High-Performing School* (Dunsworth & Billings, 2009).

The classroom observation form included a description of the lesson being taught during the observation. It also included a list of what to look for in terms of behavior, organization, instructional strategies, and interventions identified for certain characteristics for the eight selected indicators of effectiveness.

Data Analysis

During the three-day site visit, the review team used multiple measures to gather evidence and used Tool 46, Effectiveness Indicator Map, as a guide in analyzing and interpreting the data. The review team conducted an exit conference with the Director of Elementary Curriculum, Teaching, and Technology and the building principal. The purpose of the meeting was to share the measures that were used and the format for the written report, with examples of some emerging patterns that included commendations, areas for improvement, and recommendations.

Each team member independently analyzed data by trend/pattern analysis and frequency distribution, and then the team leader wrote a final report. The written report recognizes the school's strengths, identifies areas for improvement, and makes recommendations based on the findings of the review.

Participants

Eighty participants were involved in providing the school review team with valuable information and insight into what is happening at the school. The participants included administrators, teachers, specials, non-instructional staff, parents, and 3rd- and 4th-grade grade students. To maintain the anonymity of participants when providing evidence (e.g. observations, quotes) in this report, the groups are identified as administrators, teachers, specials, non-instructional staff,

parents, and students. The following table identifies the number of participants per identified group.

Table 3. Number of Participants per Identified Group (n=80)

Groups	Faculty/Staff	Number
Administrators	Principal, assistant principal	2
Preschool	Preschool staff (teachers and assistants)	8
Primary	Kindergarten	6
Primary	First grade	6
Primary	Second grade	5
Intermediate	Third grade	5
Intermediate	Fourth grade	5
Intermediate	Fifth grade	5
Instructional Support	Homebound teacher, speech-language pathologist, K-2 special education teacher, 3-5 special education teacher, reading coach	5
Specials	PE (2), music, art, librarian, enrichment	6
Non-instructional Staff	Custodians, nurse, lunchroom manager	6
Parents	Parents	13
Students	3rd- and 4th-grade students	8
Total		80
Leadership Team	Planning Committee and CIP Team	21
	Note: Members were included in the total count above per their identified group.	

Section Three: Commendations

Based on multiple measures and sources, the review team identified the following five indicators with specific characteristic traits as commendations. These indicators are reported using the specific characteristics and traits from Tool 46 (reproducible), Effectiveness Indicator Map (Dunsworth & Billings, 2009).

The five indicators include Written Curriculum (Indicator 1), Student Assessment (Indicator 3), School Leadership (Indicator 4), School Environment (Indicator 8), and Family and Community Involvement (Indicator 9). A rubric score of “effective” or “high performing” was given for the identified characteristics and traits for each indicator based on strong evidence from multiple sources to support the claim. Direct quotes from informants in the identified groups, quotes from documents, descriptions from classroom observations, and results from the teacher survey and IC maps are provided as evidence for the scores.

Effectiveness Indicator 1: Written Curriculum

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum
1C	1C1	Rubric Score: High Performing
Textbooks and other instructional materials are aligned with the written curriculum.	Identification of instructional materials	The written curriculum identifies specific pages or units from instructional and supplemental materials that address each learning objective or standard.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 2.

The following quotes from district documents provide some evidence to support the rating score of “high performing” for the identified trait.

Reading (Tier 1): What materials are used?

The core reading programs selected by the textbook adoption committee and Board-approved are Making Meaning (K–5) and Fountas and Pinnell Phonics Lessons (K–3). Leveled text and Scholastic trade book libraries have been adopted and Board-approved as well. District reading pacing guides have been developed and are posted on the HCS web site. All students are provided core instruction using these materials.

*Hoover City Schools Elementary Response to Instruction (RTI) Plan
(Revised October 3, 2010, p. 6)*

Math (Tier 1): What materials are used?

The core math program selected by the textbook adoption committee and Board-approved is Investigations. District math pacing guides were developed and are posted on the HCS intranet. These pacing guides include supplemental resources to be used for select topics of instruction. All students are provided core instruction using these materials.

*Hoover City Schools Elementary RTI Plan
(Revised October 3, 2010, p. 23)*

*Unit of Study—Essential Skills & Concepts (Objectives to drive mini-lessons)—
AL Course of Study Content*

- *Unit of Study (1st 9 weeks of Grade 1): Establishing a Reading Community and Workshop*
 - *TSW learn and practice procedures for reading workshop, including focus lesson, individualized reading, conferences, and share time.*
- *Unit of Study (2nd 9 weeks for Grade 2): Making Inferences About Characters*
 - *TSW participate in 'Think, Pair, Share' to make and discuss inferences about the characters.*
- *Unit of Study (2nd 9 weeks for Grade 4): Using Comprehension Strategies with Narrative Text*
 - *TSW use questioning to make sense of a story.*

HCS Reading Curriculum Map

Each grade level has a mathematics pacing guide organized per nine weeks. The pacing guide includes the topic for the month (e.g., Number and Operations), AL CoS objectives, primary focus/resources, computation practice/focus, Number Talks, games, and web site for online games.

Grade Level Mathematics Pacing Guide

Effectiveness Indicator 3: Student Assessment

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum
3C	3C1	Rubric Score: Effective
Diagnostic assessments are used to identify student skill levels and to determine appropriate interventions or remediations.	Assessment of knowledge and skill levels	All students participate in diagnostic assessments to identify current knowledge and skill levels in reading and mathematics.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 9.

The following table identifies that the majority of primary and intermediate teachers (75%, or 24 out of 32) agreed they always use diagnostic assessments in reading and math to identify student skill levels.

Table 4. Results from Teacher Survey for Student Assessment (3C)

Trait	Question	Group	Always True	Most Often True	Some-times True	Never True	NA
3C1	We use diagnostic assessments in reading and mathematics to identify student skill levels.	Primary	17	1	0	0	0
		Intermediate	7	2	0	0	0
		Specials	3	3	0	1	11
		No Group ID	4	2	0	0	2

Note: Primary (n=18), Intermediate (n=9), Specials (n=18), No Group ID (n=8).

The district RTI plan explicitly identifies the K–5 reading and math assessment schedules for all students and assessments and the frequency for Tier II and Tier III interventions for identified struggling students. Teachers are accountable for giving the assessments and meet as a grade-level problem-solving team (PST) to report the progress of identified struggling students.

Universal screenings are administered to all students to determine their level of mastery of grade level standards.

HCS RTI Plan, p. 7

Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) progress monitoring assessments are administered every even numbered lesson and recorded using the LLI Data Management System. Mondo Bookshop Assessment kit tests are administered after instruction on two books of the same level and recorded on the Mondo Reading Intervention Data Management spreadsheet. Let's Talk about It data are recorded for each session. After 10 sessions, data are totaled. Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark System Assessments must be administered for movement out of Tier II.

HCS RTI Plan, p. 16

Following the Do the Math program, progress monitoring assessments are administered every 5th lesson and are referred to as 'Assessing Student Understanding.' Following the Developing Number Concepts program, progress monitoring assessments are administered every 5th lesson as well.

HCS RTI Plan, p. 34

A review of the math data (Winter 2011) indicated that 10% of the students were struggling in math and receiving Tier II or Tier III instruction.

Winter 2011 Math Data Sheet

We have an assessment schedule of what is done each month. It is done through PST [a problem-solving team]. We did screening in the fall. We do DIBELS three times a year (August, January, April). We use a lot of Marie Clay.

Primary Teacher

We always pre-test for a particular area. We make different assignments based on the needs of the students as demonstrated on the pre-test. We attend to the needs through tiered instruction. We have Tier II intervention every two weeks.

Intermediate Teacher

We use leveled readers. We spot check with Fountas and Pinnell. The teachers are supposed to be doing interventions often in every room.

Administrator

Effectiveness Indicator 4: School Leadership

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum
4C	4C1	Rubric Score: Effective
School administrators see student learning as the foremost priority for the school.	Priority assigned to student learning	School administrators see student learning as the highest priority in all decision-making.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 12.

The evidence from multiple sources (i.e. students, staff, parents, administrators) indicated a rating score of “effective.” The following table identifies the results from the teacher survey for the characteristic trait 4C. The majority of teachers (75%) indicated they always feel that school administrators see student learning as the number-one priority for the school.

Table 5. Results from Teacher Survey for School Leadership (4C)

Trait	Question	Group	Always True	Most Often True	Some-times True	Never True	NA
4C1	School administrators see student learning as the number-one priority for the school.	Primary	15	3	0	0	0
		Intermediate	7	0	2	0	0
		Specials	15	1	1	0	1
		No Group ID	3	3	1	1	0

Note: Primary (n=18), Intermediate (n=9), Specials (n=18), No Group ID (n=8).

The following quotes provide some evidence to support the rating score of “effective” for the identified characteristic trait.

I have been more informed about my 5th grader in the last 5 months than I was in the previous five years. The change in communication from the administration to teacher to parent has been huge. I feel like a real stakeholder and I want to be involved. The achievement of students appears to be the high priority.

Parent

We are all so proud of the hard work that you have done so far this school year. Every morning when you walk through the doors of your school, every adult in this building will work to make sure that you are happy, well cared for, and loved. We will also do everything possible to teach you in such a way that you can be whatever you dream to be when you grow up. Please know that you are in a school where you are loved, cared about and greatly admired.

Parents’ newsletter, *Trace Tribune*, Feb. 2011

Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum
8B	8B1	Rubric Score: Effective
The school and its physical environment are safe, welcoming, and conducive to learning.	Overall feeling of safety	Students, staff members, and families feel safe at the school.
8B	8B2	Rubric Score: Effective
The school and its physical environment are safe, welcoming and conducive to learning.	Overall atmosphere	Students, staff members, and families view the school as welcoming to students.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 30.

The evidence from multiple sources (i.e. students, staff, parents, administrators) indicated a rating score of “effective.” The following table identifies the results from the teacher survey for the characteristic traits 8B1 and 8B2. The majority of teachers (86%) indicated they always feel safe at school. The majority of teachers (76%) indicated they believe that the school atmosphere is always welcoming to students.

Table 6. Results from Teacher Survey for School Environment (8B)

Trait	Question	Group	Always True	Most Often True	Some-times True	Never True	NA
8B1	I feel safe at school.	Primary	16	2	0	0	0
		Intermediate	7	2	0	0	0
		Specials	16	1	1	0	0
		No Group ID	7	1	0	0	0
8B2	The school atmosphere is welcoming to students.	Primary	13	5	0	0	0
		Intermediate	6	2	1	0	0
		Specials	13	4	1	0	0
		No Group ID	7	1	0	0	0

Note: Primary (n=18), Intermediate (n=9), Specials (n=18), No Group ID (n=8).

The following quotes provide some evidence to support the rating score of “effective” for the identified characteristic traits.

In this school, we have a great library and good computer lab. I like almost everything about this school. I like that my parents come to school and have lunch with me. We also have some good teachers.

Student

There is a positive atmosphere about the school that begins early each morning when in the carpool line my car is met by a staff member or the principal. This welcome sets the tone for the day and my child feels welcome at the school.

Parent

It is a very safe environment for children to learn. You can find a teaching point anywhere. We integrate into the classroom about healthy eating and take it home to do the same thing.

Specials

The following table identifies how the majority of teachers (77%) agreed as to their role in establishing a learning environment that is emotionally and physically safe. In Table 8, the results of the IC map with both administrators

indicate their agreement as to their role in establishing a school environment that is both emotionally and physically safe for teachers and students.

Table 7. Results from Teacher Self-Assessment on IC Map for Equity (n=43)

Desired Outcome 10.3: Establishes a learning environment that is emotionally and physically safe.						
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Primary	16	1	0	0	0	0
Intermediate	10	5	0	0	0	0
Specials	7	3	1	0	0	0
Total	33	9	1	0	0	0

Note: Primary (n = 17), Intermediate (n = 15), Specials (n = 11).

Table 8. Results from Principal Self-Assessment on IC Map for Equity (n=2)

Desired Outcome 10.3: Establishes a school environment that is emotionally and physically safe for teachers and students.						
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Principal	2	0	0	0	0	0

Effectiveness Indicator 9: Family and Community Involvement

Characteristic	Trait	Effectiveness Continuum
9B	9B1	Rubric Score: Effective
The school maintains high levels of communication with families and community.	Communication about school events and programs	There is frequent and varied communication with families and the community about school events and programs.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 36.

The evidence from multiple sources indicated a rating score of “effective.” The following table identifies the results from the teacher survey for the characteristic trait 9B1. The majority of instructional staff (83%) indicated they feel that the school always encourages the involvement of family and community members.

Table 9. Results from Teacher Survey for Family and Community Involvement

Trait	Question	Group	Always True	Most Often True	Some-times True	Never True	NA
9B1	This school encourages family and community involvement.	Primary	15	3	0	0	0
		Intermediate	7	2	0	0	0
		Specials	14	2	0	0	2
		No Group ID	8	0	0	0	0

Note: Primary (n=18), Intermediate (n=9), Specials (n=18), No Group ID (n=8).

The following quotes provide some evidence to support the rating score of “effective” for the identified characteristic traits.

We have many families that now work at the school and help to coordinate with the middle school. Parents have given assistance with copying materials, “copy mom”, with working on improving the courtyard and assisting with fundraising. Parents are now invited into classrooms. There have been several theme days and nights that have encouraged participation by parents.

Parent

The last two math nights and other evening activities have been participated in fully. Parents do feel welcome to come to the school and meet with the teachers in the evening. We have also had a Culture Fair in which the students of different cultures were encouraged to share foods, clothing, or other culture markers.

Parent

Our PTO is awesome. We have community wide dinners. We send weekly newsletters. We have classroom volunteers come in. There is a Dr. Seuss Run on Wednesday and parents are invited to come and run. Wiki is set up so parents can see what we are doing with academics.

Primary Teacher

The school encourages collaborative relationships between the school and the home through the use of communication. Wiki sites, newsletters, emails, reading and math nights, and other communication means are used often for family communication. Students are asked to bring something from home each week to share with students.

Primary Teacher

We have had a reading and math family night. ... We are going to have a focus on reading, math, science, social studies, and fine arts. Three will be at night and two during the day. ... I have monthly “Coffee with the Principal” and invite parents to come to the school. I did it twice, once during the day and once at night, to go through the student data.

Administrator

Section Four: Areas for Improvement

Areas for improvement emerged through trends and patterns in multiple sources. These identified areas for improvement represent gaps or inconsistencies within grade levels and/or across the school. The areas of focus are curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development and the impact of these areas on student achievement for all students.

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) observe that “in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the big idea is coherence. In a coherent instructional program, all parts are aligned and working together toward the same goal: meeting the standards. The written curriculum lays out the specifics of the instructional program. It describes the assessments to be used and the program intervention and enrichment opportunities that are keyed to the results of those assessments” (p. 3).

Donna Tileston and Sandra Darling (2009) acknowledge that “there exists a gap in achievement between white students and students from diverse cultures. ... Therefore, educators who are interested in improving academic achievement must address the issues of culture and poverty in order to accomplish that goal” (p. 3). They further state that “improving achievement requires a focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Closing the gaps in achievement for diverse learners means teaching that curriculum and providing a context for that curriculum based on the culture of the students in each classroom. It means using the best, most powerful instructional strategies drawn from the research and modifying those instructional strategies to meet the unique, cultural needs of the learner. It means using appropriate assessment for the kind of knowledge you are expecting students to learn and providing opportunities for students to use assessment as a tool for learning in a collectivist classroom respectful of their culture” (p. 81).

Rachel Brown-Chidsey, Louise Bronaugh, and Kelly McGraw (2009) define Response to Intervention (RTI) as “a roadmap for student success in the general education classroom” (p. 1). They state that “curriculum is defined as what we teach. It includes the skills, concepts, and applications that we convey to our students and is the crux of the content and material. How we convey the information to students

is our instruction. Instruction is defined as how we teach. Are the skills taught explicitly with repeated practice and review? Or are the skills imparted in a student-directed manner, where students discover the ideas on their own? Considering the goal of the lesson is important when deciding what teaching methods to use. Finally, assessment allows us to answer the question ‘Is what we are doing working?’ ... Matching assessments to instruction is important so that data are used to address student needs and guide further instruction” (p. 38).

HCS Response to Instruction (RTI)

The district’s RTI plan clearly identifies that all students—including enrichment, special education, English Language Learners, and 504 students—are to receive core instruction (Tier I) for reading and math. During the core instruction, teachers are to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. There is a set amount of time allocated for reading (i.e. a 90-minute reading block for grades K through 3 and a 60-minute reading block for grades 4 and 5) and for math (i.e. a 60-minute math block).

The district requirements for Tier I instruction in reading are “teaching grade level standards specified in the HCS reading curriculum; use of reading pacing guide; use of the adopted *Making Meaning* reading program (K–5) and *Fountas & Pinnell Phonics Lessons* (K–3); administration of assessments specific in district assessment schedule; daily reading and writing workshop format; individual student reading conferences with accompanying documentation” (Hoover City Schools, 2010, p. 6).

The district requirements for Tier I instruction in math are “teaching grade level standards specified in the HCS math curriculum; use of math pacing guide; the use of the adopted *Investigations* math program; administration of district math assessments; daily math workshop format” (Hoover City Schools, 2010, p. 22).

The district’s RTI plan provides a list of what to implement and what to avoid when using best practices for reading and math instruction for Tier I. See Appendix H for a list of best practices for Tier I reading and math instruction.

Within the RTI plan is the district K–5 reading and math assessment schedule for the beginning, middle, and end of the year. These assessments are identified as

minimum requirements. Both the reading curriculum maps and the math pacing guides identify other classroom assessments for teachers to use to guide their instruction between district assessments.

Tier I is the most important tier. Make every minute count for ALL students in your classroom by providing high-quality, differentiated instruction.

HCS RTI Plan, p. 32

Professional Development

Alabama adopted and put into administrative code (Rule 290-4-3) a new definition of professional development. Professional development is defined as a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving all educators' effectiveness in raising student achievement. This means taking a collective responsibility for improving student achievement through professional learning that is conducted among learning teams who are engaged in a cycle of continuous improvement through the analysis of data on teacher and student performance. See Appendix I for the Alabama definition of professional development.

The state also adopted standards for professional development that align with NSDC's Standards for Staff Development (2001). One tool used in this review gathered data on one standard (Equity): prepare educators to understand and appreciate all students; create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments; and hold high expectations for students' academic achievement. See Appendix J for a list of the 12 Alabama standards for professional development.

The following five indicators were identified as areas for improvement in a movement toward a rating of "high performing": instructional program, school leadership, professional development, school environment, and parent and family involvement.

Effectiveness Indicator 2: Instructional Program

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that "in effective schools, instructional practices challenge and support all students. ... Their deep content knowledge, mastery of a broad range of instructional strategies, and commitment to student achievement are essential to the delivery system" (p. 25).

Effectiveness Indicator 2: Instructional Program

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
2E	2E1	Move toward High Performing
Teachers provide students with activities and assignments that are rigorous and engaging and that extend their learning.	Student engagement	Students are attentive during instruction and engaged in classroom activities. Activities are varied for the range of student skill levels, and enrichment activities are readily available.
2E	2E2	Move toward High Performing
Teachers provide students with activities and assignments that are rigorous and engaging and that extend their learning.	Rigor of activities and assignments	Activities and assignments are rigorous and extend concepts addressed in the lesson. Assistance and supports are readily available to enable all students to complete assignments.
2F	2F3	Move toward High Performing
Teachers have deep knowledge of their subject matter, possess expertise in a wide range of effective instructional strategies, and are committed to closing achievement gaps.	Teacher commitment to closing achievement gaps	Teachers' commitment to raising achievement has narrowed or closed achievement gaps between groups of students.
2G	2G1	Move toward High Performing
Teachers plan together to ensure that instruction and assessment meet the needs of all learners.	Extent of collaborative planning	A formalized process exists and sufficient time is allocated for teams of grade-level teachers to plan common lessons and assessments. Planning time is used effectively, and teams document strategies and results.
2G	2G2	Move toward High Performing
Teachers plan together to ensure that instruction and assessment meet the needs of all learners.	Schedule time	The school schedule fosters collaboration and planning within and across grade levels and programs (for example, ELL, special education).
2J	2J1	Move toward High Performing
School administrators ensure that the taught curriculum reflects the written curriculum and aligns with the pacing charts.	Match between the taught and written curriculum and pacing charts.	School administrators and all instructional staff members hold one another accountable to ensure that the taught curriculum matches the written curriculum and pacing charts.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, pp. 5–8.

The following results from the teacher survey indicate a variance in staff perceptions within and across grade levels. The first three questions focus on student engagement during instruction (2E1), on activities and assignments that are rigorous and demand higher-order thinking (2E2), and on teachers' belief that good instruction can lead to closing the achievement gap between identified subgroups (2F3). Questions 2G1 and 2G2 focus on having time to regularly meet with colleagues to plan together to ensure instruction and assessment meet the needs of all learners. The last question (2J1) focuses on classroom observation and feedback to ensure that the written curriculum is taught and aligns with district pacing guides.

Table 10. Results from Teacher Survey for Instructional Program (2E, F, G, J)

Trait	Question	Group	Always True	Most Often True	Some-times True	Never True	NA
2E1	Students are attentive during classroom instruction.	Primary	3	13	2	0	0
		Intermediate	0	7	2	0	0
		Specials	2	10	4	0	2
		No Group ID	1	5	2	0	0
2E2	My activities and assignments are rigorous and demand higher-order thinking skills.	Primary	5	9	4	0	0
		Intermediate	1	5	3		
		Specials	5	7	3	0	3
		No Group ID	1	6	1	0	0
2F3	I believe that good instruction can lead to closing achievement gaps between groups of students (e.g. whites and African-Americans).	Primary	11	6	1	0	0
		Intermediate	4	4	1	0	0
		Specials	9	7	1	0	1
		No Group ID	3	4	1	0	0
2G1	I meet on a regular basis with other teachers to review student work and plan common lessons and assessments.	Primary	11	3	4	0	0
		Intermediate	3	3	3	0	0
		Specials	8	5	3	0	2
		No Group ID	6	1	1	0	0
2G2	I have time to meet with other teachers for shared planning and collaboration.	Primary	11	4	2	1	0
		Intermediate	0	3	5	1	0
		Specials	4	2	8	3	1
		No Group ID	2	1	2	2	1
2J1	When school administrators observe my teaching, they provide feedback on whether what I taught matches the written curriculum.	Primary	7	4	5	1	1
		Intermediate	0	3	3	0	3
		Specials	8	5	1	2	2
		No Group ID	4	2	1	0	1

Note: Primary (n=18), Intermediate (n=9), Specials (n=18), No Group ID (n=8).

Although the amount of time spent in each classroom was limited, the classroom observation form (Tool 43) that was used focused specifically on what to look for related to instructional strategies:

- The teacher uses questioning strategies that elicit a range of intellectual behavior (knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation);
- Students are alert and actively engaged in instructional activities;
- Classroom activities and assignments are rigorous and contribute to student understanding; and
- The teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies matched to student learning needs.

The district RTI plan suggests a variety of activities that students can be involved in while the teacher is conducting Tier II instruction for the identified students (three or fewer) in reading or math. Some suggestions are independent reading, literacy centers, math menus, independent research projects, independent journals, writing activities, independent science or social studies activities, or technology projects.

There was great variance in the four observed instructional strategies listed above, whether it was during core instruction (Tier I) or intervention (Tier II). Higher-level questioning and more engagement were observed when teachers were using the math program, *Investigations*. Students were using manipulatives, explaining their thinking to justify their answers, exploring different ways of doing a problem, and interacting with other students. Students were often observed working independently on worksheets rather than independently reading leveled books, writing in journals, or working on projects. In some classrooms there were limited amounts of leveled books for students; however, other classrooms had a variety of leveled books with easy access for all students. Teachers responded during focus groups about their use of differentiated instruction; however, this was not observed consistently across same or different grade levels.

All students were independently working on the same worksheet coloring in the answers.

Classroom Observation—Primary

Students were working and interacting with each other during center time [e.g. at the computers, at the listening station, matching picture cards, writing journals] while the teacher was conferring with an individual student. The teacher was completing a conference form as she listened to the student read from an appropriate leveled book.

Classroom Observation—Primary

All students were reading a story from a basal reader. One student would read aloud [asked by the teacher to read with expression], teacher asked whole class some questions, then student would read aloud, etc. The teacher tried to keep all students engaged through questioning and enthusiasm.

Classroom Observation—Intermediate

Some students were finishing a packet of worksheets, others were working on a social studies project.

Classroom Observation—Intermediate

Engagement differs for individual students and is related to the prior knowledge that the student may have. It is difficult to keep all students engaged, but it helps when students are involved in selecting an activity that they want to assist in their learning.

Intermediate Teacher

Student engagement is developed by moving from whole class instruction to small group instruction. Another facet of instruction that aids engagement is technology. Although there are still some students who love the satisfaction of completing a worksheet, this is engaging for individual students.

Intermediate Teacher

There appears to be more consistency in the teachers' beliefs about and use of the math pacing guide for *Investigations* than there is for the curriculum maps for reading using *Making Meaning*. There was limited evidence of teaching and learning using comprehension strategies identified in *Making Meaning* (e.g. few anchor charts and limited references by teachers about students' use of reading comprehension when reading independently). The following quotes show some

evidence of the differences in opinions about the two required programs for reading and math.

There appears to be a variance in the type of collaboration that occurs within and across grade-level teams. Some teams meet frequently and plan together, while others appear to plan and deliver independently of what is outlined in the reading curriculum maps and math pacing guides.

The following quotes depict the variance across teams within the school for characteristic traits 2G1 and 2G2.

We meet weekly to share information and ideas and what we see our students doing. There is a representative from science to enhance the vertical relations in science. In science through our mapping, each class will be working on the same objective.

Primary Teacher

In [a grade level], we work on a 9-week plan. Are all teachers always on the same page? No. We think that math is great because it is hands-on understanding and concepts. This requires talking and listening on the part of the student. Making Meaning is fine. We need more time for planning and developing activities.

Primary Teacher

We only have an hour a week. We don't have enough time to plan. We do collaborate to share resources.

Intermediate Teacher

We do meet weekly as a grade level, and we started to meet as a larger group with teachers from other grade levels. The pacing guide does not include everything that we are expected to teach. These concerns have been noted and attended to. We have tried to close any gaps that existed.

Intermediate Teacher

Effectiveness Indicator 4: School Leadership

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that the role of school administrators is to “ensure that a culture of high expectations nurtures student and teacher efficacy. ... These administrators maximize their influence by increasing leadership capacity schoolwide and widely distributed leadership responsibilities.” (p. 65).

Effectiveness Indicator 4: School Leadership

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
4H	4H1	Move toward High Performing
School administrators address existing and potential conflicts.	Efforts to resolve conflicts	School administrators work toward resolution of conflicts, addressing both the immediate concerns and the underlying issues.
4H	4H2	Move toward High Performing
School administrators address existing and potential conflicts.	Anticipation of conflicts	School administrators anticipate where and when conflicts, including workplace or community dissatisfaction, might arise and intervene to address both the problems and the underlying issues.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, pp. 14–15.

The school is in transition, having a new principal who started at the beginning of this school year (2010–2011). Everyone (i.e. staff, administrators, parents) acknowledged being in the midst of change. It appears that there are some underlying issues based on staff often being guarded in what was said/not said during focus groups and classroom observations.

The following table identified the results from the teacher survey for the characteristic traits 4H1 and 4H2. The range in answers for both questions related to addressing and resolving conflict varies from “always true” to “no answer.”

Table 11. Results from Teacher Survey for School Leadership (4H)

Trait	Question	Group	Always True	Most Often True	Some-times True	Never True	NA
4H1	School administrators work to resolve conflict between staff members.	Primary	9	1	3	1	4
		Intermediate	2	2	3	0	2
		Specials	7	6	2	1	2
		No Group ID	0	1	5	1	1
4H2	School administrators defuse negative situations before they get out of hand.	Primary	8	2	5	1	2
		Intermediate	2	1	4	2	0
		Specials	6	8	1	1	2
		No Group ID	1	2	4	1	0

Note: Primary (n=18), Intermediate (n=9), Specials (n=18), No Group ID (n=8).

Some issues currently being addressed are accountability for teaching the written curriculum by forming curriculum teams (i.e. reading, math, history/social studies, science, and technology). Other teams include fine arts, preschool, and instructional support. There is one teacher from each grade level on each curriculum team. This will allow for more depth in developing the necessary knowledge and skills for specific curriculum areas as well as the ability to facilitate learning within and across grade levels.

The first step was to record what has actually been taught each nine weeks so far this school year for each curriculum area. The purpose of this work will be to facilitate vertical alignment to eliminate any gaps or duplication across grade levels. In a review of the charts, some of the content recorded as taught does not align with the district-required reading and math pacing guides as written.

A new leadership team has been formed this year. This eliminated two different former groups, the Planning Committee and the CIP Team.

The school leadership committee has been disbanded and a new team is now in existence. One of the areas of focus of the school leadership is the CIP (Continuous Improvement Plan). This plan identifies the greatest area of need in reading and math. There are some discrepancies in the free and reduced lunch and special education students. Everybody endorses the RTI, but there is still some uncertainty on how well the plan is being implemented.

Leadership Team

The school leadership has established the tiger stripe program. The school rules are posted throughout. The goal is to be consistent with the rules and expectations, and to inform all about being consistent.

Primary Teacher

There have been some incidents of behavior where some students were favored and others treated differently. This has led to some feelings that particular students are treated differently. It was reported that the same incident resulted in different consequences for different students. A request was made that these differences be addressed by the principal.

Parent

Effectiveness Indicator 6: Professional Development

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that “in effective schools, professional development deepens and refines teachers’ knowledge and skills in content and pedagogy ...[,] is based on student outcome data and is collaborative, sustained, intensive and closely tied to the classroom” (p. 105).

Effectiveness Indicator 6: Professional Development

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
6B	6B1	Move toward High Performing
The professional development program is based on an analysis of student achievement data and learning needs, is coherent with state standards, and complements the instructional program.	Connection to student learning	The professional development program is based on an analysis of student achievement data and learning needs, as well as discipline, attendance, and dropout rates.
6C	6C1	Move toward High Performing
Professional development is collaborative, is job-embedded, and addresses both individual and schoolwide needs.	Teams focused on improving achievement and learning	All instructional staff members participate in collaborative work teams focused on improving student achievement and learning.
6C	6C2	Move toward High Performing
Professional development is collaborative, is job-embedded, and addresses both individual and schoolwide needs.	Job-embedded opportunities	All instructional staff members participate in professional development that is embedded in the work of teaching, providing opportunities for practice, analysis, and refinement.
6E	6E1	Move toward High Performing
Professional development builds cultural proficiency.	Effect on staff members’ cultural proficiency	Professional development has increased staff members’ confidence in their level of culture proficiency.
6E	6E2	Move toward High Performing
Professional development builds cultural proficiency.	Effect on beliefs	All instructional staff members engage in professional development addressing beliefs about and building schoolwide insight into culture, race, and learning.

Effectiveness Indicator 6: Professional Development (cont.)

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
6E	6E3	Move toward High Performing
Professional development builds cultural proficiency.	Effect on equity	Professional development has resulted in a reduction of the identified barriers to racial, ethnic, and cultural equity.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, pp. 22–25.

The following table identifies the results from the teacher survey for the characteristic traits 6C1, 6C2, 6E1, and 6E2.

Table 12. Results from Teacher Survey for Professional Development (6C, 6E)

Trait	Question	Group	Always True	Most Often True	Some-times True	Never True	NA
6C1	Teachers are members of collaborative work teams focused on improving student achievement and learning.	Primary	11	6	1	0	0
		Intermediate	6	2	1	0	0
		Specials	10	5	1	1	1
		No Group ID	2	6	0	0	0
6C2	Schoolwide professional development includes opportunities for practicing and refining newly acquired knowledge and skills.	Primary	10	3	5	0	0
		Intermediate	3	5	1	0	0
		Specials	5	11	1	0	1
		No Group ID	3	4	1	0	0
6E1	We have opportunities to learn effective teaching strategies for the cultural groups present in our school.	Primary	7	3	8	0	0
		Intermediate	1	4	4	0	0
		Specials	7	6	4	0	1
		No Group ID	2	1	5	0	0
6E2	Schoolwide professional development has challenged me to think deeply about culture, race, and learning.	Primary	5	5	8	0	0
		Intermediate	1	3	4	0	1
		Specials	7	5	4	0	2
		No Group ID	1	2	5	0	0

Note: Primary (n=18); Intermediate (n=9); Specials (n=18); No Group ID (n=8).

The following quotes provide support for the area of improvement of instructional staff related to professional development.

We do an interest survey each year to determine what the professional development will be. It [professional development] mostly comes from the district. If a teacher wants to learn something, all you have to do is ask and the district will try to provide.

Primary Teacher

At the district level, professional development is based on the most recently adopted curriculum materials. Science is at the top of the ladder at this point. At the school level, professional development is informal.

Primary Teacher

At the school level, I wish that we had a program that would permit us to spend time observing instruction in one another's rooms. We do not have enough time during the day to really discuss [instruction] together.

Primary Teacher

The majority of professional development that we have had access to [in the district] has been curriculum related to either math or reading. ... More time is needed during the school day for instructional planning.

Intermediate Teacher

Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that a positive school environment is strongly associated with student success. In such an environment, staff meets the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Behavior management systems focus first on instruction and intervention. It is important to address and establish “trust between staff members and administrators in order for lasting, meaningful improvement to take place” (p. 172).

Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
8C	8C1	Move toward High Performing
A culture of trust and respect exists at all levels of the school community.	Level of trust	A culture of trust exists at all levels of the school community. School administrators listen to and act upon ideas, thoughts, and concerns regarding trust.

Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment (cont.)

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
8C	8C2	Move toward High Performing
A culture of trust and respect exists at all levels of the school community.	Level of respect	A culture of respect exists at all levels of the school community. School administrators listen to and act upon ideas, thoughts, and concerns regarding respect.
8D	8D1	Move toward High Performing
Staff members work effectively with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students.	Degree of staff effectiveness with diverse students	Staff members work effectively with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students, resulting in high and equitable achievement levels across all student populations.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, pp. 31–32.

The following table identifies the variance in the perceptions within and across grade levels in reference to a culture of trust and respect existing at all levels of the school community. The fact of some individuals being unwilling to identify their current assignment (i.e. certified teacher [primary/intermediate] or certified specialist) appears to be another indicator of a lack of trust among staff.

Table 13. Results from Teacher Survey for School Environment (8C, 8D)

Trait	Question	Group	Always True	Most Often True	Some-times True	Never True	NA
8C1	I trust and feel trusted by school administrators and other staff members.	Primary	11	4	3	0	0
		Intermediate	4	3	1	1	0
		Specials	13	3	2	0	0
		No Group ID	2	4	0	2	0
8C2	Students behave respectfully toward teachers.	Primary	5	11	2	0	0
		Intermediate	2	7	0	0	0
		Specials	5	8	5	0	0
		No Group ID	1	5	2	0	0
8D1	I feel knowledgeable about how to work effectively with students, parents, and families from diverse backgrounds.	Primary	11	7	0	0	0
		Intermediate	3	6	0	0	0
		Specials	10	7	1	0	0
		No Group ID	5	2	1	0	0

Note: Primary (n=18), Intermediate (n=9), Specials (n=18), No Group ID (n=8).

Not all members of the school community acknowledged or perceived the current status of trust and respect across the school community in the same way. The administrators and many staff members agreed that there was a lack of a trusting relationship between the principal and the assistant principal. It was stated by multiple sources that the lack of trusting relationships among administrators and staff causes conflict and hampers relationships among and between members of the school community.

The following quotes provide some evidence of the differing opinions about the culture of trust and respect at the school.

We have a culture of trust and respect, but this is a year of transition for Trace Crossings. But as a team [grade-level], we are positive toward our new principal, and we have known her for many years. She tries to visit our classrooms often and appears to be a principal who is in it for a long time.

Primary Teacher

There is a culture of trust and respect with the grade level teams at our school, but it is not completely present across larger groups of staff across the whole school. Some autonomy of the teachers has been taken away, and it is missed by the teachers.

Intermediate Teacher

There is a lack of trust across the school. There is not the widely held view that we are all one team for the advancement of the students. We are not the village that will raise the child.

Specials

The data shown in this report about the results for all student populations on the HCS Balanced Scorecard (refer to p. 25) indicate that teachers are not working as effectively with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students as is required to make the necessary gains in achievement levels.

Effectiveness Indicator 9: Family and Community Involvement

Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that “communication is the key to trust, positive relationships, and strong family and community involvement” (p. 174).

Effectiveness Indicator 9: Family and Community Involvement

Characteristic	Trait	Need for Improvement
9B	9B2	Move toward High Performing
The school maintains high levels of communication with families and the community.	Communication about student achievement	Families regularly receive clearly presented data in their native languages on both achievement of their children and overall school performance.

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 46, p. 36.

The new principal met with the parents at the beginning of this school year (2010–2011) to present data about student achievement and overall school performance. The message voiced by several groups was that this was different information than the parents had received before.

There is a discrepancy in the teachers' perceptions of communicating with parents and the parents' perceptions (limited number of parents were interviewed) of when and how teachers communicate to them about student achievement. The following quotes show some evidence of this discrepancy.

There are some teachers who do not communicate with parents as well as some others. In previous years, there have been teachers who did not communicate well. My desire is to see more consistent communication by all teachers and consistency from class to class.

Parent

We get graded papers and/or emails each Wednesday that includes the work accomplished during the week. I am very happy with this level of communication.

Parent

We communicate by the use of Wednesday folders, math nights, reading nights, emails and newsletters.

Intermediate Teacher

Section Five: Conclusion

The two indicators emerging that need the most emphasis for improvement are the instructional program and professional development. Dunsworth and Billings (2009) state that “investments in professional development are an effective strategy to improve the delivery of the instructional program for all students, particularly those in high-poverty and high-minority schools” (p. 117).

Teachers’ perceptions from multiple measures indicated they feel they have a deep knowledge of their subject matter and a repertoire of instructional strategies that they use to meet the diverse needs of their students. However, the ARMT results and the number of students identified for Tier II interventions using district assessments indicate a need to continue to focus on narrowing the achievement gap between groups of students.

It is not evident that teachers are teaching the written curriculum for reading and math as designed, using a variety of strategies, or using formative assessments to guide planning and differentiation during core instruction (Tier I). Teachers are using what they believe are best practices and are not necessarily using the results from student data to guide their decisions about what are best practices to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. Although teachers are attempting to meet the needs of struggling students through interventions (Tier II), there was little evidence that many teachers are differentiating for independent practice for the majority of students during intervention time. Dunsworth and Billings (2009) note that “to meet the learners’ diverse needs and learning styles, Tomlinson advocates varying four components of classroom instruction, based on what is most effective for each child. She labels these components content, process, products, and the learning environment” (p. 39).

Alabama adopted professional development standards and a definition for high-quality professional development (see Appendices I and J). There is no evidence that professional development at the school level is aligned with the standards or following the definition of professional development. The definition of quality professional development proposes that teachers engage in a cycle of

continuous improvement focused on teacher effectiveness and student achievement. The current focus of professional development appears to be based on activities with speakers or volunteer participation at the district level, which are not necessarily aligned with the needs of the school. It appears that many teachers engaged in district professional development focus on the curriculum areas of reading (*Making Meaning*) and math (*Investigations*) as well as differentiated instruction. However, there is little evidence of transfer of the learning through implementation of the written curriculum and differentiated instruction as designed.

Section Six: Recommendations

There are specific characteristic traits identified for five indicators that the school quality review team suggests for areas of improvement. The five indicators include Instructional Program (Indicator 2), School Leadership (Indicator 4), Professional Development (Indicator 6), School Environment (Indicator 8), and Family and Community Involvement (Indicator 9). The suggestions are meant as a guide for engaging a collaborative dialogue among key stakeholders relevant to curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

The overall recommendation of the school quality review team is to determine a collective focus as a school on the highest academic priority need of targeted students, such as reading or math with specific subgroups. Then, design and implement ongoing professional learning through grade-level teams to examine teacher practice and the impact of that practice on student achievement. Part of examining teacher practice would be to ensure that teachers are culturally responsive to the diverse needs of students through differentiation during the Tier I core instruction. This would require teaching all students the written curriculum, assessing students in a variety of ways, and using the results from the assessments to guide instruction.

1. Identify underlying issues related to teacher autonomy versus a collective focus on meeting the diverse needs of all students. This will require more consistency in all teachers teaching the written curriculum as designed, using research-based best practices, and using a variety of assessments to guide differentiation of instruction, especially during core instruction (Tier I). Development of and accountability for a collective responsibility for all students has the potential to yield greater results in narrowing the achievement gap across all student groups.
2. Ensure all teachers teach the written curriculum, especially in reading and math.
 - Hold each other accountable through planning, implementing, and assessing the impact of teaching practices on student achievement.

- Engage in reflective practice with constructive feedback based on student results for students across all groups.

The school has begun this process by organizing all teachers into curriculum teams (i.e. reading, math, history/social studies, science, and technology) as well as teams for fine arts, preschool, and instructional support. There is a representative from each grade level on each curriculum team, which allows for two-way communication as well as building in-depth knowledge and skills to facilitate the transfer of learning to colleagues.

3. Identify and agree on the indicators of quality instruction.

One instructional model closely aligned with the workshop model is the Gradual Release of Responsibility Framework (Fisher & Frey, 2008; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). The four components of gradual release of responsibility include

- Focus lessons in which the teacher clearly communicates the expected learning outcomes based on standards and models his or her thinking;
- Guided instruction in which the teacher uses higher-order thinking questions, prompts, and cues to facilitate students' thinking. During this time, the teacher provides instructional scaffolds to ensure student success;
- Productive group work in which students engage in collaborative groups to increase understanding and be individually accountable for contributions to the group; and
- Independent practice in which students independently apply what they have learned. Formative assessments occur during this time to check for understanding and to identify needs for interventions.

4. Establish learning teams (grade-level teams) to enable teachers to engage in ongoing, job-embedded professional learning focused on the highest priority need of students. Aligned with the definition of quality professional development adopted by the Alabama Board of Education, teachers would engage in a cycle of continuous improvement by

- Analyzing student and teacher learning needs through a review of teacher and student performance data;
- Establishing student and adult learning goals;
- Improving teacher effectiveness and student achievement through multiple designs of professional learning (e.g. lesson study, classroom observations, examination of student work);
- Utilizing a coach or other colleagues to provide assistance in the transfer of new knowledge and skills to the classroom; and
- Monitoring progress in improving teaching practices and increasing student achievement for all students (see Appendix I).

5. Link the focus on instructional program and professional development to the Alabama teaching standards (i.e. content knowledge, teaching and learning, literacy, diversity, professionalism) and the Alabama professional development standards (see Appendix J). The following six professional development standards are recommended just as a starting point for planning and implementing quality school-based professional development.

- Standard 1: Effective professional development organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school, the district, and the state.
- Standard 2: Effective professional development requires knowledgeable and skillful school and district leaders who actively participate in and guide continuous instructional improvement.
- Standard 4: Effective professional development uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.
- Standard 10: Effective professional development prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students; create safe, orderly, and supportive learning environments; and hold high expectations for students' academic achievement.

- Standard 11: Effective professional development deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.
- Standard 12: Effective professional development provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.

Appendices

Appendix A: Overview of Selected Indicators and Characteristics

Effectiveness Indicator 1: Written Curriculum

- 1B: The written curriculum is vertically and horizontally aligned.
- 1C: Textbooks and other instructional materials are aligned with the written curriculum.
- 1D: Formative and summative assessments are identified for the written curriculum.

Effectiveness Indicator 2: Instructional Program

- 2B: The instructional program is rigorous and provides access, challenge, and support for all students.
- 2C: Teachers expect all students to make substantial learning gains each year, and students have high expectations of themselves.
- 2D: Teachers organize instruction to support clearly articulated and communicated learning targets.
- 2E: Teachers provide students with activities and assignments that are rigorous and engaging and that extend their learning.
- 2F: Teachers have deep knowledge of their subject matter, possess expertise in a wide range of effective instructional strategies, and are committed to closing achievement gaps.
- 2G: Teachers plan together to ensure that instruction and assessment meet the needs of all learners.
- 2H: Instructional time is fully and effectively used.
- 2I: School administrators support and promote effective instructional practices, program coordination, and resource allocation.
- 2J: School administrators ensure that the taught curriculum reflects the written curriculum and aligns with the pacing charts.

Effectiveness Indicator 3: Student Assessment

- 3B: Teachers employ a variety of formative and summative assessment strategies.
- 3C: Diagnostic assessments are used to identify student skill levels and to determine appropriate interventions or remediations.
- 3D: Data from diagnostic assessments are used to place, group, and regroup students.

Effectiveness Indicator 4: School Leadership

- 4B: School administrators create a culture of high expectations for student and adult success and support those beliefs schoolwide.
- 4C: School administrators see student learning as the foremost priority for the school.

- 4D: School administrators ensure that adequate resources are allocated to achieve school improvement goals.
- 4G: School administrators encourage and promote collaborative relationships.
- 4H: School administrators address existing and potential conflicts.

Effectiveness Indicator 5: Strategic Planning (not included in review)

Effectiveness Indicator 6: Professional Development

- 6B: The professional development program is based on an analysis of student achievement data and learning needs, is coherent with state standards, and complements the instructional program.
- 6C: Professional development is collaborative, is job-embedded, and addresses both individual and schoolwide needs.
- 6E: Professional development builds cultural proficiency.

Effectiveness Indicator 7: Student Connectedness, Engagement, and Readiness

- 7A: Students feel connected to their school.
- 7B: Students have positive, trusting, and caring relationships with adults and peers in the school.
- 7E: A system of schoolwide, targeted, and intensive interventions meets the needs of students at risk.

Effectiveness Indicator 8: School Environment

- 8A: School administrators foster a positive school environment in which students and staff members feel valued, students are challenged to grow academically, and staff members are challenged to grow professionally.
- 8B: The school and its physical environment are safe, welcoming, and conducive to learning.
- 8C: A culture of trust and respect exists at all levels of the school community.
- 8D: Staff members work effectively with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students.
- 8E: Positive character traits are taught and reinforced as part of the instructional program.
- 8F: An effective discipline and behavior management system supports teaching and learning schoolwide.
- 8G: School administrators and staff members actively support the discipline and behavior management system.
- 8H: School rules are fair and are applied consistently and equitably. Consequences are commensurate with the offense.

Effectiveness Indicator 9: Family and Community Involvement

- 9A: Families and the community feel positive about, and welcome at, the school.
- 9B: The school maintains high levels of communication with families and the community.
- 9C: The school seeks and values family and community involvement.
- 9D: The school engages families and the community to support student learning.

Effectiveness Indicator 10: District Support (not included in the review)

Source: Dunsworth & Billings, 2009, Tool 5, pp. 262–266.

Appendix B: Documents Reviewed

- HCS Mathematic Pacing Guides for grades K–5
- HCS Reading Curriculum Maps for grades K–5
- HCS Balanced Scorecard (2009–2010)
- Continuous Improvement Plan for Trace Crossings (2010–2011)
- Teachers’ Daily Schedules
- Curriculum Teams for 2010–2011 (curriculum areas and names)
- HCS Instructional Level Expectations for Reading
- HCS 2009–2010 ARMT results for district and school for reading and math (3rd–5th grades)
- Trace Crossings 2009–2010 ARMT results—disaggregated data (3rd–5th grades)
- Trace Crossings Math Data—Winter 2011 (number of struggling students identified for Tier II and Tier III)
- Schedule for PST meetings with grade levels (Feb. 23, Feb. 28, March 1, March 3)
- Schedule for lunch, PE, art, music, library, extra, computer, recess
- Discipline and Emergency Discipline Referral forms
- Enrollment numbers per grade level and total for school (687 students)
- Alabama AYP Accountability Reporting and Appeals System—School Status Report
- Parents’ newsletter, *Trace Tribune*—February 2011
- School vision, beliefs, mission, and desired results
- Activity rotation schedule (October 13th—Health & Safety Focus and February 24—Math and Science Focus)—list of activities and speakers

Appendix C: Schedule for Focus Groups and Observations

Monday through Wednesday, February 28–March 2, 2011

Time	Monday, February 28th	Tuesday, March 1st	Wednesday, March 2nd
7:15–7:45	Meet with principal	Focus group with parents	Focus group—Specials Interview with assistant principal
7:45–8:45	Interview with principal	Classroom observations Observation—PST meeting	Focus group—4th-grade teachers
8:45–9:45	Classroom observations	Focus group—3rd-grade teachers	Classroom observations
10–11	Classroom observations	Focus group—2nd-grade teachers	Classroom observations
11–12	Focus group—Kindergarten teachers	Classroom observations	Focus group—5th-grade teachers
12–12:45	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12:45–1:45	Classroom observations	Classroom observations Focus group—Students	Focus group—Pre-school staff
1:45–2:45	Focus group—Non-instructional staff	Focus group—1st-grade teachers	Exit conference
2:45–3:45	Focus group—Leadership team (Planning Committee & CIP Team)	Faculty Survey Focus group—Specials	
Evening		Focus group—Parents	

Appendix D: Interview/Focus Group Protocol

Introduce Self

- Name
- *I am part of a team of specialists contracted by Learning Forward (formerly NSDC) to conduct a school quality review. My specialty areas are ...*
- Provide additional information about self—where from, current job, etc.

State Purpose of Review

Learning Forward was invited by your school to conduct a school quality review, which examines eight indicators of effectiveness: written curriculum; instructional program; student assessment; school leadership; professional development; student connectedness, engagement, and readiness; school environment; and family and community environment. We will be doing interviews/focus groups, classroom observations, a survey, and an analysis of documents to identify strengths and areas for improvement. A written report with the recommendations will be sent to the principal to share the results with the staff.

Set Ground Rules

- Be honest.
- Speak from your personal experience.
- Maintain confidentiality of what is said here in the group today.
- No comment you make will be associated with your name or grade level in any manner.
- Establish and honor the scheduled ending time.
- Allow time at the end for additional comments or questions.

Interview/Focus Group

- Try to ask as many of the written questions as possible and be consistent with the questions that are asked of different groups.
- Take careful notes and try to capture the exact words of the informants as they are spoken.
- Leave time at the end for informants to ask questions or make additional comments.

Thank informants at the end

We appreciate you taking time to answer our questions and share your perspectives.

Appendix E: Questions for Interviews/Focus Groups

Principal/Assistant Principal

1. Describe what a culture of trust and respect looks like for staff and students in a school.
 - a. At what level would you describe your school? Why?
 - b. What schoolwide approaches are in place to create a safe and welcoming environment conducive to learning for all students?

Rubric Code: Student Connectedness, Engagement, and Readiness and School Environment—7A, 7B, 8A, 8B, 8C, 8D, 8E, 8F

2. To what extent do administrators at this school create a collaborative environment that encourages staff to feel committed to the school and its success for all learners?
 - a. What are the challenges in creating a collaborative environment?
 - b. What are the successes that have occurred at this school? Why?

Rubric Code: School Leadership—4B, 4C, 4G

3. How well do teachers understand and teach the written curriculum?
 - a. To what extent do teachers have an opportunity to meet in grade-level and vertical teams to ensure alignment of the written and taught curriculum?
 - b. What are the consistencies/inconsistencies within and across grade levels relevant to teaching the written curriculum to all students?
 - c. What textbooks and instructional materials enhance the teaching of the written curriculum?

Rubric Code: Written Curriculum—1B, 1C

4. Describe student engagement to meet the needs of learners from all subgroups.
 - a. How do you see content delivered in multiple ways to engage all learners?
 - b. What response strategies most effectively meet their needs? Least effectively?
 - c. How do teachers activate students' prior knowledge or respond to lack of knowledge or experiences?

Rubric Code: School Environment—8A, 8D

5. To what extent do teachers employ a variety of formative and summative assessments?
 - a. How do teachers use the results from assessments to modify instruction or identify interventions to meet the needs of learners from all subgroups?

Rubric Code: Student Assessment—3B, 3C, 3D, 1D

6. Describe the professional learning opportunities available for teachers and other instructional staff at this school.
 - a. What is the focus of professional development at this school? How was the focus identified and by whom?
 - b. To what extent are student data used to make decisions about professional development?
 - c. When does professional development at this school take place (e.g. during the school day, after school, volunteer basis, mandated time)?
 - d. How has the content from professional learning opportunities at this school increased teachers' knowledge and skills about instruction that meets the needs of learners from all subgroups?

Rubric Code: Professional Development—6B, 6C, 6E

7. How do administrators at this school protect and monitor the use of instructional time? What impact does that have on instruction that meets the needs of learners from all subgroups?

Rubric Code: Instructional Program—2H

8. How does the school communicate with and engage families and the community in supporting student learning?

Rubric Code: Family and Community Involvement—9B, 9D

9. What else do you think we need to know about students, staff, and families at this school?

Teachers

1. How well do you understand and teach the written curriculum?
 - a. Do you have the opportunity to meet in grade-level and vertical teams to ensure alignment of the written and taught curriculum?
 - b. What textbooks and instructional materials enhance the teaching of the written curriculum?

Rubric Code: Written Curriculum—1B, 1C

2. How do you organize instruction to support clearly articulated and communicated learning targets?
 - a. What activities and assignments do you provide all students that are rigorous, challenging, and engaging?
 - b. What determines when and how you group or regroup students?

Rubric Code: Instructional Program—2B, 2C, 2D, 2E

3. To what extent do you employ a variety of formative and summative assessments?
 - a. When and how do you use the results from assessments to modify instruction or identify interventions to meet the needs of learners from all subgroups?

Rubric Code: Student Assessment—3B, 3C, 3D, 1D

4. Describe student engagement to meet the needs of learners from all subgroups.
 - a. How do you see content delivered in multiple ways to engage all learners?
 - b. What response strategies most effectively meet their needs? Least effectively?
 - c. How do you activate students' prior knowledge or respond to lack of knowledge or experiences?
 - d. How are character traits taught and reinforced as part of the instructional program?

Rubric Code: School Environment—8A, 8D, 8E

5. Describe your expectations for students from all subgroups making learning gains each year.

- a. What interventions occur if students don't meet the necessary learning gains?
- b. What support do you receive or need to increase your effectiveness in helping students make the necessary learning gains?
- c. How do you help students set high expectations for themselves to ensure they make the necessary learning gains?

Rubric Code: Instructional Program and School Leadership—2C, 4B

- 6. Describe the professional learning opportunities available for you at this school.
 - a. What is the focus of the professional development at this school? How was the focus identified and by whom?
 - b. How has the content from the professional learning opportunities increased your knowledge and skills about instruction that meets the needs of learners from all subgroups?
 - c. When do you and your colleagues plan and learn together to ensure that instruction and assessment meet the needs of learners from all subgroups?

Rubric Code: Professional Development—6B, 6C, 6E, 2G

- 7. What policies, procedures, and resources are available to support student performance for learners from all subgroups at this school?
 - a. What is the role of the school leadership in developing, implementing, and maintaining improvement efforts that are focused on student learning?
 - b. What is your role?

Rubric Code: School Leadership—4C, 4D, 4E

- 8. Describe what a culture of trust and respect looks like for staff and students in a school.
 - a. At what level would you describe this culture at your school? Why?
 - b. What schoolwide approaches are in place to create a safe and welcoming environment at this school conducive to learning for all students?

Rubric Code: Student Connectedness, Engagement, and Readiness and School Environment—7A, 7B, 8A, 8C, 8D, 8E, 8F

- 9. Describe how your school administrators create a culture of high expectations for all students.
 - a. How consistently are those high expectations adhered to throughout the school?

- b. How do these high expectations impact the effectiveness of how staff work with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students?

Rubric Code: School Leadership and School Environment—4B, 4C, 8D, 8G

10. How do you communicate with and engage families and the community in supporting student learning?

- a. To what extent does this communication and engagement with families and the community impact a positive attitude about the school and a feeling of being welcomed at the school?

Rubric Code: Family and Community Involvement—9A, 9B, 9D

Parents

1. To what extent do you and your child feel positive and welcomed at this school? Give specific examples.

Rubric Code: School Environment and Family and Community Involvement—8B, 9A

2. Describe different ways that you and the teachers communicate about your child's learning.

Rubric Code: Family and Community Involvement—9B

3. What kind of information do you receive to inform you about your child's academic performance and behavior in school? How do you use that information to support your child?

Rubric Code: Family and Community Involvement—9B, 9D

4. To what extent do you feel that staff at this school work effectively with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students and families? Give specific examples.

Rubric Code: School Environment—8D

5. Describe how high expectations are set by and for students to make the necessary learning gains each year.
 - a. What are your expectations of your child in making the necessary learning gains?
 - b. What support do you and your child need to make the necessary learning gains?

Rubric Code: School Leadership—4B

6. How does the school engage families and the community in supporting student learning?

Rubric Code: Family and Community Involvement—9D

7. What are some opportunities available to you to be involved and have a voice in your child's school experience?

Rubric Code: Family and Community Involvement—9C

9. What else would you like us to know?

Students

1. Describe what you think is best about your school. Give examples.
 - a. What subjects are most engaging and challenging to you? Why?
 - b. What are the most effective classroom activities that help you learn? What are the least effective?
2. What is high-quality work and how do you know?
3. What instructional materials, books, or lessons do you have access to that help you to better understand yourself and your family?
4. How does your teacher help you understand different cultures, languages, and ways of learning? How does this understanding help your learning?
5. How do you demonstrate what you know and are able to do?
 - a. What happens if you don't know?
 - b. What happens if you already know?
6. What ways do you interact with other students to learn in your classroom? How frequently?
7. What are the behavior expectations at your school?
 - a. How and when are you taught behavior expectations?
 - b. How are following the behavior expectations rewarded?
 - c. What are the consequences for not meeting the behavior expectations?
8. If you could celebrate one thing about your classroom or school, what would it be?
9. If you could change one thing about your classroom or school, what would it be?

Leadership Team

1. Describe your role as a member of the Planning Committee or CIP Team (e.g. planning, monitoring implementation).
1. How is school leadership shared among staff members based on knowledge and skills?
2. What professional development is available for you to build your leadership capacities?
3. What time is available for staff to collaborate within and across grade levels and with other instructional staff (e.g. special education teachers, ESL teacher, reading coach, enrichment teacher)?
4. To what extent do administrators create a collaborative environment that encourages staff to feel committed to the school and its success for all learners?
5. Describe to what extent a culture of trust and respect exists for staff and students at this school.
6. What schoolwide approaches are in place to create a safe and welcoming environment conducive to learning for all students?
 - a. What has been your role in initiating and monitoring consistency in the implementation of schoolwide approaches?
7. How does the school communicate with and engage families and the community in supporting student learning?
8. What is your role in ensuring that the written curriculum is taught, instruction is delivered in multiple ways to address the needs of learners from all subgroups, and a variety of assessments (formative and summative) are utilized to guide instruction and interventions?
9. Describe the professional development opportunities available at the school that address the weaknesses identified in the school improvement plan (CIP).
10. As a member of the leadership team, what do you want to celebrate as an accomplishment in meeting the needs of learners from all subgroups?
11. As a member of the leadership team, what is a change you would like to see happen this school year to impact teaching and student learning across the school?

Specials/Non-Instructional Staff

1. Describe what a culture of trust and respect looks like for staff and students at this school.
 - a. How has that culture been developed, nurtured, and sustained overtime?
2. What school-wide approaches are in place to create a safe and welcoming environment at this school conducive to learning for all students?
 - a. How are character traits (e.g. rules) taught and reinforced throughout the school?
 - b. How consistently are those rules followed by all staff and students?
3. Describe how school administrators and staff create a culture of high expectations for all students.
 - a. How consistently are those high expectations adhered to throughout the school?
 - b. How do these high expectations impact the effectiveness of how staff work with racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students?
4. Describe student engagement to meet the needs of all learners.
 - a. How are the diverse needs of students addressed through a variety of approaches to learning?

Appendix F: Innovation Configuration Map—Equity

Teacher

Desired Outcome 10.1: Analyzes the impact of attitude, background, culture, and social class on the teaching process.					
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Adjusts classroom instructional activities in light of student background, disabilities, culture, and SES. Participates in professional development that develops skills to make adjustments in instruction as a result of the impact of teacher attitude, background, culture, and social class on teaching. Discusses with colleagues the impact of culture and SES on the teaching and learning process. Teaches students the school code of conduct and customs to help them be successful in that context.	Participates in professional learning that develops understanding of the impact of teacher attitude, background, culture, and social class on teaching. Discusses with colleagues the impact of culture, disabilities, and SES on the teaching and learning process. Teaches students the school code of conduct and customs to help them be successful in that context.	Discusses with colleagues the impact of culture, SES, and social class on the teaching and learning process. Teaches students the school code of conduct and customs to help them be successful in that context.	Participates in professional learning that heightens the awareness of the impact of teacher attitude, background, culture, and SES on teaching. Believes that all students need to adopt middle-class standards.	Does not consider personal attitude, background, culture, and SES as part of the teaching process.	
Primary=11 Intermediate=8 Specials=3	Primary=4 Intermediate=5 Specials=5	Primary=2 Intermediate=2 Specials=2		Specials=1	

Source: Hord & Roy, 2003, p. 46.

Teacher

Desired Outcome 10.2: Develops skills that communicate high expectations for each student.					
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Develops relationships with students that encourage achievement. Makes a personal commitment to the success of all students. Participates in reciprocal classroom observations with colleagues focusing on high expectations. Uses a variety of instructional strategies that motivate all students to learn. Participates in professional development about how teachers communicate high expectations to students.	Participates in reciprocal classroom observations with colleagues focusing on high expectations. Uses a variety of instructional strategies that motivate all students to learn. Participates in professional development about how teachers communicate high expectations to students.	Uses a variety of instructional strategies that motivate all students to learn. Participates in professional development about how teachers communicate high expectations to students.	Participates in professional development about how teachers communicate high expectations to students. Understands and monitors classroom interactions with students that communicate expectations for high achievement.	Asserts that “all children can learn” but makes no substantive changes in the classroom schedule, curriculum, or instruction to support the learning of all students.	Believes all children are not capable of learning at high levels.
Primary=11 Intermediate= 8 Specials=1	Primary=4 Intermediate= 3 Specials=6	Primary=2 Intermediate= 3 Specials=3	Intermediate =1 Specials=1		

Source: Hord & Roy, 2003, p. 47.

Teacher

Desired Outcome 10.3: Establishes a learning environment that is emotionally and physically safe.					
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Teaches, reinforces, celebrates, and publicizes schoolwide themes of respect, caring, and safety that ensures the emotional and physical safety of all students.	Teaches and reinforces school rules that promote the emotional and physical safety of students.	Establishes a classroom learning environment that provides for the physical safety of students.	Establishes a learning environment that is focused on maintaining order.		
Primary=16 Intermediate=10 Specials=7	Primary=1 Intermediate=5 Specials=3	Specials=1			

Desired Outcome 10.4: Demonstrates respect and appreciation for students and families and for their cultural backgrounds.					
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Involves family and community members in developing classroom and schoolwide activities that promote an appreciation of cultural diversity. Develops and implements curriculum and instructional strategies that integrate information concerning the contributions made by students' cultural backgrounds.	Develops and implements curriculum that integrates information concerning the contributions made by students' cultural backgrounds.	Celebrates the holidays of the diverse cultural backgrounds of some students.	Demonstrates a limited understanding and appreciation of students' cultural backgrounds.	Does not view learning about family cultural backgrounds as important.	
Primary=8 Intermediate=4 Specials=5	Primary=8 Intermediate=8 Specials=5	Intermediate=1	Primary=1 Intermediate=2 Specials=1		

Source: Hord & Roy, 2003, p. 48.

Principal

Desired Outcome 10.1: Communicates high expectations for self and for all teachers and students.					
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Accepts no excuses for the lack of achievement by subgroups of students. Changes school schedules, curriculum, and use of staff time to support learning of struggling students. Expects teachers to change classroom practices to support the learning of struggling students. Encourages respectful dialogue among faculty regarding their role in helping all students learn. Emphasizes developing students' efforts, persistence, and resiliency. Challenges educators' underlying assumptions concerning the role of parents, SES, race, and background in student learning. Provides an ongoing system of staff development to enhance teacher skills and knowledge about teaching struggling students.	Encourages respectful dialogue among faculty regarding their role in helping all students learn. Emphasizes developing student effort, persistence, and resiliency. Challenges educators' underlying assumptions concerning the role of parents, SES, race, and background in student learning. Provides an ongoing system of staff development to enhance teacher skills and knowledge about teaching struggling students.	Challenges educators' underlying assumptions concerning the role of parents, SES, race, and background in student learning. Provides an ongoing system of staff development to enhance teacher skills and knowledge about teaching struggling students.	Provides an ongoing system of staff development to enhance teacher skills and knowledge about teaching struggling students.	Asserts publicly that "all children can learn" but makes no substantive changes in schedule, curriculum, or use of staff to support learning for students who are struggling.	Believes all children are not capable of learning at high levels.
Administrator=1	Administrator=1				

Source: Hord & Roy, 2003, p. 100.

Principal

Desired Outcome 10.2: Works with staff to understand the impact of attitudes on instruction and to modify classroom practices.					
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Schedules classroom coaching and follow-up discussions to ensure behaviors that communicate high expectations become part of daily practice. Supports development of new skills and attitudes related to holding high expectations for all students. Arranges for observation of classroom practices regarding how expectations are communicated to students. Provides learning opportunities to identify how educator attitudes, background, culture, and social class impact the teaching and learning process.	Supports development of new skills and attitudes related to holding high expectations for all students. Arranges for observation of classroom practices regarding how expectations are communicated to students. Provides learning opportunities to identify how educator attitudes, background, culture, and social class impact the teaching and learning process.	Arranges for observation of classroom practices regarding how expectations are communicated to students. Provides learning opportunities to identify how educator attitudes, background, culture, and social class impact the teaching and learning process.	Provides learning opportunities to identify how educator attitudes, background, culture, and social class impact the teaching and learning process.	Does not consider how educator attitude, background, culture, and social class impact the teaching and learning process.	
	Administrators=2				

Source: Hord & Roy, 2003, p. 101.

Principal

Desired Outcome 10.3: Establishes a school environment that is emotionally and physically safe for teachers and students.					
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Develops student and faculty responsibility for reinforcing positive behaviors within the school. Supports schoolwide themes of respect, caring, and safety, and ensures those themes are taught, reinforced, celebrated, and publicized in the classroom and in the school. Confronts both students and teachers who violate norms of respect, caring, and safety.	Empowers teachers to teach and reinforce school rules that promote emotional and physical safety. Confronts both students and teachers who violate norms of respect, caring, and safety.	Establishes a school environment that meets district expectations for ensuring student safety and focuses on maintaining order.	Establishes a school environment that focuses on maintaining order.		
Administrators=2					

Desired Outcome 10.4: Demonstrates respect and appreciation for students and families and for their cultural backgrounds.					
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Involves families and community in creating schoolwide activities related to the contribution and traditions of their cultures. Assists teachers in developing schoolwide investigations, curriculum units, and other activities that recognize the contributions of various cultures.	Participates with teachers to develop schoolwide investigations, curriculum units, and other activities that recognize the contributions of various cultures.	States publicly an appreciation for different cultural backgrounds of students and staff. Supports the celebration of holidays related to cultural backgrounds of students.	Demonstrates no understanding of or appreciation for the cultural backgrounds of students and staff.		
	Administrator=1	Administrator=1			

Source: Hord & Roy, 2003, p. 102.

Appendix G: Description of Reading and Mathematics Programs

Reading

The district has adopted *Responding to Reading: Making Meaning* and developed curriculum maps for reading. The curriculum maps are outlined in either a 4½-week section or a 9-week section per grade level. The curriculum map identifies big ideas (what students should understand) and essential skills and concepts (what students should be able to do)—objectives to drive mini-lessons. The curriculum maps also include materials (i.e. *Making Meaning* and suggested supplemental materials) and assessments (e.g. teacher observations, anecdotal records, student work, *Making Meaning* Individual Comprehension Assessment).

The purpose of *Making Meaning* is “to deepen and expand understanding of text through the implementation of reading strategies and conversation among peers.” The comprehension strategy application means “after each strategy is explicitly taught through a teacher read aloud and class discussion, students apply the strategy independently” (available at www.woodrige68.org/education/components/scrapbook/default.php?sectiondetailid=7360).

Mathematics

The district math curriculum is based on *Investigations*. Pacing guides were developed for each nine weeks per grade level, which outlines the topics, Alabama CoS objectives, primary focus/resources, daily data, games, and online games. Each curriculum unit is divided into investigations. The curriculum is designed to

- Support students to make sense of mathematics and learn that they can be mathematical thinkers;
- Focus on computational fluency with whole numbers as a major goal of the elementary grades;
- Provide substantive work in important areas of mathematics—rational numbers, geometry, measurement, data, and early algebra—and connections among them;
- Emphasize reasoning about mathematical ideas;

- Communicate mathematics content and pedagogy to teachers; and
- Engage the range of learners in understanding mathematics (available at www.investigations.terc.edu/library/developing/overview.cfm).

Appendix H: Best Practices for Tier I Core Instruction

What are best practices for reading instruction for Tier I?

IMPLEMENT	AVOID
Reading aloud to students	
<i>Making Meaning</i> lessons (K–5), <i>Fountas and Pinnell Phonics Lessons</i> (K–3), and supplemental resource lessons listed in pacing guide	Lessons from previously adopted basals or other core instructional materials that are not Board-approved
Time for independent reading with appropriately difficult text	Whole-class novels and exclusive whole-class reading activities
Children’s choice of their own reading materials	Teacher selection of all reading materials for individuals and groups
Children reading “just right” books	Children reading books that are too easy or too difficult
Exposing children to a wide and rich range of multi-leveled, multi-sourced literature	Relying on selections in basal readers
Teacher modeling and discussing his/her own reading process	Teacher keeping his/her own reading tastes and habits private
Instructional emphasis on comprehension and vocabulary development	Instructional emphasis on reading subskills
Teaching reading as a process through comprehension strategy instruction	Teaching reading as a single, one-step act
Social, collaborative activities with much discussion and interaction	Solitary seatwork
Grouping by interests or book choices	Grouping ONLY by reading level
Silent reading followed by discussion	Round-robin oral reading
Writing in conjunction with reading	Little or no chance to write about what is read
Making the reading-writing connection explicit to students (how to read like a writer and write like a reader)	No reference to writing elements during the reading block
Conferring with individual students once weekly (K–2) or biweekly (3–5) and providing documentation of conferences	Little or no conferring and documentation
Differentiating instruction for ALL readers by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administering reading assessments to guide instruction - Placing children in appropriate text - Increasing difficulty of text throughout the year - Providing small-group guided reading instruction and/or individual conferences - Providing enrichment projects and activities for high-end learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Little or no individual assessment - Children reading books that are too easy or too difficult - Children receiving little or no direct instruction
Teacher attention to students’ reading habits and attitudes	Teacher attention only to students’ reading levels and test scores

Source: Modified from Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005.

What are best practices for math instruction for Tier I?

IMPLEMENT	AVOID
<i>Investigations</i> lessons and supplemental resource lessons listed in pacing guide	Lessons from previously adopted math textbooks or other core instructional materials that are not Board-approved
Number Talks and Ten-Minute Math	Daily Oral Math, math boxes, other warm-up drills
Emphasizing reasoning about mathematical ideas	Exclusive emphasis on rote memorization
Teaching by questioning	Exclusively teaching by telling
Teaching math as a process	Teaching math as a series of procedures
Social, collaborative activities with much discussion and interaction (i.e. math games, group tasks)	Exclusively using solitary seatwork
Heterogeneous grouping	Homogeneous or ability grouping
Use of manipulative materials	Paper and pencil tasks only
Student use of multiple strategies	Single methods to find answers
Using multiple assessment techniques, including written, oral, conference, and demonstration formats	Using only written tests
Differentiating for ALL students by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Administering math assessments to guide instruction - Providing small-group instruction - Using math menus that provide appropriate tasks for all students - Using math centers that provide appropriate tasks for all students - Using technology - Providing enrichment projects and activities for high-end learners 	No opportunities for students who struggle or need more challenging instruction
Supporting students to make sense of mathematics and learn that they can be mathematical thinkers	
Engaging the range of learners in understanding mathematics	

Source: Modified from Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2005.

Appendix I: Alabama Definition of Professional Development

(1) Professional development means a comprehensive, sustained and intensive approach to improving all educators' effectiveness in raising student achievement.

(a) Professional development fosters collective responsibility for improved student performance and must be comprised of professional learning that:

(1) Is aligned with rigorous state student academic achievement standards as well as related local educational agency and school improvement goals;

(2) Is conducted among learning teams of educators, including teachers, paraprofessionals, and other instructional staff at the school;

(3) Is facilitated by well-prepared school principals and/or school-based professional development coaches, mentors, master teachers, or other teacher leaders;

(4) Occurs primarily several times per week or the equivalent of three hours per week; and

(5) Engages established learning teams of educators in a continuous cycle of improvement that:

(i) Analyzes student, teacher, and school learning needs through a thorough review of data on teacher and student performance;

(ii) Defines a clear set of educator learning goals based on the rigorous analysis of the data;

(iii) Achieves the educator learning goals identified in subsection (1)(a)(ii) of this rule by implementing coherent, sustained, and evidence-based learning strategies that improve instructional effectiveness and student achievement, such as lesson study and the examining of student work;

(iv) Provides classroom-based coaching or other forms of assistance to support the transfer of new knowledge and skills to the classroom;

(v) Regularly assesses the effectiveness of the professional development in achieving identified learning goals, improving teaching, and assisting all students in meeting challenging state academic achievement standards;

(vi) Informs ongoing improvements in teaching and student learning; and

(vii) May be facilitated and strengthened by external assistance.

(b) The process outlined in section (1) of this rule may be supported and strengthened by activities such as courses, workshops, institutes, networks, and conferences that:

(1) Address the learning goals and objectives established for professional development by educators at the school level;

(2) Advance the ongoing school-based professional development; and

(3) Are provided by for profit and non-profit entities outside the school such as universities, education service agencies, technical assistance providers, networks of content-area specialists, and other education organizations and associations.

Appendix J: Alabama Standards for Effective Professional Development

The following list of Standards for Effective Professional Development was adopted by the Alabama State Board of Education on June 13, 2002. These state standards are embedded in the NCLB definition of professional development in Title IX, Section 9101 (34). They should be used as a guide in developing your LEA Professional Development Plan and implementing activities under that plan.

Standard 1: Effective professional development organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school, the district, and the state.

Standard 2: Effective professional development requires knowledgeable and skillful school and district leaders who actively participate in and guide continuous instructional improvement.

Standard 3: Effective professional development requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

Standard 4: Effective professional development uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.

Standard 5: Effective professional development uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.

Standard 6: Effective professional development prepares educators to apply research to decision making.

Standard 7: Effective professional development uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.

Standard 8: Effective professional development applies knowledge about human learning and change.

Standard 9: Effective professional development provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate.

Standard 10: Effective professional development prepares educators to understand and appreciate all students, create safe, orderly and supportive learning environments, and hold high expectations for their academic achievement.

Standard 11: Effective professional development deepens educators' content knowledge, provides them with research-based instructional strategies to assist students in meeting rigorous academic standards, and prepares them to use various types of classroom assessments appropriately.

Standard 12: Effective professional development provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately.

Source: available at www.alex.state.al.us/leadership/Alabama%20Professional%20Development%20Standards.pdf.

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