

# Essential Questions to Promote Staff Inquiry and Reflection

(examples)



## **MISSION and BELIEFS**

- *To what extent does our (team, school, district, community) share a common Mission?*
- *What educational beliefs about teaching and learning do we hold?*
- *What assumptions about learning guide our instructional and assessment practices?*
- *To what extent do our policies, priorities, and actions reflect these beliefs?*
- *To what extent do our policies, priorities, and actions honor our Mission?*

## **STANDARDS**

- *How would people know that we are a “standards-based” school/district?*
- *What are observable indicators at the classroom? ... school? ...district?*
- *To what extent are we “walking the talk” and using standards to guide our work (e.g., curriculum, assessment, instruction, professional development, staff appraisal)?*

## **CURRICULUM**

- *Why should curriculum be planned “backward”?*
- *To what extent is our curriculum coherent and aligned?*
- *Does our curriculum highlight enduring knowledge and authentic performance?*
- *What content should we “cover” and what needs to be “uncovered?”*
- *To what extent do textbooks function as the syllabus (rather than a resource)?*

## **ASSESSMENT**

- *How are we doing? What evidence is needed to answer this question?*
- *How will we know that students really understand the “big” ideas?*
- *Are we assessing everything we value (or only those things that are most easily tested and graded)?*
- *Is anything important “falling through the cracks” because we are not assessing it?*
- *How might our assessments promote learning, not simply measure it?*

## **INSTRUCTION**

- *To what extent is our instruction engaging and effective?*
- *To what extent does our instruction reflect research and best practices?*
- *To what extent are we engaging students in “doing” the subject?*
- *Are we effectively teaching ALL students?*

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(continued)

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- *To what extent do our professional development practices reflect the research on adult learning?*
- *How does our staff view professional development?*
- *To what extent are our professional development practices “results” oriented?*
- *Is our professional development appropriately differentiated?*

## CHANGE PROCESS

- *What do we believe about educational change? To what extent are these shared beliefs?*
- *To what extent are various initiatives seen as connected and coherent (as opposed to being seen as separate things or “add ons”)?*
- *How might we “work smarter” and more effectively?*

## POLICY, STRUCTURES, CULTURE

- *To what extent do our policies, structures, and culture reflect our beliefs about learning?*
- *How might we restructure to enhance learning?*
- *What is the best use of our time when teachers are not with students?*
- *What messages do our policies send?*
- *Is our staff appraisal process working?*
- *To what extent do we have a culture of continuous improvement?*
- *What existing factors support this reform? What factors resist change?*
- *How do our leaders receive the honest feedback they need to improve?*
- *To what extent does our grading and reporting system communicate clearly and honestly?*
- *Are resources (e.g., time, money, facilities, technology) being used optimally to advance learning?*

## OTHER

- *Would you want your child to attend our school?*

• *other:* \_\_\_\_\_