Schooling by Design

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: ______________________________________________________