

CORE FUNCTION	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Leadership Capacity	Distributed leadership and collaboration	The school has established a team structure among teachers with specific duties and time for instructional planning. (5143)

The evidence review indicates that incorporating team structures into the school culture assists in driving improvement at the school and informs district policies and practices. Team structures charged with specific functions and purpose can address three unique areas of need in schools; instruction and instructional methods, whole school improvement planning and family community connections. Teams, when effectively constructed and managed, shore up continuous improvement planning frameworks.

How will the school establish team structures with specific purpose and duties? How will the school ensure that time necessary for meetings is supplied and protected for teams? How will the school prepare teachers for their service on teams? What incentives will the school offer to attract teachers to serve on teams? How will the school articulate in its governance policies and procedures the purpose and expectations of teams? How will the school document the work of teams?

#### **Evidence Review: Establishing Team Structures to Drive Improvement**

Teams at both the district and school levels, when effectively purposed, organized, and supervised, provide an infrastructure for continuous improvement. District teams' decisions can be informed by input from the school teams.

Marzano (2003) points out the leadership should not reside with one individual; a team approach to planning and decision making allows for distributive leadership. While principals in effective schools promote staff collaboration, teachers working with less effective instructional leaders function more as individuals than as members of a school team – “in the less successful schools, teachers were often left completely alone to plan what to teach, with little guidance from their senior colleagues and little coordination with other teachers: (Rutter et al., 1979, p. 136). Collaborative activities that do occur in these less successful schools are more socially based and less professionally oriented than the exchanges that occur in schools with more effective instructional leaders.

Schmoker (1996) recommends that teams of teachers implement, assess, and adjust instruction in short-term cycles of improvement – not annually, but continuously. Common team tasks include intensive efforts to align content taught across grades, and development of interim and diagnostic mini-assessments to monitor student progress on a continuing basis. Practices such as the development of agendas and minutes and the use of organized procedures for meetings help the teams stay focused and maintain a history of team work.

Planning and decision making within the district and school require teams, time, and access to timely information. That is, decision-making groups must be organized and given time to plan and monitor the parts of the system for which they are responsible. Hassell et al. (2006) provide useful tools to begin the change process and get planning teams started.

A basic structure for team planning, work, and decision making in a school includes a Leadership Team, Instructional Teams, and a team focused on the family-school connection (such as a School Community Council).



- The Leadership Team is typically comprised of the principal and team leaders from the Instructional Teams (grade level or subject area teams). The Leadership Team may also function as the School Improvement Team, with parent members attending meetings scheduled for purposes of reviewing and amending the school improvement plan.
- 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.
- A School Community Council is comprised of the principal, counselor, social work, teachers, and parents (typical configuration), with parents constituting the majority of the membership. The School Community Council advises, plans, and assists with matters related to the school-home compact, homework, open houses, parent-teacher conferences, school-home communication, and parent education (including training and information about learning standards and the parents' role in supporting children's learning at home).

## **Action Principles**

### **For District**

1. Address district and school team structures and expectations in official district policy.
2. Expect teams to sustain their operation even through changes in district and school leadership.
3. Provide adequate time for teams to meet, conduct business, and meet the expectations of district policy.
4. Require teams to prepare and maintain documentation of meeting agendas, minutes, and work products.
5. Provide professional development for district and school personnel on effective teaming practices.
6. Include successful engagement of teams and evidence of their productivity in evaluation of district and school administrators.
7. Systematize the regular reporting of the work of school and district teams of the school board.

### **For School**

1. Incorporate team structures into the school improvement plan and school governance policy.
2. Develop written statements of purpose and by-laws for each team's operation.
3. Provide teams with work plans for the year and specific work products to produce.
4. Insure that all teams prepare agendas for their meetings, maintain minutes, and catalog their work products.
5. Maintain a file of the agendas, work products, and minutes of the all teams.
6. Provide adequate time for teams to meet, conduct business, and meet the expectations of district and school policy. A rule of thumb is that Leadership Teams and School Community Councils meet twice each month for an hour each meeting; Instructional Teams meet twice each month for 45 minutes to conduct business and for blocks of time 4 to 6 hours each month to review student learning data and develop and refine instructional plans.
7. Insure that teams receive timely access to information, including student progress data and summaries of classroom observations.
8. Provide professional development on effective teaming practices.

(Perlman & Redding, 2011, pp. 65–66)



## NC MTSS CONNECTION:

At the school level, a school-based leadership team should guide implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS). This may take place within the structure of the School Improvement Team or may be a subset of this team. A linked teaming structure refers to the teams in a school charged with implementation of MTSS. Teams may differ based on several factors, but a connection should always be made in order to facilitate effective implementation. Multiple teams at a school may be charged with implementation of MTSS (e.g., school leadership team, school improvement team, grade-level teams) and overlapping membership across teams may exist.

A formal communication protocol between teams should be a part of an MTSS implementation plan that is developed by the school-based leadership team. This may be a part of the school improvement plan or separate. If it is separate, there should be clear alignment of the MTSS implementation plan with the overall goals and action steps within the school improvement plan.

The master schedule provides opportunities for collaborative, data-based problem-solving and decision making among staff to occur in settings such as leadership team meetings, grade-level meetings, cross grade-level meetings, and professional learning communities. Schedules permit personnel to access additional professional development and coaching support that is differentiated based on their needs. Schedules refer to both the year-long schedule of activities that may include professional development and coaching, universal screening/benchmark assessments, and data-analysis. Schedules also refer to on-going (e.g., weekly) activities related to professional development and coaching, assessment, and data-analysis. Professional development and coaching are ongoing activities that develop the capacity of staff to implement MTSS. Efforts should be aligned with results of school needs assessments and modified based on the results of professional learning.

[NC MTSS Implementation Guide: Examining School Teams](#)

## REFERENCE AND RESOURCES

- Hassel, E. A., Hassel, B. C., Arkin, M. D., Kowal, J. K., & Steiner, L. M. (2006). *School Restructuring Under No Child Left Behind: What Works When? A Guide for Education Leaders*. Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED496104.pdf>
- Lamar County Primary School. (2014). *Schoolwide/School Improvement Plan 2014-2015*. [http://www.lcps.lamar.k12.ga.us/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_220105/File/Title%20LCPS\\_SWP\\_2014\\_2015\\_Revised.pdf](http://www.lcps.lamar.k12.ga.us/UserFiles/Servers/Server_220105/File/Title%20LCPS_SWP_2014_2015_Revised.pdf)
- Marzano, R. (2003). *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. <http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/video/WhatWorksInSchools.pdf>
- Perlman, C. L., & Redding, S. (Eds.). (2011). *Handbook on Effective Implementation of School Improvement Grants*. Center on Innovation & Improvement. [http://www.centerii.org/handbook/Resources/Handbook\\_on\\_Effective\\_Implementation\\_of\\_School\\_Improvement\\_Grants.pdf](http://www.centerii.org/handbook/Resources/Handbook_on_Effective_Implementation_of_School_Improvement_Grants.pdf)
- Redding, S. (2006). *The Mega System: Deciding, Learning, Connecting. A Handbook for Continuous Improvement Within a Community for the School*. Academic Development Institute. <http://www.adi.org/mega/>
- Redding, S., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook on Statewide Systems of Support*. Information Age. <http://www.adi.org/about/downloads/Handbook%2011%2020%2007.pdf>
- Rutter, M., Maughan, B., Mortimore, P., & Ouston, J. (1979). *Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children*. Harvard University Press.
- Schmoker, M. (1996). *Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Walberg, H. J. (Ed.). (2007). *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*. Information Age Publishing. <http://www.centerii.org/survey/downloads/Restructuring%20Handbook.pdf>