

ILLINOIS CENTER FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT (ILLINOIS CSI) DISTRICT SERVICE PROVIDER COMPETENCIES AND “LOOK FORs”

INTRODUCTION

Core competencies provide a foundation for:

- Assistant Directors (AD) as they recruit and hire liaisons and coaches (district service providers);
- Design training for district service providers and districts receiving priority and focus services;
- District Service Provider self-assessment and individual growth; and,
- Quality assurance of district service provider effectiveness within a performance management system.

A competency is the state or quality of being adequately or well qualified, having the ability to perform a specific job or role. A competency:

- Defines a standardized requirement for an individual to properly perform a specific job or role.
- Encompasses a combination of knowledge, skills, and behaviors or disposition utilized to improve performance
- Explains how one is able to interpret a situation and to apply a repertoire of possible actions that best apply to the specific context.
- Is characterized by “look fors”, i.e., observable behaviors that demonstrate the competency.

A district service providers’ competence grows through training, experience, and their willingness to learn and adapt. The core competencies articulated here are organized into five categories that are broad characteristics evident across district service providers. These categories are:

Category A: Knowledge of Research, Process and Tools

Category B: Facilitation and Customization

Category C: Organization and Management of Professional Learning

Category D: Capacity Building

Category E: Behaviors and Dispositions

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The core competencies articulated here are derived from several sources: (1) Ohio Department of Education: Ohio Improvement Process: Facilitator Competency Tool; (2) Academic Development Institute: Coaching Handbook, (3) Illinois State Board of Education: Illinois School Support Team Core Competencies (2000), (4) Illinois Center for School Improvement job descriptions for district service providers; and, (5) Public Impact: School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success and Using Competencies to Improve School Turnaround Principal Success. The Midwest Equity Center provided additional background on cultural competency. In addition, the core competencies reflect language and content connections to the Illinois Center for School Improvement Diagnostic Markers and the interconnected rapid change levers for building capacity of systems to improve teaching and learning and the Illinois State Board of Education Rising Star Indicators of Effective Practice.

Category A: Knowledge of Research, Process and Tools

The foundation for working with a district or school is knowledge and understanding of the Diagnostic Markers and Rising Star as the continuous improvement platform used in Illinois. Comprehension of the process, resources, tools, and the research that supports those means the district service provider can accurately articulate them to others and respond to questions relative to each, including the purpose and interrelationship of each.

Core Competencies	Look Fors
A1. Knows the current educational research related to the eight essential elements (Comprehensive Planning, Professional Development/Learning, Leadership, Conditions for Learning, Community and Family Engagement, Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment) relative to the Diagnostic Markers.	a. Articulate and cite current research around the essential elements directly related to the district/school plans with which they are working.
	b. Articulate a clear understanding of Illinois' tiered service delivery system and how the Illinois CSI supports services to districts based on the eight essential elements.
A2. Understands how to use <i>the Rising Star Indicators, in relation to the Diagnostic Markers</i> and can assist others to use them.	a. Consistently use language specific to the Diagnostic Markers and Rising Star Indicators.
	b. Explain to districts how the critical services provided through the Illinois CSI relate to Rising Star and Diagnostic Markers.
A3. Explains the application and benefits to district and school leadership teams of the merits of using <i>Rising Star Indicators</i> and in particular, <i>Diagnostic Markers</i> , to continually improve.	a. Create a district service agreement that includes how Rising Star and the Diagnostic Markers inform the agreement.
	b. Explain the structure, merits and benefits of the Illinois CSI.
A4. Understands how to analyze student data, including disaggregated student data, and can facilitate the use of this analysis in selecting objectives and creating tasks.	a. Assist DLTs in identifying and using appropriate qualitative and quantitative data to identify patterns and trends relative to student achievement by means of facilitation and analysis protocols.
	b. Help DLTs explore the relationship between patterns, trends and variables to select objectives and develop tasks based on root causes.

A5. Knows research and effective practices focused on closing achievement gaps.	a. Articulate and cite current research around closing the achievement gap related to the district/school plans with which they are working.
	b. Articulate a clear understanding of evidence-based strategies that have proven to be effective in similar districts to those assigned.
A6. Knows effective interventions for struggling students based upon pre-tests and other assessments.	a. Articulate current research on interventions for struggling students related to the objectives based on identified district/school needs.
	b. Articulate a clear understanding of evidence-based academic and SEL interventions that have proven to be effective in similar districts.
A7. Knows the District Discovery Profile and Diagnostic Needs Assessment process and how findings can be integrated into the continuous improvement process.	a. Explain the purpose, process and value-added of the Discovery Profile and Diagnostic Needs Assessment processes for districts.
	b. Know how to guide the DLT to assimilate the results of both processes into Step 2 of the Rising Star platform and help districts “connect the dots”.
A8. Facilitate the translation of Diagnostic Needs Assessment through co-interpretation into objectives and tasks included in the district plan.	a. Demonstrate how to manage the co-interpretation process.
	b. Know how to guide the DLT to integrate the recommendations with Step 3 of the Rising Star platform.
A9. Understands the change process including understanding districts as systems and their role in supporting schools’ improvement; and how policy, climate, and culture contributes to or diminishes improvement efforts.	a. Articulate current research around organization/system and personal change process including creating a climate and culture that supports continuous improvement.
	b. Facilitate the district in redefining roles and responsibilities and applying policies that support continuous improvement.

Category B: Facilitation and Customization

Facilitation is the ability to help manage the progression of continuous improvement efforts by serving as a critical friend and partner who asks thought-provoking questions and provides focused, constructive feedback. A competent district service provider knows how to adjust his/her approach in a variety of educational settings.

Core Competencies	Look Fors
B1. Assist leadership teams in the development of district and school continuous improvement plans that include setting achievement targets and closing achievement gaps.	a. Analyze existing plans, data and evidence to identify trends in data and gaps between the data and existing objectives.
	b. Apply evidence-based research in the refinement of targets, objectives and tasks based on data analysis.
B2. Assist leadership teams to focus attention on a purposeful agenda,	a. Assess culture, conditions and functions of the DLT based on qualities of high functioning teams.

resolve conflict, and enable broad participation by members.	b. Build capacity of the DLT to regularly follow agreed upon norms, procedures and protocols consistent with those of high functioning teams.
B3. Recognize and respond appropriately to the underlying dynamics of the group, varying the techniques to meet the unique needs, interests, and learning styles of adult learners.	a. Anticipate conflict, manage ambiguity and engage in activities to maintain focus and achieve the desired outcomes.
	b. Guide the DLT in negotiating consensus based on thoughtful discussion and careful consideration of evidence.
B4. Be both a critical friend and partner to guide conversation that promotes mutual trust and freedom from fear – a “culture of candor”.	a. Direct the course of each session by posing the “right question at the right time for the right purpose” using effective coaching language and questioning techniques.
	b. Provide timely, focused constructive feedback.
	c. Remain positively responsive to all feedback received.
B5. Demonstrate respect of the unique viewpoints, skills and experiences each participant brings to the group and create opportunities to benefit from the diversity found within the leadership team.	a. Demonstrate behavior that values and respects each individual’s and the DLT as a group’s strengths, talents, skills and knowledge and celebrates accomplishments.
	b. Engage all DLT participants in discussion and consensus building in a respectful way that allows them to understand and confront their assumptions and challenge their current reality.

Category C: Organization and Management of Professional Learning

Continuous improvement requires that the district service provider know district/school structures, processes, and plans and has the ability to create a schedule and align/develop leadership structures consistent with Systemic Diagnostic Markers. Management of the process requires the district service provider to co-plan, meet agreed upon schedules, follow effective meeting management guidelines, and coordinate with leadership to ensure effective implementation of the process.

Core Competencies	Look Fors
C1. Acquire knowledge of the district, such as demographics, performance, culture, organizational structure, leadership roles, as an integral part of preparation.	a. Create a district profile by accessing existing resources to gather background information specific to the district.
	b. Gather additional information not accessible from existing data through formal and informal opportunities.
C2. Prepare for meetings in advance, considering what needs to happen before, during and after each session.	a. Collaborate with the DLT to create agendas, prepare materials and use Rising Star portal/tools for each session.
	b. Use defined structures and tools supporting before, during and after meeting expectations with a follow-up plan (next steps and dates).
C3. Manage meetings effectively in a logical and sequential order to support learner	a. Coach the DLT in effective meetings practices, including scaffolding meeting roles, e.g. timekeeper.

understanding of the content and to complete tasks accurately and completely.	b. Model the ability to refocus the meeting using “back on track strategies”, effective facilitation techniques and tools, and manage timelines in balancing the important tasks with urgent needs of the DLT.
C4. Communicate with clarity and regularity verbally and in writing.	a. Use verbal and written communication tools in an appropriate, clear, logical, consistent and timely manner.
	b. Actively listen and read nonverbal behaviors and request clarity to respond appropriately.
	c. Assist the DLT in developing and facilitating processes for regular, effective two-way communication among all team members.
C5. Assist districts in aligning professional learning across the system to ensure it focuses on the work described in the plan.	a. Assist the DLT in planning, organizing and delivering job-embedded professional development across the system so that what is learned contributes to the accomplishment of the district objectives.
	b. Assist the DLT in collecting data on the impact of professional development in changing adult performance to increase student achievement.
C6. Design regional training and professional learning based upon knowledge of adult learning and how adults learn.	a. Follow state and national standards for professional development and design learning opportunities so participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Are exposed to Information 2- Receive visual reminders 3- Are shown how the learning looks in practice through demonstration 4- Are afforded the opportunity for practice in a safe environment 5- Learning is reinforced by teaching it to others.
	b. Use a variety of professional development delivery options based on adult learning and facilitation skills and techniques, making it engaging, memorable and relevant to the objectives and tasks of assigned districts

Category D: Capacity Building

Capacity building is the development of a district’s/school’s core skills and capabilities in order to build the organization’s effectiveness and sustainability to improve student performance. It is the process of assisting the Leadership Teams to identify and address issues and gain the insights, knowledge and experience needed to solve problems and implement change. Competent district service providers build capacity by providing support, including coaching, training, and technical assistance.

Core Competencies	Look Fors
D1. Assist the district/school in creating distributive leadership and teams that include appropriate stakeholder	a. Guide the DLT to learn, understand and practice the core skills of distributive leadership and identify necessary roles and members based on the necessary roles.

representation for implementing and sustaining continuous improvement.	b. Guide the DLT to identify and refine collaborative structures and protocols (e.g., attendance) at the district, building and classroom levels in order to create and sustain the work of the plan.
D2. Work with district/school leadership teams to develop their capacity to assess, plan, implement, and monitor indicators of professional practice.	a. Access current data for collaborative planning and compare current practice to desired practice (indicators).
	b. Engage DLTs/SLTs in regular use of Rising Star platform as a tool for continuous improvement.
D3. Work with the district/school in establishing ongoing, two-way communication between and among internal and external stakeholders.	a. Facilitate an analysis of the effectiveness of current communication practices.
	b. Work with DLT to develop a communication plan that includes all stakeholders and collect evidence showing implementation and level of effectiveness.
D4. Support efforts to align and intentionally use resources to achieve objectives and to connect the district with ISBE partner groups for resources and feedback.	a. Serve as a single point of contact between ISBE, partners and the district and help all connect the dots and fill gaps.
	b. Monitor the transparency of resource alignment so that all district resources are known and made available to support the plan.
D5. Develop knowledge, behavior and skills of the leadership teams to effectively use <i>the Rising Star Indicators</i> and <i>Diagnostic Markers</i> .	a. Teach the fundamentals and model use of the RS platform to ensure RS is an internalized district practice.
	b. Collaborate with DLT in a learning community format to use the RS platform to address the Diagnostic Markers.
D6. Assist district/school leadership teams in understanding the meaning of each <i>Rising Star Indicator</i> and <i>Diagnostic Marker</i> and how to measure the degree of implementation of each.	a. Assist the DLT in using monitoring results to guide data-based decisions that result in mid-course corrections between the projected and actual indicators.
	b. Support the DLT efforts to replicate data and evidence-based successes across the district/building.
D7. Work closely with school boards in priority districts to build their capacity to focus on district performance, including monitoring performance and accountability for results.	a. Partner with the Illinois Association of School Boards to articulate Rising Star/Illinois CSI to the local board of education.
	b. Co-prepare and periodically present with superintendent if requested to the local board of education information about the DLT, the continuous improvement process, progress monitoring data and results.
D8. Understand human capital management systems and how they can support priority districts in recruiting and supporting strong instructional leadership.	a. Support the district in their awareness, development, and placement of those with the knowledge and skills to contribute toward building the district's capacity for strong leadership.
	b. Assist the district in connecting dots among recruitment, training, support and retention of highly qualified and talented educators.

Category E: Behaviors and Dispositions

Commitment to continuous improvement requires fidelity in the execution of the process by initiating courageous conversations based on a culture of candor and by persisting in challenging traditional thinking. A competent district service provider demonstrates through words and actions the moral imperative of maintaining a student-centered focus and ensures that improvement efforts are designed to support the success of every child. A competent district service provider also has a positive outlook, engages in professional growth opportunities that show personal commitment to continuous improvement, and displays the temperament needed to work collaboratively with a district, honoring and valuing the district’s history.

Core Competencies	Look Fors
E1. Influence individuals and groups effectively to gain support, achieve objectives and guide the group to desired outcomes.	a. Model the role of team player by encouraging enthusiasm, participation, energy, creative thinking, and trust, resulting in mutual respect.
	b. Exemplify a temperament conducive to an atmosphere of cooperation, candor and collaboration.
E2. Accept responsibility for personal learning demonstrating a commitment to self-reflection and continuous improvement.	a. Model openness to learning.
	b. Demonstrate a commitment to learning, openness to coaching and feedback, and a pattern of pro-active behavior that reflects continuous growth.
E3. Demonstrate performance agility and the ability to work with a variety of people and situations.	a. Model perseverance and adaptability.
	b. Demonstrate the fortitude to provide a consistent message of shared leadership resulting in improved practices and outcomes.
	c. Model a strong work ethic.
E4. Use language that illuminates the belief in the capacity of all children to learn given the right kinds of support.	a. Communicate the importance of having an educational system that is responsive to the needs of all students.
	b. Work with districts to provide sufficient support and resources so that every child has an opportunity to achieve.
E5. Encourage meaningful interactions that are performance-based, data-related and nonjudgmental.	a. Demonstrate confidence and belief in the team’s success potential.
	b. Use an appropriate variety of facilitation tools and protocols that encourage meaningful interactions.