

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT GLOSSARY





School & District Improvement Glossary



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A

Accommodations – An alteration of environment, curriculum instruction, or assessment or equipment that allows an individual with a disability to gain access to content and/or complete assigned tasks.

Accountability – The process by which educators are held responsible for performance or outcomes. These expectations can be set at the classroom, school, district, and/ or state level.

Achievement Data – These data tell us what students have learned. These include classroom-level, benchmark, interim, and formative assessment data, as well as summative data such as standardized test scores from annual district and state testing.

Action Plan – A formalized plan for achieving an objective that includes strategies, activities, timelines, resources, roles and responsibilities.

Action Research – A disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action. Educational action research can be engaged in by a single teacher, by a group of colleagues who share an interest in a common problem, or by the entire faculty of a school. Once the focus of the action research is selected, the educators clarify a theory, identify the question(s) to be researched, collect and analyze the appropriate data and act on the results.

Adult Learning Theory – A concept that examines how adults learn. It is based on the principles that learning should be relevant, engaging, active and learner-centered.

Aggregate Data – Data combined from several measurements. Examples include grade-level, building-level, district-level data for all students, and statewide data.

Alignment – Consistency of plans, processes, actions, information and decisions used to support goals. Consistency between all aspects of a school improvement plan: goals based on data, strategies, interventions based on research and best practices, activities, professional learning that supports the goals is a Michigan requirement.

Annual Education Report – Describes the educational achievement status and programs of a school/district. See state school code [PA25.380.1204a](#) for specific requirements of the report.

Assessment – Methods and instruments used to collect data and evaluate student performance. In order to capture a complete and accurate picture of student achievement, a variety of, or multiple data sources, are strongly recommended.

Assessment (Balanced Assessment System) – A rigorous and fair system of measuring student achievement growth using summative, interim and formative assessments.

Assessment (Formative) – Assessment “for learning” that occurs concurrently with instruction and is used to provide specific feedback to teachers and students for the purpose of adjusting instruction.



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Examples include, but are not limited to, teacher observations, ungraded quizzes, graphic organizers, and portfolio reviews.

Assessment (Interim) – Assessments given periodically throughout the school year, which provide information to educators about student learning. Examples include grade level/course assessments, etc.

Assessment (Summative) – Assessment “of learning” that summarizes what students have learned at the conclusion of an instructional segment. Examples include unit tests, final exams, and culminating projects. State assessments are considered summative assessments.

B

Balanced Assessment System – A rigorous and fair system of measuring student achievement growth using summative, interim and formative assessments.

Behavioral Expectations – Expectations for appropriate behavior that have been defined, taught, and modeled.

Benchmark (noun) – A standard by which something can be measured or judged. (verb) To measure according to a specified standard in order to compare and improve student outcomes.

C

CIMS – The Continuous Improvement Monitoring System (CIMS) is the system used by the state to promote positive outcomes and ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 and the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education. CIMS was designed to help schools analyze and interpret data and keep track of all monitoring activities in a single location. CIMS reflects the priorities of the IDEA 2004 and the State Performance Plan (SPP) and is aligned with the School Improvement Framework.

Climate – The patterns of behavior, attitudes, and feelings that characterize life in an organization.

Cognitive Thinking – The mental processes of perception, memory, judgment, and reasoning.

Collaboration – Two or more individuals working together to achieve a common goal.

Collaborative Team – A group of individuals who share common objectives, tasks, resources, responsibilities and leadership. The main purpose of a collaborative team in schools and districts is to improve teaching practices to increase student achievement.



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Communication Tools – Multiple methods of communication, such as email, websites, social-media, phone, print, etc.

Community Involvement – The community is actively engaged in school and district activities, including student learning.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment – Michigan’s Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) process is the first step in developing a school or district improvement plan. Improvement teams gather and study multiple sources of data and information. Through the Michigan CNA process, thoughtful conclusions are drawn about what is going well (strengths) and what needs improvement (challenges). These conclusions drive the development/refinement of goals, measurable objectives, strategies and activities.

Content Appropriateness – Classroom lessons that are suitable for the purpose, content and student audience and aligned with the district’s written curriculum.

Content Knowledge – Understanding, knowledge, skills and attitudes related to specific subject areas.

Content Standard – What students should know and be able to do. Content standards are broad descriptions of the knowledge and skills students should acquire in the core academic area.

Continuous Improvement – A process by which staff engages in collaborative inquiry, focused on implementing, assessing, monitoring, adjusting, and evaluating to increase student achievement.

Culture - An organization’s values, vision, habits, norms, and beliefs.

Culturally Responsive – Using the diverse cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; teaching to and through the strengths of students.

Curriculum – A coherent plan for instruction and learning. Curriculum serves as the basis for teachers’ and students’ active involvement in the construction and application of knowledge. Curriculum is based on the approved state standards.

Curriculum Alignment – The process of integrating and sequencing what is to be taught between, among, and across grades/subjects.

Curriculum Coherence – All components in the teaching and learning system are aligned, articulated and implemented. This includes the curriculum and its intended outcomes, the instructional methods, the learning activities, the assessment tasks and the resources to support learning.

Curriculum Map – A guide for aligning, pacing, and sequencing instruction and assessment in a classroom, grade level, content area, school, or district. Curriculum maps are calendar-based, and show what students are learning in classrooms.



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D

Data – Factual information, especially information organized for analysis or used to make decisions. Types of data include student achievement/outcome, perception, process, and demographic data.

Data Analysis Process – The process of studying data, including looking for patterns and trends, for the purpose of making decisions.

Data Driven Culture – The processes and decisions within a building or district are driven and supported by data.

Demographic Data – Data that provides descriptive information about the school community. Examples may include enrollment, attendance, grade level, race/ethnicity, gender, students with disabilities, English learners, socio-economic status, graduation rate, suspensions/expulsions, etc.

Delivered Curriculum – Curriculum that is being taught in the classroom; also referred to as enacted curriculum.

Depth of Knowledge – Refers to the complexity of mental processing that must occur to answer a question, perform a task, or generate a product.

Descriptive Feedback – Specific information in the form of written comments or conversations, that help the learner understand what he or she needs to do in order to improve.

Developmental Appropriateness – Curriculum that is suitable for the level and needs of students to which it is being taught.

Disaggregation – The process of breaking down data into smaller subsets in order to more closely analyze performance.

Differentiated Instruction – Planning for teaching and learning in ways that are designed to meet the needs of all learners at differing levels of the learning continuum.

Dispositions – Attitudes and aptitudes.

District Improvement Framework – A set of strands, standards, and indicators that describe a high performing district.

District Improvement Plan – A document that enables districts to develop and manage improvement goals across all schools and multiple areas.

District Leadership – Leaders at central office, including but not limited to, superintendents, assistant superintendents, business directors, special education directors, curriculum directors, intervention coordinators, and parent/community coordinators, who provide support across schools in a district; also includes school level leaders who are assigned district responsibilities as described above.



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District Systems Review - The purpose of completing the District Systems Review (DSR) is to engage your staff in meaningful dialogue about district processes that support student achievement. Thoughtful analysis of the research-based indicators from the District Improvement Framework 2.0 can assist staff in identifying system strengths and opportunities for improvement. The District Systems Review is one piece of the comprehensive needs assessment that informs your District Improvement Plan.

Diversity – Differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, and/or geographic area.

DPPD – District Provided Professional Development or professional learning for the purpose of Professional and Occupational certificate renewal; for purposes of compliance with the five days of required professional development for all teachers (MCL 380.1527).

E

Educator – Certified staff at the district and school levels.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – ESEA, which was first enacted in 1965, is the principal federal law affecting K-12 education. The No Child Left Behind Act is the most recent reauthorization of the ESEA.

Enacted Curriculum – Curriculum that is being implemented in the classroom; also referred to as delivered curriculum.

Ensure – Make certain something will occur. The district will make certain that the procedures and processes that support teaching and learning will occur in its schools.

Equitable and Inclusive – Providing all students with access to appropriate curriculum and learning opportunities.

Evaluation – Collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer questions about programs and practices, particularly about their effectiveness and efficiency in producing an intended effect. Evaluation includes the analysis of adult implementation and student achievement results.

Expectations for Assessments – Describes the purposes and uses of the various types of assessments that are used in the district and its schools.



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F

Fidelity – The accurate and consistent provision or delivery of instruction in the manner in which it was designed or prescribed according to research findings and/ or developers' specifications. Five common aspects of fidelity include: adherence, exposure, program differentiation, student responsiveness, and quality of delivery.

G

Gap Analysis – An analysis of the gap between the target performance and actual performance or the analysis of the difference in performance between two groups/subgroups.

Goals – Based on a careful analysis of data, a goal defines the priority area(s) for a school/district's improvement initiatives. There are two types of goals identified in School/District Improvement Plan: academic goals and organization goals.

H

Highly Qualified Teacher – A requirement that all teachers in Michigan meet specific guidelines, as outlined in The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and by the Michigan Department of Education.

Horizontally Aligned – The curriculum commonly taught by teachers in the same grade levels and/or content areas.

I

Individualized Development Plan – The Individualized Development Plan (IDP) is a required tool to support beginning teachers and arrange professional development opportunities to meet their identified needs.

Instructional Practices – General principles, guidelines, and suggestions for effective teaching that are supported by research.

Instructional Delivery – The use of varied instructional practices focused on increasing students' acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Instructional Design – The systematic process by which instructional plans and materials are created, developed, and delivered.



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Instructional Leadership – Integration of the tasks of setting clear goals, managing curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources and supporting all staff to promote student learning and growth. School leaders create and sustain a context for learning that puts students first.

Intentional – Done in a way that is purposefully planned or intended.

Instructional Staff – All staff in a school who have the responsibility of providing and supporting instruction to students, including, but not limited to, teachers, interventionists, paraprofessionals, and administrators.

J

Job Embedded – Learning that occurs while teachers and administrators engage in daily work. They learn by doing, reflect on their experiences, and have shared dialog about their insights with their colleagues (grade-level meetings, team meetings, staff meetings, professional learning communities, etc.).

L

Leadership – Leaders facilitate change, analyze data to improve processes, and create an intentional focus on improving instruction and increasing student achievement. School leaders may be formal or informal, include both individuals and teams, and collaboratively work to increase student achievement.

Learning Community – A professional community of learners in which the teachers, administrators and support staff in a school continuously seek and share learning, act on what they learn, and improve and enrich their effectiveness as educators.

Learning Targets – Student-friendly statements of what we expect students to learn.

M

Michigan Department of Education Program Evaluation Tool – A process designed by the Michigan Department of Education through which educators reflect on the impact of their teaching as well as on possible causes for the results.

Mission – A statement declaring an organization's purpose.



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Modifications to Curriculum – A change in the curriculum made for any student who needs an alteration of the content an instructor is teaching. A modification is a change in what is being taught to, or expected from a student.

N

Non-Academic Data – Information about students and schools that helps create a context for understanding student academic/learning data. Non-academic data includes attendance, retention, dropout, suspensions, expulsions, graduation, involvement in extra-curricular activities, free/reduced-price lunch, etc.

P

Peer Coaching Log – A process designed by MDE through which educators reflect on the impact of their teaching as well as on possible causes for the results.

Perception Data – Information collected that reflects opinions and views of stakeholders.

Personal Curriculum – A process to modify specific credit requirements and/or content expectations based on the individual learning needs of a student. It is designed to serve students who want to accelerate or go beyond the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements and students who need to individualize learning requirements to meet the Michigan Merit Curriculum requirements.

Process Data – Information about the practices and procedures schools use to plan, deliver, and monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Professional Learning – The development and/or refinement of knowledge, skills, and abilities specific to the effective delivery of job-related duties and responsibilities that support the learning outcomes of all students. Professional learning includes professional discourse, analysis, application, and reflection. It is sustained, relevant learning that is essential to ongoing improvements in professional practice and job effectiveness.

Proficiency – The achievement targets for which students, schools, and districts are held accountable.

Promising Practices – Programs and strategies that have some research or data showing positive outcomes, but do not have enough evidence to support generalizable conclusions.

Protocol – A tool (or agreed-upon guidelines) that provides a structure for professional interactions and procedures.



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Public Act 25 – A set of education initiatives intended to improve the educational programs and outcomes for all students in Michigan schools by requiring all schools to engage in a process of planning for continuous school improvement.

R

Reflective Practice – Analysis and evaluation of practices for the purpose of improvement.

Research-based Instruction – Curriculum and educational interventions that have been scientifically proven to be effective for most students.

Rigorous Thinking – A disciplined, focused approach to adequately thinking through a problem, from the way the question is framed until an effective solution is produced. Rigorous thinking is careful, planned and thorough.

Rubric – An established and written set of criteria for scoring or evaluating a performance in relationship to established criteria.

S

Scientifically-based – Scientifically-based research that employs systematic, empirical methods, which draw on observation or experiment; involve rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions; rely on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers as well as across multiple measurements and observations; and be accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparatively rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

School Culture and Climate – School culture and climate refers to the sum of the values, cultures, safety practices, and organizational structures within a school that cause it to function and react in particular ways.

School Improvement – A continuous, collaborative process through which staff/stakeholders identify strengths and weaknesses of the entire school program and use the information as a basis for making deliberate, positive, cohesive and observable changes in measurable student outcomes.

School Improvement Framework – A set of strands, standards, and indicators that describe a high performing school.

School Improvement Plan – A tool for creating and managing change. This written plan identifies student performance goals based on data, measurable objectives, instructional strategies and the activities needed for readiness, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the strategies.



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School Improvement Team – A team comprised of a representative group of people from the school and community whose focus is to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate the school's improvement plan.

School Leaders – Staff who are recognized as carrying out leadership activity focused on school improvement and student learning. This leadership includes the formal leader(s) of a school (i.e. principal, assistant principal, headmaster), and also includes shared or distributed leadership across all staff in a school.

Shared Leadership – Structures and processes exist to support leadership in which all staff has ownership and responsibility for student learning.

School Level Systems – The organized processes and procedures that are established in a school to support student achievement, such as decision-making process with protocols, school improvement plans, a system of interventions, behavior expectations, attendance policies, etc.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals/Objectives – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-focused, and Time-bound.

Staff – Adults who support school improvement and student learning at the school level. Staff includes, but is not limited to, administrators, teachers, support staff, paraprofessionals, interventionists, academic support staff .(counselors, -, therapists, media specialists, social-workers),

Stakeholder – For school improvement purposes, stakeholders are defined as having an interest in a district or school's actions. Stakeholders may include students, staff, families/parents, community members and partnering agencies.

Standards – The consistent set of clear K-12 expectations that outline the knowledge and skills students need in the content areas.

Standards Alignment – The process of assuring curriculum is aligned with state standards and content expectations.

Student Centered – Approach to instruction focusing on the needs of the students, rather than the needs of the adults involved in the educational process.

Student Engagement – Students are actively interested and involved in learning.

Student Learning Expectations – Refers to the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students will demonstrate as a result of their involvement in a particular set of educational processes.

Surveys of Enacted Curriculum – Self-reported data collection tools created by the Wisconsin Center for Education Research that teachers can use to collect and report information on current instructional practices and content being taught in classrooms. The resulting data provides an objective measure for teachers to analyze the degree of alignment between current instruction, state standards, and assessments.



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System – An interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something. A system must consist of three kinds of things: elements, interconnections and a function or purpose.

Systematic – Things that are arranged or dealt with according to some system or organized method.

Systemic – Something that affects all parts of a system (i.e., school, district, or organization).

T

Technology Integration – Incorporating technology resources such as computers, mobile devices (smart phones, tablets), digital cameras, social-media platforms and networks, software applications, and the Internet in daily classroom practices. Technology integration supports curricular goals and helps students apply technology skills to learning and problem solving.

Tiered Interventions – A model in which the instruction delivered to students varies on several dimensions that are related to the nature and severity of the student's difficulties in mastering curriculum or content.

Transfer of Learning – Refers to learning in one context and applying it to another, i.e. the capacity to apply acquired knowledge and skills to new situations.

Triangulation – Comparison of multiple data sources to determine strengths and weaknesses of a school's performance. Triangulation ensures that school improvement decisions will not be made from a single data source.

V

Vertically Aligned – Curriculum that is aligned between grade levels to reduce redundancy and gaps in instruction.

Vision – A shared, articulated notion of an organization's preferred future state.

W

Walk-through – A process by which educators observe a classroom and provide descriptive feedback to the instructor on pre-determined topics or criteria.