Leadership System   Readiness and Planning Actions

The Leadership System focuses on decision-making, operational management, and upholding the vision, mission, and goals of the district over time. A district's leadership system addresses how the district, as a whole, will engage the students, staff, and the community, as well as the process for implementing the district's strategic plan through day-to-day operations. The leadership system provides the structures to develop the capacity of the adults within the district to utilize their skills and behaviors to positively impact teacher and leader performance, and to support student learning.

Research centered on the leadership system identifies a set of evidence-based practices around key areas of focus implemented by leaders throughout the system. Each practice has actions for central office leaders who are making district-wide decisions for all, which are detailed below, as well as actions taken by building leaders who are establishing norms and routines for individual buildings within the district (detailed in a separate document). These areas of focus start with Shaping the District's Identity and Building Positive Relationships with the people in the district, including students, staff, and the broader community. These both lead to the third area, Developing the Desired District Climate and Culture, which utilizes the practices of the previous areas through policies and practices. All of these set the stage for the next area, Developing Capacity for Instruction and Student Support to ensure that district systems are addressing the needs of learners. The fifth area addresses the key operational levers available to leaders - Allocating Resources to Support the District Mission. Once all of these are functioning, the final area of Managing District Systems for Continuous Improvement and Compliance maintains and sustains the various systems over time. Below are the practices that support the Leadership System of a district, including the planning steps to prepare for implementation.

READINESS DETERMINATION, RESOURCES, AND PROTOCOLS

CONSIDERATION	GETTING STARTED	GETTING BETTER	KEEP IMPROVING
Readiness	The district uses the Hexagon Discussion and Analysis tool to consider the fit and feasibility of implementing Leadership System practices to guide district and building leaders in establishing and overseeing the various systems for their district. Leadership System practices are generally required to be in place to monitor any other system implementation.	The team reviews and discusses the questions for each indicator and documents relevant considerations, both for district leadership and individual building leaders. The team rates each Hexagon component using the 5-point Likert scale in each section. If needed, data is gathered, obstacles documented, and notes are used for the final recommendation.	Using the discussion notes and ratings, the team makes recommendations regarding the fit and feasibility of district and building leadership system practices and, if relevant, what additional support each practice may need. While ratings should be taken into account during the decision-making process, the ratings alone should not be used to determine final recommendations.

CONSIDERATION	GETTING STARTED	GETTING BETTER	KEEP IMPROVING
Resources	District and building leaders along with individuals involved in decision-making, dedicate time to planning and discussing issues relative to leadership system practices, as well as to other systems that are being considered for implementation. Time is set aside for monitoring, data review, and coaching of district and building leaders to ensure they regularly engage in the leadership system practices. Since the leadership practices are about implementation, monitoring, and adjustment to meet the building and district goals and mission, this time is critical for leaders to ensure progress in systems implementation.	District and building leaders designate time on their schedules for partnership meetings to discuss issues and personnel relevant to both central office and building(s). Time is also allocated in district and building leaders schedules for regular systems review and monitoring tasks, including instructional observations (walkthrough or evaluation), and for meeting with collaborative teams around programming and support. District budget personnel allocate resources to support professional learning objectives, and build in planning time for collaboration, coaching, and mentoring into leaders' contracts.	Districts and building leaders designate time for collaboration and partnership among leaders, monitoring of instructional and support systems, and for collaborative engagement with students, staff, and community members. Time for community engagement is allocated for situational issues and problems that arise, and also for proactive positive outreach to establish trust and collaborative relationships with external partners and agencies. Districts also maintain leadership support by allocating for ongoing coaching and collaboration opportunities for district and building leaders.
Protocols	Sample norms and protocols for communication and decision-making processes during leadership meetings and collaboration are shared with district and building leaders. District and building leaders may choose to inventory the use of (and adherence to) protocols in practice throughout the district for review and consideration for improvement.	Norms and protocols for decision-making and data review around the systems, including leadership meetings for review of general data, and focused review of the instructional system (from walkthrough observation and student outcome data, among other sources), student support system (from attendance and behavioral data from students and regular MTSS discussions regarding individual student support), and the talent management system (from hiring, recruitment, and placement data).	During implementation of the leadership practices, district and building leaders identify and document data and indicators that are specific to academic programming and instruction, student support, and talent management in ways that are systemic across the district while also being contextualized to individual building or program needs. Improvement cycles are used ubiquitously for monitoring progress on all systems.

SHAPE THE DISTRICT'S IDENTITY

PRACTICE	IN#	GETTING AWARE	GETTING READY
1. District leaders establish the identity of the district through the creation and implementation of a student-centered vision and mission.	1	District leaders review evidence-based practices for developing vision and mission statements for a school district. District leaders survey or gather feedback from various constituents, including students, staff, and community members.	District leaders review examples of vision and mission statements from successful districts. District leaders schedule a series of meetings with students, staff, and community members to develop a district vision and mission, and communicate the intentionality and purpose of the process, as well as how these statements will be used to shape district policy and approaches to learning.
2. District and building leaders communicate district identity and focus through their actions, decisions, and deliberate messaging.	2	District leaders explore examples of communication plans and processes for schools that focus on two-way communication and targeted delivery of information specific to different critical perspectives that they may wish to engage.	District leaders inventory the existing communication efforts that take place within the district and individual school buildings to reach students, staff, parents, and other community members. District leaders use this information to assess the effectiveness of existing communication channels and to assess needs and opportunities for communicating about the district's identity and focus with these audiences.

BUILD POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

PRACTICE	IN#	GETTING AWARE	GETTING READY
3. District and building leaders engage with students, staff, and community through formal and informal communications to share ideas and build trust.	3a	District leaders survey random students, staff, and community members regarding their perceptions and level of engagement with various aspects of the district in order to identify baseline information about communication and trust.	District leaders review survey data to identify patterns and trends regarding perception of the district from different audiences. From this, district leaders identify strengths and opportunities with each audience to focus on in establishing positive relationships and trust.
	3b	District leaders inventory the student, staff, and community organizations within their district and determine whether such organizations have a focus or mission that would contribute to or engage with the district.	District leaders examine their own organizational and decision-making structures to determine where critical perspectives from the district, including students, staff, and community members, would benefit the district. District leaders create descriptions of the input and feedback that would benefit district decision-making and use this to recruit potential individuals that represent these perspectives.
4. District and building leaders establish communications networks to share information with students, staff, and the community and gather feedback to inform practice.	4	District leaders inventory the communications that district or building level leaders use to share information about district activities. The inventory gathers information about who creates and reviews the communication, what platforms are used for dissemination, and what typical audiences receive the communication.	District leaders explore communications planning tools and protocols that address audience, mode of communication, and frequency of use, and map information from an inventory of existing communications onto such tools. District leaders identify gaps in communications or opportunities to gather feedback through communications and incorporate these into a district communication plan.
5. District and building leaders leverage students, staff, and community to strengthen relationships, develop messaging, and promote the goals and actions of the district.	5a	District leaders develop a list of critical perspectives for seeking feedback on implementation or suggestions for programming for issues around instruction, student support, and staff development and retention, among other topics. District leaders seek out exemplars for community engagement as potential models for gathering advisory input from staff, students, and the community.	District leaders apply the list of critical perspectives for major instructional programming or student support initiatives to identify the perspectives needed to provide feedback for program design or improvement. District leaders identify and recruit key students, staff, community members, or organizations to provide critical perspectives for such initiatives.
	5b	District leaders inventory groups that are representative of students, staff, and/or community members that have a focus related to the mission and vision of the district. Inventories include information about group focus, membership (both quantity and demographic), and meeting frequency, among other information.	District leaders identify potential groups based on the inventory that would potentially partner with the district in providing communication channels for district messaging and gathering of feedback. District leaders reach out to these groups to propose such partnerships for current, future, or ongoing initiatives.

DEVELOP THE DESIRED DISTRICT CLIMATE AND CULTURE

PRACTICE	IN#	GETTING AWARE	GETTING READY
6. District and building leaders establish, model, and promote expectations for safety, support, and equity for all.	6a	District leaders explore evidence-based interventions to support student safety and address the critical focus areas of the whole child. District leaders seek information on exemplars for support programs and policies that have been successful in similar schools and communities.	District leaders use information from exemplary programs to design a self-study around safety and student support policies and programming. District leaders engage in a review of school and district programs and policies to identify strengths and challenges and gather baseline data around student safety and support.
	6b	District leaders explore strategies and exemplars for supporting diversity, voice, equity, and opportunity for marginalized groups. District leaders review resources and seek expertise in implementing an equity audit to look at issues of resource allocation, academic performance, and policy implementation as they relate to students, staff, and community.	District leaders engage in an equity audit to gather information and perspectives from students, staff, and community members regarding issues of equity, and diversity. District leaders explore potential programming options or initiatives that are specific to the needs or issues identified through the equity audit process.
7. District and building leaders establish norms for engagement, dialogue, and response to address challenging issues and actions.	7	District leaders inventory norms and meeting protocols for internal decision-making or advisory groups within the district to determine possible needs or options for district-wide implementation. District leaders explore examples of such norms and protocols from existing research on successful practices.	District leaders review existing norms and determine whether common norms should be expected of all district or building level groups. District leaders explore protocols that can be used within such groups to collaboratively develop norms and standard implementation protocols for decision-making or advisory groups.
8. District and building leaders implement protocols for decision-making and discourse and policies to promote the desired district climate and culture.	8a	District leaders review evidence-based protocols for decision-making, discussion, and provision of feedback in district and building-level meetings. District leaders compare such protocols to existing protocols currently used by the district to find opportunities for adaptation or improvement.	District leaders identify areas of decision-making, discussion, and provision of feedback where protocols are needed to improve processes and/or outcomes. District leaders introduce central office and building leaders to relevant protocols and train staff in the use of these processes. District leaders pilot use of the protocols within selected groups to adapt or modify the use of the protocols for large scale use throughout the district.

PRACTICE	IN#	GETTING AWARE	GETTING READY
	8b	District leaders inventory existing policies addressing behavior, communication, and interactions between individuals or groups to identify opportunities for common policy. District leaders review similar policies of exemplar districts that are demographically or structurally similar to their own district to identify possible opportunities for adaptation or implementation.	District leaders review potential new policies and develop a plan for implementation, including how policies will be monitored and consequences of not abiding by such policies. District leaders identify who will be impacted by such policies, and develop a communication plan for different audiences affected by the policy that explains what the anticipated behaviors and expectations are for each policy. District leaders seek initial feedback around the plan and policy for possible concerns before policies are communicated widely so as to revise policies or communications if needed.

DEVELOP CAPACITY FOR INSTRUCTION AND STUDENT SUPPORT

PRACTICE	IN#	GETTING AWARE	GETTING READY
9. District and building leaders develop and communicate models of instruction and student support that reflect the identity, vision, and mission of the district.	9	District leaders review research and information around the instructional and student support system practices to become familiar with all components of the system. District leaders review the work of exemplars from similar districts that have established a mission, vision, and/or identity similar to their own in order to understand considerations and details needed for implementation.	District leaders initiate early practices within the instructional and student support systems to identify needs and establish a district framework and goals for these systems. District leaders develop a plan for implementation of programming within these systems that focuses on limiting the scale of new activities in order to ensure appropriate capacity to implement for improvement and fidelity.
10. District and building leaders support and leverage the work of effective and innovative educators within the district to shape and model instruction and student support.	10a	District leaders regularly review information about educational innovations and seek out exemplars to consider for future implementation. District leaders invite educators within their district to similarly explore possible innovations through readings, conference presentations, or site visits, and ask educators to share their learnings with district leadership.	District leaders informally convene innovative educators or those who wish to explore innovations through non-committal meetings such as book studies or brainstorming sessions. During these, district leaders introduce planning questions for discussion that address how such innovations might be introduced in their own buildings and classrooms. Feedback from these sessions may be used to create a planning framework for district-promoted innovations.
	10b	District leaders review comments and/or feedback from building leaders, community members, and other educators about creative or innovative instruction taking place within their district. District and building leaders make regular observations of instruction in classrooms to identify innovators or early adopters among their instructional staff.	District and building leaders identify opportunities for educational innovations based upon classroom observations, staff suggestions, or reviews of current instructional practice or student support programming. District and building leaders collaborate to identify capacities and resources needed to implement innovations. Leaders plan a process that would provide flexibility in instruction, facilities, academic load, and anticipated student outcomes for such innovations, setting the stage for a planned pathway for approval and monitoring of pilot innovations.

PRACTICE	IN#	GETTING AWARE	GETTING READY
11. District and building leaders regularly monitor instruction and student support efforts to ensure effective implementation and continuous improvement.	11a	District and building leaders review the practices and research-based resources on instructional leadership routines. District leaders work with building leaders to observe and document instruction from brief, random walkthroughs of classrooms throughout the district. Building leaders review school specific schedules to identify opportunities for regular observation and monitoring that would reach a majority of teachers or classrooms.	District leaders review informally gathered observational notes and data from classroom walkthroughs and use this to engage in planning discussions about implementing instructional leadership routines. District leaders schedule time with building and instructional leaders to conduct collaborative walkthroughs in order to come to shared understandings about what is being observed.
	11b	District leaders review the instructional system resources to identify potential areas of priority for monitoring instructional practices and curriculum implementation. District and building leaders review tools for walkthrough observation and other instructional monitoring to determine opportunities for best fit. District and building leaders review student support resources and data to identify possible indicators for district and building level monitoring	District leaders identify priorities for monitoring of instruction and student support. District and building leaders identify a set of observable practices and develop or select an appropriate tool for data gathering during walkthrough observations or reviews of student support. District leaders train and calibrate around identified practices with all potential observers to come to consensus on how these practices will be documented. District and building leaders review data generated by the observation process to determine how it will be used in improvement cycles.
12. District and building leaders engage in and foster partnerships, coaching, and mentoring of educators and staff to support practices of the instructional and student support systems.	12a	District leaders engage in informal time studies to determine how frequently they will meet, and from these, how often they engage in coaching and planning discussions compared to problem solving situational issues. District leaders review research on strategies and protocols for productive partnership meetings.	District and building leaders allocate time in schedules for regular partnership discussions, ensuring proper time and opportunity for feedback from coaching. District leaders identify specific district practices and leadership competencies to incorporate into partnership meetings.
	12b	District leaders review research-based practices around professional coaching for educational leaders. District leaders seek input from building and instructional leaders to identify specific areas of support to prioritize for coaching conversations.	District leaders participate in training on providing quality coaching and feedback that includes protocols around the process. District leaders engage in collaborative practice opportunities around coaching protocols. District and building leaders collaborate to identify a shared method of planning for and documentation of coaching conversations.

ALLOCATE RESOURCE TO SUPPORT THE DISTRICT MISSION

PRACTICE	IN#	GETTING AWARE	GETTING READY
13. District and building leaders develop and implement financial and other resource allocation decisions to support the mission and welfare of the district as an organization.	13	District leaders review and reflect on past practices for developing annual budgets and determining allocations for staff, programming, and policy implementation. District leaders explore examples of how needs-assessment based allocation processes can be used to develop an annual budget for instruction, programming, and support.	District leaders analyze their existing budget allocations to determine flexibility in general and special purpose funds (i.e. federal and state grant funds). District leaders track program specific funding for future analysis and identify program success metrics to determine the impact of programming on student or staff outcomes. District leaders explore cost-benefit analysis tools for use in decision-making.
14. District leaders forecast multiple scenarios and conditions to support the long-term viability of district resources, programming, and infrastructure.	14	District leaders explore research and examples of environmental scanning, forecasting, and scenario planning as they relate to the broader practice of strategic planning. District leaders review educational policy trends, and seek out examples of trends that align with the district's needs assessment planning and protocols.	District leaders are trained in scenario and contingency planning, and practice this concept around small projects of limited scope. District leaders engage in environmental scanning to understand factors that may impact planning for short and long-term programming and resource allocation.
15. District and building leaders schedule time and personnel to ensure effective implementation of district systems to best support the district vision and mission.	15a	District leaders review educator contracts to find opportunities to allocate time for leaders and instructional staff to engage in systemic practices that address instruction and student support. District leaders explore examples of high functioning districts similar to their own that utilize building level routines to support district level systems in implementation with fidelity.	District and building leaders engage in time studies of existing practice of leaders and instructional coaches to identify opportunities for greater focus on systems monitoring and coaching of educators. District leaders explore possible options to alter existing schedules as needed to provide appropriate opportunities for instructional walkthroughs, coaching, and educator collaboration.
	15b	District leaders review research and examples of successful district implementation of instructional and student support systems to identify potential models for implementation and the required collaborative time to function with fidelity. Building leaders track existing scheduled collaboration and instructional monitoring sessions to note time requirements for potential future collaboration needs.	District leaders review weekly and monthly schedules of building leaders to identify opportunities for collaboration time to address district level systems implementation. Building leaders review schedules of specialists and instructional staff to identify opportunities for monitoring of instruction and student support programming and to allow for collaboration of instructional staff around curricular planning, review of student work, and adaptation of district systems.

MANAGE DISTRICT SYSTEMS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

PRACTICE	IN#	GETTING AWARE	GETTING READY
16. District and building leaders generate, collect, and analyze a variety of data sources to identify needs and priorities for programming and policy aligned to the district vision and mission.	16	District and building leaders inventory the data that is collected regularly on students, educators, classrooms, or buildings within the district. Inventories include information about how the data is collected, who reviews outcome data, what data requires special collection efforts (beyond standard review of existing data tools or student information systems), and which metrics are used specifically to guide leader decisions. District and building leaders identify data that is not currently collected that would be useful in decision-making around instruction, programming, student support, or talent management practices.	District and building leaders identify relevant data to be used in programming and policy decisions. Leaders develop a plan for data collection and analysis that identifies who will collect or report data, how data will be collected, where data will be available, and how data will be analyzed and presented in order to support decision-making. District leaders identify a review protocol that will be used for each set of data, and determine how frequently such data will be reviewed.
17. District and building leaders regularly monitor process and outcome indicators of practices and systems to determine actions for people and processes.	17	District and building leaders engage in needs assessment and root cause analysis to determine goals and priorities for the district and/or individual buildings. Using these analyses, leaders identify potential outcome indicators, as well as possible actions that will influence these outcomes.	District and building leaders utilize needs assessment outcome indicators and identify specific actions that will impact outcomes. Leaders develop a logic model to identify relevant actions, capacities, and indicators for monitoring implementation. Leaders identify tools and protocols for monitoring system implementation data for future decision-making.
18. District and building leaders seek critical perspectives to inform decisions and actions to support the district vision and mission.	18	District leaders review research on recommended practices for gathering advisory input or feedback and on engaging different groups in decision-making. District and building leaders review existing programs and projects to identify potential categories of input that may be impacted by programming or policy decisions.	District and building leaders develop a set of critical perspective considerations based upon roles, demographics, and other areas of influence that are used in developing any new project or initiative within the district or individual buildings. For each such perspective, district and building leaders identify potential individuals who can effectively provide such perspectives, so that these individuals could potentially be recruited to provide input on decisions and review community feedback regarding district or building initiatives.

PRACTICE	IN#	GETTING AWARE	GETTING READY
19. District and building leaders manage the change process for people and processes to ensure that systems are resulting in desired outcomes.	19a	District leaders review research on change and change management to understand how different individuals respond to change. District and building leaders may use surveys or personality assessments to identify staff who are well prepared to implement or facilitate change along with those who are averse to change and may provide active resistance to change.	District leaders utilize readiness decision-making protocols, such as the Hexagon tool, for determining whether to initiate new programming or policies. District leaders develop a process to engage innovators and early adopters from within their district to implement early stages of such programs or policies, and gather data and feedback to inform improvement before scaling such efforts.
	19b	District leaders review research on change processes and identify exemplars that can be used to better understand considerations for successful transitions. District leaders stay informed on policies and external influences to education that could require a response or reaction on behalf of the district.	District and building leaders establish a process for communicating potential changes in policy or programming to help ease negative responses to the change. District and building leaders develop a protocol for advanced timing / planning for any anticipated changes (within reason) within the district.