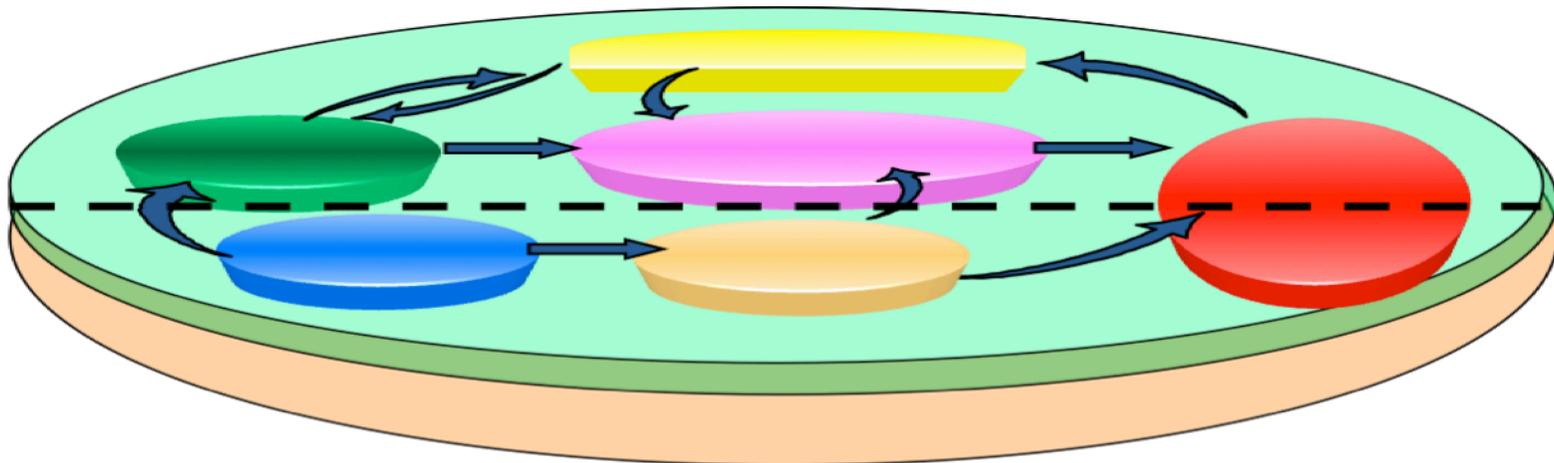


John Laidlaw Elementary School System Assessment Feedback Report

The following system assessment feedback report was developed for John Laidlaw Elementary School, Western Springs District 101, by the System Assessment Review Team of the Consortium for Educational Change.

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



This feedback report was developed reflecting on the indicators described on the next few pages. It is a response to written information provided by the school as well as from information gathered from interviews. It is not intended to represent the perspective of all school administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents. Its accuracy is dependent on the information presented and discussed.

The criteria around which we conducted our visit are listed below. It is a synthesis of the research from the Baldrige Performance Excellence Criteria, the Correlates of Effective Schools, the Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities, and Standard Bearer. They represent the four best practice, continuous improvement frameworks. This school uses the Professional Learning Community Framework as its format.

Focus on Learning: We acknowledge that the fundamental purpose of our school is to help all students achieve high levels of learning and therefore we are willing to examine all of our practices in light of their impact on learning.	
<i>A Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum</i>	
A.	We set student learning expectations for staff to build shared knowledge regarding common core state standards, district curriculum guides, trends in student achievement, and expectations for the next course or grade. This collective inquiry enables each staff member across a grade or department to clarify what all students must know and be able to do as a result of every unit of instruction. The curriculum is horizontally and vertically aligned.
B.	We expect that each teacher give priority to the identified essential learning targets in every unit of instruction to guarantee that each student has equal access to those learning targets in all classrooms for the grade level or course. Text and other resources are aligned to the essential learning targets. Pacing guides identify what should be taught during each grading period.
C.	We expect that every teacher is able to assist each student and their parents (families) know the essential learning targets so they can assist in monitoring performance in relationship to those targets.
<i>Formative and Summative System of Assessments</i>	
D.	We ensure there is a balance between common, formative assessment data to guide instruction and learning; and common, summative assessment data to reflect on teaching, programs, interventions, and periodic student progress reporting.
E.	We ensure there is frequent and timely feedback regarding the performance of our students on team, school, district, and state assessments.
F.	We expect each teacher to monitor the learning of each student on all common essential learning targets on a timely basis through a series of district-developed and/or school/team-developed common assessments that identify what each student knows and needs to learn next.
G.	We expect teachers to use assessment data aligned to the student learning targets to differentiate instruction and respond to students when they demonstrate they have not learned or have learned and are ready for more challenge.
H.	We regularly recognize and celebrate individual and collective student growth, mastery, and success aligned to goal accomplishments.
<i>School-Wide Systematic Interventions and Enrichments</i>	
I.	We expect Instructional activities are engaging and differentiated to meet individual and small group needs within the classroom.
J.	We ensure a system of interventions that guarantees each student will receive additional time and support for learning if he/she has not demonstrated mastery of grade level or course essential learning targets.
K.	We ensure that students are required rather than invited to devote the extra time and receive the additional support until they are successful in their learning
L.	We ensure teachers extend and enrich the learning of students who have mastered common essential learning targets so every student is challenged.
M.	We ensure staff has sufficient training and follow-up support to address the needs of all student subgroups through Response to Intervention systems.
<i>Examine Policies and Procedures To Ensure a Focus on Learning</i>	
N.	We expect all teachers to have a thorough knowledge of their subject matter, possess expertise in a wide range of effective instructional strategies, and demonstrate commitment to closing achievement gaps.
O.	We expect the learning environment of the school to be safe, respectful, engaging, and support a climate of high expectations for all students to be successful learners.
P.	We provide opportunities for teachers to examine homework, grading, discipline, recognition, etc. to ensure systematic and systemic implementation that supports and encourages learning.
Q.	We expect all teachers to clarify the criteria by which they will judge the quality of student work, and practice applying those criteria until they can do so consistently.
R.	We provide sufficient training and follow-up support to assist teachers with expectations in the alignment of essential learning targets, assessments, and instruction.
S.	We organize resources of people, time and money with a focus on learning as opposed to a focus on teaching.

Focus on Collaboration: We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose of learning for all students. We cultivate a collaborative culture through the development of high performing teams.

Building Shared Knowledge and Leadership: Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals

- A. We have developed and deployed mission, vision, values (collective commitments) and goals to set clear direction. There is a process in place for school-wide improvement planning. The school improvement plan is focused on refining teaching practices to improve student learning. Action plans describe the steps to be taken toward attainment of goals.
- B. We expect that behaviors and actions of all staff support the vision, mission, values, and goals of both the school and the district. The improvement plan is put into action with fidelity.
- C. We set clear direction and communicate a "Big Picture" so that everyone sees how current and new initiatives connects to that direction and how those initiatives align with district direction. Everyone understands how this/her work contributes to school improvement.

High Performing, Collaborative Teams

- D. We expect work to be done through collaborative teams in which members work together interdependently to achieve common goals. We have developed and adhere to team norms in conducting our work.
- E. We provide time during the contractual day and school year for teams to meet. We support both vertical and horizontal team collaboration. We address transition and articulation from elementary to middle to high and beyond.
- F. We expect teams to be accountable for the decisions they make. Teams expect all students to make substantial learning growth each year. Teams expect all students to express confidence in their ability to grow and improve each year. Teams monitor and report student learning results and make adjustments when appropriate. Structures and processes are in place for shared decision-making.
- G. We provide sufficient training and follow-up support for team members to have the skills, tools, and strategies to make teamwork efficient and effective. We monitor and report team effectiveness and efficiency on a regularly scheduled basis.

Creating Intentional Collaboration

- H. We promote a culture/teaching environment of personal growth and high performance. Extensive communication and collaboration ensures that all stakeholders are a part of the decision-making process. There is evidence of a high level of trust, respect and morale throughout the school community.
- I. We create a safe environment to report and compare data so as to learn from one another and share best practices. We promote collaboration rather than competition. The school recognizes and celebrates individual, team, and school success aligned to its goals. There is evidence that staff satisfaction is high.
- J. We expect that team time to be used engage in collective inquiry on questions specifically linked to gains in student achievement. Each team is called upon to generate and submit products, which result from its work on its goals and targets related to student learning. Our work and the work of teams are focused on the four PLC questions.
- K. We ensure professional development is job-embedded and ongoing. It explicitly addresses the needs of staff and is focus on assisting staff to improve students' learning results. It has adequate resources, reflecting that ongoing, job-embedded professional development is a district priority.

Fostering Strong Partnerships

- L. We foster collaborative partnerships between and among the district office and all schools to ensure decisions are made in the best interests of students.
- M. We foster a two-way communication system between and among the district office and all other schools that includes an exchange of essential information and feedback related to that information.
- N. We foster collaborative partnerships with parents (families) and the community to engage them in decisions about the progress of school, school and student goal attainment. There is evidence that parent (family) satisfaction is high.
- O. We foster a two-way communication system with parents (families) and the community that includes an exchange of essential information and feedback related to that information.

Examine Policies and Procedures To Ensure a Focus on Collaboration

- P. We enforce district job expectations and provide meaningful evaluation systems so that each employee can self-assess as well as receive supervisory assessment of their strengths and opportunities for improvement in relation to district expectations. The evaluation system addresses new state and federal requirements.
- Q. We organize and allocate resources of people, time and money with a focus on collaboration.

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

Developing SMART Goals

A. School, team, and individual staff goals are specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and timely (SMART). They address gaps identified through key data sources that focus improvement efforts.

B.	The school improvement plan and process serves as the centerpiece for examining how the school performs in comparison to district and state requirements.
C.	We align key data indicators and measures throughout the system—district to school to team/department/ to individual--- throughout the use of a systematic reporting system. The school's improvement plan goals align to the key data indicators and measures where performance is below expectations or requirements.
D.	Administrative performance goals align with district and/or school improvement plan and related SMART goals
E.	Teacher performance goals align with district, school, and/or team improvement plan and related SMART goals.
F.	Student performance goals align with assessment data and information that defines what they need to learn next (Common Core State Standards).
<i>Creating a Results Orientation</i>	
G.	We expect all staff to use assessment data to: a) identify students who need additional time and support for learning; b) discover strengths and weaknesses in their own job performance; c) measure and report progress toward goals, and d) define action plans.
H.	We create a safe data culture so students and staff feel comfortable sharing their results in an effort to learn from others;
I.	We view, monitor, and report progress to all stakeholders on a regular basis to identify what to celebrate and what to focus on next in terms of improvement.
J.	We expect staff to assist students take responsibility for their own learning by collecting data to monitor and track their performance compared to high expectations and performance results of others.
K.	All students know where they are in the progression of steps to meet their learning targets and what evidence will be required to demonstrate mastery of the next step.
L.	We collect, analyze, prioritize, and act upon student, parent, and staff satisfaction data to be certain it is addressing the needs and requirements of our stakeholders.
<i>Improving Results</i>	
M.	We have evidence to show our trend achievement results are improving compared to the past. Our achievement results include measures of growth.
N.	We have evidence to show our student cohort achievement results are improving from grade to grade. Our achievement results include measures of growth.
O.	We have evidence to show our achievement results are improving compared to others (state and other benchmark schools).
P.	We have evidence to show our results have narrowed or closed achievement gaps between groups of students.
Q.	Our school meets adequate yearly progress requirements as defined by federal and state legislation. Our students are ready for the next level (elementary to middle, middle to high school, high school to college/career readiness,
<i>Examine Policies and Procedures To Ensure a Focus on Results</i>	
R.	We examine policies and processes related to data collection, management and analysis to be certain they are effective and efficient. Data is easily accessible and user-friendly in its format.
S.	We benchmark our performance against similar and high performing schools.
T.	We organize and allocate our resources of people, time and money with a focus on results.

SYSTEM ASSESSMENT SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

The school responded to a set of questions aligned to the three criteria research best practice areas listed above. The external team reviewed the Professional Learning Community effective practices and identified

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

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

On the first day the Team interviewed:

- Principal and Student Services Administrator
- Team Leaders
- Association Leaders
- Parent Organization Leaders
- Chairs/ Co-Chairs
- Non-instructional Support Staff
- Instructional Support Staff
- Problem Solving Team/ Response to Intervention
- Cafeteria Staff
- Building Self-Assessment Team

On the second day, the Team interviewed:

- Parents
- Students
- Teachers
- Classroom visits

The schedule was set by school leaders. Representatives interviewed reflected the demographics of the school. Approximately 210 stakeholders were interviewed.

Following interviews, the Team reviewed its findings and prepared an oral report to give the school a preview of overall strengths and opportunities for improvement aligned to the framework and criteria.

The week following the visit, the Team communicated electronically to prepare the final written feedback report. This final report was sent to the school within seven days of the visit.

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

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

Laidlaw System Assessment team members.

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The following outlines the overall strengths and overall opportunities for improvement. The overall strengths are celebrations. They are findings with deep implementation and therefore consistent across the various grade levels within the schools.

The overall opportunities provide a focus for where the continuous improvement journey will move next. They are not looked at as negative. They are findings without deep implementation and therefore vary across the various grade level and classroom within the school.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL STRENGTHS

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

investment of resources in improving performance results.

Focus on Learning Strengths:

- △ **Students enjoy coming to school and feel their teachers and principal care about them and assist them to be successful. Parents are very proud of the school and its sense of “community.”**
- △ **The school has transitioned over the past few years to having a focus on learning as opposed to a focus on teaching. Decisions are made in the best interests of students. The school is very student-centered.**
- △ **CLI has assisted K-8 language arts teachers transition to the Common Core State Standards. Language Arts has a curriculum document that includes summative assessments aligned to targets, with formative assessments being added currently. Pacing guides have been provided. Teachers are collaborating around unit plans. Essential learning targets for language arts are posted in most classrooms.**
- △ **The district and school are focusing on student growth in addition to achievement based analysis of assessment results. MAP tests are given in fall, winter and spring. Results are used to determine interventions, extensions or differentiation activities. AIMSweb assessments are used to progress monitor.**
- △ **There is a wide range of supports available for students in all tiers. Teachers use assessment data to differentiate instruction and respond to students when they**

demonstrate they have not learned or have learned and are ready for more challenge. There are intervention and enrichment personnel in math and reading to assist students and teachers. There are collaboration opportunities with resource teachers, the social worker, and the psychologist.

- △ The **learning environment is safe, respectful, engaging, and supports a climate of high expectations for all students** to be successful learners. There are minimal discipline problems.
- △ **Social-emotional learning is valued by everyone.** Students are surveyed three times a year. Student climate data is examined and acted on.

Focus on Collaboration Strengths:

- + The **principal provides dynamic leadership.** The office has an open door policy and is approachable and responsive. Teachers work well together to make decisions in the best interest of students.
- + **Morale is healthy and positive.** Staff members enjoy working with one another. There is a satisfied, positive learning community. Data supports a healthy climate. There is a culture of open communication among teachers, parents and students to ensure achievement and growth success. **Teachers feel comfortable sharing resources, ideas, strategies and data.**
- + **Time is provided during the contractual day and school year for teams to collaborate.** There is transition and articulation from preschool to Kindergarten

and from 5th to 6th grade. Grade level teachers report collaboration time is purposeful.

- + Professional development is ongoing. **Strands and required PD within the first four years of teaching in the district focus on required training and support for what the district has identified everyone needs to do well together.** Most of the staff has attended PLC training.
- + Communication takes place through team minutes, shared Google Docs and the curriculum and instruction internal website. **Weekly staff and parent communication is provided by the school. Teachers provide weekly communication to parents.**
- + **Parents are generally well satisfied with the quality of their child's educational experiences.** Parents find the school safe, nurturing and a positive environment. Parents recognize the dedication of staff. Parents recognize they can always get a response to their concerns.
- + **Parent organization committees provide opportunities for parent engagement.** Volunteerism is happening in the primary grade classrooms.
- + The district and school are **experimenting with "pay for performance"** based on all staff student learning results following the last contract negotiations.

Focus on Results Strengths:

- ✦ The district and school **embraces continuous improvement.**
- ✦ Laidlaw has **two SMART Goals aligned to District Goals: Social Emotional Learning and Reading Growth. Grade level goals align with school goals.** Those goals have measures and targets. Strategies or action plans are being developed by grade level teams.
- ✦ There are **training opportunities for staff aligned to the use of MAP data.** There is **one data document, easily accessible to staff, that gives a data over time picture for each student's performance.** It is useful for problem solving meetings and making decisions for differentiation and interventions.
- ✦ There is evidence to show **student achievement results are high and improving.** Student achievement results are exceptional on both state and nationally-normed tests. Laidlaw **consistently has met Adequate Yearly Progress expectations.**
- ✦ The district and school collect, analyze, prioritize, and act on student, parent, and staff satisfaction data to be certain it is addressing the needs and requirements of our stakeholders. **Satisfaction results are excellent.**
- ✦ Student **attendance exceeds state averages.** There is low student mobility.
- ✦ **Class sizes are well below state averages** with the exception of 5th grade. (instructional assistants are provided for those classes)

- ✦ **Discipline data indicates few issues or problems.**
- ✦ **Operating and instructional costs per pupil are relatively low.**

SUMMARY OF OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES

Among all of the opportunities for improvement within each category and for all core values, the assessment team finds these opportunities

to be highest in priority. It is hoped that addressing these opportunities will yield a high future return on investment of resources in improving performance results.

Focus on Learning Opportunities for Improvement:

- △ Teachers not on the CLI committee are struggling to implement the new requirements. There are some misunderstandings/expectations about the new implementation process. The implementation is overwhelming.**
- △ Some, but not all, other subject area unit plans are based on essential learning targets. K-8 math teachers are beginning their transition to the Common Core State Standards. There is a five-year cycle to examine other areas.**
- △ Teachers do not always get regular feedback about student performance in pull-out interventions or enrichments. They do not know what is happening in the interventions. Interventions and enrichments are not aligned to essential learning targets. Students are not directly receiving additional help and support aligned to what they have not learned in the classroom.**
- △ The self-assessment identified regularly recognizing and celebrating individual and collective student growth, mastery and success aligned to goal accomplishments as an opportunity for improvement.**

- △ The self-assessment identified **examining homework, grading, discipline and recognition processes to ensure systematic and systemic implementation as an opportunity for improvement.**
- △ The self-assessment identified **providing sufficient training and follow-up support to assist teachers with expectations in the alignment of essential learning targets, assessments and instruction as an opportunity for improvement.**

Focus on Collaboration Opportunities for Improvement:

- △ It is unclear if school mission, vision, values remains at the forefront. **There is not a formal school leadership team** who serves as keepers of the school improvement plan and ensures shared decision-making to keep the mission and vision alive.
- △ There are many state and district initiatives and some staff members have a difficult time understanding the interconnectedness or “Big Picture” of these initiatives. The self-assessment identified that **while there is work toward collaborative goals, sometimes the carry through is not there. “We focus on a new initiative without knowing that the current initiative is being implemented with fidelity.”**
- △ The self-assessment identified **providing sufficient training and follow-up support for team members to have the skills, tools, and strategies to make**

teamwork efficient and effective as an opportunity for improvement.

- △ **Support staff has needs for training, recognition, and clear communication around expectations** when working directly with a student outside the classroom.

Focus on Results Opportunities for Improvement:

- △ **Space utilization is a concern identified by parents, staff and students.** Current space limitations are an obstacle to both learning climate and learning results.
- △ **School improvement planning has been administratively driven. The school improvement plan and process does not serve as the centerpiece for examining how the school performs in comparison to district and state requirements.** No specific schools have been identified as benchmark schools with whom to compare results.
- △ **The self-assessment indicated that school leaders have goals and action plans aligned to district goals but current goals have not been explicitly stated to staff. SMART goal lack indicators.**
- △ **Student performance goals do not align with assessment data and information that defines what they need to learn next (Common Core State Standards).** While some students are goal-setting, it is not a systematic process across all subjects and grade levels.

△ Parent satisfaction data is not disaggregated by school. It is unclear if parent satisfaction data is reported and acted on. Parents are not engaged on school academic decision making committees. Parents have access to grades on PowerSchool, but **grades are not tied to mastery of essential learning targets.**

NEXT STEPS

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

Priority: Focus on Learning

Staff needs training and follow-up support for the systematic alignment of essential learning targets, assessments and instruction. They need protected time to collaboratively design unit plans and share strategies for implementation. They need to develop common, formative assessments aligned to the unit targets. That assessment data aligned to the essential learning targets must drive instruction, intervention, and enrichment. They need an on-line technology web-based center for storing unit plans, resources and products. These products need to be developed in all curricular areas. Fine Arts programs need to understand their relationship in supporting core subjects while being valued for their contribution in the development of the whole child. Instructional support staff need to be included in the training and follow-up support.

Priority: Collaborative Culture

Staff needs training and follow-up support to develop the knowledge, tools and strategies to make collaboration and team time effective and efficient. There is little follow-up from the PLC Summit training. Teams do not reflect on their effectiveness and efficiency. Team time is not directly aligned with the PLC four questions. Teams do not benchmark against other similar or high performing schools. Support staff needs to be included in the training and follow-up support as much as possible to improve communication and collaboration.

Priority: Results Orientation

Laidlaw Elementary School needs to address the use of time and space to maximize

learning conditions and results. The building schedule does not provide for an intervention block. Grade level teams are not always teaching the same subject at the same time to maximize differentiation opportunities across the grade level. Support specialists and other personnel have difficulty connecting with grade level team collaboration meetings and problem solving meetings. The school is utilized to the maximum and does not have the space necessary to extend learning opportunities for all students. The school is utilizing every possible space to deliver programs and services to students. Teacher are using carts and going from room to room. Students are not able to receive full services due to space limitations.