

# Blueprint for Excellence Assessment



## CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

The Blueprint for Excellence is designed to be a positive school improvement process that covers nine major categories of critical performance elements found in excellent schools. This process allows a school's stakeholders to assess the school's performance and design program improvement initiatives focused on the assessment results.

### Student Focus and Support

Goals and objectives flow from the school's vision and student needs, and reflect high aspirations for all students. The school strives for and achieves excellence and equity. A cohesive and integrated network of programs, co-curricular activities, and services have been implemented to support the full spectrum of students in achievement of the goals and objectives of the school. The staff has aligned curriculum and developed strategies to ensure successful transitions of students entering the school and transitioning to other schools. Examples of and participation rates in programs and services provide evidence that the school is committed to doing whatever it takes to ensure student success.

### School Organization and Culture

The school culture exemplifies a caring community of learners that supports continuous learning and improvement flowing from student-focused goals. Examples document that members are engaged in collective inquiry, reflection, and responsible decision-making about learning. Hiring and assignment of staff, opportunities for students to build sustained and caring relationships with adults, a healthy peer climate among students, and the existence of a safe positive environment demonstrate that this school is focused on the welfare and continuous achievement of all students and staff.

### Challenging Standards and Curriculum

The curriculum is rationally designed to ensure high levels of achievement of the school's goals and objectives by all students. These goals and objectives include learning of significant content by all students, and citizenship, interpersonal, and workplace skills. The curriculum is based on knowledge of effective practice, and the nature of the student body; programs, and curricula are consistently implemented, and are regularly monitored, evaluated, and improved. Students are meeting rigorous standards for promotion and/or graduation.

### Active Teaching and Learning

There is clear and compelling evidence that purposeful decision-making governs all aspects of the teaching and learning program. There is a clear link between instructional strategies and student achievement. Teaching practices and learning experiences reflect current research on cognition, teaching, and learning. An abundance of technology, print, and media resources are available to all students and staff to ensure that educational goals and student needs are met.

### Technology Integration

School utilizes technology in an effective, efficient manner by incorporating the National Education Technology Standards for all students: Basic Operations and Concepts; Social, Ethical, and Human Issues; Technology Productivity Tools; Technology Communication Tools; Technology Research Tools; and Technology Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Tools.

### Professional Community

The school recognizes the vital role continuous professional development plays in achieving the school's mission. The school has developed a culture that encourages teachers, administrators, and school staff to work together as members of a professional community, supporting each other in the improvement of student learning. Professional growth and development, both inside and outside the school walls, are continuous and thoughtfully planned, based on analysis of data on student and faculty needs, and are integrated into new school initiatives and/or changes in curriculum. Formal and informal support is provided to beginning and experienced teachers. Staff members are given opportunities for leadership and recognition. Finally, teachers, administrators, and support staff are provided with the time and opportunity to reflect on what is working and to change what is no longer effective.

### Leadership and Educational Vitality

Dynamic leadership engages the school and community in continuous school improvement focused on student learning and based on vision, data, knowledge of research, effective practice, and continuous monitoring and assessment that have resulted in high levels of student achievement and implementation of comprehensive plans to meet current and future challenges.

### School, Family, and Community Partnerships

A pattern of actions taken by the school demonstrates commitment to and recognition of the important role that families, partnerships, and community play in supporting learning. The school has implemented strategies (e.g., services that meet the needs of families, parent conferences, meeting schedules that facilitate parent participation, and methods for promoting two-way communication that are effective in involving parents from all segments of the community in supporting their children's education. Examples illustrate how the school has successfully engaged the educational resources of the community, families, and other partners to support educational goals and provided reciprocal benefits.

### Indicators of Success

Based on multiple indicators, students have consistently achieved high academic standards. On norm-referenced tests, the students score at least one standard deviation above the mean. Or, the school has provided evidence of significant improvement in student achievement over time (at least one standard deviation above the mean on norm-referenced tests). Criterion reference tests and other achievement measures support that high levels of learning are achieved. Illustrations show how assessment data have been used to improve practice and to promote student learning. Factors that can have a negative effect on school climate (e.g., high absenteeism, serious discipline problems) have been minimized. Significant data are shared with the community, parents, and students concerning the outcomes of the school's programs and offerings.

# How is Your School Doing... REALLY DOING?

## STEP ONE: Rate Your School

### Rate Your School

Based on the Nine Categories of School Success, rate your school on the following scale:

Outstanding = 3 points  
Strong = 2 Points  
Needs Improvement = 1 Point  
We Are Not Doing This - 0 Points  
I Don't Know = 0 Points

<b>Student Focus and Support</b> _____	<b>Active Teaching and Learning</b> _____	<b>Leadership and Educational Vitality</b> _____
<b>School Organization and Culture</b> _____	<b>Technology Integration</b> _____	<b>School, Family and Community Partnerships</b> _____
<b>Challenging Standards and Curriculum</b> _____	<b>Professional Community</b> _____	<b>Indicators of Success</b> _____
<b>Total Points:</b> _____ <b>Average Score:</b> _____ (Total Points Divided by 9)		

## NEXT STEP: Take a Deeper Dive Into Each Category; Get Feedback From ALL Stakeholders

Within a 40 day process, Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence (BRSE) can provide a school with detailed data on their strengths and weaknesses in nine critical areas of school performance.

This data is based upon feedback from students, parents, teachers, administrators, and support staff. Within that same 40 day process, BRSE can get a school started on the path to improvement by delivering a Blueprint for Excellence Plan that provides strategies for overcoming deficiencies and connects the school with leaders from other schools who have a proven track record in the target school's area of weakness.

Through its ongoing network of regional workshops and and national conferences, BRSE provides a structure for continuous improvement and a means to celebrate and reward success.

*"The assessment helped us because we were struggling financially and we had very limited resources. And it helped us focus our resources that we did have on the right things."*

*"To me, in terms of cost to benefit, it is the best assessment tool out there today!"*