

Building Distributive
Leadership Capacity

Planning and Rollout

Driving Instructional
ImprovementReflecting and Making
Adjustments

Increase Teacher Effectiveness through Learning Cycles

Who Is the Primary Audience for This Guide? **Instructional Leadership Teams**

When Is This Guide Most Useful? **Throughout the School Year**

Vision of Excellence

Strong teaching practice is the foundation of an excellent school, and the learning cycle provides the organizing structure for improved practice. Schools that implement a coherent, unified approach to teacher professional learning often see gains in teacher effectiveness and subsequently, student learning. In these schools, observation and feedback, data-driven instruction, and professional learning are not unrelated initiatives but essential components of the learning cycles that support the growth of teachers and students.

Essential Questions

- How do instructional leaders best work with teachers to develop learning goals and create progress-monitoring plans?
- How do instructional leaders support teachers to access opportunities for learning and apply that learning to their practice?
- How do instructional leaders engage teachers in formal, meaningful reflection to understand gains and inform future learning?

Objective 1: Set Intention for Learning Cycles with Teacher Teams and Individual Teachers

Key Action Steps

- ✓ **Use observation and feedback to support the development of goals and definitions of success**
 - Collect baseline data related to teachers' Professional Growth Plans. In 1:1 feedback conversations, use the data from observations to inform planning for upcoming learning cycles.
 - Use scores on LEAP indicators and other forms of observation data (e.g., video clips, scripting, and counts) as a baseline for determining the areas and amount of growth desired.
- ✓ **Use student data, examined individually and in data teams, to set an intention for the learning cycle**
 - Examine gaps related to student subgroups. Consider developing goals based on the needs and progress of special populations.
 - Prior to data team meetings, ask teachers to examine and sort student work based on performance. Have them use a [reflection sheet](#) to identify patterns and trends that might inform where to go next.
 - Use data team meetings to engage in deeper examination of standards. Lead teachers to identify key components of the standard, prerequisite skills, and clarity around expectations.
- ✓ **Adjust the level and type of support according to the needs of teachers and teams**
 - Consider the [appropriate stance](#) (consulting, collaborating or coaching) to take with teachers based on their level of experience, access to data and prior success. Be aware of how your stance will be viewed by teachers and consider possible challenges.
 - Collaborate with your school leader to make sure that your approach to goal setting is going to meet your teachers' and students' needs. Be mindful of when individual goals need to be adjusted.



**SPOTLIGHT
ON SCHOOLS**

Many schools have increased the collective impact of their work by **utilizing social media and online tools** that lead to collaboration. One Senior/Team Lead uses Twitter to celebrate achievements, push her team members and provide a venue for ongoing discussions during team meetings. Another school created [Teaching Channel Teams](#) for each team to upload videos, share them and give each other feedback.

Objective 2: Provide Opportunities for Teachers to Engage in Learning

Key Action Steps

- ✓ **Connect observation and feedback cycles to learning cycle goals**
 - Develop a [bank of probing questions](#) that can guide feedback conversations and focus teachers on action steps related to their learning cycle goals.
 - Use video to guide learning. Ask teachers to watch and reflect on a video prior to coaching conversations.
 - Send a [memo to teachers](#) immediately following observations that highlights an area of celebration connected to their goal and prompts reflection that will lead to further learning.
- ✓ **Monitor data during learning cycles by examining formative and summative assessments**
 - Identify multiple sources of data to examine during data team meetings. Ensure that there is an immediate connection between goals for growth, learning in data teams and classroom practice.
 - Focus on identifying trends, especially within subgroups, related to team-wide goals. Have teachers complete a [cover sheet](#) prior to data team meetings that asks them to reflect on student learning in light of these goals.
- ✓ **Target team-wide supports based on shared goals and common areas of growth**
 - Use [Peer Learning Labs](#), [Lesson Study](#), [Instructional Rounds](#), or other approaches to collaborative learning. Make sure that these experiences connect to individual/group goals and serve as opportunities to support learning in relevant areas.
 - Encourage co-planning as a form of professional learning. Use collaborative tools for sharing lesson plans and their development among team members. Consider using a common template to provide feedback on lesson plans that is directly connected to learning cycle goals.
 - Develop agendas for professional learning time that are driven by the goals of team members and use [targeted protocols](#) for discussing shared readings, exploring problems of practice or examining student work.

Objective 3: Provide Opportunities for Teachers to Reflect on Learning

Key Action Steps

- ✓ **Support teachers to engage in structured, formal reflection through 1:1 coaching and collaboration**
 - Examine multiple sources of data collected throughout the learning cycle (e.g., student results and observation/feedback data). The analysis of this evidence should lead to the development of future learning cycle goals.
 - Ask [targeted questions](#) that focus teachers on reflection related to their own growth, the learning cycle process, and their students' progress.

Objective 4: Utilize the Collective Capacity of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to Provide Differentiated Support and Monitor Progress

Key Action Steps

- ✓ **Engage in and Model Professional Learning Cycles**
 - School leaders should model the learning cycle process with their Senior/Team Leads.
 - School leaders should be transparent about their own growth and development by sharing their goals, plans for monitoring progress, and the application of learning with their ILTs. Consider having the ILT observe a coaching session between the principal and Instructional Superintendent (IS) – either live or on video.
- ✓ **Identify trends in data collected through observation/feedback and data team meetings**
 - Examine the pre-work completed by teachers for data team meetings. Discuss trends during regular ILT meetings and identify possible supports. Patterns identified should help set the agenda for future team meetings and inform learning cycle goals.

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- ✓ **Use ILT meetings to model expectations for collaborative learning**
 - Use videos of principals coaching Senior/Team Leads to discuss how observation/feedback is used as a support within the learning cycle.
 - Engage in the same structures being used by teams (e.g. Lesson Study, Learning Labs and protocols) as an ILT.
 - ✓ **Observe one another, provide feedback, and share learnings in ILT meetings**
 - School leaders should regularly observe (and participate in) data team meetings, professional learning at the teacher team level, and co-planning sessions. Coaching for ILT members should not be limited to observation and feedback.
 - Use a system for creating learning cycle templates that allows school leaders access to all teachers' goals so that they can provide feedback to Senior/Team Leads on the goals, opportunities for learning, and reflection of their team members.
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