

Leaders Hungry for Details of Systemic Change

In July 2018, we were invited to present at the Southern Region Leadership Conference in Biloxi, Mississippi, hosted by the Mississippi School Board Association. The goal for our two sessions was to help district leaders from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas prioritize specific take-home steps for their districts to build and establish systemic leadership for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Reflecting upon the group and individual interactions both during and after the sessions, we believe that we achieved the level of interest for which we were striving! District leaders were excited about the specific implementation details for creating systemic leadership and questions for evaluating their current leadership processes for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.



While not a comprehensive list by any means, we present this list of questions to initiate and open a dialogue regarding district-wide academic processes among stakeholders within a district. These challenging questions could help an administrative team affirm or evaluate their current curriculum structures and processes. The questions are posed from a first-person perspective from within a district.

1. Do we have an **academic structure** in place to ensure that our curriculum processes are district-based rather than site-based?
2. Do we have a model or system of **processes** we follow, as a district, for alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment?
3. Does our current model or system of processes have a built-in **reporting** method so that documentation is readily available for accreditation visits or mandated reports (ESSA, AdvancED, etc.) without having to spend an extra amount of time and expense to prepare such evidence?
4. Have we, as a district studied **change theory** sufficiently to support first and second order changes within the district?
5. Do we need outside **help** to establish a systemic, shared-decision making culture for these issues?
6. Do we have a district-wide, board-approved **policy** for how curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student learning decisions are made to ensure stability when there are administrative staff changes?
7. Do we have a structured **timeline** (long-range plan) to indicate the cycle of curriculum development, resource adoption, and the writing of local assessments for every subject area?
8. Do we have a district-wide, **representative body** of stakeholders (various levels of administration, teachers, specialists, board

members, community members) that meets regularly rather than leaving the responsibility to a single person to address such things as:

- Acceptable grading practices
- Assessment use (security and administration)
- Accountability requirements to assure implementation of the district curriculum
- Instructional alignment to the curriculum
- Definitions of mastery
- Use of data from assessments

9. What roles do the building principal or other **administrators** play as instructional leaders within the district?

10. Do we have **consistency** in what is taught and what is expected of students within the same grade level or course regardless of the teacher, building, or year?

11. How are **new staff** members prepared to follow the model/procedures before they begin teaching in our district?

12. How does the district ensure that the required use of the curriculum is put into practice with **fidelity**?

13. Do we have valid, **local assessments** to use as data for timely intervention for students who are struggling?

Although not exhaustive, these are some examples of questions that the Curriculum Leadership Institute Model for School Improvement provides support in answering. [Click here](#) for a rubric to determine where your district's current strengths and weaknesses are in addressing these critical issues.

Photo Credit: [Jamie Street](#)