

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

5.2 The governing body systematizes the policies of the school's operations to ensure fidelity to mission, and continuity and sustainability through leadership successions.

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

Benchmark 5.2 is about systematizing and sharing the policies of the school's operations in order to bring all stakeholders to a position of faithfulness to the school's mission. The importance of this task is to ensure that the school's mission, acted upon through policies, is sustainable despite leadership change. Therefore, it is critical to educate and train all stakeholders in the intention and implementation of school policy. This education and training is to be a dynamic process that assists new and existing stakeholders in understanding policy formation and implementation in alignment with the school's mission. Equally critical is the establishment and implementation of accountability measures to ensure ongoing evidence of policy alignment with the program and operations. Accountability is a direct function of the school's leadership in collaboration with the school's governance. Included in the process of systematizing policy is the need for developing leadership succession plans for the governing board, leadership team, and all other leadership positions associated with school operations, such as advisory boards, parent groups, volunteer groups, affiliated clubs, and others. In doing so, the school seeks to ensure the continuity and sustainability of policies and programs aligned with the mission through carefully planned and executed leadership successions.

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

Here are some fundamental guiding questions for school leaders and the governing body to ask in order to be able to determine the extent to which the systematizing of school policies described above is taking place at the school:

- Is there evidence in meeting minutes that the governing body addresses an ongoing process of policy review as it pertains to connection to mission?
- Is there an orientation program and on-going training of governing body members focusing on the alignment of the school's mission with policy, operations, and programs?

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- How does communication occur to all stakeholder groups regarding policy formation, implementation, and accountability?
- How are positions posted for professional and non-certified staff?
- Is there a listing of board members specifying terms and history of change in membership according to term limits?
- How does communication occur within the school community regarding leadership change, the leadership succession process, and identification of new leadership?
- Do the school's governing body and leadership work together to oversee the alignment of mission with policy, operations, and programs?
- Does the school have an updated policy manual that includes instructions and processes for implementation?
- Do the school's governing body and leadership have stated measures of accountability for policy implementation?
- Are there reports documenting assessment of policy implementation for the school's operations and programs?
- Are there leadership succession plans for the governing board, leadership team, and all other leadership associated with school operations, such as advisory boards, parent groups, volunteer groups, or affiliated clubs?

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

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

the governing body and school leadership develop and communicate policies, structures, and procedures to direct the school's operations with fidelity to the mission. *These systems are present, functional, and provided to all stakeholders to ensure the ability of the school to operate as a vibrant entity.* There is evidence of leadership succession planning on all levels of the school's governance, leadership, operations, and program.

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At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark**,

the governing body and school leadership have put systems in place that ensure the ability of the school to operationalize the school's mission through its policies. *These systems are present, functional, provided to all stakeholders and furnish ongoing training and accountability measures for successful implementation of policies and mission alignment.* Continuity and sustainability of policies and programs is present through successful execution of leadership succession plans for the governing body, school leadership team, all other leadership associated with school operations, other advisory boards, parent groups, volunteer groups, affiliated clubs, and others. The governing body and the leader/leadership team hold themselves and the school accountable for adhering to policies and engage in regular policy review.

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

the governing body and school leadership have put some systems in place that attempt to ensure the ability of the school to operationalize the school's mission through its policies. *Only some of the needed systems are present, functional, and provided to all stakeholders.* There is clear evidence that some policies are not implemented in the school's operations and program. The school's governing body and leadership have started the process for measuring policy implementation and alignment to mission but are still in the formative stages. Leadership succession planning is not a priority.

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

the governing body and school leadership have not systematized the policies of the school's operations. As yet, there is no commitment through observable evidence that consistent fidelity to the mission is a priority. There exists a misunderstanding as to the role of the governing body and leadership in relationship to policy and operations. The governing body and leadership appear to be working independently from one another.

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IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Begin a process of recognizing that fidelity to the school's mission is fundamental to the design and implementation of an instructional program that embraces continuous improvement.
- Begin a review process for existing policies to determine alignment with the school's mission after reaching a point of understanding of fidelity to mission; engaging the stakeholders in this review process is a critical element in achieving mission awareness in the implementation of all policies.
- Begin working on updating and revising existing policies and determining creation of new policies.
- Communicate the process of revision and new policy formation to all stakeholders. This action is critical in taking the steps to ensure fidelity to mission through systematized policies.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Operationalize and systematize all policies in alignment with the school's mission.
- Establish a process for accountability of stakeholders in meeting the implementation goals of policies. Gather and analyze evidence that improvements have been made.
- Establish a process for leadership succession planning for the replacement of the school's leader in order to sustain continuity in implementation of policies.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Establish a process of accountability for successful implementation of policies to be executed with evidence gathered and analyzed by stakeholders, and adjustments made to operations and program.
- Conduct this accountability process on a regular basis.
- Maintain leadership succession over time, following the guidelines of a well-crafted plan, to ensure continuity and sustainability of policies throughout leadership transitions.

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

Governing body
School leadership
Leadership team
Policy
Procedure
Operations policies
Leadership succession
Authority
Accountability
Sustainability
Systematization