



ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES. High-performing schools with middle grades are learning organizations that establish norms, structures, and organizational arrangements to support and sustain their trajectory toward excellence.

- 1. A shared vision of what a high-performing school is and does drives every facet of school change.**
 - The shared vision drives constant improvement.
 - Shared, distributed, and sustained leadership propels the school forward and preserves its institutional memory and purpose.
 - Everyone knows what the plan is and the vision is posted and evidenced by actions.

- 2. The principal has the responsibility and authority to hold the school-improvement enterprise together, including day-to-day know-how, coordination, strategic planning, and communication.**
 - Lines of leadership for the school's improvement efforts are clear.
 - The school leadership team has the responsibility to make things happen.
 - The principal makes sure that assignments for the staff are clear and explicit and are completed in a timely manner.

- 3. The school is a community of practice in which learning, experimentation, and the opportunity for reflection are the norm.**
 - School leadership fosters and supports interdependent collaboration.
 - Expectations of continuous improvement permeate the school culture.
 - Learning is on going for everyone.

- 4. The school and district devote resources to content-rich professional learning, which is connected to reaching and sustaining the school vision and increasing student achievement.**
 - Professional learning is intensive, of high quality, ongoing, and relevant to middle-grades education.
 - Teachers get professional support to improve instructional practice (i.e., classroom visitations, peer coaching, demonstration lessons, etc.).
 - Opportunities for learning increase knowledge and skills, challenge outmoded beliefs and practices, and provide support in the classroom.

- 5. The school is not an island unto itself; it is a part of a larger educational system (i.e., districts, networks and community partnerships).**
 - Deliberate vertical articulation and transition programs exist between feeder elementary schools and destination high schools.
 - The district supports through funding and time its schools' participation in best practice networks, associations, learning communities, and professional learning focused on middle grades improvement and achievement.
 - The school and district work collaboratively to bring coherence to curriculum, instruction, assessment, intervention, data collection, analysis, and accountability for student achievement.

- 6. The school staff holds itself accountable for student success.**
 - The school collects, analyzes, and uses data as a basis for making decisions.
 - School-generated evaluation data is used to identify areas for more extensive and intensive improvement.
 - The school staff intentionally and explicitly reconsiders its vision and practices when data call them into question.

- 7. District and school staff possess and cultivate the collective will to persevere, believing it is their business to produce increased achievement and enhanced development of all students.**
 - Barriers are viewed as challenges, not problems.
 - District and school staff assess and evaluate current programs regularly and adapt them as needed to maximize the level of student mastery.

- 8. The school staff and district staff partner with colleges and universities.**
 - A mentoring program for new teachers is in place.
 - The principal contacts colleges and universities when hiring new teachers.

- 9. The school includes families and community members in setting and supporting the school's trajectory toward high performance.**
 - Families and community members are informed about the school's goals for student success and students' responsibility for meeting those goals.
 - Representatives of all stakeholders are engaged in ongoing and reflective conversation and decision-making about governance to promote school improvement.