Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

6.4 *The leader/leadership team establishes and supports networks of collaboration at all levels within the school community to advance excellence.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

Benchmark 6.4 is about the establishment of a collaborative professional environment at all levels of the school community. This collaborative professional environment creates networks of stakeholders dedicated to excellence in all elements of the school's program. These networks are engaged in continuous improvement of the school's program as an ongoing focus of their talent and expertise. The work and outcomes of the networks are shared with the full school community with collaboration at all levels to advance the school's excellence. The school leader/leadership team serves as the initiator, promoter, planner, and supporter of collaboration among the school's stakeholders and provides them with clearly delineated goals, objectives, assessment protocols and budgets.

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 documented structure describing each stakeholder collaborative network that includes member lists, meeting minutes, schedules, and products?

- Does each network group have a mission, goals, and objectives that are in alignment with the school's mission, goals, and objectives?

- Does the school community celebrate the achievements of network group collaboration through public recognition events?

- Is there evidence that the school's budget supports collaboration of network groups through allocation of financial resources for space, time, and hospitality?

- Is there evidence that the school's budget supports collaboration of network groups through allocation of financial resources to promote professional development, network meetings and stipends for outside experts?

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- Is there evidence of the shared use of outside experts?

- Is there evidence that network groups come together to share ideas and products?

- Is there time built into the school schedule for faculty professional collaboration?

- Is there evidence that the academic program has improved as a result of the collaborative network's effort to engage in continuous improvement?

- Is there evidence based on assessment that improvement in achieving student learning outcomes is directly related to the professional collaborative network?

- To what extent has collaboration been made more efficient and transparent by using online network tools for communication and record keeping?

- Has the school engaged in collaboration with other schools to establish a regional network in support of the common issues, concerns, and objectives?

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

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

the leaders/leadership team has established and supports networks of collaboration at all levels of the school community. These collaborative networks are present, functional, and engaged in communication to support program excellence. The leader/leadership team ensures that the school's schedule, budget, goals, and objectives support a culture of community and collaboration.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark**,

the leaders/leadership team has established and supported networks of collaboration at all levels of the school community. These collaborative networks are present, functional, and engaged in communication to support program excellence in all areas. All networks are focused on advancing

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program excellence and communicate progress with other networks regularly. All networks share resources, talent, and ideas, and outcomes to strengthen the bond of collaboration and improve the school. The leader/leadership team ensures that the school's schedule, budget, goals, and objectives support a culture of community and collaboration. It is evident that this culture exists and that the stakeholders consider it critical to ongoing program improvement.

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

the leaders/leadership team has established some structure for collaboration but structure for networks remains in a formative stage. Although the leader/leadership team supports networks of collaboration at all levels of the school community, there exists a cultural debate as to value of full collaboration. These collaborative networks are only partially present, somewhat functional, and infrequently engaged in communication. Stakeholders are in agreement to support program excellence but the direction to follow is not commonly understood or accepted. The leader/leadership team struggles to ensure that the school's schedule, budget, goals, and objectives support a culture of community and collaboration.

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

autonomous individuals and groups that struggle to communicate their goals, objectives, and outcomes with each other in implementing the school's program is the norm.

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,
- Develop a culture of collaboration through regular communication and team-building strategies.
- Design and implement structures for professional collaborative networks on a gradual basis building upon the success of supportive groups within the school.
- Begin a planned and formative process for collaboration to be implemented by the various stakeholder groups across the school.

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To move from level 2 to level 3,
- Build on the planned and formative process for collaboration by developing the elements necessary for the cultural presence of a collaborative professional environment.
- Implement a process of regular meetings and communication for the various network groups that supports and links the ideas and results of their work with ideas and results of other groups.
- Utilize a system of sharing ideas and resources within the network to promote collaboration and mutual support for ongoing school improvement.
- Work to address feelings of autonomy and individual private agendas that may impede progress in focusing on the common goals that support program excellence.
- Ignite the art of consensus building as a practice for decision-making for all network groups.
- Develop and implement a method of assessing progress in implementing this collaborative model.
- Communicate to the entire school community that assessment of this collaborative model will be ongoing in order to maintain the integrity of the process.
- Develop schedules and design the school's budget to support a culture of collaboration.

To move from level 3 to 4,
- Provide evidence and communicate to the entire school community that a culture of collaboration has been in place for three to five years and has accomplished several program goals.
- Provide evidence and communicate to the entire school community that the successful implementation of this collaborative model is directly linked to the successful achievement of program goals.
- Provide evidence and communicate to the entire school community that sharing of resources and ideas has become a regular and expected function of the school community networks.
- Provide evidence and communicate to the entire school community that decision making at the group and community level is the result of fact-finding, discussion, and consensus that represents transparency through open lines of communication.
- Provide evidence and communicate to the entire school community that the school's collaborative culture has resulted in a positive impact on student learning.

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

Collaboration
Communication
Networks
Vertical Teaming
Transparency
Consensus
Professional Learning Community