Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

13.1 *The communications/marketing plan requires the school leader/leadership team and staff to ensure the implementation of contemporary, multiple information technologies to reach target audiences and to establish reliable and secure databases and accountability to stakeholders.*

I.   What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

The leadership team is accountable for institutional development, which includes a coherent, shared communications marketing plan for advancing the name, identity, message, and good news of the school. This plan recognizes multiple audiences including donors, families, students, alumni and local community leaders. This plan is reviewed and critiqued with others to be certain the plan is timely, relevant, and has clearly delineated the targets for all communications. The plan reflects the mission of the school and make sure that this mission is central to the communications/marketing message. This requires the oversight of a database, which includes each target audience outreach, response and a strategy for sharing this data with investors, parents, board members, and other stakeholders.

II. As a review team member, what evidence do I look for?

Here are some fundamental guiding questions which will help frame this item:

- Is there a detailed, clearly understood plan?

- Is there evidence of an intentional design for the advancement of the school's mission and message?

- Does the plan include the creation and maintenance of research and data to monitor communications?

- How are the targeted audiences determined and delineated for communication? Is this part of a plan?

- Are the requirements for technology and media included in the planning?

- Is there a time line for implementation and costs associated with this plan?

- Are there reports or summary reports that are shared with stakeholders and demonstrate the accountability of all school leaders?

Benchmark 13.1 Developed by CHESCS Guidelines Taskforce 2014

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III. What are the key differences between the levels of the rubric?

At level **3-Fully Meets Benchmark,**

> the marketing/communications plan exists and clearly delineates the staff person responsible and measures of accountability. This can be found in documents/tapes/videos, which provide examples of products used by the schools. (Look at samples of communications to stakeholders and be certain they are effective.)

> The technology plan is precise and technologies selected are designed to reach target audiences with explicitly stated expected outcomes. Analysis of data, by target audience, is clearly available. Samples of databases are present and clearly articulated and all evidence is timely and demonstrates professional preparation of materials.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark,**

> The items listed in level 3 above are clearly delineated in a strategic plan with timelines, scenarios for outputs, and costs associated with each step. The plan includes timelines for revision, review, critique and updates. New communication strategies are synchronized with the advent of new populations arriving in the neighborhood and waiting to be served by the school.

> Dashboards for quick and efficient reporting and upkeep of data are provided with summaries able to be reviewed by the leadership team as well as strategies for change. Work on all of the above is marked by collaboration above and beyond simple cooperation.

At level **2-Partially Meets Benchmark**,

> The plan exists but is not fully vetted or supported by the community, either financially or verbally and often is not connected or articulates the mission, which is disconnected from the message. This makes it difficult for staff and community members to capture a unique and unified message about the school.

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Technology/media strategies are "yesterday" and not reaching today's targets. (Look at what local businesses are doing to see what is contemporary.) Data collection is weak and/or not reliable, as no one person has ownership or one person has ownership and does not share or collaborate. The accountability to stake holders ends in the principal's office or at the board level; it is not shared with the community. For all practical purposes the analysis of outcomes is not based on real data.

At level **1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,**

there is no plan, or no one knows about the plan and it is not used or is viewed as having little connection to the mission of the school. Current leadership is not sure who created it or why.

Technology resources are weak and no person or team is accountable for creating and implementing a marketing/communications plan. Enrollment is down, morale is poor and most people in the neighborhood do not know about the school; new populations have no idea there is a school or think it is a private/independent school.

NOTE: It is very important to carefully ascertain that the school's mission is central to the marketing message and that all who learn about the school learn as well about <u>why</u> the school is there and <u>whom</u> the school will serve. Effective marketing and communications campaigns sell the heart and soul of the school and the face of the kids. Without a shared and embraced MISSION driven message, no advancement or enrollment/marketing plan will succeed.

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

In general, for any of these areas,
- Use your assessment data based on the scoring above
- Delineate what you have to do (and what you can do), and carefully plan your steps to move forward.
- Do not try to do it all at once. Make all of this part of your strategic plan for change and transformation.

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To move from level 1 to level 2,
- Designate leadership responsibility to a team or person to create a plan with all facets clearly delineated, including cost, time, target etc.
- Review plan, critique, refined and adopted for implementation.
- Ensure the knowledge and skill sets necessary are in place to implement the media strategies required as well as the technology tools for data management.
- Implement any training required.
- Hire, if necessary, a person with these specific talents and experiences.

To move from level 2 to level 3,
- Move to a level of analysis of the target data.
- Use multiple information technologies that are intentionally designed by the leadership team to reach multiple audiences.
- Work to establish databases that are secure and can be used by the team as well as the person designing the database.

To move from level 3 to 4,
- Ensure that a person or team of persons is truly responsible and accountable as part of their position expectation.
- Make this communication plan a part of the strategic plan.
- Build a timeline to plan for the future expansion of the marketing plan as new populations or new communication channels present themselves.

V.	What are key terms for common understanding? (Refer to Glossary for the key terms listed below.)

Target Audience
Marketing/Communications Plan
Institutional Advancement