LEADERSHIP for LEARNING:
Characteristics of High-Performing DISTRICTS

CURRICULUM & EXPECTATIONS
- Hold and communicate high expectations and the conviction that all students can be successful learners.
- Act in ways that communicate the importance of education and life-long learning.
- Establish district and school policies and practices that guarantee all students will experience equity and access to high-quality curricular and instructional programs and review policies periodically to determine their effect on equity and student performance. [Establish guidelines rather than mandating specific actions. Correct any counterproductive policies and practices.]
- Conduct careful planning and monitoring to ensure continuity, consistency, and equity in the curriculum districtwide.
- Conduct curriculum alignment and review efforts to ensure high quality, consistent classroom instruction and effective school practices of team teaching, integrated curriculum, multage grouping, cooperative learning, experiential learning, flexible scheduling, and performance assessments.
- Ensure that curriculum is clearly written, articulated (pre-K through 12), and used consistently by teachers.
- Ensure that curriculum is high-quality, mapped, aligned with standards and assessments, and prioritized to better meet student needs.
- Provide direct support for school and classroom curriculum efforts (including consultation services, planning time, resources, and training) with Directors taking an active role in collaborating with schools.
- Ensure that curriculum incorporates higher-level thinking, workplace skills, and is integrated and developmentally appropriate.
- Ensure that curriculum incorporates diversity and multicultural perspectives and promotes respect and empathy among students of different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.
- Ensure that curriculum priorities are supported by adequate and appropriate materials, technology, space, facilities, staff, planning time, and professional development opportunities including mentoring.
- Maintain effective ways to communicate curriculum expectations to parenting adults and community members.
- Ensure that teachers collaborate to develop integrated, and connected instructional units.

INSTRUCTION
- Ensure that teachers learn and use a wide range of research-based, student-centered teaching strategies and differentiated approaches.
- Ensure that teachers require students to transfer learning by requiring its use in varied academic situations (and subjects) and in more authentic learning experiences (and projects) requiring students to assume real-world roles.
♦ Ensure that students experience productive and appropriate learning experiences with substitute teachers.

♦ Ensure that schools have the capability to carry out prevention activities and support high-needs students and families in accessing needed services.

♦ Ensure that educators in all schools have the extra support necessary for high needs students to meet state standards and to achieve school success.

ASSESSMENT
♦ Give direction to developing benchmark assessments (aligned with prioritized curriculum) that are given at regular, designated intervals.

♦ Provide professional development on appropriate use of assessment results to adjust instruction to meet student needs and to incorporate “safety nets” for students to improve results.

♦ Provide support and technical assistance to schools in developing and using alternative assessments (requiring the use of higher level thinking skills and application of knowledge) to supplement traditional tests.

♦ Communicate assessment results to parenting adults in addition to conferencing and goal setting.

♦ Report assessment results in longitudinal records and/or portfolios that are accessible to teachers.

ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES
♦ Ensure that policies and practices ensure a seamless and successful transition for students as they cross grades, school levels, or schools in the district.

♦ Provide support and assistance to schools in developing a range of options to encourage parenting adults and community members to be actively involved in the education of children.

♦ Establish and implement policies supporting parent and community member involvement and collaborate with community agencies (i.e., health and social services) to meet the survival needs of families.

♦ Collaborate with schools finding ways to involve business, industry, and labor in helping to identify important learning outcomes and in providing opportunities to apply school learning in workplace settings.

♦ Ensure that students leave our schools, exhibiting traits of productive citizens and self-directed, lifelong learners who can successfully use the essential “tools” of thinking and productive living.

LEADERSHIP
♦ Encourage and support the establishment and development of school-based management/leadership and delegate considerable decision making authority to schools.

♦ Communicate to the school community what school-based management is including the reasons for it, the benefits of it, who should participate, and how they can become involved.

♦ Provide the necessary support (i.e., guidelines about roles, responsibilities, and procedures); assistance; resources (i.e., financial, time, access to research, technical assistance), professional development, evaluation, and monitoring to ensure effective functioning of school leadership teams.
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT
♦ Review regulations and requirements governing construction, remodeling, and maintenance of school facilities to ensure that optimal physical environments for effective teaching and learning.

♦ Use research to make decisions that affect teaching and learning including ones about school size. [Discontinue policies and practices that are not supported by research.]

♦ Ensure that school environments for learning are aligned with research (e.g., smaller structures over larger ones to promote higher student achievement, attitudes, and behavior as well as higher educator morale). [Explore options or alternative structures as needed to meet the needs of students who are currently not successful.]

♦ Ensure that school learning environments are welcoming and supportive with clear and consistent incentive and discipline policies in place and that classroom learning environments are orderly, supportive, and promote academic risk taking, and positive attitudes toward learning.

♦ Provide assistance and support to schools in developing and implementing preventive programs (i.e., dropout, pregnancy, drugs, gangs, and violence) as well as enforcing policies by enacting approved negative consequences.

SCHOOL & SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT
♦ Ensure that administrative leadership and school faculties are fully committed and working persistently to making high expectations for student achievement a reality.

♦ Provide assistance in collecting, organizing, managing, and analyzing data (at the system and school levels) to identify high-priority student needs and productive actions to address the needs.

♦ Guide in designing well-aligned, system-level activities that focus on long term, incremental improvement of instructional effectiveness—which give direction to specific goals for individual schools.

♦ Establish expectations for participation of faculty and staff in TSIP improvement efforts and building administrators and others in district improvement planning and implementation.

♦ Hold administrative leadership and school faculties accountable for results on school and system improvement through regular monitoring, interactive feedback/problem solving sessions, and recognizing effort and improvement.

♦ Provide schools adequate and appropriate guidance, resources, support, and encouragement to achieve school improvement priorities.

♦ Establish clear processes to allocate resources and ensure their use to support staff performance and student achievement.

♦ Protect schools from political or economic turbulence that might disrupt teaching and learning and hinder improvement efforts.

♦ Encourage, support, and monitor improved results and goal-attainment efforts of school administrators.

♦ Communicate student performance successes; recognize and reward contributions, improvements, and excellence; host celebrations at the district level that are models of what should occur in each school.
♦ Establish and maintain effective communication with the school board regarding progress on TSIP and system improvement efforts.

♦ Follow guidelines for effective team performance focused on working collaboratively for the benefit of students (serving as a model for school leadership teams).

♦ Exhibit open communication, professional risk taking, collaborative decision making, and timely follow through ensure districtwide emphasis on improvement priorities.

♦ Review recruitment, selection, and promotion policies periodically to assure that effective school and central office administrators are hired and retained.

♦ Review human resource policies periodically to assure that excellent teachers are hired and retained including members of cultural minority groups especially in culturally diverse settings.

♦ Ensure that novice teachers and administrators are given strong support through effective mentoring programs and practices and other enriching professional development opportunities.

♦ Ensure that all educators are given strong support through enriching professional development opportunities and effective forms of peer assistance from teacher leaders serving as instructional experts.

References:
