Effective Schools Framework Overview

Create Substantial Student Success and Social Justice

Accelerate System Transformation

Support Implementation

Build Capacity

The Leadership Network

The School is the Unit of Change

Leaders Are the Lever for Change
EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK OVERVIEW
The NTC Effective Schools Framework helps leaders bring coherence to school practices that make the most difference for student achievement. The framework is especially useful in supporting implementation of rigorous standards and focuses attention on critical academic, social, and emotional learning conditions. It provides common language and clarity about the characteristics and practices of effective schools that will substantially improve the learning environment and school community as a whole.

The Effective Schools Framework focuses on describing schools where substantial student success and social justice are the norm. By articulating specific practices that lead to improvement, the framework supports any leader, irrespective of prior experience or individual strengths or challenges, to move forward. This growth is accelerated when the framework is used in concert with district expectations and leadership competency guidelines. The alignment helps clarify what the leader needs to do to effectively lead their school community to embrace effective and sustainable practices.

The framework illustrates how school practices—and student outcomes—can be improved through persistent and integrated attention to five priority areas (referred to as domains). Within each domain are research-based descriptions of school practice at various levels.

The framework is based on data from two decades of principal effectiveness research by the Wallace Foundation, including projects in 24 states and numerous school districts and nearly 100 reports and publications. The research identifies correlations between particular types of leadership practice and student achievement, which were used to determine the five domains of the Effective Schools Framework.
The rubric that follows describes in concrete detail school characteristics across five leadership domains:

- VISION, MISSION, AND GOALS: Is every stakeholder actively supportive of a vision, mission, and key goals whose outcome is equitable academic and social excellence?

- INSTRUCTION: Is every teacher continuously improving their instruction? Is every student provided equitable opportunities to work to their highest capabilities?

- CULTURE: Does the school provide intellectually and emotionally stimulating communities that cultivate belonging and foster learning for every teacher and student?

- TEACHER LEADERSHIP: Does every teacher say there is strong teacher ownership of and opportunities for important leadership?

- SYSTEMS: Are the systems of the school creating optimal and equitable conditions for quality teaching and learning to occur?

Each performance area has two components:

1. **Essential Question**: The core question(s) to answer about the particular performance area. In an effective school, the answer to each Essential Question is “yes.”

2. **Descriptor Language**: Descriptions of the essence of each performance area are used to differentiate five levels of performance: Emerging, Developing, Effective, Strategic, and Transformative. The Effective Schools Framework descriptors focus primarily on observable characteristics at the school.

When leaders use the NTC Effective Schools Framework, they select the performance level where the combination of descriptors most closely describes their school’s performance, using a preponderance of evidence for each performance area.
## DEFINING A VISION, MISSION, and GOALS focused on equity and access to ensure academic success for every student

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<tr>
<td>1. School leader independently establishes instructional vision, mission, and goals; these might be shared with some stakeholders but are rarely reviewed or revised</td>
<td>1. Instructional vision, mission, and goals are developed, reviewed, and revised with some stakeholder input and discussion; limited data inform this process; common definitions of key concepts developed (e.g.–stakeholders, equity)</td>
<td>1. Instructional vision, mission, and goals are informed by data, ensure key stakeholder engagement, and promote a commitment to shared purpose, instructional focus, and direction with those included; these are annually reviewed and revised</td>
<td>1. A shared instructional vision, mission, and goals are informed by data and high expectations for all and developed inclusively with stakeholder groups; school goals set ambitious, achievable targets for academic and social outcomes; these are regularly revised</td>
<td>1. A shared instructional vision, mission, and goals are informed by data, beliefs, and values and play a defining and dynamic role in the school’s culture and instructional improvement efforts; campus-wide sense of urgency serves as a call to action to all stakeholders that fosters a commitment to change and innovation</td>
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<td>2. The instructional vision is initially shared with staff, students, and families, but they are unaware of the roles they need to play to achieve the goals; responsibility for achieving school goals and targets rests primarily with the school leader</td>
<td>2. Stakeholders are knowledgeable about the instructional vision; school leader and leadership team implement school-wide plans; goal attainment rests primarily with an instructional leadership team and staff; most staff members are aware of their role in goal attainment</td>
<td>2. Stakeholders are knowledgeable about the instructional vision; school leader and leadership team implement school-wide plans; goal attainment rests primarily with an instructional leadership team and staff; most staff members are aware of their role in goal attainment</td>
<td>2. Administrative team achieves buy-in from key stakeholders, including families, to work together to achieve school goals and targets; there is collective responsibility for school-wide teaching and learning goals</td>
<td>2. Instructional vision and goals drive all action plans, school priorities, and planning; among stakeholders, there is a collective will and energy to work towards achieving shared goals</td>
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<td>3. High expectations are held primarily for well-prepared, well-behaved students</td>
<td>3. Learning expectations are consistent, and applied to every student while pathways to achievement are differentiated</td>
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<td>3. There is collective ownership of high learning expectations for every learner</td>
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<td>4. Teachers are focused on their own interests and have relatively low expectations of most students</td>
<td>4. Teachers demonstrate emerging confidence in their ability to meet the needs of every learner; most of staff assumes responsibility for the achievement of their students</td>
<td>4. Teachers have initial confidence to meet the needs of every learner; every staff member assumes responsibility for the achievement of their students</td>
<td>4. The school community sees itself as an agent of change, reflecting the perception that the staff as a whole can execute required actions to impact student achievement; staff feel responsible for every student school-wide</td>
<td>4. There is a high level of empowerment and self-efficacy campus-wide; teachers, leaders, and students attempt challenging activities and persist in the face of setbacks</td>
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<td>5. For any school initiative, there is no formal process to bring about school change and improvement; any change is seen negatively by staff</td>
<td>5. The school leader and leadership team oversee the change process; action steps are consistently generated and monitored by the team; there is mixed support for any change initiative, and resisters somewhat negatively impact the process</td>
<td>5. The school leader and leadership team oversee the change process; action steps are consistently generated and monitored by the team; there is mixed support for any change initiative, and resisters somewhat negatively impact the process</td>
<td>5. The leadership team oversees the change process; stakeholders inform change efforts and widely embrace change; leaders at every level minimize negative impact of change resisters</td>
<td>5. The leadership team, with faculty input, artfully navigates the change process; stakeholders collaboratively plan, define, and take action; every stakeholder engages in ongoing monitoring and course corrections; results are sustainable</td>
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Is every stakeholder actively supportive of a vision, mission, and key goals whose outcome is equitable academic and social excellence?
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<td>1. Instructional goals are listed in district- or school-wide planning documents</td>
<td>1. Administrative team has an instructional focus and leads several opportunities for teachers to use data to plan and improve instructional practice</td>
<td>1. The leadership team has an instructional focus that establishes common expectations for college- and career-aligned instruction; some teachers use data to improve instructional practice</td>
<td>1. The instructional focus of the school is developed and driven by a broad base of leaders and teachers; consistent use of data improves instructional practice; focus may be informed by participation in leadership network improvement communities (NIC)</td>
<td>1. Rigorous and shared instructional focus and progress monitoring drives and improves instructional practice school-wide; students are included in goal-setting; school aligns work through active NIC engagement</td>
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<td>2. Teacher professional learning (PL) occurs primarily as individual experiences. Teachers attend trainings and presentations with limited interest, coherence, sense of relevance, or opportunities to collaborate. PLCs are not established.</td>
<td>2. Teacher PL is coherent, relevant, and connected to school vision and goals; PLCs meet and inconsistently use student work to analyze and improve instruction. Some teachers find value in the PLC structure.</td>
<td>2. Teacher PL is coherent, relevant, and aligned to goals and yields demonstrable changes in teacher practice that results in improved student learning outcomes. Teachers meet on a regular basis in PLCs, using student work to analyze and improve instruction; many teachers perceive this to be a valuable use of time</td>
<td>2. Teacher PL is driven by teacher leaders and is deliberately designed to address inequitable student outcomes. Teachers collaborate in well-organized PLCs, using common, interim, standards-aligned benchmarks and student work to adapt curriculum, instructional resources, and instructional practices; the work of PLCs regularly informs subsequent instruction</td>
<td>2. Teacher PL addresses inequity and results in significantly narrowing or eliminating of inequitable student outcomes. Collaboration permeates every aspect of the school; teachers see PLCs as essential to cultivating deep understanding of student achievement precisely in order to continuously refine instruction so that every student reaches accelerated goals</td>
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<td>3. Teachers have complete discretion to use curriculum that may or may not be aligned to state standards; there is wide variance of practice and rigor across classrooms; weak assessment results can be attributed to standards misalignment, undemanding curriculum, and low expectations for students</td>
<td>3. Some self-driven students are held to high expectations, rigorous instruction, and appropriately demanding curriculum; aligned instruction and benchmarks vary across teachers</td>
<td>3. There is school-wide adoption of standards-aligned texts and district-recommended scope and sequence; some common benchmark assessments are in place; the curriculum is adopted, and standards-based instruction is appropriately demanding in many classrooms</td>
<td>3. School uses a comprehensive vertical and horizontal scope and sequence of standards-based units and lessons, which lead to rich, relevant, and rigorous instruction anchored in equity; most teachers use common periodic benchmarks</td>
<td>3. A rigorous, standards-based curriculum is adopted school-wide, and common assessments that align to college and career ready standards set and track ambitious goals for both teachers and students that dramatically increase student achievement</td>
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<td>4. Formal observation, supervision, and professional learning are conducted in accordance with district requirements as a perfunctory exercise; few teachers improve their instruction as an outcome of observations</td>
<td>4. The administrative team, using a formal teacher evaluation system, conducts classroom observations to monitor and give feedback on instructional content and practices with little differentiation given for varying levels of teachers’ performance; leaders rarely follow up with teachers to track responsiveness to feedback</td>
<td>4. Within the formal teacher evaluation system, most teachers receive feedback and coaching that has the potential to improve instructional practice and student learning; observation and feedback drive the design of professional learning and collaborative planning</td>
<td>4. The leadership team implements both a formal observation and a feedback system to ensure that frequent classroom observations with every teacher are conducted; immediate, actionable coaching focused on developing a growth mindset and using an aligned observation tool deliberately shapes teaching practice</td>
<td>4. The leadership team extends the classroom observation and feedback system and professional learning schedule by including a peer observation process that allows teachers to share practices and engage in instructional dialogue and coaching</td>
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Is every teacher continuously improving their instruction? Is every student provided equitable opportunities to work to their highest capabilities?
### Emerging

1. Staff is indifferent to negative language and actions of colleagues and ignores outward demonstrations of bias toward student differences and learning

2. Staff relationships are congenial; staff interactions tend to focus on topics other than the improvement of teacher practice

3. School leaders strive to maintain a safe and orderly campus, attending to complaints; there are few systems to include teachers in decision-making

4. Staff works in isolation outside of mandatory professional learning that could be described as “sit and get”

5. Students experience a focus on discipline; they are acknowledged for good or bad behavior

### Developing

1. Most staff and leaders can be described as working to serve the needs of self-driven and well-prepared students; there is some collaborative discussion about learner variability

2. Staff relationships are collegial and non-confrontational, tending to focus on student behavior or skill deficits

3. School leaders share previously made decisions with staff on a need-to-know basis; teachers are engaged in decisions that concern them personally

4. All staff attends mandatory professional learning that could be described as collaborative and personalized to a small degree; some staff initiate collaborative work with peers

5. Student success, with a focus on achievement, is celebrated periodically

### Effective

1. The school is focused on improving equitable outcomes for students through intentionally targeted practices with impact measures

2. Workplace conditions are perceived to be positive, fair, respectful, and collaborative; there is risk-taking and open communication of needs, concerns, expectations, equity, and practices among pockets of staff, students, and families

3. Shared decision-making between staff and school leaders occurs primarily on less critical matters such as student assignment or ancillary material purchases

4. Professional learning is collaborative, relevant, and engaging for many teachers; staff occasionally extend professional learning outside of school environment

5. Students are occasionally acknowledged and celebrated formally with a focus on achievement, progress, and civic engagement; teachers are acknowledged as a collective unit or larger group

### Strategic

1. The school’s culture is the central driver of efforts to improve instruction and achieve growth for every student

2. School atmosphere is non-bureaucratic, welcoming, upbeat, and solution-oriented; it is not uncommon for people to confront biased beliefs and practices with the intent to change behaviors

3. Shared decision-making by faculty and leadership is regular practice and primarily addresses critical instructional matters and student behavior practices

4. Professional learning and adult learning are emphasized and valued; there is an expectation, embraced by staff, that everyone engages in continuous learning

5. Students are regularly acknowledged and celebrated formally and informally with a focus on achievement, progress, and civic engagement; there is some acknowledgement of individual teacher or team growth

### Transformative

1. The school’s culture amplifies energy and drives continuous improvement through collaboration and shared decision-making that contribute to the academic success of every student through multiple pathways

2. A harmonious, vibrant environment exists wherein respect, trust, and equity are pervasive regardless of status or position as student, faculty, family, or community member

3. The school collaboratively and systematically works to ensure the highest levels of stakeholder engagement and ownership in decision-making

4. Staff independently seeks ongoing research-based and rigorous professional learning opportunities to remain current and to enhance instructional practice; highly valued professional learning is led by leaders and teachers and consistently transfers to improved practice

5. Student and teacher mastery of academic and social skills, progress and goal attainment, and civic engagement are acknowledged and celebrated in formal and informal venues

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**Does the school provide intellectually and emotionally stimulating communities that cultivate belonging and foster learning for every teacher and student?**
### EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS FRAMEWORK

#### PROMOTING LEADERSHIP in others so that everyone is engaged in school improvement and committed to student success and social justice

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<td>1. Staff's role in decision-making and in leadership is driven by district mandates</td>
<td>1. Grade or dept. leaders, school teams, and a leadership team exist; the school leader drives their focus, roles, and responsibilities</td>
<td>1. Shared leadership is internalized throughout the school community as key stakeholders assume a variety of formal and informal leadership roles; teacher leaders weigh in on their focus, roles, and responsibilities</td>
<td>1. The instructional leadership team, including teacher leaders and school leaders, collaborate on their collective and individual foci, roles, and responsibilities</td>
<td>1. Leadership is practiced at every level of the school community, including teachers, students, and school leaders; roles and responsibilities are constructed to drive broad involvement and goal attainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Staff is involved in decisions that affect adult interests</td>
<td>2. A few opportunities are provided for staff to participate in shared decision-making regarding needed changes based on data and school goals</td>
<td>2. Every staff member is encouraged to take an active role in regular decision-making</td>
<td>2. There are participatory structures, dedicated time, and opportunities for staff to engage in instructional decisions</td>
<td>2. Participatory structures supporting inquiry, reflection, and shared decision-making are consistently monitored and refined for instructional effectiveness and ability to drive goal attainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. School leaders are valued primarily for their operational work and management skills; instructional decisions are left to individual teachers</td>
<td>3. Staff rely on school leaders for general instructional support and are skeptical of the purpose of teacher leadership</td>
<td>3. Staff expects instructional leadership team members to engage in instructional leadership work directed by the school leader</td>
<td>3. Staff expects and appreciates the contributions of every leader to the instructional quality of the school in processes driven by an instructional leadership team</td>
<td>3. Expansive, collaborative leadership actions of teachers and school leaders serve as a driver that continually improves the quality of instruction, generating an optimal learning environment</td>
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<td>4. Professional learning for leadership is offered to school leaders at district-led meetings and from district supervisors; school leaders only build internal leadership capacity of staff through district-provided opportunities</td>
<td>4. School leaders share best practices and their thinking behind decisions and actions in an effort to develop the leadership skills of a small subset of teachers (e.g. instructional leadership team)</td>
<td>4. The school leader intentionally builds the leadership capacity of teachers and other school leaders to execute instructional leadership work</td>
<td>4. The school leader builds leadership capacity of individuals based on individualized needs; school leader develops collective leadership capacity of the team; school leader periodically monitors and provides feedback on instructional leadership work</td>
<td>4. Leadership capacity in students, teachers, and school leaders is developed continuously; school leader consistently monitors and provides feedback on the instructional leadership work of others</td>
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**Does every teacher say there is strong teacher ownership of and opportunities for important leadership?**
## Effective Schools Framework Overview

### Aligning & Managing Systems to Prioritize Teacher Development and Accelerate Student Learning

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<td>1. School leader coordinates and directs the school program, and communication periodically flows from the school leader to staff.</td>
<td>1. Structures are in place to facilitate two-way regular communication between the leadership team and the school community.</td>
<td>1. Ongoing two-way communication between leadership and staff is the norm.</td>
<td>1. School structures facilitate regular communication among all staff, enabling them to share and discuss critical information, to solve problems, and to strengthen working relationships.</td>
<td>1. Multiple modes of strategic communication are used to reinforce priorities and key messages; staff regularly provides input about communication effectiveness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. The hiring process is undefined and inappropriately delegated; sometimes teachers are hired without school leader input or review.</td>
<td>2. New staff is interviewed and hired by school leader.</td>
<td>2. The school leader and key staff members conduct hiring of new staff; the selection process results in mostly appropriate selections.</td>
<td>2. Robust and defined selection process involving staff representatives is used to hire new staff; most candidates must demonstrate their skills as part of the process.</td>
<td>2. The school pursues high-quality potential candidates who undergo a rigorous selection process that includes key stakeholder participation; onboarding and support systems lead to the development and retention of almost all high-performing staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. School and staff schedules are designed to maximize convenience and attend to adult agendas (seniority, minimizing parental complaints, etc.).</td>
<td>3. School schedule is designed to provide some opportunities for teacher collaboration; staffing decisions are made with some student needs in mind.</td>
<td>3. School schedule is designed to provide regular teacher collaboration; student needs are usually considered over adult needs in staffing and scheduling decisions.</td>
<td>3. Scheduling is designed to accommodate weekly and consistent teacher collaboration; staffing efforts are made to match teachers to student populations based on student need.</td>
<td>3. Scheduling, developed with staff input, accommodates multiple opportunities weekly for teacher collaboration; artful, data-driven staffing and rostering results in targeted placement of teachers to ensure every student has the opportunity to meet grade-level expectations.</td>
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<td>4. Teachers follow district-mandated processes to identify perfunctory performance goals.</td>
<td>4. Underperforming teachers are reviewed and monitored with growth plans.</td>
<td>4. Effective staff members are recognized and utilized; underperforming staff members are held accountable for growth by administrators.</td>
<td>4. Effective staff is critically deployed according to each individual’s unique talents; the school leader works tirelessly to ensure underperforming teachers improve or are replaced by effective teachers.</td>
<td>4. Performance management allows teachers to hold each other accountable to reach highest performance and pursue continuous improvement.</td>
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<td>5. School operations are not designed to align with student learning priorities, frequently interfering with instruction; instructional systems are vague or undefined; resource purchases and allocations are made by the school leader.</td>
<td>5. School-wide procedures exist for routine operations and are well known to staff; instructional systems are in place and used to some degree for both learning and resource expenditures.</td>
<td>5. School-wide procedures are designed to ensure smooth school operation with minimal instructional distraction; instructional systems rooted in data collection and analysis are utilized to support student learning; resources are allocated with some teacher leader input.</td>
<td>5. School-wide procedures ensure the school operates with focus and purpose to maximize instructional time; instructional systems are deliberately and strategically used to support teacher growth and student learning; resources are allocated with significant teacher leader input.</td>
<td>5. School-wide procedures are systematized, informed by school stakeholders, and ensure the school is maximized for instruction; robust instructional systems, utilized by all staff, drive systematic improvement for teaching and learning and resource allocation.</td>
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**Are the systems of the school creating optimal and equitable conditions for quality teaching and learning to occur?**