

5 Key Areas for True School Improvement

The medical field is unique in its use of a common set of protocols for discovering the root causes of problems and its commitment to teaching all incoming members how to analyze data to arrive at consistent and appropriate diagnoses. In *Curing Student Achievement: Clinical Practice for School Leaders*, authors Philip Ebrandt and Bruce Hayes have translated the clinical practice model for education as a foundation to drive more effective inclusion of stakeholders, use of diagnostic and prescriptive data for strategic planning, and improved outcomes.

As they write, “Specific protocols can be easily learned and implemented in daily practice to uncover real root causes, treat them effectively, and record and share successful strategies across the profession of education.”

In a separate five-year study, reported in *AASA's School Administrator* magazine, (“Beyond Compliance to Performance Improvement,” also authored by Ebrandt and Hayes) the application of the clinical practice protocols resulted in double-digit achievement growth in Language Arts/Literacy (LAL) and math each year, increased stakeholder trust, improved student engagement, and improved teacher planning.

Through the application of the new protocols, “Every instructional staff member [learned to] generate and analyze data... to discover the root causes of behavior, identify the obstacles to better performance and help every student achieve at high levels.”

The volume of knowledge encompassed in clinical practice is, however, overwhelming. Just as a patient needs a doctor's help interpreting diagnostic results and navigating medical options and their anticipated effects on complex, interrelated systems, educators are entitled to a guide to help them understand weaknesses and explore prescriptions for improvement.

As former superintendents, we understand the complexity of planning improvement and stakeholder engagement. To make the process navigable, we have developed VitalInsight™ technology to automate and standardize application of the clinical protocols. VitalInsight™ assessment of the strengths and vulnerabilities of research-based best practices in a district or school results in 20–25 best practice remedies targeted to specific, identified vulnerabilities across key performance sectors.

Below are five performance sectors with questions and areas of exploration designed to help determine how you can improve performance in your district and/or school.

1

Adult and Student Learning

Student learning is the ultimate goal of schools, but learning doesn't begin or end with students. It must also include every adult stakeholder in your school and district. From professional learning to improve practice and administrative systems to providing a model for students, every adult stakeholder also has a responsibility to learn.

The Interactive Performance Systems (IPS) that collectively constitute this Sector include:

- Human Resource Excellence (HRE);
- Planning and Planned Change (PPC);
- Professional Learning and Instruction (PLI); and
- Programs, Services, and Curricula that Accelerate Learning (PSCAL).

The purposes of the **Adult and Student Learning Sector** include reaching agreement on what students should learn and the processes that will be used to plan, implement, and measure progress in student learning.

Emphases of the Sector include hiring the personnel most likely to help school, faculty, and students achieve learning goals and the continuing training and professional development to lead students to optimized learning.

- ☐ Do you have a curriculum for faculty professional development that supports student growth?
- ☐ Are results of supervision and evaluation used in the planning of professional development?



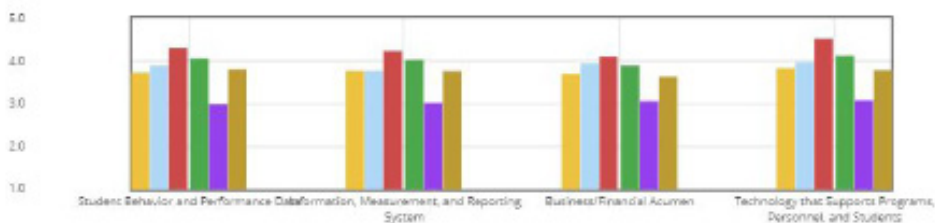
2

Data & Metrics

For stakeholders to effectively plan for an improved future, they must understand current performance and what needs to be done to achieve improvement goals. Unless performance can be measured and new programs and initiatives assessed, any effort to improve outcomes will be unsubstantiated and without meaning. We understand, however, that the amount of data available to educators is overwhelming and ever-growing. The goal of this Sector is to make the flow of data manageable and useful by effectively integrating it with planning and decision-making processes.

- ☐ Do you have tools and technology to collect and analyze data quickly at all levels of your school or district?
- ☐ Are recommendations for change informed and supported by performance data?

Data and Metrics



Bayside High School
Copper Cove Middle School
Bayside Middle School
Oak Ridge Elementary
Bayside District Service Center
Bayside Elementary School

*View from the IPS

The interactive performance systems composing this section include:

- Business and Financial Acumen (BFA);
- Information, Measurement, and Reporting System (IMRS);
- Student Behavior and Performance Data (SBPD); and
- Technology that Supports Programs, Personnel, and Students (TECH).

The purpose of this sector is to align technology with a variety of performance data to establish and document evidence for decisions at board, district, school, team, classroom, and individual levels.

Emphases of the **Data & Metrics Sector** include producing and managing usable data quickly (in “real time”) to benefit individual and classroom decisions and to accumulate significant data trends to impact decisions at other levels.

3 Parent & Stakeholder Engagement

Research has been clear for a long time that students achieve at higher levels when they are actively and continually supported by their parents, teachers, peers, and community. The district and school organization is also dependent on the active and energetic engagement of a broad selection of community stakeholders. We understand the complex web of relationships education leaders must navigate, and that the nature of individual relationships may shift depending on context. Our focus on the various systems at work in this Sector clarifies what needs to be done to successfully engage stakeholders in performance improvement efforts.

The systems found within the **Parent & Stakeholder Engagement Sector** include:

- Customer Focus (CF);
- District/School-Wide Culture (D/SWC); and
- Staff, Student, and Parent Interactions (SSPI).

The purposes of this section are establishing home, school, and community partnerships; establishing trust and eliminating misunderstandings that prevent full commitment to improvement efforts; and creating unity among stakeholders for the activities that produce desired outcomes.

Emphases include knowing students well to be able to diagnose learning issues, and to prescribe appropriate interventions that will accelerate learning and ensure that every student is supported by the primary learning team of parent, student, and teacher.

- Are parents and community stakeholders purposely and positively engaged at all levels?
- Do faculty members, students, and parents work collaboratively to support student learning?



- Are district and school practices and personnel aligned with research on best practices?
- Are recommendations of teams easily and widely implemented by staff?

4 Shared Leadership

While formal leadership roles are delegated to administrators, all employees have the duty to lead in areas of responsibility and expertise. As a vital component of performance improvement processes, restricting leadership to the exercise of a few individuals limits its effectiveness and impedes learning and improvement processes.

The interactive performance systems within the **Shared Leadership Sector** include:

- Alignment of Work Processes (AWP);
- Effective and Integrated Governance (EIG);
- Leadership (LDR);
- Structures that Nurture Improvement (SNI); and
- Team Work and Problem Solving (TWPS).

The purposes of this sector are to promote and use leadership skills at the board, central office, school, team, and classroom levels to align practices that address performance gaps, and to achieve higher levels of success.

Emphases are placed on organization designs and team use of data and the clinical practice problem-solving cycle to remove obstacles to learning and improve performance.

5

Safety & Security

Learning is a personal and a collective process that demands self-discipline, risk-taking, and broad levels of shared expectations among participants. Research is clear that when adults and students are at risk from inadequately protected facilities, disruption of learning routines, physical and cyber threats, and absence of emotional and physical support, learning is unnecessarily limited. The overarching goal within this Sector is to establish high levels of vigilance for the safety and security of adults and students to ensure the best possible supportive learning environment.

The component interactive performance systems of this sector include:

- Safety and Security (SFTY); and
- Universal Acceptance of Expectations (UAE).

The purposes of this sector include establishing an appropriate environment for learning, devoting substantial time to analysis and perfection of plans to prevent unwanted behaviors and intrusions, establishing programs and practicing procedures to deal with unwanted situations, and communicating during and after unwanted situations.

The emphases of this Sector are the five dimensions of [Safety and Security](#): Digital Safety, Emergency Preparedness and Management, Emotional & Behavioral Health, Physical Campus Security, and Physical Health & Wellness.

- Do you have systems and processes to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment, free of unwanted disruptions?
- Are both students and adults confident that they know what to do in a variety of emergency circumstances?

School and district performance is not just dependent upon evidence-based best practices, but the dynamic interrelation of best practices within and between multiple performance sectors. With VitalInsight™ technology providing diagnoses of vulnerabilities and several best practice prescriptions to be implemented by supportive teams, your district will be performing better than ever in no time.

**Would you like to learn more about how we are helping leaders just like you?
Please [schedule a conversation](#) with us today!**

