



Principal Action Resource: The Instructional Leadership Team and Professional Learning Communities

A resource for principals who have prioritized building team function within their buildings, and who are seeking a few priority areas for action with their ILT and PLCs within the building

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Using this Action Guide

Principals play a crucial role in establishing effective, aligned teams among the school faculty, and this Action Guide is meant to serve as a resource for principals in establishing and then managing the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)¹ and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) within their school. Together with the principal, these teams can ensure that the school community keeps the school's vision and mission, with a commitment to high achievement for all students, as the primary focus.

The purpose of this tool is to be a resource for principals who have prioritized building team function within their buildings, which is frequently a multi-year initiative. It can guide principals in selecting a few priority areas for action with their ILT and PLCs within the building; no principal is meant to address all team functions and each principal action outlined here all at once, nor is this guide meant to be used for the evaluation process as a “checklist” of exemplary principal actions to expect in practice. However, principal supervisors coaching their principals in building and managing teams may find this a helpful resource for sharing actionable strategies.

In addition to the web-enabled version of the tool, we are providing this version, which can be printed and referred to as a manual. Content included here includes:

Foundational Principles

Additional information about Instructional Leadership Teams and Professional Learning Communities is included in this section, and the principles outlined in this section can help principals ensure that their actions with the ILT and PLCs are effective. This section includes: ILT and PLC team definitions and structures; strategies for ensuring meaningful connections among teams in your school; and guidance for designing the teams and selecting team members. We encourage you to take the time to review this additional framing, as it will help to clarify your priorities within the specific action steps captured in the checklist and guide. There is also additional information about how this resource aligns to principal performance measures.

Principal Action Guide with Resources

This section is meant to be helpful in identifying key principal actions aligned to the domains of the Minnesota Principal Development and Evaluation Rubric, defining effective Instructional Leadership Teams and Professional Learning Communities. Principals should use this section to focus their actions on crucial priorities regarding team function at any given point of the year and to access tools, protocols and other resources that will support this work.

¹ Within this guide, the school leadership team that is focused on student outcomes and instruction is referred to as the Instructional Leadership Team, although the nomenclature is less crucial than the function. Different schools will structure and name this team differently, but it is important to note that this is a distinct function from site management or operations. In designated Continuous Improvement, Focus, and Priority Schools, the ILT is referred to as the Leadership Implementation Team (LIT). The information about principal actions related to this team is relevant across team titles and terminology.

Principal Action Checklist

These principal actions are organized thematically and chronologically across the school year in the Action Checklist portion of the resource. This checklist serves as an “at a glance” summary of the detailed actions in the longer Action Guide, and can help orient principals to key actions for focus at each point in the school year.

Foundational Principles

ILT and PLC Team Definitions and Connections

The coordination and connections among these teams is a crucial area of focus for the principal. A principal can ensure these strong links by focusing first on establishing and then on managing the Instructional Leadership Team as a professional learning community, modeling the expectations, practices, and culture for all teacher teams in the school. This is possible when the ILT is a goal-based, data-driven team focused on collaborative action and problem-solving. The ILT can also be an effective means to provide visibility into the Professional Learning Communities throughout the school, supporting their functionality and alignment and keeping track of progress and impact on student outcomes. PLCs, in turn, should be providing rich detail about effective practice as well as enablers and barriers to implementation to the ILT through their leaders and by reporting out to the ILT.

It is challenging for principals to balance their work with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with the rest of the responsibilities on their agenda. An important element in building this “balance” is to remember that engaging the ILT and PLCs is not simply another isolated item on the to-do list. It is, actually, a means to accomplish all of the principal’s other priorities: strengthening instructional practice, developing talented staff members, aligning the school vision and culture, and ensuring that school planning and systems are functioning to support school goals – all in the service of student outcomes.

As Principals work with the teams in their school, they are building leadership capacity and ensuring alignment across the school

Principals Lead the ILT by:

- Choosing the right ILT members and focusing on their leadership development
- Creating a shared vision and urgency
- Establishing shared knowledge of the important frameworks and strategies, especially around instructional improvement
- Bringing in resources (research, best practices, district-level resources)
- Ensuring a focus on the Plan-Do-Study-Act framework for continuous practice improvement

Principals Enable PLCs by:

- Choosing the right PLC leaders
- Creating a shared vision and urgency
- Equipping these leaders with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to be effective
- Establishing the right plans and culture with the ILT team and ensuring coherence among all teams in the building
- Monitoring the progress and results of PLCs at the school

Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)

- The Instructional Leadership Team is the primary mechanism for implementing distributive leadership within a school, expanding the impact of the vision and goals for student outcomes beyond the principal to other stakeholders. The ILT is responsible for ensuring that the vision and goals for the school are well established.
- Membership in the ILT is one of the principal's most important strategic decisions. More information about forming the ILT follows below.
- The ILT also focuses on planning for the improvements in instructional practice, culture, and systems that are the schoolwide strategies for reaching identified goals.
- The ILT has an important role in monitoring progress, reviewing data, and sharing learning from PLCs throughout the school. The *Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle* is a helpful structure not only for guiding the ILT's actions, but also for aligning their actions and process with those of the PLCs and other teams in the school.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

- Professional Learning Communities are foundational to coordination, communication, and adult learning among a school faculty.
- The best Professional Learning Communities model the structure and function of a “community of practice,” focusing on collective problem-solving and learning within a defined domain, building more effective instructional practice among team members to increase student achievement and improve other student outcomes.
- The composition of a specific Professional Learning Community can reflect areas of alignment among teachers within the school (grade-level or subject-matter teams, for example) or can be organized around specific school strategies and needs, but regardless, the team should have a focus.
- Professional Learning Communities focus deeply on cycles of PDSA and examining data and evidence of effectiveness are foundational to their work.
- Leadership of each PLC is an important consideration. The PLC leaders should have a strong understanding of schoolwide goals and priorities and the ability to translate them to the specific focus area of their team. They will need skills in group facilitation and in instructional leadership, leading teachers in data-driven practice improvement. These PLC Team Leads will be crucial members of the ILT.

Connections among the Teams

There are several crucial connections between the ILT and the PLCs within a school, and these connections are central to the principal's effective management of all the school teams.

- *All teams are foundational culture-carriers* for the school – places where adults meet together and make decisions that, ideally, reflect the school's values and vision. When this is not the case, these teams can undermine and counteract the defined school culture priorities.
- *Membership reinforces alignment* when all PLC Leads serve as members of the ILT.
- *Information should flow between the Instructional Leadership Team and the Professional Leadership Communities in both directions.* Priorities established by the ILT should be communicated to PLCs, and the ILT is a place to raise key insights and outcomes from the PLCs throughout the school. Together, the teams are responsible for reinforcing a culture of feedback and open communication in service of student outcomes. Communication flow among these teams is crucial for identifying and sharing effective practices, addressing gaps in practice and outcomes, and reinforcing aligned actions among the faculty.
- *Team facilitation practices should be aligned across the teams.* The ILT and all PLCs within a school should apply similar norms, protocols, calendars, and approaches to foundational responsibilities (data review, for example), so that practices within the teams are aligned and mutually reinforcing.
- *Goals should cascade from the schoolwide plan through the ILT and the PLCs,* so that there is alignment toward the same expectations for student outcomes and behind the same priorities for improved adult practice. ILT practices should include monitoring and enabling the outcomes defined at the PLC level.
- *Teams should be partners in ensuring and evaluating implementation* of strategies in support of the school's goals. This includes adjusting strategies as the year progresses, identifying and spreading effective practices across teams, and ensuring coherence of all efforts to support student learning.
- *Alignment among the teams enables effective information sharing* with other school constituencies, reporting to the district office as well as sharing strategies and progress with families and other community stakeholders.

Membership in both the ILT and PLCs will vary depending on school context. In effective schools, one of the principal's primary strategies for supporting the work of PLCs is through their Team Leads, and these Team Leads should also serve as members of the ILT. Principals should be engaged in the leadership development of these Team Leads. Principals should also periodically visit PLC meetings, bringing insights to the ILT and helping the Team Lead respond to any challenges observed in the team's function. Principals also have a direct hand in monitoring the effectiveness of the PLCs. This can include helping the Team Lead set up the conditions for success, by reviewing agendas and team plans before the team meets and acts. Principals should also establish a system for collecting information from the PLCs. Many principals find it effective to ask each PLC to report back after the meeting on a few crucial questions:

- What decisions were made by the team?
- Were any issues identified or discussed? If so, what were they and what was the outcome of the discussion? Are there any open questions that need the engagement of the principal, the ILT, or others in the school?
- What data were analyzed?
- What instructional strategies were discussed?
- Are there effective practices to be captured and shared or strong outcomes to celebrate?
- Is the team on/off track to its goals? Based on what evidence? And why?

Figure 1 Relationship of ILT to PLCs



The ILT establishes a schoolwide vision and plan and monitors implementation, building leadership for other teams

PLCs translate schoolwide goals and plans into specific strategies for teachers and students, facilitate professional growth and learning for participating teachers, and serve as *learning labs* for developing effective practices with the potential for schoolwide impact.

A Note about Companion Resource Alignment

The Minnesota Department of Education's Regional Centers of Excellence have created two rubrics for district use that define the functions of effective teams - both Instructional Leadership Teams and Professional Learning Communities -- within school buildings. These functions are captured in the Instructional Leadership Team Rubric and the Professional Learning Community Rubric. These resources are most familiar to Continuous Improvement, Focus, and Priority Schools, but they are relevant to all schools in Minnesota.

This Action Guide is aligned to these definitions of these crucial teams, but focuses more directly on the principal's role in establishing and leading them – and on the connections between the two teams.

As your school uses these team structures to ensure shared ownership for student outcomes, you will find it helpful to access both of the Team Rubrics (ILT and PLC) as well as this tool together as a suite of resources.

The ILT and PLC resources can be found on MDE's [Continuous Improvement in Districts and Schools](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/cimp/index.htm) page.
(<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/cimp/index.htm>)

Selecting the Instructional Leadership Team

Selecting members of the Instructional Leadership Team is one of the most impactful leadership moves a principal will make, whether they are a long-term leader reviewing and revising membership or a new principal assessing a team for the first time.

There is no one-size-fits-all formula for designing these teams and deciding on their membership. Principals will have to weigh competing priorities and fit the team's structure to the context of their school: school size, priorities, history, and faculty dynamics. As mentioned earlier in the guide, terminology and functionality for the ILT and other teams should reflect the history of teams in the school as well as district context. At some schools, particularly smaller schools, leaders wear many hats, and teams can have multiple functions. For example, sometimes the management team – which focuses on operational questions – is the same as the instructional leadership team, and effective principals distinguish between the two functions of the same team, ensuring a dedicated focus on student outcomes and instruction.

When considering potential Instructional Leadership Team members, principals should ask themselves:

- Is this person onboard with the direction of our school and our goals for students and adults?
- Does this person model the practices and values that a leader in our school should demonstrate?
- Does this person have a strong knowledge of effective instructional practice? Do they already have skills in recognizing and building this in other teachers, or do you think they could learn how to do this?
- Is this person a reflective practitioner and a committed learner?
- Is this person someone who is already recognized as an informal leader in the school – someone who is sought out by peers as a resource because of his/her expertise and willingness to partner to improve the work?

At the same time, there are important considerations that can help ensure these teams are as aligned and effective as possible.

- *Team size.* Principals should evaluate the right size for the team, balancing considerations that support broader inclusion, such as engagement and input, with good reasons for keeping the team smaller and more focused. The team should not exceed the principal's bandwidth for engaging deeply in leadership development with each member, both in the context of the team and also one-on-one. A team that is too large will quickly become unwieldy and can hamper decision-making. When the team is too small, on the other hand, true distributed leadership and capacity building is difficult. Factors such as school size and school history and context can impact the team size, but principals should thoughtfully resist the tendency to let the team grow too big by simply adding more members and also watch that, over time, it does not shrink in size and effectiveness through attrition and inertia.
- *Alignment to Other Leadership Structures.* In some cases, the principal may want to distinguish between a larger school leadership team (all formal leaders, parents, all program leads) and a smaller, more frequent instructional leadership team that consists of the crucial instructional leadership roles on staff, including grade level leaders. Principals should also distinguish between the instructionally-focused work of the ILT and the managerial or operationally-focused priorities of a Site Team or Management Team. At

smaller schools where there is only one leadership team, principals can still distinguish between the instructional and the operational work of the team, ensuring that there is enough time focused on improving core practices of the faculty.

- *Demonstrated leadership skills and alignment.* These qualities are the most important consideration for inclusion as an ILT member. Principals should seek out aligned leaders within the building as members of the ILT based on their instructional skills and readiness to lead others in this area, their commitment to the school vision and desired culture and values, and their willingness to demonstrate reflective practice and learning. Oftentimes, the principal can place these leaders in formal leadership roles within the school, and ultimately everyone who holds a leadership position should display these characteristics. For a new principal or the leader of a school in transition, it may take time to enact this in practice and informal leaders who have these skills but lack of an official leadership role should not be precluded from inclusion on the team.
- *Balancing Strengths.* Principals should also be aware of their own strengths and areas for growth when selecting team members and be conscious of building an ILT that includes members with expertise they may not possess, especially around content knowledge but also in other leadership areas. In a similar way, principals balance strengths across the team, making sure there are voices pushing for careful consideration of all aspects of decisions. [There is a resource for determining team member strengths in the [Tools and Resources section below](#).]
- *Formal leaders.* Those who hold official positions of leadership in the school—including assistant principals, department chairs or grade-level team leads—have a crucial role to play, as do other faculty members who serve in positions that are important for implementing schoolwide strategies. The ILT rubric explicitly states in the definition of a high-quality team that “[t]he team includes all learning team leaders and representatives from all core content areas or grade levels. Representatives from programs (e.g., special education, ELD, Title 1) and parents actively participate as members. There is flexibility to add school staff experts to the team as needed to link the communication from other teams and address specific improvement work or needs.” This guidance points to how crucial it is to ensure that individuals charged with leading within the school can act with the full authority that comes from having been part of leadership planning and decision-making.

Principals shaping an existing Leadership Team may begin with an existing slate of team members and formal roles and then look for opportunities to place aligned, informal leaders into school leadership positions as they become available. On the other hand, a new principal—or one with a mandate to restructure the leadership team—may begin by looking for aligned individuals with strong leadership inclinations and move them into formal leadership roles and onto the ILT. In reality, the ILT will always be a dynamic team where leaders are being cultivated and the membership is being shaped to reflect the school’s direction and needs.

A note on alignment with Principal Performance Measures in the Minnesota State Example Model

Although this resource is not meant to be used in the evaluation process itself, it's important to note that the suggestions here can be helpful to principals who are working on building their own practice in the specific areas of leadership and talent development. This means, for example, that a principal who receives feedback that he or she can focus on growth in building leadership in others, or in strengthening teams and other functions for improving instruction, may find specific guidance for their actions in this guide book. Similarly, a principal supervisor who is looking for resources to provide specific support to a principal who needs to improve schoolwide engagement around instructional practice may find elements of this guide helpful in coaching their principals. Strong principal actions related to the ILT and the PLC strengthen principal performance at the same time as they impact school outcomes. The [Minnesota Principal Development and Evaluation Performance Measures](#)—an example and guide for districts in developing their own principal performance standards—provides framing for the importance of principal leadership of school teams, including the ILT and PLCs. These are defined most directly in *Performance Measure #3 – Develops and Maintains a High-Quality, Effective Staff from Minnesota's Principal Performance Measures*:

- **Indicator 3B:** Facilitates high-quality professional learning for teachers and other staff [including through team structures]
- **Indicator 3D:** Selects, develops and supports a high-performing instructional leadership team with a diverse skill set

While these indicators within Performance Measure #3 most explicitly define the principal's actions as team builder and leader, throughout the Principal Evaluation Rubric the description of Distinguished Principal actions (Level 1) emphasize the importance of collaborative leadership and engaging stakeholders across the school community. The most effective principals include teachers, parents and other family members, and students in shaping the school vision, planning for continuous improvement, and understanding progress to goals. The ILT and PLCs are an important mechanism for effective principals acting on this collaborative and engaged vision of school leadership.

Principal Action Guide

The charts below highlight the highest-priority principal actions in each domain of the definition of high-functioning teams, drawn from the ILT and PLC rubrics created by the Regional Centers (see note on pp. 12) and included below for reference.

Although the chart below may appear at first to include an exhaustive—and exhausting!—list of principal focus areas, you'll find that there is a great deal of overlap across the domains of high-functioning teams: principals ensure that team organization and function are well-established and communication is a priority so that the teams themselves can have a laser-like focus on improving instruction and learning through data-driven decision-making. Use the general overview questions on page six to help ensure coherence among your priorities and leadership actions, and use the details below to diagnose and focus efforts in crucial priority areas.

This action guide is not meant to highlight a comprehensive list of actions effective principals should tackle all at once. Instead, principals should select a few priorities based on school needs and goals as well as their own leadership focus. As principals select a few priorities for their teams, for each critical feature under a leadership domain, principals can use this chart as guidance for answering the question: if I want my teams to be high-functioning as defined in the rubrics, where should I be focusing my leadership actions? Chose one or two domains to focus on and a few actions within those focus areas.

To further support principals, also included here are tools and resources to support teams in each of these domains. Principals searching for concrete strategies for advancing the work of their leadership team and Professional Learning Communities within their school may find these resources helpful. It will also be useful to other team leaders who are seeking resources for their own teams within a school.

The tools that follow in this resource library were selected because they are directly related to the actions of high-functioning teams and because these tools are accessible without additional information or training.

The Domains of High-Functioning Teams from the MN State ILT and PLC Rubrics

- [Organization](#)
- [Function](#)
- [Communication](#)
- [Focus on Improving Instruction and Learning](#)
- [Data-Driven Decision Making](#)

A Note about Resources for Priority and Focus Schools

In addition to taking advantage of the tools that follow, Focus Schools should also consider reaching out to their contact in their Center of Excellence and utilize the resources provided there, including AI HUB and Implementation Science resources, which can guide team functions.

Also, as you work closely on strengthening the ILT and PLC functions, a helpful strategy is to develop a Practice Profile in this area. The [Practice Profile Tool for Teams](#) is a protocol for developing a Practice Profile related to the team practices. The [Practice Profile Template](#) is a companion document. Principals serving in Continuous Improvement Schools will also find the [NIRN Active Implementation hub resources](#) [<http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/>] to be useful in guiding team efforts within their schools

Leadership Domain: Organization

Principals can make significant strides in ensuring effective teams within the school by establishing the right membership and structures for the teams. Principals determine team composition for both ILTs and PLCs—an important part of the overall talent strategy for the school—and define roles on the team. Principals should then focus throughout the year on building capacity of ILT team members to ensure that the ILT is truly a model of distributed leadership within the school and team members are prepared to turn around and provide leadership to their PLC teams. Principals can also enable effective functioning by careful design of the meeting calendar for the year, with guidance for specific team focus areas throughout the year. Establishing expectations for meeting function (agendas, facilitation, etc.) is another important principal task.

Organization: Principal Actions

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Membership and Responsibilities</p> <p>ILT The team includes all learning team leaders and representatives from all core content areas or grade levels. Representatives from programs (e.g., special education, ELD, Title 1) and parents actively participate as members. There is flexibility to add schools staff experts to the team as needed to link the communication from other teams and address specific improvement work or needs.</p> <p>PLC All instructional staff are actively engaged on learning teams that are aligned to the purpose and continuous improvement goals of the school. Team membership is consistent through the year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify ILT members based on instructional skills, alignment to culture, and willingness to demonstrate learning (leadership). These team members may be identified from existing formal leadership roles or by defining leadership roles for promising potential team members. • Plan for ongoing leadership development of members of this team. This includes establishing leadership development as a priority by ensuring that at least one leadership-specific growth goal is included as part of their individual PD plans. • Follow up regularly as part of one-on-one check-ins to support and monitor individual growth and impact for ILT members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select the right leader for each Professional Learning Community. • Before the year begins, meet with the Team Leads to review PLC membership, advising or directing additions or changes to the team composition to support team goals. • As the year goes on, review team membership with Team Leads as needed, in alignment with team effectiveness and any staffing changes in the school.

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Roles and Responsibilities</p> <p>ILT Responsibilities of members (e.g., attendance, participation, preparation) are defined, documented and adaptable.</p> <p>PLC Responsibilities of members are defined, documented and adaptable (e.g., facilitator, note keeper, timekeeper, and leadership team designee). Attendance, participation and preparation are consistent to support the instructional improvement process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish the responsibilities of the members of the ILT, sharing them with team members and ensuring maximum appropriate input into their design. This should include explicit expectations for attendance, participation, and preparation. Review ILT responsibilities throughout the year to make sure they are functioning in the service of team and school goals. Follow up one-on-one as needed with team members who are not meeting their responsibilities and take actions to reestablish expectations or change their status as a team member. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work together with Team Leads (as part of the ILT) to establish responsibilities for PLC membership which are aligned to expectations for other leaders, such as ILT representatives, within the school. Check in with Team Leads: are their PLC team members fulfilling expectations for their responsibilities? Coach Team Leads, as needed, on appropriate steps for follow up if responsibilities are: (1) failing to serve team goals OR (2) disregarded by individual members of the team.
<p>Meeting Frequency and Attendance</p> <p>ILT Team meets more than two times per month. Meetings are long enough to focus on school improvement and student learning.</p> <p>PLC Teams meet for 90 minutes weekly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a calendar for team meetings throughout the year and plan in advance to ensure that timely topics are covered in the appropriate meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure through report-outs from Team Leads that teams are meeting regularly according to a pre-set schedule. Visit three to five PLC meetings monthly, to gather insights from the teams and also to provide feedback.

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Meeting Protocols, Norms, and Facilitation</p> <p>ILT</p> <p>A formal process exists to propose agenda items prior to meeting, assist agenda development, and document meeting results with different members sharing leadership (e.g., facilitating specific agenda items during meeting).</p> <p>PLC</p> <p>A formal meeting protocol includes established norms, celebrations, and processes led by identified teacher leaders trained in professional learning community facilitation and implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a process for setting ILT meeting agendas in advance that is inclusive of all ILT members and includes input as appropriate from the broader school community. • Establish systems for capturing the outcomes of ILT meetings, including key discussion points and decisions, and for sharing these results. • Establish regular protocols and expectations for group discussion, problem solving, and planning. • Throughout the year, demonstrate transparent facilitation techniques, sharing facilitation strategies and explicitly modeling the use of all protocols so that other leaders within the ILT can take these practices back to their own teams. • Transition significant leadership in ILT meetings to team members, coaching them in applying facilitation strategies, protocols and norms to their leadership of the team. • Establish expectations that protocols, norms, and facilitation practices will— in turn—be used by ILT team members who are PLC Leads in PLC meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodically review PLC agendas with Team Leads prior to their meetings, looking for alignment to the highest-priority practices and goals of the school. Provide feedback on the efficacy and alignment of the team meeting design for reaching team and school goals. • Review PLC meeting summary notes), both individually and with the ILT as a whole. Request briefings on the most crucial decisions and open questions from teams. • Follow up in visits to PLC meetings to ensure that planning and facilitation of the meetings meets expectations and that norms and protocols are being applied effectively. Share feedback and coach PLC Leads to improve their effectiveness.

Organization: Team Tools and Resources

Tool/Resource	Description and Use	Documents
Leadership Team Member Selection	The template can be used by a principal to reflect on the appropriate membership for the school's ILT.	Instructional Leadership Team Selection Worksheet
Team Roles and Responsibilities	The team profile tool can be used to capture the individual strengths, growth areas, and working styles of team members and establish a picture of these important considerations across the team.	Creating Your Own Leadership Team Profile
Meeting Agenda	Continuous Improvement Schools and Focus/Priority Schools use this meeting protocol and agenda template for Leadership Implementation Team (LIT) meetings. The model could also be modified for other ILT or PLC meetings, with its focus on decision-making, instructional improvement, and capturing follow-up and communication implications.	Meeting Agenda Template
Meeting Norms	The National School Reform Faculty's protocol for forming ground rules lays out a collaborative process for establishing norms that helps to build team trust and cohesion.	NSRF's Forming Ground Rules Protocol
Effective Team Processes	<p>This overview is helpful in establishing and then maintaining effective team processes among the ILT or other teams in the building. The first three tools are informational materials that can be used as discussion pieces with the Team Leader and the leadership team.</p> <p>The fourth tool, Basic Building Blocks for Promoting Participation, can be used as a self-assessment tool that each member of the leadership team completes.</p>	Effective Team Processes
Team Protocols	Team Building Protocols from the National School Reform Faculty include exercises for learning more about individual team members' working styles and areas of comfort or challenge. Note that several protocols are open source and available for free; additional resources are included with an annual membership.	NCSF Team Building Protocols

Leadership Domain: Function

Strong teams are united by a focus on shared mission and goals, careful planning, and strong follow up to monitor progress and capture learning. This cycle is captured in the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle (PDSA). The ILT and the PLCs meetings remain focused on instructional practice and teams are marked by strong relationships that encourage collective problem solving and action.

Function: Principal Actions

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Vision and Mission</p> <p>ILT Team vision and mission are known throughout the school and colleagues acknowledge the team’s roles and responsibilities for implementation of the continuous improvement plan that foster a cohesive and dynamic focus on school improvement.</p> <p>PLC Goals are aligned with the school improvement plan to support the school vision and mission and foster a cohesive and dynamic focus on school improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead the team in setting the team vision and mission, establishing the parameters to ensure a student-centered mission focused on improving outcomes. • Lead the team in setting aligned schoolwide goals, and address as a team how these schoolwide goals should translate into aligned goals for the Professional Learning Communities and individual faculty members in the school. • Lead the team in developing a continuous improvement plan aligned with the school-wide goals, and establish the team’s role in implementation and monitoring of this plan. • Ensure that agendas and discussions for all Leadership Team meetings are aligned with the school’s goals and continuous improvement plan. • Engage the team in monitoring results, trouble-shooting issues, and sharing best practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review team-specific goals with the Leadership Team (incl. each Team Lead): do each team’s specific goals align with the schoolwide goals? • When first visiting a team, ensure that the team members understand how their team’s terms of reference or charter align with the overall school vision and mission and that they can articulate how their team goals and activities are aligned with schoolwide goals and the continuous improvement plan. • Coach and support Team Leads in addressing challenges with team members who are not aligned with the school vision and mission. • Together with Team Leads and the Instructional Leadership Team, review each team’s progress to goals and interim results throughout the year

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Shared Understanding of Learning Team Work</p> <p>ILT Not included in rubric</p> <p>PLC Evidence-based instructional strategies are learned and supported with coaching to ensure fidelity. Student work and formative assessments are analyzed to determine the extent of student learning and the effectiveness of the strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the ILT to define a vision of quality instruction for the school, aligned to the school system frameworks and vision where there is one in place, and return to discuss this vision, refining it and talking about what it looks like in practice throughout the year. • Lead the team in identifying instructional priorities for the school year. • Identify district and other resources to support implementation. • Work with the team to ensure that each team member is prepared to demonstrate strong instructional practice and develop it in others (instructional leadership). Effective practices for building instructional leadership include conducting walk-throughs with the ILT or completing co-observations to build a consistent lens for identifying strengths and growth areas in instructional practice. • Work with the ILT to establish professional development (PD) priorities and a PD plan for the year, tasking the ILT members as appropriate with leading schoolwide PD and establishing the expectation that PLCs are deeply engaged in building practice. • Bring insights on the current state of instructional practice from formal and informal classroom observations to the ILT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After visiting classrooms, bring insights about the current state of instructional practice from formal and informal classroom observations to PLC Leads and the ILT. Provide additional support to struggling teams through the PLC structure. • Support PLC Team Leads in their work building instructional practice within their teams, establishing expectations for the review of student work and formative assessment outcomes to determine the extent of student learning and effectiveness of instructional strategies.

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Relationships</p> <p>ILT Team relationships are trusting, mutually respectful and supportive of openly sharing ideas, perspectives and options to collaborate, solve problems and resolve conflicts.</p> <p>PLC Team relationships are trusting, mutually respectful and supportive of continuous collaboration about student learning, problem solving, resolution of conflicts, and open sharing of ideas, perspectives and opinions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead by example, demonstrating transparent, trusting, and mutually respectful relationships with the ILT members and other colleagues. • Set clear expectations as part of the ILT Terms of Reference for openly sharing ideas, perspectives and options to collaborate, solve problems, and resolve conflicts. • Focus agenda creation and facilitation planning for every meeting on reinforcing a culture of collective problem-solving and shared leadership among members of the ILT team. • Gather feedback on the quality of candor and trust within the ILT. This can be accomplished at a few points throughout the year with a short survey of team members as well as one-on-one meetings. • Directly address any issues with relationships within the ILT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share schoolwide expectations for collegial, action-oriented relationships with Team Leads and help them translate and implement this with their teams. • Coach and support Team Leads in addressing directly any issues with relationships within their team.
<p>Discussion and Decision-making</p> <p>ILT Team discussions and decisions reflect the expertise and perspectives of all team members, including those invited to contribute on a temporary basis.</p> <p>PLC Discussions and decisions reflect use of a standard protocol, classroom student work, data, analysis of recurring instructional problems, and the perspective of all team members, including those invited to contribute on a temporary basis, to determine the next steps for instruction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce and model a number of facilitation protocols that support robust and inclusive discussions within the ILT, ensuring that a culture is established where all voices are heard. • Ensure that ILT members are equipped to implement these protocols as well, especially those that serve as Team Leads of PLCs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all Team Leads are prepared to implement a variety of facilitation protocols that support robust and inclusive discussions. • When visiting PLCs, observe the use of discussion protocols and share feedback with Team Leads and—where appropriate—entire teams. • Ensure that decisions made are supported by the rigorous review of data.

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Responsive and Systemic Planning (Plan-Do-Study-Act: PDSA)</p> <p>ILT A formal process exists to propose agenda items prior to meeting, assist agenda development, and document meeting results with different members sharing leadership (e.g., facilitating specific agenda items during meeting).</p> <p>PLC The team process continually gathers student work and data as evidence to identify, implement, and record next steps in the PDSA cycle [Plan for instruction (PLAN), Deliver instruction (DO), Share evidence of student learning (STUDY), Determine next steps (ACT)] guided by the school improvement plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and manage a process for proposing and confirming agenda items prior to the meeting. • Manage the creation of each agenda, incorporating ILT team members' recommendations and also ensuring that the meetings include regular review of implementation of the continuous improvement plan. • Focus team agendas and discussion on strategies to improve instructional practice and reviewing impact through student results. • Coach ILT team members in facilitating portions of the ILT meetings, and provide feedback as part of building leadership across the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure a shared understanding among Team Leads of the PDSA process; coach and support Team Leads in their work leading the PDSA cycle. • Review insights and outcomes from the PLCs with Team Leads and with the ILT team as a whole.

Function: Team Tools and Resources

Tool/Resource	Description and Use	Documents
Team Terms of Reference (or Charter)	This is an effective tool for clarifying team mission.	Team Charter
Vision and Mission Statements	<p>1. These documents are protocols for establishing a vision and mission—both for the team and, in this case, for a school community—and maximizing collective input and ownership for the developed vision and mission. Your ILT can even use these protocol to engage stakeholders more broadly within the school community.</p> <p>2. The next document is a checklist you can use to examine your vision or mission statement.</p> <p>3. By itself, your mission statement doesn't mean much. It's just words on a page unless it's supported by a group of people who care about making a difference in their organization. Few things are as powerful as a shared mission. This last tool is from the NonProfithub and will help your team come up with "a mission that matters."</p>	<p>1. Developing a Mission or Vision Statement</p> <p>Vision and Mission Statements</p> <p>2. Mission/Vision Statement Checklist</p> <p>3. NonProfithub's Tool</p>
Problem Solving Processes	<p>The National School Reform Faculty's website includes several open source protocols for problem solving, including consultancy protocols, a protocol for group use in coaching an individual on a challenge (Issaquah protocol), the Peeling the Onion protocol for deep exploration of a problem or challenge, and the Ping Pong protocol, which ensures broad engagement within a group around problem solving.</p> <p>The attached Word document includes several straightforward problem-solving processes.</p>	<p>NSRF's Protocols for Exploring Dilemmas</p> <p>Problem Solving and Action Planning</p>
Root Cause Analysis	<p>1. This protocol for Root Cause Analysis includes steps for reflecting on student outcomes (data and other evidence) to identify priority concerns; hypothesizing about root causes for gaps; and then planning for implementation of evidence-based instructional strategies to address those gaps. The last step outlined is to apply the PDSA Cycle to implementing the plan for addressing the identified root cause.</p> <p>2-3. The other two documents referenced here are a four step blank template and a math four step process example.</p>	<p>1. Root Cause Process</p> <p>2. Four Steps to Root Cause Template</p> <p>3. Four Steps to Root Cause—Math Sample</p>
Fishbone: Cause and Effect Analysis	This protocol enables a team to begin with an identified challenge (instructional or learning problem) and explore potential causes through several lenses: (a) Curriculum causes; (b) Instruction Causes; (c) Assessment Causes; (d) Equity Causes; and (e) Professional Development Causes.	Fishbone—Cause and Effect Analysis Protocol
Consensus	This protocol is effective at defining consensus in group decision-making and reaching that outcome.	Consensus—Five Finger Tool

Tool/Resource	Description and Use	Documents
Decision-making Protocols	<p>When deciding on a decision-making process for the team, it is important to determine what type of decision the group is seeking: is this a consensus-based decision, where everyone on the team must be able to support the outcome? Or is the goal to have multiple viewpoints brought to the group for a vote for to inform a decision made by leadership? These processes reflect different approaches:</p> <p>The School Reform Faculty provides a Consensus-Based Protocol</p> <p>Decision-making can also be facilitated through the Open-Narrow-Close Protocol for Decision-Making, used in both Six Sigma and Facilitative Leadership Processes. This version of the protocol comes from Expeditionary Learning Schools:</p>	See links to the left.
The Five Dysfunctions of a Team	This model calls out five areas where teams stumble in their work together, highlighting what leaders and team members can do to improve their results.	Overview of the Five Dysfunctions
Comprehensive School Needs Assessment	Developed for Continuous Improvement Schools in 2013, this tool is broadly applicable across schools as a means to create a snapshot of current practice across several areas, including curriculum and instruction, professional development, use of data, learning teams, family and community engagement, use of time and space, school culture, and team functioning.	Comprehensive Needs Assessment
School Planning and Monitoring Progress	<p>The Record of Continuous Improvement protocols for data-driven goal-setting and monitoring progress will be most familiar to Continuous Improvement schools but can be a relevant resource for annual school planning in all schools across the state.</p> <p>The Big Four document is an overview of the four elements of an effective Continuous Improvement process, highlighting the practices that make this type of school planning effective. These four elements include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify Prioritized Student Achievement Concerns Based on In-Depth Data Analysis b. Identify Hypothesized Root Causes of Top Two to Three Prioritized Concerns c. Select Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies/ Practices to Solve Root Causes of Concerns d. Use PDSA Cycle to Implement Each Instructional Strategy/ Practice to Verify Root Cause 	Record of Continuous Improvement Resources Big Four Record of Continuous Improvement
Action Plan Roles & Responsibilities	The RACI tool can be used to identify roles and responsibilities of team members during implementation of a change process, action plan, etc. Making clear who is doing what is instrumental to the success of a project.	RACI Model for Role Definition

Leadership Domain: Communication

Information must move between the ILT and PLCs in both directions and the principal can facilitate this function by modeling open, transparent communication and by establishing systems for communication. This means ensuring that ILT actions are informed by PLC learning and insights and that all decisions are shared effectively with PLCs and other stakeholders within the school.

Communication: Principal Actions

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Communication</p> <p>ILT The communication plan is implemented with fidelity and identifies how instructional changes are shared collaboratively with stakeholders (e.g., school staff, students, school board, families and community).</p> <p>PLC The communication plan is implemented with fidelity and identifies how instructional changes are shared with the various grade or content teams, leadership team, other instructional staff, and students. All parties participate in celebration of academic success.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set expectations and lead the team in establishing a communication plan that identifies all relevant stakeholders for sharing information with and addresses strategic priorities, including instructional changes. • Ensure roles for implementing the communication plan are defined and shared with the team and follow up individually and as a team to ensure implementation. • At the conclusion of each ILT meeting, confirm important updates and insights for sharing more broadly, either by the principal with the whole school or through Team Leads to their PLCs. • Ensure that communication channels reach the classroom level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model responsive team leadership with open communication and follow up for Team Leads. • Ensure the role of PLCs in implementing the communication plan is clear.

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Feedback Loops</p> <p>ILT The team uses and acts upon focused, formal feedback processes linked to all stakeholders who provide and receive information on systemic changes in instruction and their impact on student learning. Practices inform policies and policies enable practices that support implementation. PDSA feedback loops communicate implementation barriers and successes.</p> <p>PLC Team members use and act upon focused, formal feedback processes linked to stakeholders (including leadership team) that provide and receive information on changes in instruction and their impact on student learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model and establish a culture of feedback from all stakeholders, ensuring that communication is a two-way proposition and important feedback is acted upon. • Establish processes for stakeholders wishing to share feedback so that information flows back up to the ILT from all stakeholder groups. • Ensure that the ILT is a forum for hearing from PLCs about the successes and barriers to implementing important instructional strategies and other school priorities, addressing barriers and sharing best practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the ILT and other mechanisms to respond to feedback from the PLCs. PLCs should take advantage of structures for them to raise questions and insights to the ILT, including working through their Team Lead and using the post-meeting summary document to highlight key areas for follow up. As part of this summary document, PLCs can raise areas where they are seeking input or request responses to specific questions. • Support Team Leads in their work to establish open communication within their Professional Learning Communities.

Communications: Team Tools and Resources

Tool/Resource	Description and Use	Documents
Stakeholder Map Template	This tool is helpful in identifying stakeholders (affected groups for outreach, whether for input or information sharing) and planning for their engagement.	Stakeholder Map
Communication Plan Template	Effective communication must be planned for, and this template helps to connect specific messages and media to the stakeholder groups who must hear it.	Communications Plan
Communication/ Feedback Loops between the ILT and PLC	This template can be adapted by principals and teams to capture meeting outcomes and raise insights and questions to the Instructional Leadership Team, the administration, and other teams, where they have schoolwide implications.	PLC Agenda and Meeting Summary Template
Feedback Practices within a Team	This protocol from the National School Reform Faculty uses team participants' past negative feedback experiences to build a set of shared principles for open, constructive feedback on the current team.	Feedback Nightmares Protocol

Leadership Domain: Focus on Improving Instruction and Learning

Information must move between the ILT and PLCs in both directions, and the principal can facilitate this function by modeling open, transparent communication and by establishing systems for communication. This means ensuring that ILT actions are informed by PLC learning and insights and that all decisions are shared effectively with PLCs and other stakeholders within the school.

Focus on Improving Instruction and Learning: Principal Actions

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Alignment (Assessment, Instruction, and Curriculum)</p> <p>ILT The team identifies gaps and overlaps to establish a plan for scaffolded learning to align curriculum, assessments and instruction to the Minnesota Academic Standards benchmarks to ensure learning at higher cognitive levels and transfer learning to real-life situations.</p> <p>The team leads staff effort for scaffolding learning to align curriculum, assessments and instruction with the Minnesota Academic Standards benchmarks to ensure learning at higher cognitive levels and transfer learning to real-life situations.</p> <p>PLC The team implements pre and post common assessment aligned to Minnesota Academic Standards and benchmarks. They use this information to address student needs by adjusting instruction and curriculum.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build an understanding among all ILT members of the importance of alignment and high standards, and urgency to address any gaps. • Establish the role of the ILT and the PLCs in ensuring alignment: is there schoolwide parameter setting or planning that should happen in the ILT or with its coordination? What is the work of the PLCs in working through alignment at the grade- or subject-level or within an individual teacher's practice? • Lead the ILT (or a sub-team, as appropriate) in a process to establish the foundation for schoolwide alignment. This can include defining rigor and assessment practices, prioritizing aligned instructional practices for development, and establishing ground rules for curriculum planning and pacing guides. • Clarify roles for individuals and each PLC in ensuring implementation of the instructional plan, and ensure that there are clear mechanisms—including interim assessments—for monitoring impact of implementation. • Focus the ILT's actions and meetings on monitoring the progress of implementation and addressing gaps as they arise. The ILT can be particularly effective in ensuring each team's actions match up, so that alignment exists across subject areas and vertically across grades. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Team Leads in building an understanding of the importance and urgency of alignment within their PLC teams by communicating the decisions of the ILT and the other “ground rules” for alignment to the PLC members. • Support Team Leads in translating the implications of schoolwide alignment plans and priorities to the specific function of their PLC. • Monitor PLC progress in establishing alignment within their specific function (e.g., at the grade level or across a subject) and in supporting teachers in planning for alignment within their own classroom. This can be done by reviewing PLC progress summaries and through visits to PLC meetings. Look for shared instructional practices, evidence of aligned curriculum, and rich conversations about student progress based on assessment data.

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Instruction</p> <p>ILT The team explores and selects usable interventions (instructional strategies or practices) that are evidence-based using data analysis to identify and address instructional gaps.</p> <p>The team guides implementation of the usable interventions (instructional strategies or practices) using in-depth data analysis.</p> <p>The team monitors usable interventions for fidelity and impact of implementation using in-depth data analysis (including observation) within both short and long PDSA cycles.</p> <p>PLC (Including Recursive Instructional Challenge)</p> <p>The team collaborates to scaffold learning and to align assessments and usable interventions, accelerating learning to higher cognitive levels.</p> <p>The team analyzes student work, common formative assessments and adjusts instruction as needed.</p> <p>The team focuses on a specific instructional problem linked to Minnesota Academic Standards to refine, impact and accelerate student achievement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with ILT members to bring forward effective instructional strategies or practices for consideration as priorities, especially within the context of district priorities or resources. • Lead team in determining instructional priorities. • Once strategies are selected, ensure that PLC Team Leads and other ILT members as appropriate have a deep understanding of these practices and are prepared to build the practices in other faculty members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe PLC meetings and review agendas and outcomes to ensure a focus on instructional implementation and to review progress in building strong, shared instructional practices. • As data is gathered on the implementation of these practices, use this evidence to work with PLC Team Leads to help them address gaps within their teams and address schoolwide development needs through regular PD opportunities.

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Capacity Building</p> <p>ILT The team identifies and shares features of selected usable interventions (instructional strategies or practices), including instructional changes needed to maximize impact. The team provides support for staff to transfer learning about usable interventions (instructional strategies or practices) to classroom through instruction-focused learning teams. The team coaches staff in deepening their content expertise by using both student achievement and implementation data from usable interventions (instructional strategies or practices) to accelerate and maximize student learning.</p> <p>PLC The team collaborates to scaffold learning, align assessments and usable interventions accelerating learning to higher cognitive levels. The team analyzes student work, common formative assessments and adjusts instruction as needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all ILT members share a sense of urgency around ongoing improvement of instructional practice. • Build a shared understanding among ILT members of what strong instructional practice looks like. • Build a shared understanding of the importance of high academic standards, using the MN Academic Standards to build this understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure PLC Team Leads are prepared for their role through the work of the ILT and support them one-on-one as necessary. • Identify schoolwide needs for PD support to implement instructional priorities and make sure these are addressed in the schoolwide PD Plan.

Focus on Improving Instruction and Learning: Tools and Resources

Tool/Resource	Description and Use	Documents
Student Work Review	<p>1. The EQuIP resources—from the Achieve network—include training materials and examples to guide reviewing student work.</p> <p>2-3. The <i>Guide for Using Student Protocols</i> includes summaries for applying a number of effective protocols from the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) to the practice of reviewing student work. Protocols include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative Assessment Conference • Considering Evidence • Looking at Patterns in Student Work • Reflective Practice • Standards in Practice • Student Work Analysis • Tuning 	<p>1. EQuIP's Student Work Review Resources</p> <p>2. Guide for Using Student Work Protocols</p> <p>3. National School Reform Faculty Protocols</p>
Curricular Planning	EQuIP resources—from the Achieve network—include rubrics, training materials, and examples to guide reviewing lesson and unit plans for rigor and coherence through alignment to Common Core State Standards.	EQuIP's Curricular Planning Resources
Audit Instructional Practice Improvement Protocols	<p>This guide includes summaries for applying a number of effective protocols from the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) to groups focused on improving specific elements of instructional practice. Protocols include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATLAS Looking at Data • Charrette • Four 'A's and Three Levels of Text • Learning Progressions • Lesson Planning • Peeling the Onion (adapted) • Tuning A Plan 	Guide for Using Adult Work Protocols National School Reform Faculty Protocols
Practice Profile Review	<p>Teams should focus on deep examination of instructional practice. One way to do this is through the development and review of a Practice Profile on prioritized instructional practices. The tools here include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Guidance for developing a practice profile focused on Instructional Improvement 2. A template for a Practice Profile 3. Guidance for reviewing the Practice Profile after completion 	<p>1. Practice Profile Tool for Teams</p> <p>2. Practice Profile Template</p> <p>3. Criteria for Reviewing a Practice Profile</p>
Inventory: Instructional Initiatives within the School	These two resources from the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) allows for an inventory of the existing instructional initiatives, including understanding their target population, alignment to priorities, and impact.	<p>The Initiative Inventory</p> <p>The District Initiative</p>

Leadership Domain: Data-Driven Decision-Making

Instructional improvement is most focused and effective when it is grounded in meaningful, data-supported analysis of student outcomes. This includes ensuring access to aligned data and building the skills and culture that support adults in examining evidence and reflecting on personal and team practice.

Data-Driven Decision-Making: Principal Actions

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Use of Data Process</p> <p>ILT The team performs a comprehensive needs assessment by gathering and analyzing implementation and achievement data, disaggregated by student group, to assess impact of usable interventions.</p> <p>The team acquires, displays and communicates useful, current and relevant data patterns to all staff to evaluate implementation and student achievement (e.g., root cause analysis).</p> <p>The team uses PDSA cycles to evaluate implementation and achievement data to inform next steps and confirm root cause.</p> <p>PLC Not included in rubric.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a culture of data-driven decision-making within the ILT and throughout the school. • Ensure the ILT has access to the data needed to complete a comprehensive needs assessment and manage the needs assessment process. • Ensure urgency to continue to improve instructional practice to address weaknesses in student outcomes. • Ensure that the ILT team periodically reviews school-level data—as well as looks deeply at more detailed data—and that the team is facilitated through root cause analysis. • Ensure that the team is well-versed in the PDSA cycle and establish this as a priority for the ILT; ensure insights and action plans are communicated to and followed up on within the PLCs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a dedicated calendar for interim assessment and other data review at the PLC level, so that this is happening in a timely and consistent way across all teams. • Ensure that PLC Leads are prepared to share relevant insights from the comprehensive needs assessment with their teams. • Ensure PLC Leads are prepared to facilitate data-driven problem solving, planning, and action within their PLCs by providing training and support in data-driven instructional leadership.

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Use of Schoolwide Accountability Data</p> <p>ILT The team examines aggregated state and local student performance data to verify school achievement, explore graduation gaps and hypothesize potential root causes.</p> <p>The team implements short-term cyclical processes of examining local student achievement data aligned to Minnesota Academic Standards benchmarks to adjust usable interventions and maintain evidence for the continuous improvement plan.</p> <p>The team uses multiple-year student achievement data aligned to Minnesota Academic Standards benchmarks to guide and adjust alignment of assessments and instruction.</p> <p>Use of Grade Level/ Content Accountability Data</p> <p>PLC The team analyzes individual and multiple classroom data for a specific learning goal linked to Minnesota Academic Standards (e.g., student work, formative assessment, test results) to determine next steps in refining and solving recursive instructional problems. Relationships between achievement, behavior and attendance are also analyzed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the ILT’s plan of action for the year includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foundational efforts to align available data to understand schoolwide data trends and insights 2. Short-term cyclical processes to evaluate and adjust practice in action 3. Examination of longer-term trends in alignment with school goals • Keep the ILT focused on monitoring the effectiveness of the plan of action throughout the year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all school faculty members are prepared to participate in reviewing data from their classrooms and teams, analyzing trends and identifying root causes. • Ensure that there is a schoolwide culture of learning from results and responding to areas of weakness in outcomes and practice. • Ensure that Team Leads have access --through the ILT—to schoolwide data that can help put the results and insights of the PLC in context. • Ensure PLCs understand impact of vertical alignment and cumulative student outcomes, so that teachers are aware of and committed to ongoing impact and the long-term trajectory of student success.

Critical Feature	Principal Actions: Instructional Leadership Team	Principal Actions: Professional Learning Community
<p>Data Management System</p> <p>ILT The team develops a system that links multiple types of student data and provides in-depth analysis of relationships at multiple levels (e.g., school, learning team, classroom, and individual). The team provides access to data (including school, learning team, and classroom performance) that allows for real-time identification of changes needed in the instructional system and support of student needs.</p> <p>The team provides access for students and parents or guardians to acquire student level data to track learning and make decisions about college and career plans.</p> <p>Use of Intervention Data</p> <p>PLC The team collects and analyzes student work, fidelity of implementation data and other classroom evidence to guide and standardize intervention implementation to support progress of students' learning across same grade classrooms or school wide. Differentiated instructional coaching is provided for teachers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that ILT members have access to the information needed to establish schoolwide data management expectations, practices, and systems—including coordinating with central offices that generate crucial data streams from district-wide or state-wide assessments. • Put district-wide expectations for data use and accountability into the context of schoolwide priorities and outcomes, so that even mandated processes are presented with coherence within the school's sphere of influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure Team Leads have a shared understanding of how to review student work and implementation data to understand the effectiveness of instructional strategies. • Prepare Team Leads to serve as instructional coaches, where appropriate, to their team members. • Ensure PLCs have access to data needed to establish and monitor PLC goals.

Data-Driven Decision-Making: Tools and Resources

Tool/Resource	Description and Use	Documents
Systematic Data Inventory	This resource can assist school leaders in capturing the available academic and non-academic data streams and the process for their collection, identifying gaps in available data as well.	Systematic Data Inventory Template
Data-Driven Goal-Setting Protocol	<p>Minnesota schools supported by the Minnesota Department of Education’s Regional Centers of Excellence are familiar with a process for data analysis that includes defining SMART goals and:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying Enrollment Data trends Setting SMART Goals differentiated by student group Reviewing trend data at the school level with a focus on closing achievement gaps Reviewing and comparing achievement level trend data by grade level Reviewing growth data Answering questions and prioritizing concerns Completing a Root Cause Analysis <p>These two documents will help guide schools through the process.</p>	Data Analysis and Use for Continuous Improvement Template PowerPoint Data Analysis and Use for Continuous Improvement Process Guide
SMART Goal Template and Guidance	<p>Setting SMART Goals is an important element of effective teams, and the first document includes guidance for ensuring goals are Specific/ Strategic, Measurable, Attainable (yet Rigorous), Results-based, and Time Bound.</p> <p>The second document is an Excel spreadsheet that can help facilitate schoolwide goal setting. It includes space to capture historical trends and worksheet tabs for goal setting for specific demographic groups.</p>	Setting Student Achievement SMART Goals for School Improvement SMART Goal Setting School Template
Data Driven Dialogue Protocol	This protocol supports a team in deeply examining data and drawing conclusions from it through a process of (1) observing factual information available from the data and then (2) developing Inferences about the implications and causes for the data results.	Data Driven Dialogue Protocol
Data Hypothesis Protocol	This protocol can be used to capture hypotheses for the root causes of student outcome results, pushing teams to identify specific evidence in support of potential causes.	Hypothesis Setting and Evidence Review
Data-Driven Instruction Overview Videos	<p>Overview videos (approximately 3 minutes each) are helpful resources for introducing core principles of data-driven instructional practices and can be a helpful overview for a team embarking on this work, building both understanding and buy-in. Videos include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments: Redefining Rigor Analysis I: Leading a Middle School Meeting Analysis II: Leading an Elementary School Meeting Action: Teaching More Effectively Culture: PD on Driven by Data 	Driven by Data
Data-Driven Instruction Resources	<p>EngageNY has compiled resources for Data-Driven Instruction implementation on their website, drawn from Paul Bambrick-Santoyo’s book Driven by Data. These resources include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment resources, including sample calendars and assessments Analysis resources, including sample analysis sheets and results grids, as well as a meeting agenda Culture resources, including resources for new principals and a sample year-long culture calendar 	Data-Driven Resources

Principal Action Checklist

The chart below is meant to serve as a resource “at-a-glance” for principals as they build out plans for engaging their teams throughout the year. Specific timing and frequencies of actions may change, but principals benefit from a clear plan of action & follow up. These discrete actions are connected by the practice of responsive and systemic planning (Plan-Do-Study-Act). We encourage principals to dig more deeply into what makes these actions effective in the Action Guide and additional information elsewhere in the Guide.

Ongoing

Throughout the year, Principals can reflect on these questions to ensure their work with the ILT and PLCs is on track:

- √ Are the right individuals on the team?
- √ Are team members united in a vision and sense of urgency?
- √ Do team members have the knowledge and skills they need to lead?
- √ Do they have the resources and information they need?
- √ Do we have an effective plan of action with a clear definition of success?
- √ Do we know how our plan is working to impact students?

EFFORT: Are we doing what we initially identified that we should do? **FIDELITY:** Did we do what we planned, and how do we know that we implemented with high quality? And **IMPACT:** Were our actions effective? What were our outcomes?

Before School Starts/ In the First Weeks

- Examine available data and engage stakeholders within the school community to understand the current state of the school: its strengths and challenges (1st Year Principals. Returning Principals will have completed this the previous spring.)
- Develop a personal vision for action for the 1st school year to share with the ILT (1st Year Principals)
- Develop an understanding of district-wide priorities, initiatives, and processes for the upcoming year so that the ILT and PLCs can coherently integrate these into schoolwide planning and priorities as well as team focus areas.
- Identify or review membership of the ILT. Plan to include—as guidelines suggest—all team and department leads as well as leaders of school programs such as Special Education or ELL as relevant, but looking especially at individuals’ demonstrated leadership skills and alignment with school goals.
- Plan for the use of data in the upcoming year, identifying questions of alignment and gaps in available data and planning for the timing of data availability.
- Meet with members of the ILT to understand their contributions to the school, their skill set (possibly using a tool such as a strengths-finder), and their mindsets to develop a profile of the team; share priorities for school vision and the ILT’s role in this work with team members. Establish the expectation that additional ILT members may be identified and added as the year progresses, as you identify other aligned leaders (formal leaders and informal leaders) within the building. (1st Year Principals)

- Establish sub-teams as needed within the ILT; are there smaller groups who will be focused on specific tasks or priorities through the year?
- Where possible, meet with the ILT prior to the start of school to:
 - Establish a team charter or terms of reference
 - Review and revise—or create—school goals for the upcoming year
 - Review and revise—or create—instructional priorities for the year and a plan for implementation
 - Review the PLCs and their composition and team charges for the upcoming year; focus on preparing Team Leads for their work in the upcoming year
- Establish an ILT Action Calendar for the year: when will the ILT meet and what are the known milestones for the year?
 - When will important data streams (such as MN State Assessments) be available for review?
 - How does the school’s calendar of short-term PDSA cycles intersect with the ILT calendar, and when should the team be reviewing the effectiveness of this year’s strategies?

Monthly/Periodically

- ≥2 ILT Meetings; Plan & review agendas, choose and support facilitators, and monitor follow up.
- Review progress of the PLCs through their meeting summaries and with feedback from the Team Leads.
- Visit 3-5 PLC meetings as an observer; follow up with the Team Lead and—as appropriate—with the ILT to share insights about the team’s practice and learning. Coach the Team Lead on their facilitation and the team’s functioning.
- During one-on-one meetings with ILT members, touch on their role as PLC Team Leads, their personal leadership development goals, and/or the progress of their PLCs.
- Review Progress-to-Goals milestones: based on planning at the beginning of the year, what interim milestones will be reached during this period? What evidence is there of outcomes and who needs to be involved in interpreting and acting on these results?
- ILT Team effectiveness check. Now that team membership and meetings are well-established:
 - Are team norms functioning and effective?
 - Are team meeting agendas aligned with school priorities?
 - Are team meetings facilitated effectively and outcomes clear and action-oriented?
 - Have ILT Team members begun to share in the facilitation of the group; are they using effective practices?
 - Are there any issues with team members that should be addressed?
- Midyear Progress Check:
 - Work with PLC Team Leads and other leaders on the ILT to gather data from across the school on progress to goals found in the School’s Record of Continuous Improvement and insights around gaps in implementation and effective practice.
 - Lead ILT in a comprehensive examination of progress to goals and implementation of the school’s strategic priorities for the year: what is working? What needs to be adjusted?
 - Revise the school plan as needed.

- PLC Effectiveness Check:
 - Together with PLC Team Leads, identify two to three teams based on the Midyear Progress check that would benefit from additional support and set up a regular schedule of meeting with the PLC Team Leads to review meeting agendas and team plans. Identify additional resources for these teams and prioritize these teams for PLC Team meeting visits.

Prior to the Start of the Next Year

- Establish formal and informal leadership roles for the next school year with returning faculty. Review alignment of the members of this year's ILT and consider carefully who should be in leadership roles and on the ILT in the upcoming school year.
- Reexamine ILT and PLC practices (team terms of reference and roles, action calendar for the year, facilitation, etc.) to determine what worked and what didn't.
- Meet with ILT team members to review progress in the current school year (using available data) and begin to develop priorities for the upcoming year.
- Review staffing plan for the upcoming year and create PLCs that align with school priorities and are supportive of cross-classroom collaboration and professional Learning.