

# Livingston Elem

## Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan

### Category/Correlate Quality Indicator Notes

#### 1 Curriculum

The school develops and implements a curriculum that is rigorous, intentional, and aligned to state standards.

##### 1.1 Curriculum

##### 1.1a **There is evidence that the curriculum is aligned with the Montana Content and Performance Standards and includes Indian Education for All and local tribal standards if applicable. GUIDANCE: Consider how accurate IEFA curriculum is infused across all content areas and every grade level.**

Current strengths: the Livingston Public Schools (LPS) Curriculum Map (see, [www.livingston.k12.mt.us](http://www.livingston.k12.mt.us) "Our District," "Curriculum and Instruction," "Curriculum Map") contains local, teacher-written, grade-level articulation of goals and objectives derived from Montana Content and Performance Standards. The advent of Essential Learning Expectations from OPI will be particularly helpful in this process. As each content area undergoes renewal, goals and objectives include Indian Education for All standards at in each applicable course and at every grade level.

There is room for improvement in getting all content areas in to the map, and in mapping units that address the objectives stated in the curricular framework.

##### 1.1b **The district initiates and facilitates discussions among schools regarding curriculum standards to ensure they are clearly articulated across all levels (P-12), with particular attention to the inclusion of local cultural knowledge (as part of a living, constantly adopting system).**

The district curriculum director initiates and facilitates discussions among schools, organizing vertical and horizontal teams to articulate curricular objectives across all levels, P-12. The use of technology to map the curriculum via shared document has allowed for a higher degree of vertical and horizontal collaboration. Long an unwritten or informally recognized value of many teachers and administrators in the district, in 2009 the Board formally adopted a research and design philosophy statement that includes goals for the development of place-based, project-based learning. Thus, past and present curricular renewal includes cultivation and use of local cultural knowledge. For a specific example, the recent social studies curriculum renewal included a shift in grades K-3 from holidays, biomes, and continents to a place-based emphasis, and much of the framework K-12 now includes reference to inclusion of local knowledge.

The P-12 articulation process might be further improved by finding a way to increase the amount of meeting time available for research and discussion.

##### 1.1c **The district initiates and facilitates discussions between schools in the district in order to eliminate unnecessary overlaps and close gaps.**

The district curriculum director uses Excel as a curriculum mapping tool in order that vertical and horizontal teams may quickly access curricular objectives across content areas and grade levels, in order that gap and redundancy analysis may take place efficiently. The map also contains columns for units, vocabulary, and resources; as teams complete these cells, it will also be possible to avoid gaps and redundancies in

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instruction and resource usage.

The mapping and gap and redundancy analysis processes might be further improved by finding ways to increase the amount and regularity of time available for such work. The concept of “grade level” schools will be investigated further to determine whether planning time issues might be better served in that design.

**1.1d There is evidence of vertical communication with an intentional focus on key curriculum transition points within grade configurations (e.g., from primary to middle and middle to high).**

Transition discussions and planning for activities to facilitate transition take place between building principals and at vertical team meetings. The curriculum director acts as a liaison between buildings and levels, sharing information about course emphases and instructional strategies. The curriculum map itself is consistent and accessible by all teachers at all grade levels in the system.

The facilitation of student transition may be further improved by increasing the regularity of analysis and discussion of the issue.

**1.1e The school curriculum provides specific links to continuing education, cultural awareness, life and career options. GUIDANCE: If applicable, consider what curriculum changes have been necessary in light of the state's Montana High School Initiative and/or the district's Carl Perkins Plan.**

Links to continuing education, cultural awareness, life and career options are expanding in the Livingston Public School curriculum. Currently, this is taking place formally as a function of adherence to the requirement for Pathways for Perkins funding, and through an increased emphasis on engagement and relevance in the curriculum renewal process. Special education teachers and counselors have engaged in post-secondary transition studies within the last year, and our physical education teachers have worked to develop some advanced lifetime activity offerings. High school students have been able to participate in internships, and guest speakers from the science profession have been widely used in middle school science programs.

The district is committed to further improvement of continuing education, cultural awareness, life and career option planning for students, seeking to add more objectives for these to the curricular framework, to enhance real-world relevance in instructional models, and to provide increased opportunity to explore such concepts via academically rigorous project or place-based learning.

**1.1f There is in place a systematic process for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the curriculum. GUIDANCE: Consider the development and revision cycle to insure that the district and school curriculum is continually updated.**

The district plans to renew curriculum on a five-year cycle, and the schedule for renewal is published with the curriculum map. Renewal begins in January of each year. Utilizing an appreciative inquiry process, the K-12 content area (vertical) team under renewal meets to consider what is working in the status quo and to review current trends and research in best practice. Representatives from each grade level then collaborate to draft a vertically-articulated, standards-referenced curricular framework for the content area. Once the final draft is finished, the team begins to work on scope and sequence and

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resource identification. Ideally, the goal is to complete the renewal by December of the year in which it began.

The district might further improve the renewal process by increasing the capacity of faculty to engage Excel to access the map, and by creatively finding funding sources that permit the district to support the renewed curricular framework.

- 1.1g** The curriculum provides access to a common academic core for all students. **“Common academic core – that is culturally responsive and available to all students.” GUIDANCE: If applicable, consider what specific steps are being taken to close the achievement gap and ensure that American Indian students have access to a rigorous, common academic core?**

Each and every curricular articulation in the district curriculum map begins with the learning-for-all lead, “Each student at this grade or in this course will be able to . . .” Additionally, the district has taken strides to assure equality of access to learning opportunity, so that all students can access the common academic core.

The district can further improve students’ access to the common academic core by constantly increasing the fidelity of implementation and alignment.

## **2** Evaluation/Assessment

The school utilizes multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs and support proficient student work.

### **2.1** Evaluation/Assessment

- 2.1a** Classroom assessments of student learning are frequent, rigorous and aligned with Montana’s Content and Performance Standards. **GUIDANCE: Consider how local assessments are designed and used to assess classroom implementation of IEFA.**

Teachers and administrators are working toward the identification or development of formative assessment tools that can point out student needs and provide for constant monitoring of progress toward learning objectives. Among these tools are the Pearson Success Tracker online math assessments and DIBELS reading assessments. We feel that a key strength of the Success Tracker mathematics assessments is the way in which student progress through content in the series and in the classroom can be measured against mastery of skills that will be tested by the CRT, thus, providing alignment between the taught, tested, and learned curricula. Sharon Griffin’s Number Worlds assessment and intervention program is being investigated, as it shows promise for K-2. Other reading comprehension assessments, such as MAP testing, are currently under review. Many teachers and administrators feel strongly that high-quality assessments are in many cases the missing link between instruction and standards-based curriculum.

The district can constantly improve assessment by keeping abreast of the best information about the validity, reliability, and applicability of screening, diagnostic, and placement tests, and by promoting and facilitating professional development in the

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- 2.1a Classroom assessments of student learning are frequent, rigorous and aligned with Montana's Content and Performance Standards. GUIDANCE: Consider how local assessments are designed and used to assess classroom implementation of IEFA.**

utilization of formative assessments.

- 2.1b Teachers collaborate in the design of authentic assessment tasks aligned with the standards and relevant to the school culture.**

Teachers in the district have long valued opportunity for authentic assessment; this value has been formally recognized in a Board philosophy statement which advocates development of Research and Design instructional models, including project-based, place-based, and/or multidisciplinary learning. The goal is to maintain rigor while elevating relevance; that is, to be successful, projects intended to provide opportunities for authentic reading, writing, or math tasks must involve not only a project for relevant application, but also, substantial quantities of high-quality reading, writing, or math practice. The district curriculum director promotes the use of rubrics for performance-based assessments of mastery of overarching understandings in the curriculum.

The district can further improve the application of authentic assessments by promoting and facilitating professional development in the use of rubrics.

- 2.1c Students can articulate the academic expectations in each class and know what is required to be proficient.**

In most cases, students receive a syllabus, course outline, open disclosure form, or an outline of grade-level expectations. While the curriculum map is accessible to students and parents, it is likely not widely referenced by them, as the intended audience is the professional educator. Instead, students require clear information from their instructors as to academic expectations and their individual standing toward meeting those expectations at any given time. Many teachers are developing and sharing rubrics with students to convey a picture of proficiency. The district has engaged Katie Burke from OPI in professional development in the use of rubrics, as it is felt that student understanding of what is required to be proficient could likely be enhanced by more widespread use of such tools.

The district may further improve students' knowledge of academic expectations and proficiency indicators by helping teachers to find ways to make those explicit.

- 2.1d Test scores are used to identify curriculum gaps.**

CRT summative scores are currently analyzed to identify gaps in the written or taught curriculum. For example, from item analysis and disaggregation of data we know that many students struggle with concepts leading to understanding of fractions, ratios, proportions, and percents. Additionally, screening tests this year indicated many students had difficulty with rounding.

The district can further improve the use of test scores to identify curriculum gaps. There is a need to develop or to identify more high-quality benchmark and formative assessments for such purposes. As a specific example, an 8th-grade mathematics teacher recently used a released-item CRT as a pretest and post-test for progress in his class, and noted a mismatch between the instructional materials and the content in the released items, for

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**2.1d Test scores are used to identify curriculum gaps.**

which he will adjust and supplement his instruction. There may also be a need to identify professional development opportunity in test score interpretation, perhaps enlisting the services of a consultant such as Ken Stuker, Helena consultant.

**2.1e Multiple assessments are specifically designed to provide meaningful feedback on student learning instructional purposes. GUIDANCE: Consider how the academic progress of American Indian students is monitored to ensure they receive appropriate instructional support.**

Constant monitoring of academic progress of each and every student is a thing the district can improve on by identifying the most efficient and effective formative and benchmark assessments. As an example, Dr. Russel Gersten of the 2008 National Math Panel reports that meta-analysis of highest quality research suggests that math fluency is a poor predictor of math comprehension, unlike the correlation that exists between reading fluency and reading comprehension. Thus, the district intends to explore use of AIMSweb comprehension probes and Number Worlds comprehension assessments in addition to the AIMSweb digit fluency tests.

**2.1f Performance standards are clearly communicated, evident in classrooms and observable in student work.**

A concise version of grade-level expectations for math learning, termed “ins and outs,” is posted in each classroom.

However, to promote making visible the agreed-upon learning expectations for each grade level and content area is something the district curriculum director hopes to improve.

**2.1g Implementation of the state-required Assessment Program is coordinated by school and district leadership.**

The curriculum director is also the assessment coordinator for the MontCAS CRT and CRT Alternate. Principals set schedules for the CRT within each building.

While It seems to many teachers and administrators that OPI could further improve the validity of the assessment if it required all districts to deliver the CRT in the same fashion, on the same days, under the current autonomy in scheduling, the district will seek to optimize the test taking environment to allow students to perform at their best.

**2.1h Samples of student work are analyzed to inform instruction, revise curriculum and pedagogy and obtain information on student progress.**

To develop and to regularly implement (formative) assessment of student work that leads to differentiated intervention (taught curriculum and pedagogy) is an area in which it seems any district can and must constantly improve to respond to changing student needs.

**3 Instruction**

The school's instructional program actively engages all students by using effective, varied, and research-based practices to improve student academic performance.

**3.1 Instruction**

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#### 3.1 Instruction

**3.1a There is evidence that effective and varied instructional strategies are used in all classrooms. GUIDANCE: If applicable consider what changes in instructional strategies have been necessary in light of the state's Montana High School Initiative, the state's RTI Initiative and or the district's Carl Perkins Plan.**

Instructional strategies are varied, and many teachers are using concepts derived from Differentiated Instruction, Response to Intervention, brain-based strategies, and computer-assisted formative assessment to individualize instruction.

To further improve the responsiveness of instructional strategy to student performance and need, the district is currently seeking to identify an evaluation tool with a rubric that helps everyone to identify and to assess the metrics of high quality instruction. To make recommendations about such a tool could be a function of school instructional leadership teams.

**3.1b Instructional strategies and learning activities are aligned with the district and school learning goals, and assessment expectations for student learning and specific cultural needs.**

The LPS curriculum map provides the opportunity to do unit and lesson planning in reference to district and school learning goals. Particularly with respect to the CRT, it may be necessary to revamp some instruction to meet assessment expectations. To align instruction with specific cultural needs, such as poverty, ethnic ideals, and youth culture, may be among the most challenging, yet, effective, ways teachers across the district might adjust instruction.

**3.1c Instructional strategies and activities are consistently monitored and aligned with the changing needs of a diverse student population to ensure various learning approaches and learning styles are addressed.**

The Livingston Public School District has conducted needs assessment and monitoring of instruction aimed at meeting the needs of a diverse and dynamic student population. Outcomes have been measures to improve instruction for low-income students through professional development with Ruby Payne AHA! Processes presenters and measures meant to increase student engagement via the development of project-based learning models.

To further improve alignment of instructional strategies and activities to changing student needs requires constant attention, as technological, economic, and cultural shifts present the district with a diverse array of learners.

**3.1d Teachers demonstrate the content knowledge necessary to challenge and motivate students to high levels of learning. GUIDANCE: Consider whether teachers have sufficient background knowledge regarding IEFA.**

Teacher content knowledge is currently not assessed formally or prescriptively by the district, except as measured by certification, participation in professional development, and as apparent indirectly through products such as student achievement and the high quality of the ideas and writing in the curriculum map, a teacher-authored document.

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- 3.1d Teachers demonstrate the content knowledge necessary to challenge and motivate students to high levels of learning. GUIDANCE: Consider whether teachers have sufficient background knowledge regarding IEFA.**

Nonetheless, the district views strong content knowledge of subjects taught by the teacher as paramount to challenging, motivating, responsive, creative, effective instruction. The district salary schedule provides general incentive for teachers to further their formal education, though it is not prescriptive about content domain.

The district could assist teachers in constant and efficient renewal and acquisition of content knowledge by identifying formative, prescriptive assessments, then promoting and facilitating targeted individual professional development and continuing education.

- 3.1e There is evidence that teachers incorporate the use of technology in their classrooms.**

Use of technology to share curricular objectives, for instruction, and for assessment, in classrooms is not universal, though it is prevalent. Every teacher in the district has access to a computer, and most of those who prefer to use visual displays, such as projectors, have one in the room or have access to one. The district constantly seeks to integrate technology more fully through the use of interactive displays such as student computers, whiteboards and clickers, though cost is inevitably a limiting factor. The district desires for infrastructure to keep pace with demand.

- 3.1f Instructional resources (textbooks, supplemental reading, and technology) are sufficient to effectively deliver the curriculum. GUIDANCE: Consider whether instructional materials, including textbooks and supplemental materials, have been reviewed for bias.**

A hope for the LPS Curriculum Map is that it may be utilized to make certain that resources support the goals for skills and understanding in the curricular framework. Some required instructional materials have not been reviewed or approved by the Board at all, perhaps an oversight, or, a thing deemed impracticable given the vast array of materials and the need to stay current. District policy requires that the board approve textbooks. Some materials are outdated; for example, some social studies texts currently in use (2009) have copyrights from the early 1990's. Replacement cost will once again constitute a limiting factor. However, resources have typically undergone a vetting process for effectiveness, relevance, curricular fit, and to avoid bias.

- 3.1g Teachers examine and discuss student work collaboratively and use this information to inform their practice.**

Collaborative discussions about student work to inform practice take place in team meetings and regularly in some courses and grade levels, but this is not universal throughout the district. A pressing question before our professional development committee is how we might find time and money to facilitate and to sponsor such collaborative time in a way that does not disrupt instructional time in a way that is disproportionate to the benefit of the sharing of information and planning.

- 3.1h There is evidence that homework is frequent and monitored and tied to instructional practice.**

In some cases, the district has asked that teachers assign less, rather than more, homework, in order that students learn new concepts at school where misconceptions can be avoided before they are practiced. Alfie Kohn's notions about the effectiveness of

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**3.1h There is evidence that homework is frequent and monitored and tied to instructional practice.**

homework have been considered against research indicating that targeted homework that constitutes practice of concepts learned in class can be beneficial. Thus, the district requests that homework be purposeful, that it reinforce concepts learned in class, that it receive high-quality feedback, and that it be utilized to inform instruction.

**4 School Culture**

The school/district functions as an effective learning community and supports a climate conducive to performance excellence.

**4.1 School Culture**

**4.1a There is leadership support for a safe, orderly, culturally sensitive and equitable learning environment (e.g., culture reviews/school opinion surveys).**

Leadership promotes a safe, orderly, culturally sensitive and equitable learning environment. Policy, handbooks, protocol, vision statements, and procedure all clearly speak to the prime importance of safety. Teams survey school climate, and principals conduct due process hearings with referred students as just two means to maintain a just and safe learning environment for all. The commitment to a safe, orderly, culturally sensitive and equitable learning environment is embodied in the district mission statement; "The educational mission of the Livingston School District, in partnership with the community, is to provide the opportunity for all students to learn, in a safe environment, the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed in order to become life-long learners and contributing citizens in a diverse society."

The district might further improve the school culture through promotion and facilitation of continued or advanced professional development in areas such as emotional intelligence or culture of poverty.

**4.1b Leadership creates experiences that foster the belief that all children can learn at high levels in order to motivate staff to produce continuous improvement in student learning.**

It is the shared belief of district leadership that it is essential to create experiences that foster the belief that all children can learn at high levels in order to motivate staff to produce continuous improvement in student learning. Currently, school and district leaders promote experiences such as this crafting of the 5YCEP and the Effective Schools training that informed it; professional development in brain research that can aid in understanding of the ways different brains acquire skills and information in different ways; exposure to educational opportunities that include strategies for making research-based and data-based decisions for school improvement; and exposure to strategies for formative assessment and differentiated instruction.

The district seeks to further promote the belief that all children can learn at high levels through constant monitoring of achievement and by making known clear evidence of gains made through student and teacher efforts.

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**4.1c Teachers hold high expectations for all students academically, culturally, emotionally, physically and behaviorally. This is evidenced in their practice.**

LPS teachers maintain high expectations for student achievement. While some express the doubt that every subgroup at every grade level could attain 100% proficiency in math and in reading on the CRT, teachers nonetheless uphold high expectations for all. The challenge to teachers and administrators continues to be to identify and to refine relationships, resources, instruction and assessment that facilitate the maintenance and elevation of high expectations.

**4.1d Teachers and non-teaching staff are involved in both formal and informal decision-making processes regarding teaching and learning.**

Through vertical and horizontal team discussions, teachers and administrators engage in formal and informal decision-making processes regarding teaching and learning. In ways that incorporate a broader school culture, the food service director, facilities director, administrative assistants and transportation director have been involved in planning and facilitating project-based learning. The greatest roadblock to such efforts is meeting time; hence, it is a necessity to work toward a solution to this problem.

**4.1e Teachers recognize and accept their professional role in student success and failure.**

When students fail to meet formal or informal measures of success in the classroom, teachers face the difficult task to strike a healthy balance between looking inwardly at practice, and outwardly, at the validity of the measure and at the child's home environment, previous years' instruction, and individual abilities. Administrators share with teachers the obligation and desire to constantly improve school effectiveness through curricular and instructional alignment, parental and community outreach, and professional development. However, this response focuses on the aspect of instruction that the individual teacher can affect directly, that being the formative assessment and instructional planning for each and every student during class time, differentiated to the greatest possible extent for students' diverse backgrounds, learning profiles, and readiness.

Teachers with the greatest sense of self-efficacy in their approaches to formative assessment and instruction, who view student success as a function of skill development, rather than of inherent ability, and who are most effective at increasing individual student achievement, are also those most likely to embrace their professional role in student success and failure. These efficacious teachers likely view reports of student failure not as punitive indicators of their performance, but, as important, useful information about the specific aspects of their own instruction and assessment most worthwhile to develop.

Similarly, success indicators such as those prescribed by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) are viewed as valid and non-threatening to those who interpret such measures as useful information about student performance, and who feel confident that they can utilize formative assessment and can alter and diversify instruction to move students toward higher achievement. While it is true that teacher, school, and system autonomy are directly related to CRT test scores and graduation rates under NCLB, the district promotes interpretation of such success and failure indicators as useful measures of student engagement, skill, and knowledge, of great value to professionals who embrace their role in student success and failure.

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**4.1f The school intentionally assigns staff to maximize opportunities for all students to have access to the staff's instructional strengths.**

The district recognizes the authority to schedule and to assign classes as an essential tool for the principal, as instructional leader, to maximize student learning opportunity.

**4.1g Teachers communicate regularly with families about individual student's progress (e.g., engage through conversation).**

With exception of parent teacher conference times, and widespread, grade 3-12, usage of the online Parent Access Support System (PASS), the district currently lacks a formal measure of the frequency of teacher/parent communication.

**4.1h There is evidence that the teachers and staff care about students and inspire their best efforts.**

In remarking on the highly subjective determination as to whether there exists evidence that teachers and staff care about students and inspire their best efforts, it is well to note that to maintain high expectations for student performance is as consistent with caring about students as it is to make an accommodation for extenuating circumstances.

Perhaps the truest measure of the extent to which teachers care about students and inspire their best efforts is the time outside the school day that so many teachers spend helping students succeed, and this is common throughout the district.

As reflective practitioners, always seeking to strengthen relationships and motivation, teachers may find it beneficial to ask this question of students and parents. In a 2008 appreciative inquiry session with Bliss Brown, members of the community, parents, and some students remarked on ways that they felt LPS teachers showed compassion and inspired students to do their best; this was not looked on as a deficit or a thing in need of improvement.

**4.1i Multiple communication strategies and contexts are used for the dissemination of information to all stakeholders.**

While the district maintains communication via standard channels, such as the district website, email, letters, dissemination to teams and committees, and meetings, the sharing of information, alerts, and reminders with all stakeholders continues to be an issue of concern. A problem frequently mentioned by faculty and staff is the scarcity of time for meetings. Meetings called during the instructional day have the undesirable effect of interrupting instructional time, while attendance at meetings called outside the instructional day is optional by contract.

A solution may be heavier reliance on technology for asynchronous information sharing.

**4.1j There is evidence that student achievement is highly valued and publicly celebrated in a manner that is culturally appropriate (e.g., displays of student work, assemblies).**

LPS teachers, administrators, coaches, and advisors go to great lengths to celebrate and to advertise student achievement via communication to the press, assemblies, displays, performances, and announcements. To improve even further in this area, teachers have suggested more descriptive narrative of student achievement, better trophy displays, and more showcases of student work.

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- 4.1k The school/district provides support for the physical, cultural, socio-economic, and intellectual needs of all students, which reflects a commitment to equity and an appreciation of diversity through policies, curriculum and instruction. GUIDANCE: Consider how the learning environment reflects the implementation of IEFA.**

Through standard and supplemental programs available through Title I A, Title II A, Title II D, and Title IV A, the district provides support for the physical, cultural, socio-economic, and intellectual needs of all students. Throughout the district, learning for all is a priority second only to student safety, nutrition, and wellness. Policy and practice assure equity and appreciation of diversity in curriculum, instruction, guidance, and rule. We know through brain research that serving the intellectual needs of students requires high emotional intelligence among educators and an emotionally safe environment for children.

The district is committed to constant improvement in its support for the physical, cultural, socio-economic, and intellectual needs of all students through constructive dialogue, professional development, and resource allocation.

#### **5 Student, Family, Community Support Programs/Services**

The school/district works with families and community groups to remove barriers to learning in an effort to meet the intellectual, social, career, and developmental needs of students.

##### **5.1 Student, Family, Community Support Programs/Services**

- 5.1a Families and the community are active partners in the educational process and work together with the school/district staff to promote programs and services for all students, based on high expectations and Montana Content and Performance Standards. GUIDANCE: If applicable, consider how your district/school has partnered with tribes and/or American Indian educators for successful implementation of IEFA.**

To foster school / parent collaboration is a requirement of Title funding and of schools in improvement status under No Child Left Behind. The curriculum director has become more aware of this through the process of completing Title reports and applications, and via the requirements for parent notification under NCLB.

- 5.1b Structures are in place to ensure that all students have access to all the curriculum (e.g., school guidance).**

The academic curricular framework is intended for all students in a particular grade or course. The school guidance curriculum is available to all students through direct contact with counselors. The curriculum for conduct knowledge and skill is explicit in policy, handbooks, open disclosures and syllabi. The district could further improve universal student access to "all" the curriculum by identifying and formalizing those expectations that are currently implicit or presumed to be understood.

- 5.1c The school/district provides organizational structures and supports instructional practices to reduce barriers to learning. GUIDANCE: If applicable, consider what outreach efforts your district/school has employed to specifically increase collaboration and communication with families/communities of American Indian students to address their needs.**

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- 5.1c The school/district provides organizational structures and supports instructional practices to reduce barriers to learning. GUIDANCE: If applicable, consider what outreach efforts your district/school has employed to specifically increase collaboration and communication with families/communities of American Indian students to address their needs.**

The district partners with the Park County Special Education Cooperative and utilizes Title funding to reduce barriers to learning. The district follows a RtI-like system of tiered intervention in which teachers adjust their instruction to accommodate student needs to the best of their ability before students are considered for intervention in an alternative setting. Specifically, Title I funds pay for math and reading blocks and for supplemental instructional time K-5, while Title II is utilized to reduce class size and to pay for professional development to identify and implement instructional models that will help differentiate instruction effectively for low-achieving groups and subgroups. The district could further improve the structures and supports to instructional practice to reduce barriers to learning through further exploration of differentiated instruction, techniques for formative assessment and intervention, and of brain-based practice.

- 5.1d Students are provided with a variety of opportunities to receive additional assistance to support their learning, beyond the initial classroom instruction. GUIDANCE: If applicable, consider which supplemental services and programs have been put in place to specifically ensure American Indian students have increased academic success.**

All schools are working toward changes in schedule to permit students who need extra instruction in reading or in math to receive that opportunity. Homework programs and the LINKS for Learning after school program provide additional assistance to support student learning.

- 5.1e The school maintains an accurate student record system that provides timely information pertinent to the student's academic and educational development.**

The district maintains a Schoolmaster database for accurate, up-to-date student records. This system can continue to improve as it is implemented to greater fidelity.

## **6 Professional Development**

The school/district provides research-based, results-driven professional development opportunities for staff and implements performance evaluation procedures in order to improve teaching and learning.

### **6.1 Professional Development**

- 6.1a There is evidence of support for the long-term professional growth needs of the individual staff members. This includes both instructional and leadership growth.**

The district currently sets aside six pupil-instruction related (PIR) days for teacher professional development, and five full-release days for additional professional development. The district supports and encourages teachers to attend professional educators' conferences in October, but also approves alternative proposals that fit curricular and instructional goals. However, financial support for travel, lodging, and registration fees for nationwide conferences has been stymied by economic shortfall, as

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- 6.1a There is evidence of support for the long-term professional growth needs of the individual staff members. This includes both instructional and leadership growth.**  
professional development funds have been removed from the general fund, along with resource line items, to preserve staffing, the retention of highly-qualified, skilled, devoted personnel being recognized as of utmost value to student success. The district salary schedule incentivizes continuous professional growth. The district-supported teacher and administrator attendance at the Lezotte Effective Schools trainings is an example of the way LPS promotes instructional and leadership growth.

NCLB requires, and CRT test scores indicate, a need to constantly strengthen communication arts and mathematics instructional and formative assessment skills across the district, including interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary strategies.

- 6.1b The school has an intentional plan for building instructional capacity through ongoing professional development. GUIDANCE: Consider what professional development plans have been created to ensure individual teacher and school-wide IEFA implementation efforts are implemented and assessed. If applicable consider what professional development plans have been created to ensure individual teacher and school-wide implementation of the state's Montana High School Initiative, the state's RTI initiative and/or the district's Carl Perkins Plan.**

The district's intentional professional development plan could be said to have two threads; one, to enhance student engagement through the development of project-based learning, which requires professional development in instructional methods such as rubric use, project planning, and differentiated instruction; and the other, the building of instructional capacity through professional development in content-related best practice, e.g., a recent 2-day workshop on math and the brain with Dr. Rob Velin, and vertical and grade-level team meetings. The district could further improve professional development planning by making the intentional plan better known by the entire staff.

Owing to the perception of a mandate to correct a deficit in treatment, and with earmarked IEFA general fund allocations, IEFA professional development receives special attention among faculty at LPS. IEFA efforts are implemented and assessed by teacher teams with assistance from principals and the curriculum director.

- 6.1c Staff development priorities are set in alignment with goals for student performance and the individual professional growth plans of staff.**

With the NCLB requirement to make constant progress toward 100% proficiency in reading and in math, this has become the top academic priority of the district. Thus, professional development should align with goals for increased student performance in reading and in math, including interdisciplinary / multidisciplinary support for such goals.

With a graduation rate of 78% as calculated for AYP purposes, another K-12 priority for LPS is to prepare and to engage students better in order to constantly improve graduation rates; hence, a portion of the district-sponsored professional development is aimed at increasing both the relevance and the rigor of learning activities. Similarly, the district acknowledges the fundamental importance of the student/teacher relationship to academic success, and supports activities aimed at staff development in areas such as social / emotional intelligence and multicultural awareness. Staff development priorities align with these aims. The district could improve alignment of professional development with goals for student performance and the individual professional growth plans of staff by making this plan more explicit.

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**6.1d Plans for school improvement directly connect goals for student learning and the priorities set for the school and district staff development activities.**

In accordance with state and federal rule, LPS convenes a professional development committee to review past offerings and to recommend future ones. It is the hope that the curriculum map may facilitate quick reference to curricular goals. However, much of professional development relates to finding and implementing the best instructional strategies to help students meet objectives in the curricular framework. In recent years, the district has promoted a safe and nurturing theme, and a project-based learning theme, which have been addressed through professional development. In the future, it is hoped that clear definition of the components of the school improvement plan will inform the selection of professional development activities.

**6.1e Professional development is on-going and job-embedded. Specific to the learning community.**

At a minimum, teacher certification requires continuing education. However, the sort of on-going, job-embedded professional development described by Sparks (1994) is the sort that the district aspires to engage in. This would be learning of a sort that occurs as teachers engage in their daily work activities, and might include peer coaching, mentoring, professional learning teams, and action research.

**6.1f Professional development planning shows a direct connection to an analysis of student achievement data.**

The district has focused more attention on math professional development in an attempt to improve math achievement scores. Disaggregation shows that economically disadvantaged students struggle more on average in reading, math, and science than do economically advantaged students. Thus, some professional development has specifically targeted interventions that work for students of low socio-economic background. To further disaggregate achievement data would help the district to more clearly define professional development needs.

**6.2 Professional Growth and Evaluation**

**6.2a The school/district provides a clearly defined evaluation process.**

The evaluation process is currently under scrutiny. The district hopes to identify a comprehensive tool to identify and to formatively evaluate strong instructional practice, drawing on the method popularized by Danielson & McGreal (Teacher Evaluation To Enhance Professional Practice), and on the lead-learner/assessment-centered approach advocated by DuFour (ASCD May, 2002).

**6.2b Leadership provides the fiscal resources for the appropriate professional growth and development of certified staff based on identified needs.**

The district provides fiscal resources for professional development within the limits of funding available through state and federal school funding and competitive grants. In 2009, the district made the decision to move professional development funds out of the general fund in order to preserve staffing; hence, professional development is now funded through Title I, Title II A, Title II D, and through other federal, state and private grants.

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**6.2c The school/district effectively uses the employee evaluation and the individual professional growth plan to improve staff proficiency.**

The district has used an evaluative tool in the past that administrators, board members, and teachers feel should be replaced by a more effective formative evaluation tool that provides teachers with clear, meaningful feedback regarding current strengths and avenues for continuous improvement.

**6.2d Leadership provides and implements a process of personnel evaluation which meets or exceeds standards.**

Leadership provides and implements a process of personnel evaluation that meets policy guidelines; however, administrators and teachers wish to improve this tool to provide the most meaningful feedback possible in a fashion that is consistent across the district.

**6.2e The school/district improvement plan identifies specific instructional leadership needs and the school board has strategies to address them.**

With the clear recognition that experience most often correlates with effectiveness, LPS instructional leaders nonetheless feel that students will be better served if solid evidence of instructional competency, rather than seniority, factors most in decisions regarding teacher placements within the district. Through the negotiations and policy processes, the Board and the Livingston Education Association will consider this topic together. Teachers and administrators will work together toward a solution. The Board is working with administrators and teachers to develop a comprehensive, effective evaluation model for the district. Teachers have expressed the desire to provide formal feedback to administrators.

Aging facilities present special problems for organizational structure and resources; the Board is currently seeking to address facility issues through renovation projects.

**6.2f Leadership uses the evaluation process to provide teachers with the follow-up and support to change behavior and instructional practice.**

Leadership uses the current evaluation process to provide teachers with follow-up and support to change behavior and instructional practice; however, an improved evaluative model should include assessment data, clear descriptors of effective instruction, and an individualized growth plan.

**7 Leadership**

School/district instructional decisions focus on support for teaching and learning, organizational direction, high performance expectations, creating a learning culture and developing leadership capacity.

**7.1 Leadership**

**7.1a Leadership has developed and sustained a shared vision.**

Leadership recognizes the essential importance to sustain a shared vision.

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#### Category/Correlate Quality Indicator Notes

- 7.1b Leadership decisions are focused on student academic performance and are data driven and collaborative. GUIDANCE: Consider how leadership monitors and prioritizes data-based organizational/academic needs that will increase American Indian student achievement. GUIDANCE: If applicable consider how leadership ensures classroom implementation of the state's Montana High School Initiative, the state's RTI Initiative and/or the district's Carl Perkin's Plan.**

Leadership decisions, such as scheduling, class assignment, curricular design, choice of screening and monitoring tools, professional development offerings, and promotion of instructional strategies is informed by student academic performance on standardized assessments such as the CRT, and more formative assessments, such as the computer-assisted assessment module available through Pearson Success Net. Collaboration takes place in committee meetings, correlate team meetings, and administrative council. This is an area school and district leaders have prioritized for improvement, beginning with selection and development of the most meaningful and informative formative assessments.

- 7.1c There is evidence that the school/district school improvement team disaggregates data for use in meeting the needs of a diverse population, communicates the information to school staff and incorporates the data systematically into the school's plan.**

The curriculum director loads CRT data in to a series of Excel workbooks so that the information may be disaggregated and analyzed statistically. This data is incorporated by invested parties, including administrators and teachers; however, widespread sharing of disaggregated statistical data does not currently take place. This may be improved by regular electronic reporting via email.

- 7.1d Leadership ensures all instructional staff have access to curriculum related materials and the training necessary to use curricular and data resources relating to Montana's academic content standards for public schools.**

The curriculum director "loads" Montana content and performance standards in to the LPS Curriculum Map. In reference to this, teacher teams of curriculum writers create a vertical articulation. Then, resources to support the curriculum are identified and, if funds are available, are purchased. Leadership is dedicated to equality of educational opportunity across all courses; hence, materials, programs, and training are made available to all teachers of any given course. There is widespread access to curriculum support via technology; however, physical resources are limited by funds.

- 7.1e Leadership ensures that time is protected and allocated to focus on curricular and instructional issues.**

It could be stated that allocation of time for focus on curricular and instructional issues is among the greatest challenges for LPS. Six PIR and 5 full professional development days provide a certain amount of such time; however, the widely-held belief is that the time is insufficient. This insufficiency is partially a function of the limited availability of funding for substitute-release professional leave or extension of contract time for meetings. A conflict also arises between time for curricular and instructional issues and the parallel obligations to maximize time on task and opportunity to learn by providing uninterrupted contact time between regular classroom teachers and students. Aptly, high-quality educators are irreplaceable by substitute in the classroom. Several potential solutions are under consideration, including flex against full-day release for professional development, re-arrangement of professional development days to maximize the

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- 7.1e Leadership ensures that time is protected and allocated to focus on curricular and instructional issues.**  
efficiency of the time, and re-scheduling of days to permit meeting time during prep times.
- 7.1f Leadership plans and allocates resources, monitors progress, provides the organizational infrastructure and removes barriers in order to sustain continuous school improvement.**  
Within budget constraints, leadership plans and allocates resources to support curricular renewal, professional development, and to establish and to supplement screening and formative assessment instruments to sustain continuous improvement. Progress monitoring takes place quantitatively via analysis of student achievement data, and qualitatively via conferences observations, the “walk through,” conferences, and written reports.
- 7.1g The school/district leadership provides the organizational policy and resource infrastructure necessary for the implementation and maintenance of a safe, culturally sensitive and effective learning environment. GUIDANCE: Consider how leadership ensures classroom implementation of the districts/schools IEFA policy and curriculum.**  
Through the diligence of the district policy committee, LPS policy is likely among the most comprehensive collections statewide. Leadership facilitates implementation of the IEFA curriculum via treatment of IEFA standards in curriculum renewal and via support of IEFA implementation teams. District policy speaks to curricular renewal to meet all standards, which would include those specifically regarding IEFA. However, the district does not have a distinct IEFA policy.
- 7.1h District and school leadership provides a process for the development and the implementation of continuous school improvement.**  
Through support and facilitation of correlates teams across the district, the school improvement process for the years 2010 to 2015 will be driven largely by the 5YCEP process, goals, and effectiveness reports.
- 7.1i There is evidence that the school board has an intentional focus on student academic performance.**  
Policy guides the school board to focus intentionally on student academic performance. Additionally, the board requests reports on academic indicators from the curriculum director, superintendent, and principals. In 2007-2008, the board adopted a “safe and nurturing” emphasis; in 2008-2009, a “project-based learning” emphasis; and, begun 2009, has focused on building renovation projects, each intended to remove barriers to engagement and academic success. The board approves the intentional (written) curricular framework and support resources, and monitors progress via standardized assessment reports as well as less formal indicators.
- 7.1j There is evidence that the principal demonstrates leadership skills in the areas of academic performance, learning environment, efficiency and a safe culturally responsive environment.**  
Begun in 2009, the district and school board have been revising the administrator evaluation process in ways that will more meaningfully incorporate indicators of leadership skill in areas of academic performance, learning environment, efficiency, and a safe, culturally responsive environment. Notably, teachers have expressed the desire to

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- 7.1j There is evidence that the principal demonstrates leadership skills in the areas of academic performance, learning environment, efficiency and a safe culturally responsive environment.**

evaluate administrator effectiveness.

#### **8 Organizational Structure and Resources**

The organization of the school/district maximizes use of time, all available space and other resources to maximize teaching and learning and supports high student and staff performance.

##### **8.1 Organization of School**

- 8.1a There is evidence that the school is organized to maximize use of all available resources to support high student and staff performance and provide extended learning time and culturally relevant learning activities.**

Livingston schools offer uncommon variety in programming among similar-sized school districts, which provides students and staff with a broad array of resources to support high performance. School schedule, computer and library access, extracurricular teams and homework programs, and bus schedules are all utilized to maximize time on task and access to learning resources. A manner in which this might be improved would be to enhance the quality and use of assessment data in student scheduling, in order to better align available resources with student needs.

- 8.1b The master class schedule reflects all students have access to all of the curriculum.**

In reality, all students do not have access to all of the curriculum, as the autonomy of such access is directly related to proficiency. However, the intent is to utilize focused instruction on particular aspects of the core curriculum to close achievement gaps where they exist, thereby restoring student choice in wider curricular offerings.

- 8.1c The instructional and non-instructional staff are allocated and organized based upon the learning needs of all students.**

Generally, needs assessment drives staff allocation and organization; however, these also depend on rights accrued through seniority. Again, the need for high-quality assessment tools is of paramount importance to defining the factors that should be used in needs assessment and allocation. Additionally, ongoing work in scheduling may help to organize instructional time in ways that provide better needs-based organization and allocation.

- 8.1d There is evidence that the staff makes efficient use of instructional time to maximize student learning**

As teachers employ more formative assessment strategies, instructional adjustments to the early knowledge of student strengths and weaknesses is producing more efficient instructional time, thereby maximizing student learning.

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- 8.1e Staff promotes team planning vertically and horizontally across content areas and grade configurations that is focused on the goals, objectives and strategies in the improvement plan (e.g., common planning time for content area teachers; emphasis on learning time and not seat time; and integrated units).**

It is the hope that participation in the 5YCEP process will further enhance existing staff initiatives to plan vertically and horizontally across content areas and grade configurations in ways that focus on goals, objectives, and strategies in the improvement plan.

- 8.1f The schedule is intentionally aligned with the school's mission and designed to ensure that all staff provide quality instructional time (e.g., flex time, organization based on developmental needs of students, interdisciplinary units, cultural needs, etc.).**

Schedule is a major focus of current LPS improvement planning. The issue of scheduling to ensure that all staff provide quality instructional time is one that is currently under review across the district. Development of interdisciplinary units, ability grouping for accelerated learning, accommodations to cultural norms of economically disadvantaged students, and block schedules are being considered.

- 8.2 Resource Allocation and Integration**

- 8.2a The school/district provides a clearly defined process to provide equitable and consistent use of fiscal resources.**

Title planning requires an equitable and consistent fiscal resource allocation process. For other funds, while efforts are made to assure equitable and consistent use of fiscal resources through standards for expenditure planning and approval, the commitment to that process could be more clearly defined in a policy or procedure statement.

- 8.2b The school/district budget reflects decisions made about discretionary funds and resources are directed by an assessment of need or a required plan, all of which consider appropriate data.**

The flexibility to plan or make data-based or need-based decisions regarding discretionary funds and resources is severely limited by budget shortfall. The budget director presents the board, administration, and teachers with regular updates regarding potential budget crises and solution options. The district is currently exploring options for grant funding to meet curricular and instructional goals identified through gap analysis, needs assessment, and data analysis.

- 8.2c The school board analyzed funding and other resource requests to ensure the requests are tied to the school's plan and identified priority needs.**

Through its curriculum and materials approval process, the board has the opportunity to weigh proposed purchases against stated objectives in the school and district plan. The curriculum map, instructional philosophy statements, and 5YCEP will provide an enhanced opportunity to consider whether resource requests are tied to the school's plan and priority needs as determined through needs assessment and data analysis.

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- 8.2d State and federal program resources are allocated and integrated (Safe Schools, Title I, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, etc) to address student needs identified by the school/district. GUIDANCE: Consider how district/school IEFA funds are used to develop curriculum, offer professional development and/or deliver instruction to students.**

Choosing a title allocation scheme that addresses greatest needs, and does not disrupt functioning staffing schemes, thereby creating a deficit, and, hence, a future greater need, is a challenge. The curriculum director has requested guidance from OPI regarding solutions to allocation and integration to best address identified student needs.

### **9 Comprehensive and Effective Planning**

The school/district develops, implements and evaluates a comprehensive school improvement plan that communicates a clear purpose, direction and action plan focused on teaching and learning

#### **9.1 Defining the School Vision, Mission and Beliefs**

- 9.1a There is evidence that a collaborative process was used to develop the vision, beliefs, mission and goals that engage the school community as a community of learners.**

In the meeting agendas and drafts created by professional learning teams, there is evidence that a collaborative process was used to develop the vision, beliefs, mission and goals that engage the school community as a community of learners.

#### **9.2 Development of the Profile**

- 9.2a There is evidence the school/district planning process involves collecting, managing and analyzing data.**

In Excel files that can be filtered to disaggregate data and which include formulae for statistical analysis of all data, there is evidence the school/district planning process involves collecting, managing, and analyzing data. Student and teacher schedules reflect decisions based on this data. To determine exactly which are "leading" and which are "following" indicators of student achievement requires constant refinement and review.

- 9.2b The school/district uses data for school improvement planning.**

On the most basic level, the district uses disaggregated CRT data as impetus for improvement planning. As the most meaningful screening and diagnostic assessments, school climate surveys, and evaluation tools are created, identified, and utilized, data-based planning will be enhanced. A challenge is to resolve tensions created by competing interpretations of the meaning of data.

#### **9.3 Defining Desired Results for Student Learning**

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#### Category/Correlate Quality Indicator Notes

#### 9.3 Defining Desired Results for Student Learning

##### 9.3a School and district plans reflect learning research, current local, state and national expectations for student learning and are reviewed by a planning team.

Content-area teams and the curriculum committee are charged with identification of best research-based practice and with renewal and revision of curriculum to meet state and national expectations for student learning. There is room for improvement in the surveying of parental opinion regarding learning expectations.

##### 9.3b The school/district analyzes their students' unique learning needs.

Data is disaggregated to the level of the student; however, it could be stated that an ideal setting, an individualized learning plan could benefit every student.

##### 9.3c The desired results for student learning are defined.

Desired results are defined most simply in mark tables, the curriculum map, and tacit or written requirements for graduation from any grade. However, there exist many unwritten or unspoken expectations (e.g., expectations for behavior, work ethic, or creativity) for student learning which, if made more explicit, might benefit students.

#### 9.4 Analyzing Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness

##### 9.4a Perceived strengths and limitations of the school/district instructional and organizational effectiveness are identified using the collected data.

Strengths and limitations of district instructional and organizational effectiveness are identified via disaggregated data analysis, including longitudinal progress of individual students. The curriculum director is working toward a streamlined process for collection and manipulation of data from a variety of sources.

##### 9.4b The school/district goals for building and strengthening the capacity of the school/district instructional and organizational effectiveness are defined.

The process and goals of the previous 5YCEP were not well known across the district. Staff have been integral in the creation of the current plan; hence, it is hoped that it will be through this plan that district goals for building and strengthening the capacity of instructional and organizational effectiveness are defined. Formative evaluation, best screening and diagnostic / prescriptive assessment tools, and resolution of the shortage of time and money for planning outside instructional hours are among high priorities.

#### 9.5 Development of the Improvement Plan

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#### Category/Correlate Quality Indicator Notes

**9.5a The action steps for school improvement are aligned with the school improvement goals and objectives.**

At the Spring 2009 Effective Schools conference in Billings, MT, Dr. Larry Lezotte received resounding applause when he stated that schools are well-suited to planning, but poorly-suited to execution. To avoid this has been a guiding principle of the creation of the 5YCEP; thus, yearly action plan steps will reference goals and objectives in the 9 Montana correlate areas as identified at the district and school level.

**9.5b The plan identifies the resources, timelines and persons responsible for carrying out each activity.**

The plan states goals to be addressed within the 5-year timeline, as well as yearly goals and action plans; identifies responsibilities for certified and classified staff, administrators, parents, and community members; and describes available resources.

The plan could be improved via a project approach, perhaps facilitated via technology such as Microsoft Project; that is, tasks, persons responsible, and available resources could be laid out in greater detail for recruitment and progress monitoring.

**9.5c The means for evaluating the effectiveness of the improvement plan are established.**

The improvement plan will be evaluated on the basis of progress toward stated goals. At the Effective Schools trainings in spring and fall 2009, Dr. Larry Lezotte made clear the need to identify the descriptors and metrics of each correlate goal; correlate team members have embraced this approach. Thus, as the 5YCEP guides school improvement over the next cycle, it is intended that we continuously engage the process of touching base with goals and measuring the leading indicators of our progress toward them.

**9.5d The improvement plan is aligned with the school's profile, beliefs, mission, desired results for student learning and analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness.**

The improvement plan accounts for the school/district demographic and subgroups most in need; mission and vision statements regarding school / community collaboration in the promotion of a safe and nurturing environment that also instills independence and work ethic; the shared belief that all students can learn; and goals for incremental, constant progress toward proficiency for all.

**9.6 Implementation and Documentation**

**9.6a The plan is implemented as developed.**

Dr. Lezotte stated that educational systems tend to be well-suited to planning, and poorly-suited to implementation – the school / district recognizes that implementation of the intentional plan is critical to its success. To actualize the plan, correlates teams will continue to meet during the 5-year cycle of this plan, and it will remain a centerpiece of shared meeting time at staff meetings, PIR, and other full-release days.

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**9.6b The school evaluates the degree to which it achieves the goals and objectives for student learning set by the plan.**

The school/district will frequently monitor progress toward goals and objectives for student learning during staff meetings, PIR, and other full-release days.

**9.6c The school evaluates the degree to which it achieves the expected impact on classroom practice and student performance specified in the plan.**

Through focus on effective instruction and student outcomes via “triangulated” data analysis of fluency, comprehension, and engagement indicators, the school and district evaluate the degree to which it achieves the expected impact on classroom practice and student performance specified in the plan.

**9.6d There is evidence of attempts to sustain the commitment to continuous improvement.**

Simply stated, the 5YCEP will be a guiding document to be revisited by teams over the next five years.