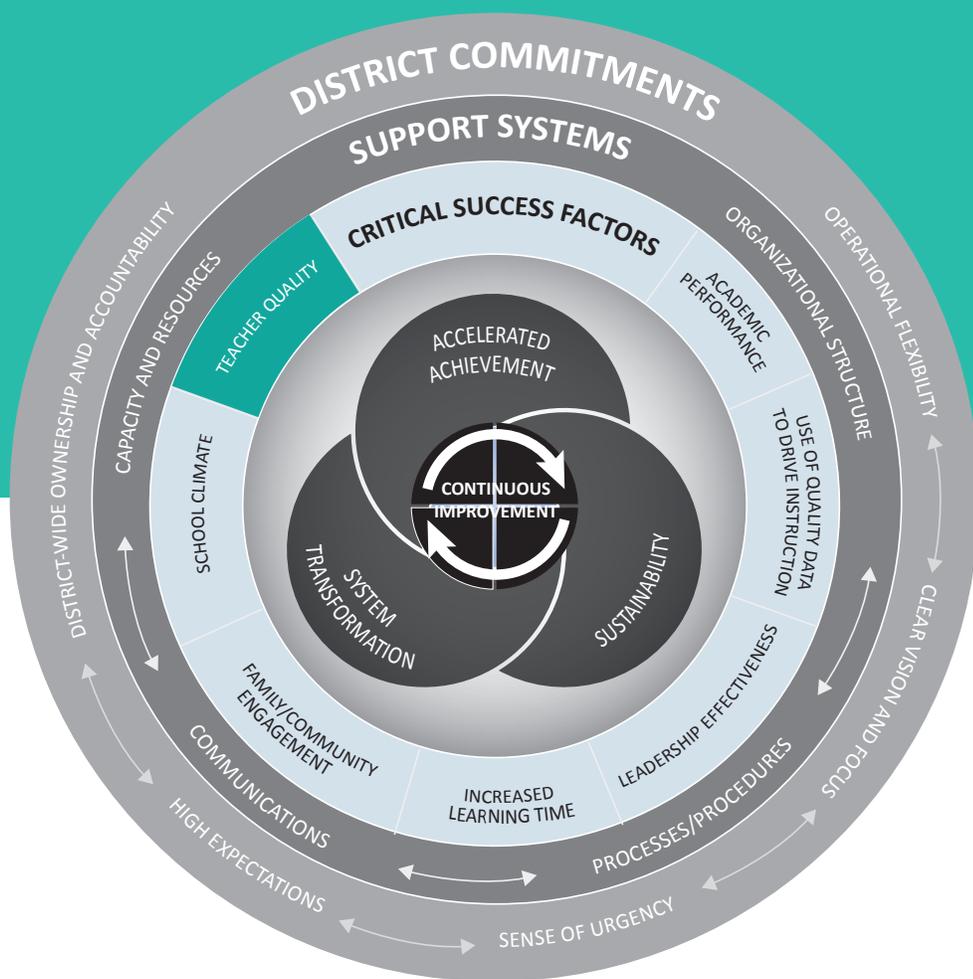


CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTOR (CSF) PLANNING GUIDE

TEACHER QUALITY



CSF PLANNING GUIDES ARE INTENDED TO

- Present supporting research that strengthens your knowledge and understanding of the CSF.
- Provide examples of processes and/or strategies to support your implementation of the Texas Accountability and Intervention Strategies (TAIS) framework to strengthen the CSFs on your campus.
- Assist with strategies to determine your strengths and weaknesses for each CSF.
- Identify specific next steps to implement on your campus.

BEFORE GETTING STARTED

- If you are working as a group, designate someone to take notes during the discussions to collect ideas and thoughts for your next steps.
- Assign an individual to lead the action plan for teacher quality.
- Use the activities in the Next Steps section to gather data, identify problems, and determine root causes.

AFTER REVIEWING THIS GUIDE, RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING

- What new knowledge do I have about this CSF and how does this information influence my thinking?
- In what ways are the practices at my district/school aligned with strengthening this CSF?
- What do we want to improve, and what plan of action is needed to improve?

CALL TO ACTION

Develop a working understanding of the CSF:

- Organize an instructional leadership team meeting.
- To understand the team's current understanding of this CSF, ask each team member what they know about it and record their responses.
- Read this guide using a jigsaw or other text discussion protocol.
- Respond to questions or discussion prompts listed throughout the guide.
- Determine how you want to initiate learning more about the CSF in relation to the TAIS framework. For instance, you could assign team members to read and facilitate the discussions for the different sections of this guide.
- Utilize the TAIS Guidance Documents at www.tcdss.net as a resource. They include details and specifics for the process.

TEACHER QUALITY

The Texas Accountability Intervention System (TAIS) framework for school improvement identifies teacher quality as one of the seven Critical Success Factors (CSFs) and summarizes as follows:

Teacher quality focuses on the need to recruit and retain effective teachers while supporting and enhancing the knowledge and skills of current staff with job-embedded professional learning. More than two decades of research has demonstrated a clear connection between teacher quality and increased student performance. Research shows that low-income students are more likely to benefit from instruction by a highly effective teacher than are their more advantaged.¹ Students enrolled in successive classes taught by effective teachers show greater gains in student performance than student groups taught by less effective teachers.² LEAs and campuses can have a direct impact on student achievement through the effective implementation of a comprehensive teacher quality program.

“Teachers not only exert significant influence on the performance of students, but they also influence the performance of other teachers and school leaders” (Reeves, 2008, p. 2).⁴

The connection between teacher quality and student achievement has gotten the attention of policy makers as well as practitioners. This heightened interest has been triggered by the federal government’s decision to tie education funding to a state’s ability to connect student progress with the quality of its teachers and principals. The influence teacher quality has on student learning is the most important school-based factor. The effect is cumulative and long lasting.³ As a result, the Teacher Quality CSF is central to school improvement efforts.

This planning resource will examine teacher quality in these five sections:

- What does teacher quality mean?
- How do you measure and determine teacher quality?
- How do you increase teacher quality?
- Reflection
- Next steps

SECTION 1

WHAT DOES TEACHER QUALITY MEAN?

The positive influence of effective teachers versus ineffective teachers on student achievement is dramatic. Over three years, Marzano studied the difference between students with most effective teachers and those with the least effective teachers:

- Most effective teacher: 83% gain
- Least effective teacher: 29% gain⁵

Teacher efficacy can be defined as teachers' beliefs in their abilities to organize and execute courses of action necessary to bring about desired results.

Although teaching is a holistic effort, Marzano identifies three factors that influence teaching effectiveness: instructional strategies (the how), classroom management, and classroom curriculum design (the what). These factors are not a mystery; there are endless research-based practices that support each factor's significance. Additionally, one of the most important elements of improving teacher quality is having a consistent focus on the following four questions:

- What do we want students to learn?
- How will we know they have learned it?
- What will we do when they have not learned it?
- How will we deepen learning for those who have mastered it?⁶

The foundation for teacher quality is the development and implementation of an effective lesson cycle.⁷ Beginning with the end in mind and utilizing the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and student expectation (SE), an effective teacher will set a task that is aligned with the challenge level of the TEKS and STAAR. Hattie's synthesis of more than 800 meta-analyses related to achievement identified the following attributes of what effective teachers do:

- Identify the most important ways in which to represent the subject they teach
- Create an optimal classroom climate for learning
- Monitor learning and provide feedback
- Believe that all students can reach the success criteria
- Influence student outcomes for knowledge building and critical thinking⁸

The attributes that Hattie defined link to the teacher’s behavior as well as his or her thought process. Teachers need a growth mind-set to create the conditions for learning and the resilience to persevere. These conditions emerge from the effective implementation of other CSFs. School climate, use of quality data, and leadership effectiveness directly affect the process of increasing teacher quality. The culture of the workplace, including how the staff works together, is significant in determining what teachers do and think.⁹ Furthermore, how they see themselves and their capacity and willingness to make a difference in the school is vital to their effectiveness.¹⁰

Studies show campus-wide teacher effectiveness to be the most consistent variable related to school success.¹¹ Continuous school improvement requires a more productive cognitive model in which teachers think and reflect on the processes involved in teaching. Attention to the teaching process will not only enhance teaching, but also move teachers to self-directed learning and, as a result, improve teacher quality exponentially.^{12,13}

CALL TO ACTION

Discuss the following points to generate ideas to develop or strengthen your plan:

- The text identified the following: The foundation for teacher quality is the development and implementation of an effective lesson cycle.
 - When planning lessons, how do teachers ensure that lesson plans connect directly to the intended learning in the SE/TEKS? How do you ensure that the instruction students get and the tasks they are assigned meet the rigorous level of the state standards?
 - What structures and supports are provided for teachers to develop effective lessons?
 - How does your district or campus ensure that lesson plans follow a research-based cycle that includes the elements of lesson design?
 - To what extent do teachers make instructional design decisions based on evidence? Cite examples in your school/district.
- What structures are in place to promote a culture for reflecting on and discussing the processes involved in effective teaching?
- Discuss the following statement and its implications for planning in your school/district: *A staff’s collective efficacy is noted to be the most consistent variable related to school success.*

SECTION 2

HOW DO YOU MEASURE AND DETERMINE TEACHER QUALITY?

Teacher evaluations have changed very little over time, primarily because there has not been a consensus on how to measure and identify effective teaching practices.¹⁴

The recent federal funding guidelines specifically include teacher evaluation as an essential part of increasing teacher quality. As a result, states must ensure that their teacher evaluations are at least partially based on student achievement. New accountability requirements are driving the need for changing traditional teacher evaluation.¹⁵ Practitioners, researchers, and policy makers agree that most evaluation systems do not help teachers improve.¹⁶

Currently, teacher evaluations are in the midst of a transformation away from relying on traditional classroom observations with an accompanying rating such as “proficient.” This labeling process provides limited ongoing feedback for teachers to reflect on their practices and link those practices to student achievement. To that end, student learning is the focal criterion for the emerging teacher evaluation methods. As a result, multiple measures of teacher performance focused on student learning are being developed. Several states, including Texas, were granted an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver proposing alternative teacher evaluation models that include both professional practice and student growth. Meanwhile, districts are seeking clarity about how to strengthen and measure teacher quality.

To measure and determine how to increase teacher quality, it is essential to understand behaviors and practices that define quality teachers. Jackson says that teaching is a combination of skill and will. Skill refers to the pedagogical and content knowledge of the teacher, and will is the art of teaching and the desire to improve. She identifies four teacher types to use as a baseline for increasing teacher quality. It is important to recognize that these teacher types are often fluid.

TEACHER TYPE	CHARACTERISTICS	LOOKS LIKE
High will/low skill	Enthusiastic; idealistic; willing to learn	Seeks feedback and explores new strategies and ideas, but implementation is inconsistent and ineffective
Low will/low skill	Discouraged; not invested; "retired on the job"	Does not volunteer or contribute; passive; tries to stay beneath the radar
High will/high skill	Motivated and skillful	Easily identifies and implements appropriate strategies; explores new ideas, seeks feedback, and refines practice; takes on challenges
Low will/high skill	Skillful but disinterested; "seen it all"	Unreceptive to feedback; resists efforts to try new approaches; saboteur ¹⁷

Although the table appears simple, recognizing the specific behaviors that define how quality teachers operate and how they develop through their careers is more complex. A focus on building skill and influencing will are essential to increasing teacher quality.

Thankfully, there is research that identifies the actions and behaviors of effective teachers. In addition to the work conducted by Jackson and Hattie, others have identified teaching practices that have consistently advanced student learning;

- Understand subject matter deeply and flexibly;
- Connect what is to be learned to students' prior knowledge and experience;
- Create effective scaffolds and supports for learning;
- Use instructional strategies that help students draw connections, apply what they're learning, practice new skills, and monitor their own learning;
- Assess student learning continuously and adapt teaching to student needs;
- Provide clear standards, constant feedback, and opportunities for revising work; and
- Develop and effectively manage a collaborative classroom in which all students have membership.¹⁸

Evaluations based on careful classroom observations can identify effective teachers and teaching practices.¹⁹ A school or district can identify specific high-yield practices they want to implement and create a tool to measure levels of implementation.

CALL TO ACTION

Consider the qualities and behaviors that exemplify the effective teaching practices mentioned so far. These practices could be the basis for a locally developed way of appraising teacher effectiveness. More importantly, frequent informal observations can help monitor if and how effective practices are used in your classrooms. These data will determine the current effectiveness of your teachers and help you develop goals and specific practices to increase teacher quality and advance student learning.

- What processes are in place in your school or district to support and mentor teachers new to the district or the profession?
- Identify examples in your school or district that describe conditions supporting the development of skill and influence will.
- How would you measure how well teachers in your school or district are implementing the identified effective practices?
- Knowing that student learning depends on the quality of teaching in your school or district, identify actions you would take to increase teacher quality.
 - Who would monitor the implementation and collect the data to determine the effectiveness of these actions? How would the data be used?
- What are the expectations for implementing effective practices? How do teachers know these expectations?

SECTION 3

HOW DO YOU INCREASE TEACHER QUALITY?

This section will review how to increase teacher quality by addressing the following:

- Professional development
- Instruction/assessment/design/implementation
- Recruitment and retention to increase teacher quality

The ultimate purpose of professional development is to increase teacher quality. It should be effective enough to dramatically increase content knowledge, the use of effective instructional strategies, and the leadership skills that create positive changes in adult behavior, which, in turn, improve student learning, performance, and success.

If professional development is to be effective, it must be chosen based on a thorough analysis of the data, identifying needed improvements in student performance and instructional practices gathered through observation data. The data should also inform how teacher learning opportunities are included in the academic calendar. Teacher learning should be ongoing, aligned with research-based best practices, and embedded in the teachers' daily work.²⁰

Teachers who get weekly feedback from classroom observations can experience significant professional growth. According to Bambrick-Sontoyo, teachers who get relevant coaching and feedback 30 times in one year can gain the equivalent of 20 years of professional growth. He explains that most teachers are observed twice a year and rarely get the right kind of feedback, (i.e., feedback that promotes reflection on their teaching practices—instructional coaching, in other words).²¹ These feedback sessions should provide ongoing, job-embedded professional development that is timely and relevant.

Keeping it simple and focused on the essentials will radically improve student learning. The research supports the view that professional development that is content-specific, involves teacher teams, and is reinforced through support with mentors and coaches can lead to increased teacher knowledge and improved classroom practices.^{22, 23, 24, 25, 26}

Mike Schmoker identifies three areas where attention should be focused: what we teach, how we teach, and authentic literacy. He cites research showing that the two most important indicators for student success are the knowledge and skills of teachers. As the quality of instruction improves, so does student learning. Low-achieving students can make significant gains when they have effective teachers. Although teaching is complex, the practices of good teaching can be identified and taught. And when these practices are consistently implemented, they have been shown to yield results. The problem is, these basic practices are rarely implemented consistently.

Schmoker and others identify the following as research-based, effective teaching practices essential to everyday teaching:

- Clear learning objectives
- Teaching/modeling/demonstrating
- Guided practice
- Checks for understanding/formative assessment

The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.

-William Arthur Ward

To increase teacher quality, a district or campus must increase teacher learning time. That is why allotting more time for teacher collaboration is one of the three principles of the TAIS CSF increased learning time.

A powerful tool for increasing teacher quality can be found in the professional learning community. An increase in staff learning time fosters collaborative learning. Typically, a PLC's purpose and focus is to engage in reflection on the design and implementation of instruction and assessment resulting in significant, positive student impact. According to Hattie, the most successful model is the data team.²⁷ These teams meet often (once or twice per month at a minimum) and use a protocol to separate and analyze student performance data, set goals, and discuss explicit instructional strategies to support student learning. They also monitor instruction and student progress on an ongoing basis.

Recruiting and retaining the right people is essential to building effective teaching teams. Districts and schools that operate strong recruitment and retention programs understand the importance of strengthening the quality of the existing teaching staff while also building a marketing program to attract new talent. Recruiting and retaining top talent must be the top priority for human resource departments.

- What marketing strategies does your district or campus utilize for attracting high-quality people to your district or school?
- Using data from exit surveys, analyze why teachers leave your district/campus.
- What aspects of your retention plan provide incentives for staff to stay? (Examples might be salary structures, retention bonuses, positive climate, career ladders, and recognition for quality work.)

SECTION 4

REFLECTION

Students' academic success strongly correlates with the qualifications and skills of their teachers. Ongoing professional development is critical to ensure that teachers are knowledgeable in their content area, use current research-based instructional strategies, and practice ongoing effective assessment methods to improve student learning and performance.

Schmoker contends that we know what to do to improve student learning; we just don't do it consistently. Increasing teacher quality means bridging the knowledge gap between educators and their practice. This gap between knowing and doing can be closed if teachers have a common purpose and a focused instructional plan for teaching and learning.²⁸ Increasing teacher quality means increasing learning at the organizational level. It is an ongoing, coherent process, not a series of isolated events.

SECTION 5

NEXT STEPS

District leadership is essential in making professional learning a priority and communicating its value in improving student learning. The district must secure financial support, time in the school calendar, and operational flexibility in how campuses address their staff learning needs. This aligns with the district commitments and support systems outlined in the TAIS framework model, with emphasis on the importance of district commitments and district support systems.

Establish a team or identify an individual to guide the action for the following steps. Utilize the notes taken throughout the review of this planning resource and refer to Call to Action questions to guide the following next steps to increase learning time:

- Determine the learning needs of your staff. (use the TAIS data collection process to determine problems). Use classroom walkthrough data, Performance Learning Center (PLC) observation data, and student progress data for all student groups.
- Create a professional development plan (PDC) that includes a monitoring plan and that is based on the identified problems and their root causes.
- Utilize the PLC structure to embed and connect learning and continuous improvement.

Effective PLCs should be a significant part of your professional development plan. The table below presents DuFour and Eaker's six characteristics of successful professional learning communities.²⁹ Use it as a guide to create your professional development plan.

- Complete the last three columns of the table.
- Identify your areas of strengths and determine the areas in which you want to improve using the TAIS data analysis and needs assessment process.
- Create a PLC plan that addresses the root causes for the problems in areas in which you want to improve using the TAIS needs assessment process.
- Identify the actions needed to meet your desired goal using the TAIS continuous improvement process.
- Develop a PLC protocol that supports your desired actions for successful professional learning communities and identify the data needed to measure effectiveness using the TAIS improvement planning process.
- Identify the specific resources needed to support effective PLCs, such as times and places for teachers to meet; data-gathering tools to monitor instruction; teacher facilitators; training for leading effective PLCs; and administrators' commitment attendance, support, and engagement in the professional learning communities.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL PLCS	ACTIONS	YOUR CURRENT ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS	YOUR CURRENT ACTIONS AND BEHAVIORS AND RESOURCES NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT	DATA TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVENESS
Shared mission, vision, and values	The PLC has a collective commitment to principles that express beliefs, vision, and goals.			
Collective inquiry (TAIS continuous improvement process, data analysis, needs assessment)	The PLC questions the status quo, seeks new ways to improve results, and reflects on the results.			

Collaborative teams	The PLC's focus is on building the capacity of the learning organization so that people learn from one another and are energized to continuously seek ways to improve.			
Action orientation and experimentation (TAIS continuous improvement process improvement planning process: data analysis, needs assessment, establishing quarterly and annual goals, monitoring interventions).	The PLC focus is on achieving the desired results through relentless action. Members are willing to experiment and test hypotheses through action research.			
Continuous improvement (TAIS; the framework is based on a continuous improvement process).	The PLC does not tolerate the status quo, and members are always searching for a better way for students to learn. They create an environment that welcomes innovation and experimentation as a way of going about their daily work.			
Results orientation (TAIS-the continuous improvement process is data-driven)	PLCs recognize that everything they do is assessed by results, not intentions.			

MAKING CONNECTIONS TO OTHER CSFS

- Improve Academic Performance
- Increase the Use of Quality Data to Drive Instruction
- Increase Leadership Effectiveness
- Increase Parent and Community Involvement
- Increase Learning Time
- Improve School Climate
- **Increase Teacher Quality**

As you review each of the CSF resource guides, notice how the CSFs intermingle, interact, and blend together. The Increasing Teacher Quality CSF is fundamental to the Improving Academic Performance CSF. Increasing teacher quality is, in turn, highly influenced by the CSFs leadership effectiveness, data use, school, climate, and increased learning time.

Notice how the CSFs intermingle in the following statement: Effective leaders are highly engaged in improving teacher quality by frequently observing classroom instruction and providing feedback to teachers. The effective leader collects data to determine the implementation of effective teaching practices and their results. They use this data to identify their teachers' professional development needs. Effective leaders recognize that it is essential to provide learning time for teachers during the school day. Increased and focused learning will increase teacher quality individually and as a whole.

Discuss other examples that show how each factor influences the others. For example, how might improving teacher quality increase learning time and school climate? As you take action on each of the CSFs while implementing the TAIS model, realize that these factors always affect each other.

NOTES

Page numbers corresponding to the citations are forthcoming

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