Alabama Standards for Instructional Leaders

To realize the mission of enhancing school leadership among principals and administrators in Alabama resulting in improved academic achievement for all students, instructional leaders will be held to the following standards:

Standard 1: Rationale
This standard addresses the need to prepare instructional leaders who value and are committed to educating all students to become successful adults. Each instructional leader is responsible for creating and articulating a vision of high expectations for learning within the school or district that can be shared by all employees and is supported by the broader school-community of parents and citizens. This requires that instructional leaders be willing to examine their own assumptions, beliefs, and practices; understand and apply research; and foster a culture of continuous improvement among all members of the educational staff. Such instructional leaders will commit themselves to high levels of personal and organizational performance in order to ensure implementation of this vision of learning.

Standard 1: Planning for Continuous Improvement
Engages the school community in developing and maintaining a shared vision; plans effectively; uses critical thinking and problem-solving techniques; collects, analyzes, and interprets data; allocates resources; and evaluates results for the purpose of continuous school improvement.

Standard 1: Key Indicators
1. Knowledge to lead the articulation, development, and implementation of a shared vision and strategic plan for the school that places student and faculty learning at the center
2. Ability to lead and motivate staff, students, and families to achieve the school’s vision
3. Knowledge to align instructional objectives and curricular goals with the shared vision
4. Knowledge to allocate and guard instruction time for the achievement of goals
5. Ability to work with faculty to identify instructional and curricular needs that align with vision and resources
6. Ability to interact with the community concerning the school’s vision, mission, and priorities
7. Ability to work with staff and others to establish and accomplish goals
8. Ability to relate the vision, mission, and goals to the instructional needs of students
9. Ability to use goals to manage activities
10. Ability to use a variety of problem-solving techniques and decision-making skills to resolve problems
11. Ability to delegate tasks clearly and appropriately to accomplish organizational goals
12. Ability to focus upon student learning as a driving force for curriculum, instruction, and institutional decision-making
13. Ability to use a process for gathering information to use when making decisions
14. Knowledge to create a school leadership team that is skillful in using data
15. Ability to use multiple sources of data to manage the accountability process
16. Ability to assess student progress using a variety of techniques and information
17. Ability to monitor and assess instructional programs, activities, and materials
18. Knowledge to use approved methods and principles of program evaluation in the school improvement process
19. Ability to use diagnostic tools to assess, identify, and apply instructional improvement
20. Ability to use external resources as sources for ideas for improving student achievement

Standard 2: Rationale
This standard addresses the need for instructional leaders to establish teaching and learning as the focal point of schools. It accepts the proposition that all students can learn given enough high-quality instruction, and that student learning is the fundamental purpose of schools. To this end, instructional leaders are responsible for ensuring that decisions about curriculum, instructional strategies (including instructional technology), assessment, and professional development are based on sound research, best practices, school and district data, and other contextual information and that observation and collaboration are used to design meaningful and effective experiences that improve student achievement. Successful instructional leaders must be able to identify, clarify, and address barriers to student learning and communicate the importance of developing learning strategies for diverse populations. In addition, this standard requires that instructional leaders be learners who model and encourage life-long learning. They should establish a culture of high expectations for themselves, their students, and their staff.

Standard 2: Teaching and Learning
Promotes and monitors the success of all students in the learning environment by collaboratively aligning the curriculum; by aligning the instruction and the assessment processes to ensure effective student achievement; and by using a variety of benchmarks, learning expectations, and feedback measures to ensure accountability.

Standard 2: Key Indicators
1. Knowledge to plan for the achievement of annual learning gains, school improvement goals, and other targets related to the shared vision
2. Ability to use multiple sources of data to plan and assess instructional improvement
3. Ability to engage staff in ongoing study and implementation of research-based practices
4. Ability to use the latest research, applied theory, and best practices to make curricular and instructional decisions
5. Ability to communicate high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of students
6. Ability to ensure that content and instruction are aligned with high standards resulting in improved student achievement
7. Ability to coach staff and teachers on the evaluation of student performance
8. Ability to identify differentiated instructional strategies to meet the needs of a variety of student populations
9. Ability to develop curriculum aligned to state standards
10. Knowledge to collaborate with community, staff, district, state, and university personnel to develop the instructional program
11. Knowledge to align curriculum, instructional practices, and assessments to district, state, and national standards
12. Ability to focus upon student learning as a driving force for curriculum, instruction, and instructional decision-making
13. Ability to use multiple sources of data to manage the accountability process
14. Ability to assess student progress using a variety of formal and informal assessments
15. Ability to monitor and assess instructional programs, activities, and materials
16. Ability to use the methods and principles of program evaluation in the school improvement process

**Standard 3: Rationale**
This standard addresses the need for instructional leaders to recognize quality professional development as the key strategy for supporting significant improvements. Instructional leaders are able to articulate the critical link between improved student learning and the professional learning of teachers. Skillful instructional leaders establish policies and organizational structures that support ongoing professional learning and continuous improvement. They ensure an equitable distribution of resources to accomplish school goals and continuously improve the school's work through the ongoing evaluation of staff development's effectiveness in achieving student learning goals. They make certain that employee annual calendars and daily schedules provide adequate time for learning and collaboration as part of the workday. Instructional leaders also distribute leadership responsibilities among teachers and other employees. Distributed leadership enables teachers to develop and use their talents as members or chairs of school improvement committees, trainers, coaches, mentors, and members of peer review panels. These leaders make certain that their colleagues have the necessary knowledge, skills, and other forms of support that ensure success in these new roles.

**Standard 3: Human Resources Development**
Recruits, selects, organizes, evaluates, and mentors faculty and staff to accomplish school and system goals. Works collaboratively with the school faculty and staff to plan and implement effective professional development that is based upon student needs and that promotes both individual and organizational growth and leads to improved teaching and learning. Initiates and nurtures interpersonal relationships to facilitate teamwork and enhance student achievement.
**Standard 3: Key Indicators**
1. Knowledge to set high expectations and standards for the performance of all teachers and staff
2. Ability to coach staff and teachers on the evaluation of student performances
3. Ability to work collaboratively with teachers to plan for individual professional development
4. Ability to use a variety of supervisory models to improve teaching and learning
5. Ability to apply adult learning strategies to professional development
6. Knowledge to use the accepted methods and principles of personnel evaluation
7. Knowledge to operate within the provisions of each contract as well as established enforcement and grievance procedures
8. Ability to establish mentor programs to orient new teachers and provide ongoing coaching and other forms of support for veteran staff
9. Ability to manage, monitor, and evaluate a program of continuous professional development tied to student learning and other school goals
10. Knowledge to hire and retain high-quality teachers and staff
11. Ability to provide high-quality professional development activities to ensure that teachers have skills to engage all students in active learning
12. Ability to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect, plan, and work collaboratively
13. Ability to create a community of learners among faculty and staff
14. Ability to create a personal professional development plan for his/her own continuous improvement
15. Ability to foster development of aspiring leaders, including teacher leaders

**Standard 4: Rationale**
This standard addresses the need for instructional leaders to understand and be able to operate within the larger context of community and beyond, which affects opportunities for all students. Instructional leaders must respond to and influence this larger political, social, economic, and cultural context. Of vital importance is the ability to develop a continuing dialogue with economic and political decision-makers concerning the role of schools and to build collaborative relationships that support improved social and educational opportunities for all children. Instructional leaders must be able to participate actively in the political and policy-making context in the service of education, including proactive use of the legal system to protect students’ rights and improve opportunities for all students.

**Standard 4: Diversity**
Responds to and influences the larger personal, political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context in the classroom, school, and the local community while addressing diverse student needs to ensure the success of all students.

**Standard 4: Key Indicators**
1. Knowledge to involve school community in appropriate diversity policy implementations, program planning, and assessment efforts
2. Ability to conform to legal and ethical standards related to diversity
3. Ability to perceive the needs and concerns of others and is able to deal tactfully with them
4. Knowledge to handle crisis communications in both oral and written form
5. Ability to arrange for students and families whose home language is not English to engage in school activities and communication through oral and written translations
6. Knowledge to recruit, hire, develop, and retain a diverse staff
7. Knowledge to represent the school and the educational establishment in relations with various cultural, ethnic, racial, and special interest groups in the community
8. Knowledge to recognize and respond effectively to multicultural and ethnic needs in the organization and the community
9. Ability to interact effectively with diverse individuals and groups using a variety of interpersonal skills in any given situation
10. Ability to promote and monitor the delivery of instructional content that provides for diverse perspectives appropriate to the situation

Standard 5: Rationale
This standard addresses the fact that cooperation among schools, the district, parents, and the larger community is essential to the success of instructional leaders and students. Instructional leaders must see schools as an integral part of the larger community. Collaboration and communication with families, businesses, governmental agencies, social service organizations, the media, and higher education institutions are critical to effective schooling. Effective and appropriate communications, coupled with the involvement of families and other stakeholders in decisions, help to ensure continued community support for schools. Instructional leaders must see families as partners in the education of their youngsters and believe that families have the best interest of their children in mind. Instructional leaders must involve families in decisions at the school and district levels. Family and student issues that negatively affect student learning must be addressed through collaboration with community agencies that can integrate health, social, and other services. Such collaboration relies on good relationships with community leaders and outreach to a wide array of business, religious, political, and service agencies. Providing leadership to programs serving all students, including those with special and exceptional needs, further communicates to internal and external audiences the importance of diversity. To work with all elements of the community, instructional leaders must recognize, value, and communicate effectively with various cultural, ethnic, racial, and special interest groups. Modeling community collaboration for staff and then offering opportunities for staff to develop collaborative skills maximizes positive interactions between schools and the community.

Standard 5: Community and Stakeholder Relationships
Identifies the unique characteristics of the community to create and sustain mutually supportive family-school-community relations
Standard 5: Key Indicators
1. Ability to address student and family conditions affecting learning
2. Ability to identify community leaders and their relationships to school goals and programs
3. Ability to communicate the school’s vision, mission, and priorities to the community
4. Knowledge to serve as primary school spokesperson in the community
5. Ability to share leadership and decision-making with others by gathering input
6. Ability to seek resources of families, business, and community members in support of the school’s goals
7. Ability to develop partnerships, coalitions, and networks to impact student achievement
8. Ability to actively engage the community to share responsibility for student and school success
9. Ability to involve family and community in appropriate policy implementation, program planning, and assessment efforts
10. Knowledge to make parents partners in their student’s education

Standard 6: Rationale
This standard addresses the need for effective leadership for technology in schools. An underlying assumption of this standard is that instructional leaders should be competent users of information and technology tools common to information-age professionals. The effective educational leader should be a hands-on user of technology. While technology empowers instructional leaders by the information it can readily produce and communicates, it exponentially empowers the instructional leader who masters the tools and processes that allow creative and dynamic management of available information. Instructional leaders who recognize the potential of technology understand that leadership has a responsibility to ensure technological equity. They must also know that technology can unlock tremendous potential in learners and staff with special and diverse needs.

Standard 6: Technology
Plans, implements, and evaluates the effective integration of current technologies and electronic tools in teaching, management, research, and communication.

Standard 6: Key Indicators
1. Ability to implement a plan for the use of technology, telecommunications, and information systems to enrich curriculum, instruction, and assessment
2. Ability to develop a plan for technology integration for the school community
3. Knowledge to discover practical approaches for developing and implementing successful technology planning
4. Ability to model the use of technology for personal and professional productivity
5. Ability to develop an effective teacher professional development plan to increase technology usage to support curriculum-based integration practices
6. Ability to promote the effective integration of technology throughout the teaching and learning environment
7. Knowledge to increase access to educational technologies for the school
8. Ability to provide support for teachers to increase the use of technology already in the school/classrooms
9. Ability to use technology to support the analysis and use of student assessment Data

**Standard 7: Rationale**
This standard addresses the need to enhance student learning through effective, efficient, and equitable utilization of resources. Instructional leaders must use their knowledge of organizations to create a learning environment conducive to the success of all students. Proper allocation of resources such as personnel, facilities, and technology is essential to creating an effective learning environment. Resource management decisions should give priority to teaching, student achievement, and student development. Also, operational procedures and policies must be established to maintain school safety and security and to strengthen the academic environment. All management decisions, including those regarding human resources, fiscal operations, facilities, legal issues, time management, scheduling, technology, and equipment, should be based on sound organizational practice. Instructional leaders must monitor and evaluate operational systems to ensure that they enhance student learning and reflect the school’s and district’s accountability to the community. They also actively seek additional sources of financial, human, and physical support. They involve stakeholders to ensure the management and operational decisions take into consideration the needs of multiple constituencies while at the same time focusing the entire community on student achievement as the ultimate goal. To include stakeholders in management decisions, instructional leaders must be competent in conflict resolution, consensus-building, group processes, and effective communication.

**Standard 7: Management of the Learning Organization**
Manages the organization, facilities, and financial resources; implements operational plans; and promotes collaboration to create a safe and effective learning environment.

**Standard 7: Key Indicators**
1. Knowledge to develop and administer policies that provide a safe school environment
2. Ability to apply operational plans and processes to accomplish strategic goals
3. Ability to attend to student learning goals in the daily operation of the school
4. Knowledge to identify and analyze the major sources of fiscal and nonfiscal resources for the school including business and community resources
5. Knowledge to build and ability to support a culture of learning at the school
6. Knowledge to manage financial and material assets and capital goods and services in order to allocate resources according to school priorities
7. Knowledge to use an efficient budget planning process that involves staff and community
8. Ability to identify and organize resources to achieve curricular and instructional goals
9. Ability to develop techniques and organizational skills necessary to lead/manage a complex and diverse organization
10. Ability to plan and schedule one’s own and others’ work so that resources are used appropriately in meeting priorities and goals
11. Ability to use goals to manage activities
12. Knowledge to create and ability to empower a school leadership team that shares responsibility for the management of the learning organization

**Standard 8: Rationale**
This standard addresses the educational leader’s role as the “first citizen” of the school/district community. Instructional leaders should set the tone for how employees and students interact with one another and with members of the school, district, and larger community. The leader’s contacts with students, parents, and employees must reflect concern for others as well as for the organization and the position. Instructional leaders must develop the ability to examine personal and professional values that reflect a code of ethics. They must be able to serve as role models, accepting responsibility for using their position ethically and constructively on behalf of the school/district community.

**Standard 8: Ethics**
Demonstrates honesty, integrity, and fairness to guide school policies and practices consistent with current legal and ethical standards for professional educators.

**Standard 8: Key Indicators**
1. Knowledge and ability to adhere to a professional code of ethics and values
2. Knowledge and ability to make decisions based on the legal, moral, and ethical implications of policy options and political strategies
3. Knowledge and ability to develop well-reasoned educational beliefs based upon an understanding of teaching and learning
4. Knowledge to understand ethical and legal concerns educators face when using technology throughout the teaching and learning environment
5. Knowledge and ability to develop a personal code of ethics embracing diversity, integrity, and the dignity of all people
6. Knowledge and ability to act in accordance with federal and state constitutional provisions, statutory standards, and regulatory applications
7. Ability to make decisions within an ethical context
ALABAMA QUALITY TEACHING STANDARDS

Pursuant to the mission of improving the academic achievement of all students in the public schools of Alabama, teachers will align their practice and professional learning with the following standards:

**Standard 1—Content Knowledge:** To improve the learning of all students, teachers master the disciplines related to their teaching fields including the central concepts, important facts and skills, and tools of inquiry; they anchor content in learning experiences that make the subject matter meaningful for all students.

**Rationale.** Researchers identify a strong relationship between teachers’ content knowledge and the achievement of their students. Three dimensions of content knowledge contribute to effective teaching: (1) deep knowledge of the academic disciplines related to the subjects of instruction, (2) an understanding of pedagogical content knowledge that is required to make the subject understandable and meaningful for all learners, and (3) knowledge of the state standards and district curriculum for subjects taught at particular instructional levels.

**Key Indicators**

**A. Academic Discipline(s)**

1. Knowledge of the structure of the academic disciplines related to the subject-matter content areas of instruction and of the important facts and central concepts, principles, theories, and tools of inquiry associated with these disciplines.
2. Knowledge of ways to organize and present content so that it is meaningful and engaging to all learners whom they teach (pedagogical content knowledge).
3. Ability to use students’ prior knowledge and experiences to introduce new subject-area related content.
4. Ability to identify student assumptions and preconceptions about the content of a subject area and to adjust instruction in consideration of these prior understandings.
5. Ability to help students make connections across the curriculum in order to promote retention and transfer of knowledge to real-life settings.

**B. Curriculum**

1. Knowledge of the content standards and of the scope and sequence of the subject areas of one’s teaching fields as defined in the Alabama courses of study for those teaching fields.
2. Ability to provide accommodations, modifications, and/or adaptations to the general curriculum to meet the needs of each individual learner.
3. Ability to select content and appropriately design and develop instructional activities to address the scope and sequence of the curriculum.
Standard 2—Teaching and Learning: To increase the achievement of every student, teachers draw upon a thorough understanding of learning and development; recognize the role of families in supporting learning; design a student-centered learning environment; and use research-based instructional and assessment strategies that motivate, engage, and maximize the learning of all students.

Rationale. Instruction and assessment are the vehicles by which teachers design and deliver rigorous and relevant learning experiences for all learners. Research provides compelling evidence relating student achievement to teachers’ use of appropriate instructional strategies selected from a rich repertoire based in research and best practice. Researchers have also found a strong classroom learning culture that is strategically organized and managed to be essential to effective use of these strategies.

Key Indicators

A. Human Development

1. Knowledge of the physical, emotional, and social development of young people and of the relationship of these to learning readiness and to cognitive development.
3. Knowledge of the general characteristics of disabilities and of their impact on cognitive development and learning.
4. Knowledge of developmentally appropriate instructional and management strategies.
5. Ability to teach explicit cognitive, metacognitive, and other learning strategies to support students in becoming more successful learners.
6. Ability to use knowledge about human learning and development in the design of a learning environment and learning experiences that will optimize each student’s achievement.
7. Ability to recognize individual variations in learning and development that exceed the typical range and use this information to provide appropriate learning experiences.

B. Organization and Management

1. Knowledge of the importance of developing learning objectives based on the Alabama courses of study and the needs, interests, and abilities of students.
2. Knowledge of the principles underpinning a sound age-appropriate classroom organization and management plan and of supportive behavior management strategies.
3. Knowledge of the components and characteristics of collaboratively designed and implemented individual behavioral support plans.
4. Knowledge of conflict resolution strategies, school emergency response procedures, and juvenile law.
5. Ability to plan and implement equitable and effective student access to available technology and other resources to enhance student learning.
6. Ability to plan teaching and learning experiences that are congruent with the Alabama courses of study and appropriate for diverse learners.
7. Ability to collect and use data to plan, monitor, and improve instruction.
8. Ability to organize, allocate, and manage the resources of time, space, and activities to support the learning of every student.
9. Ability to organize, use, and monitor a variety of flexible student groupings and instructional strategies to support differentiated instruction.

C. Learning Environment

1. Knowledge of norms and structures that contribute to a safe and stimulating learning environment.
2. Knowledge of factors and situations that promote or diminish intrinsic motivation.
3. Ability to develop a positive relationship with every student and to take action to promote positive social relationships among students, including students from different backgrounds and abilities.
4. Ability to communicate with parents and/or families to support students’ understanding of appropriate behavior.
5. Ability to create learning environments that increase intrinsic motivation and optimize student engagement and learning.
6. Ability to use individual behavioral support plans to proactively respond to the needs of all students.
7. Ability to create a print-/language-rich environment that develops/extends students’ desire and ability to read, write, speak, and listen.
8. Ability to encourage students to assume increasing responsibility for themselves and to support one another’s learning.

D. Instructional Strategies

1. Knowledge of research and theory underpinning effective teaching and learning.
2. Knowledge of a wide range of research-based instructional strategies and the advantages and disadvantages associated with each.
3. Knowledge of strategies that promote retention as well as transfer of learning and the relationship between these two learning outcomes.
4. Knowledge of the importance of parents and/or families as active partners in planning and supporting student learning.
5. Ability to select and support the use of instructional and assistive technologies and to integrate these into a coherent instructional design.
6. Ability to make developmentally appropriate choices in selecting teaching strategies to assist diverse learners in meeting instructional objectives.
7. Ability to evaluate, select, and integrate a variety of strategies such as cooperative learning, discussion, discovery, problem-based learning, and direct instruction into a coherent lesson design.
8. Ability to adjust instruction in response to information gathered from ongoing monitoring of performance via formative assessment.
9. Ability to use questions and questioning to assist all students in developing skills and strategies in critical and high order thinking and problem solving.
10. Ability to use strategies that promote the independence, self-control, personal responsibility, and self-advocacy of all students.

E. Assessment

1. Knowledge of the purposes, strengths, and limitations of formative and summative assessment and of formal and informal assessment strategies.
2. Knowledge of the relationship between assessment and learning and of how to integrate appropriate assessments into all stages of the learning process.
3. Knowledge of measurement-related issues such as validity, reliability, norms, bias, scoring concerns, and ethical uses of tests and test results.
5. Ability to design and use a variety of approaches to formal and informal assessment to plan instruction, monitor student understanding and progress toward learning, modify teaching and learning strategies, and measure and report student progress related to learning objectives.
6. Ability to collaborate with others to design and score common assessments and to use results to share and compare instructional practice and plan new instruction.
7. Ability to collaborate with others to incorporate accommodations into all assessments as appropriate.
8. Ability to provide a variety of ways for students with diverse needs, including students with disabilities, to demonstrate their learning.
9. Ability to develop rubrics and to teach students how to use them to assess their own performances.
10. Ability to develop and select appropriate performance assessments.
11. Ability to engage all students in assessing and understanding their own learning and behavior.
12. Ability to interpret and use reports from state assessments and results of other assessments to design both group and individual learning experiences.

**Standard 3—Literacy**: To improve student learning and achievement, teachers use knowledge of effective oral and written communications, reading, mathematics, and technology to facilitate and support direct instruction, active inquiry, collaboration, and positive interaction.

**Rationale.** Research clearly indicates that one of the strongest correlates to effective teaching is a high level of literacy. Not only do effective teachers demonstrate effective use of the spoken and written language, reading, mathematics, and technology, they also model and actively teach their students the fundamentals of reading, writing, and oral communications across all content areas. Additionally, in this culture where technology is ubiquitous, teachers demonstrate mastery of appropriate instructional technology and integrate technology into instruction of their subject areas.

**A. Oral and Written Communications**

1. Knowledge of standard oral and written communications.
2. Knowledge of the impact of native language and linguistic background on language acquisition.
3. Knowledge of media communication technologies that enrich learning opportunities.
4. Ability to model appropriate oral and written communications.
5. Ability to demonstrate appropriate communication strategies that include questioning and active and reflective listening.
6. Ability to foster effective verbal and nonverbal communications during ongoing instruction using assistive technologies as appropriate.
7. Ability to integrate skill development in oral and written communications into all content areas that one teaches.
8. Ability to use effective nonverbal communication and respond appropriately to nonverbal cues from students.

B. Reading

1. Knowledge of strategies associated with accelerated, highly specialized, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension that significantly expands and increases students’ pace of learning and competence in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
2. Knowledge of assessment tools to monitor the acquisition of reading strategies, to improve reading instruction, and to identify students who require additional instruction.
3. Ability to integrate reading instruction into all content areas that one teaches.
4. Ability to stimulate interest in and foster appreciation for the written word, promote reading growth, and increase the motivation of students to read widely and independently for information and pleasure.

C. Mathematics

1. Knowledge of the role that mathematics plays in everyday life.
2. Knowledge of the concepts and relationships in number systems.
3. Knowledge of the appropriate use of various types of reasoning, including inductive, deductive, spatial and proportional, and understanding of valid and invalid forms of reasoning.
4. Knowledge of both metric and customary measurement and fundamental geometric concepts, including shapes and their properties and relationships.
5. Ability to solve problems using different strategies, to verify and interpret results, and to draw conclusions.
6. Ability to communicate with others about mathematical concepts, processes, and symbols.

D. Technology

1. Knowledge of available and emerging technologies that support the learning of all students.
2. Knowledge of the wide range of technologies that support and enhance instruction, including classroom and school resources as well as distance learning and online learning opportunities.
3. Ability to integrate technology into the teaching of all content areas.
4. Ability to facilitate students’ individual and collaborative use of technology, including classroom resources as well as distance and online learning opportunities when available and appropriate.
5. Ability to use technology to assess student progress and manage records.
6. Ability to evaluate students’ technology proficiency and students’ technology-based products within content areas.
Standard 4—Diversity: To improve the learning of all students, teachers differentiate instruction in ways that exhibit a deep understanding of how cultural, ethnic, and social background; second language learning; special needs; exceptionalities; and learning styles affect student motivation, cognitive processing, and academic performance.

Rationale. Teachers who respect and build upon diversity create a learning environment in which all students feel valued and supported in their learning. Respect for diversity grows out of knowledge of differences, including differences in students’ cultural, ethnic, language, social, and experiential backgrounds; differences in their physical, emotional, and social development; differences in their readiness for a particular curricular goal; and differences in their learning styles and strengths. Teachers have a rich understanding of these and other important areas of diversity as well as knowledge of curricular and instructional modifications that improve the learning of the wide range of individual learners in their classrooms.

Key Indicators

A. Cultural, Ethnic and Social Diversity
1. Knowledge of the ways in which student learning is influenced by individual experiences and out-of-school learning, including language and family/community values and conditions.
2. Knowledge of cultural, ethnic, gender, linguistic, and socio-economic differences and of how these may affect individual learner needs, preferences, and styles.
3. Knowledge of the characteristics of one’s own culture and use of language and of how they differ from other cultures.
4. Ability to develop culturally responsive curriculum and instruction, i.e., model, teach, and integrate multicultural awareness, acceptance, and appreciation into ongoing instruction.
5. Ability to communicate in ways that demonstrate sensitivity to diversity such as appropriate use of eye contact, interpretation of body language and verbal statements, and acknowledgement of and responsiveness to different modes of communication and participation.

B. Language Diversity
1. Knowledge of the process of second language acquisition and strategies to support the learning of students whose first language is not English.
2. Ability to differentiate between learner difficulties that are related to cognitive or skill development and those that relate to language learning.
3. Ability to collaborate with teachers of English language learners and to assist those students with full integration into the regular classroom.

C. Special Needs
1. Knowledge of the major areas of exceptionality in learning, including the range of physical and mental disabilities, social and emotional disorders, giftedness, dyslexia, and attention deficit disorder.
2. Knowledge of the indicators of the need for special education services.
3. Ability to identify and refer students for diagnosis for special services.
4. Ability to address learning differences and disabilities in an inclusive classroom.
D. Learning Styles
1. Knowledge of research and theory related to learning styles and multiple intelligences.
2. Knowledge of a range of curricular materials and technologies to support the cognitive development of diverse learners.
3. Ability to help students assess their own learning styles and to build upon identified strengths.
4. Ability to design learning experiences that engage all learning styles.

E. General
1. Knowledge of how personal/cultural biases can affect teaching and learning.
2. Ability to involve families, community agencies and organizations, and colleagues in helping support academic achievement of diverse learners.
3. Ability to create a learning community in which individual differences are respected.
4. Ability to assess and diagnose individual student’s contexts, strengths, and learning needs and to tailor curriculum and teaching to address these personal characteristics.

Standard 5—Professionalism: To increase the achievement of all students, teachers engage in continuous learning and self improvement; collaborate with colleagues to create and adopt research-based best practices to achieve ongoing classroom and school improvement; and adhere to the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics and federal, state, and local laws and policies.

Rationale. Current research relates teacher collaboration, shared responsibility for student learning, and job-embedded learning in professional community to higher levels of student achievement. This research challenges the independence and isolation that has historically characterized the teaching profession and calls for deprivatization of practice. An underlying premise of professional learning communities is the power of ongoing, continuous learning that takes place in a culture where risk and experimentation are rewarded. In schools where there is a strong professional community, teachers actively participate in creating and sustaining such a learning environment and in maintaining its focus upon improved student learning. Beyond collaboration, teachers exhibit professionalism by demonstrating a personal commitment to continuous learning and improvement; by adhering to high ethical standards; and by maintaining currency with regard to federal, state, and local laws and policies. Teachers assume increased leadership for schoolwide improvement initiatives and for mentoring of colleagues as they move along their professional pathways.

A. Collaboration
1. Knowledge of the purposes, processes, structures, and potential benefits associated with collaboration and teaming.
2. Knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of members of different types of teams including, but not limited to, Building Based Student Support Teams.
4. Ability to involve parents and/or families as active partners in planning and supporting student learning.
5. Ability to share instructional responsibility for students with diverse needs, including
students with disabilities, and to develop collaborative teaching relationships and instructional strategies.

6. Ability to share responsibility for all students’ learning across the school and collaborate with colleagues to support every student’s growth.

7. Ability to participate as reflective members of different types of teams including, but not limited to, Building Based Student Support Teams.

8. Ability to collaborate in the planning of instruction for an expanded curriculum in general education to include Individual Education Plans and other plans such as Section 504 goals for students with disabilities.

9. Ability to communicate and collaborate effectively with colleagues, students, parents, guardians, and significant agency personnel who are included and valued equally as partners.

10. Ability to exhibit the professional dispositions delineated in professional, state, and institutional standards while working with students, colleagues, families, and communities.

B. Continuous, Lifelong Professional Learning

1. Knowledge of a range of professional literature, particularly resources that relate to one’s own teaching field(s).

2. Knowledge of a range of professional learning opportunities, including job-embedded learning, district- and state-sponsored workshops, university offerings, and online and distance learning.

3. Knowledge of the processes and skills associated with peer coaching and mentoring.

4. Ability to articulate and reflect on a personal philosophy and its relationship to teaching practice and professional learning choices and commitments.

5. Ability to use best practices, professional literature, and collegial assistance to improve as a teacher and a learner.

6. Ability and willingness to inquire into one’s own practice by designing action research to determine the effectiveness of identified instructional strategies.

7. Ability to participate in the creation and nurturance of a learning environment that supports standards-based inquiry, reflective practice, and collaborative learning for teachers at all stages of their careers.

C. Alabama-Specific Improvement Initiatives

1. Knowledge of current and emerging state initiatives and programs including, but not limited to, the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI); the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI); Alabama Learning Exchange (ALEX); and Alabama Connecting Classrooms, Educators and Students Statewide (ACCESS) and their relationship to student achievement.

2. Knowledge of Alabama’s state assessment requirements and processes.

3. Ability to integrate statewide programs and initiatives into the curriculum and instructional processes.

4. Ability to communicate with students, parents, and the public about Alabama’s assessment system and major state educational improvement initiatives.
D. School Improvement

1. Knowledge of research relating collective responsibility for student learning to increased achievement for all students.
2. Knowledge of the principles of individual and organizational change and a commitment to assume personal responsibility for leading and supporting others in results-oriented changes.
3. Ability to participate in school improvement planning by working collaboratively with teams focused on specific improvement initiatives.
4. Ability to assume increased leadership responsibility in school, district, and state improvement initiatives over the course of one’s professional career.

E. Ethics

1. Knowledge of appropriate professional behavior and dispositions expected of professionals as outlined in the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics.
2. Knowledge of safe, responsible, legal, and ethical uses of technologies including fair-use and copyright guidelines and Internet-user protection policies.
3. Ability to use and maintain confidential student information in an ethical and professional manner.
4. Ability to practice safe, responsible, legal, and ethical use of technology and comply with school and district acceptable-use policies including fair-use and copyright guidelines and Internet-user protection policies.

F. Local, State, Federal Laws and Policies

1. Knowledge of laws related to students’ and teachers’ rights and responsibilities and the importance of complying with those laws, including major principles of federal disabilities legislation (IDEA, Section 504 and ADA), as well as Alabama statutes on child abuse and neglect, and the importance of complying with those laws.
2. Ability to access school, community, state, and other resources and referral services.
3. Ability to access resources to gain information about federal, state, district, and school policies and procedures.
4. Ability to keep accurate records including IEPs, especially records related to federal, state and district policies, and other records with legal implications.