



Indicator: Instructional Teams meet regularly (twice month or more for 45 minutes each meeting) to review implementation of effective practice and student progress. (5091)

Explanation: The evidence suggests that decisions regarding students are often best made by those closest to the students; their teachers. High functioning instructional teams dedicate and protect their meeting times. They routinely meet at least twice monthly for durations of no less than 45 minutes. In addition, they often reserve a larger 4-6 hour block of time to meet per month.

Questions: What evidence will the Leadership Team seek to determine whether instructional teams are meeting routinely, at least twice monthly for no less than 45 minutes per meeting? Does the Leadership team have policies in place to protect and dedicate this meeting time for instructional teams? Does the administration respect and observe dedicated meeting times for instructional team? How does the Leadership Team check in to the results of those meetings?

School leadership carve out precious time in the school schedule for teams to meet: Leadership Teams, Instructional Teams, School Community Councils. For Instructional Teams, this time may be divided into two purposes, with time allotments assigned appropriately. The Instruction Team may meet once a month and prior to the start of school in large blocks of time (4 – 6 hours each meeting) to work on aligning curriculum to standards or aligning lesson plans to the curriculum. These large blocks of time are necessary for the work that the team must do in order to be prepared for their classes. The Instructional Teams also need to meet on a more often basis in order to calibrate and examine their efforts in the classroom to see what effect they are having on student achievement and learning. This is the business of the Instructional Team. Teams may plan their units together and then once the unit has been delivered, come back together to assess how it went. What students did well? Where did students struggle? What can be done differently? Did one teacher have greater success than another? What did that teacher do that was different? This collegial interaction is where teachers hone their skills, get the support and reinforcement they need, and learn from one another.

Hattie (2012) states that teachers “need to collaborate to build a team working together to solve the dilemmas in learning, to collectively share and critique the nature and quality of evidence that shows [their] impact on student learning, and to cooperate in planning and critiquing lessons, learning intentions, and success criteria on a regular basis” (p. 171). Hattie also remarks that often, when time is allowed for teachers to plan, this time is taken up with marking papers, preparing for their next lesson or looking for resources...mostly on an individual basis. While this is all important, this time could also be spent, as a team, culling the experience of all the teachers in a grade level, grade-level cluster, or subject so that the work of one benefits the work of many. This ability to learn from one another, Hattie says, was one of the lessons gleaned from *Visible Learning* and studying the multiple affect sizes of different elements of teaching and learning, “Sharing a common understanding of progression is the most critical success factor in any school; without it, individualism, personal opinions, and ‘anything goes’ dominate...Miller (2010) refers

to the ‘smart swarm’ that occurs when all begin to move in the right direction based on collaborative critique, distributed problem-solving, and multiple interactions” (p. 67).

Allensworth (2012) echoes this sentiment, “Schools that show the largest improvements in student learning over time are those where teachers work collectively on improving instruction, and where school leadership is inclusive and focused on instruction” (p. 30).

We encourage students to work together in teams to increase knowledge, provide a culture of belonging and inclusion, and to allow them to contribute their own strengths to a project. Instructional Teams do that same when they come together, plan together, evaluate the effects of what they are doing in their classrooms, and share with one another their challenges and successes. Redding (2005) writes,

Some decisions are best made by the teachers responsible for particular groups of students—grade level teams or subject area teams, which we will call “instructional teams.” Instructional Teams are manageable groupings of teachers by grade level or subject area who meet to develop instructional strategies aligned to the standards-based curriculum and to monitor the progress of the students in the grade levels or subject area for which the team is responsible. Instructional Teams need time for two purposes: 1) meetings, and 2) curricular and instructional planning. A 45-minute meeting twice a month is ideal for maintaining communication and organizing the work at hand, operating with agendas, minutes, and focus. In addition, a block of 4 to 6 hours of time once a month is necessary for curricular and instructional planning, and additional whole days before and after the school year are a great advantage. (p. 46)

References and Resources

- Allensworth, E. (2012, Fall). Want to improve teaching? Create collaborative, supportive schools. *American Educator*.
- Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers. Maximizing impact on learning*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Redding, S. (2005). *The mega system. Deciding. Learning. Connecting*. Lincoln, IL: Academic Development Institute. Retrieved from www.adi.org