

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

8.5 *Faculty collaborate in professional learning communities to monitor individual and class-wide student learning through methods such as common formative assessments and rubrics.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

Benchmark 8.5 is about the *assessment* responsibilities of teachers in professional learning communities. Teachers collaborate in professional learning communities in order to increase student achievement. It's all about the learning results. *Demonstrated* student learning results lie at the core of all PLC work.

Benchmark 7.7 - also about professional learning communities - provides the expectation that excellent Catholic schools *establish* PLCs as the way teachers work and collaborate to improve learning. Benchmark 8.5 zeroes in on the data-driven, results-oriented nature of the work of well-functioning PLCs.

That data-driven work can be succinctly described as follows: Once teachers working in PLCs agree on the important learning for the year or course, they design valid common assessments which they administer to all students in the subject/grade or course periodically throughout the instructional period (year, semester, quarter, or grading period). Teachers meet regularly in their PLCs to analyze the data from the common assessments and use it to adjust teaching so more students can successfully demonstrate proficiency. PLCs create and use rubrics and proficiency targets to ensure consistent measurement of learning results. As teacher teams progress, they are able to use learning data from the previous year to set achievement goals for their current students. As they monitor student learning as demonstrated on the common assessments, they use the data to set objectives and adjust instructional strategies in order to better reach the learning goals.

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

Here are a few fundamental guiding questions for teachers to ask (or to ask teachers) in order to be able to point to examples of the extent to which the work of PLCs described in Benchmark 8.5 is actually taking place at the school:

- What are the learning goals your PLC has established for this year for your students? Are they S.M.A.R.T. goals?

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- What common assessments has your PLC created to measure student learning in relation to the S.M.A.R.T. Goals?
- How are members of the PLC collecting and analyzing learning data?
- What evidence can you show that adjustments in teaching have been made based on data and aimed at increasing student learning results?
- What proficiency targets have you set in relation to the targeted learning?
- How are you using rubrics to measure student performance?
- How do you interpret the learning results you see?

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

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

teachers are working in professional learning communities that meet regularly to analyze the results of common assessments they have given to all their students. They have set goals based on the level of learning they want to see demonstrated by their students and they are working to improve curriculum and instruction to reach those goals.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark**,

the teachers' work in PLCs as described in level 3 bears clear results. That is, teacher teams are highly adept at using data to set learning goals, designing common formative assessments aligned to the learning goals, analyzing the results on the common assessments, and using those results to adjust their teaching so more students actually reach or exceed proficiency. The work of PLCs is deliberate, intentional and reflective. Teachers can explain and justify the goals they set, and they can give good reasons (including data-based reasons) for the adjustments they make to their teaching and for their students' performance. PLCs share their work with the larger school community.

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

teachers use PLC meeting time to talk about student performance. They may examine available assessment data and suggest alternative strategies to try for improvement, but they are not yet creating and administering common formative assessments in a regular and consistent way and basing decisions on the results.

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

teachers are not working together to assess student performance.

NOTE: A school's score on this benchmark essentially depends on how well teachers understand how to design good common assessments and then use the data that come from these assessments to make instructional decisions that get better results next time, and over the long haul. The more skilled and intentional teachers are at making specific and accurate connections among learning goals, common assessments, proficiency targets, and teaching decisions, the higher the school's score on this benchmark.

IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Form professional learning communities
- Set an agenda for them to begin to examine student performance and determine how to improve achievement

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Provide professional development and coaching for teachers in PLCs to be able to set S.M.A.R.T. goals, design common formative assessments, collect and analyze results which they use to adjust teaching in order to improve learning.
- Monitor the work of the PLCs and provide support as needed.

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To move from level 3 to 4,

- Provide on-going professional development tailored to the needs of each PLC.
- Establish a culture of sharing PLC work and results across the school.

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

Common Formative Assessment
Rubric
Proficiency Target
Data-driven
Results-oriented
S.M.A.R.T. Goals
Learning Results