

## The Tri-State Assessment Model: Statement of Purpose

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The Tri-State Consortium is a learning organization devoted to assisting its member districts in using student performance data to develop a rigorous framework for systemic planning, assessment, accreditation, and continuous improvement. As critical friends, Consortium members advance teaching and learning and share best practices through the application of the Tri-State assessment model.

To achieve that goal, Consortium members are working together as a peer review group of “critical friends” with the goal of:

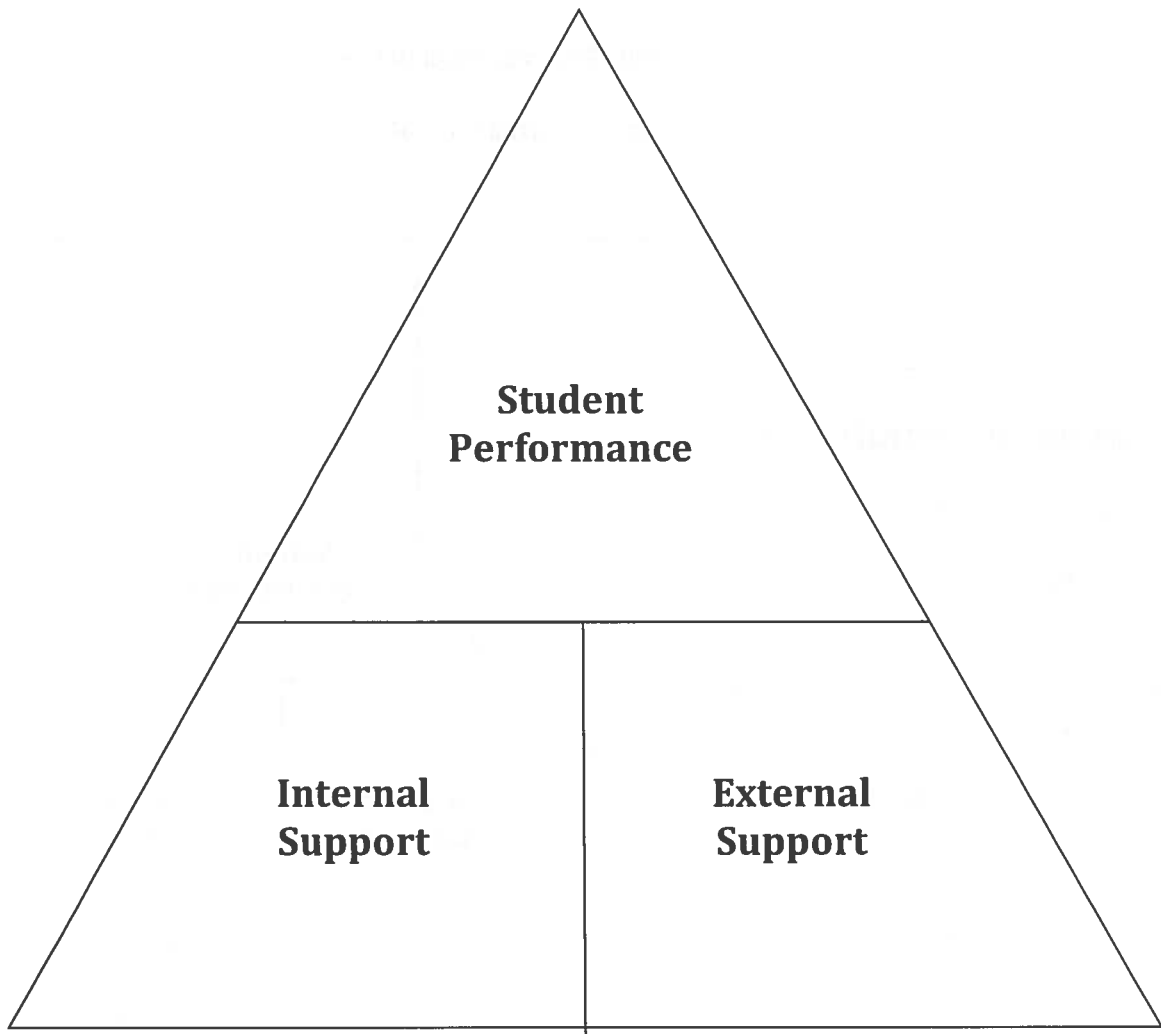
- *Applying an assessment model to benchmark member districts’ systemic practices*
- *Commending and recommending practices focused on continuous improvement of student performance.*

A central feature of the Consortium’s assessment model for school and program evaluation is its focus on **student performance**, which sets it apart from other models currently in use by regional accrediting associations. In addition to its focus on student performance, the Tri-State model also includes the dimensions of **internal support** and **external support** for systemic change.

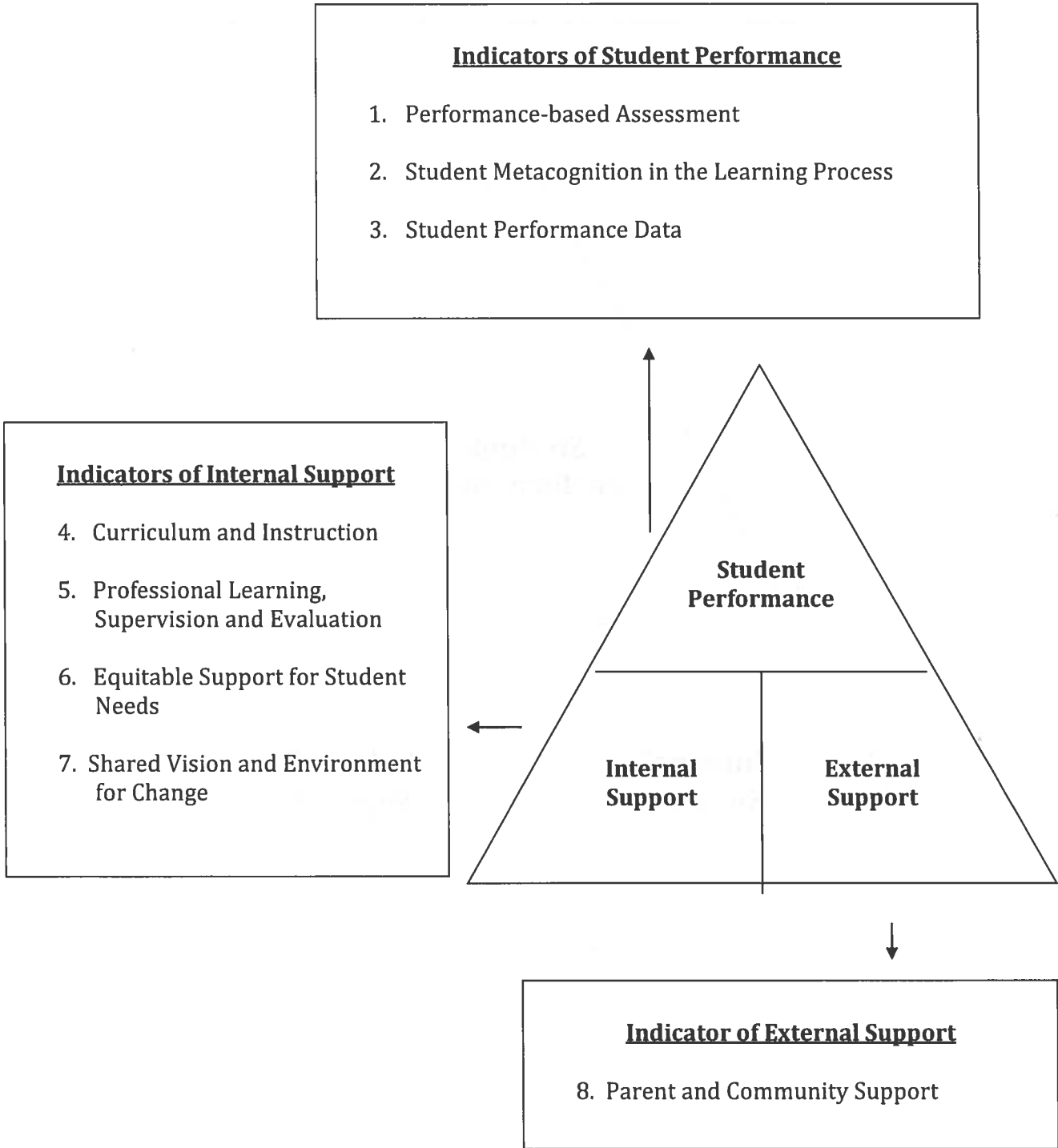
Consortium members value the high standards defined in the model’s eight indicators and scoring guidelines. It is precisely this engagement with the demanding standards in this model that helps all our member districts review and refine current practices designed to improve student performance. It is important to recognize that defining the highest local, regional, and national standards is a work in progress, but it is a process that presents the opportunity to communicate as peers and critical friends. This sharing of efforts through the application of a broad range of standardized and performance-based assessments is the key to continuous improvement.

**Three categories of systemic performance form the framework of the Tri-State Assessment model**

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# The Tri-State Performance Indicators



## The Tri-State Assessment Model: Approach, Implementation and Results

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The Tri-State model is based on systems thinking and the concept of a learning organization devoted to continuous improvement. Like the Baldrige model of organizational evaluation<sup>1</sup> on which it is based, the Tri-State approach looks at three aspects of a district's work with respect to each of the eight indicators.

The first aspect is **approach**, which describes the district or school process or plan for organizing and guiding educators' thinking with respect to each indicator. The approach is based on an analysis of student performance data and is revisited and refined over time based on the analysis of new student performance data. The approach is evaluated on the basis of its soundness and comprehensiveness and the degree to which it is periodically revisited and refined.

The second aspect is **implementation**, which refers to the work that teachers and administrators carry on in pursuit of the district or school plan. Implementation is evaluated on the basis of the number of relevant educators in the district engaged in putting the plan into practice.

The third aspect of each indicator is student performance **results**. The model insists that every aspect of the work of the district be evaluated on the basis of the difference it has made in student performance, evaluated not only in terms of test results, but, more importantly, against all of the measures of student learning that the district has put in place. Student performance results are evaluated on the basis of whether they are measurable, significant, and sustained over time.

To show how these aspects work in practice, let us take as an example their operation with respect to professional development. An analysis of student performance data has suggested to the district that teachers need additional training in the methodology of differentiating instruction. The district or school develops a process, plan or approach to deliver training. Teachers then **implement** the plan by engaging in the training provided and implementing the new strategies in their classrooms. **Results**, in the form of student performance data, are analyzed to determine whether the implementation of the professional development plan has made a positive difference in student learning.

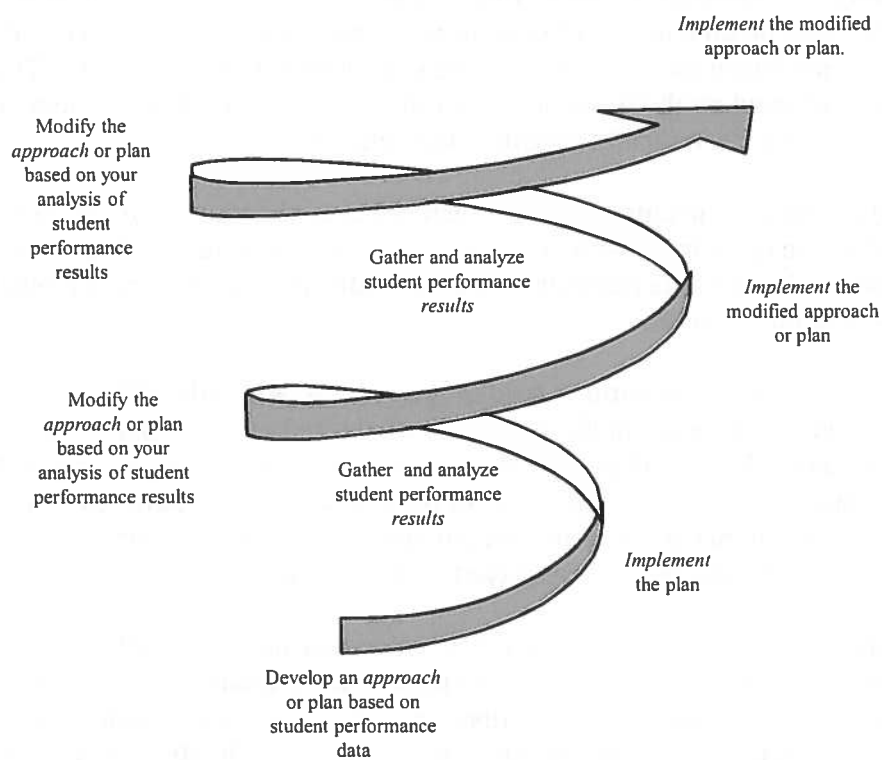
The "feedback spiral" developed by Bena Kallick and Art Costa, illustrates the relationship among these three aspects. It is shown on the following page.

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<sup>1</sup> Information on the Baldrige National Quality Program, which is based at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, is found at <http://baldrige.nist.gov/>.

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## The Feedback Spiral



• Adapted from Costa, Arthur L. and Kallick, Bena (eds.) *Assessment in the Learning Organization, Shifting the Paradigm* (Washington, D.C.: ASCD, 1995) page 27

## Definitions and Study Questions

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This section contains definitions and a set of questions for study and reflection for each of the eight indicators. The study questions are designed to introduce the indicators and guide the thinking of prospective visit team members, and to model a format for self-study in a district preparing to receive a Tri-State visit.

## **Performance-based Assessment**

### **Student Performance - Indicator #1**

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**Definition:** Educators utilize performance-based assessments that enable students to demonstrate their capacity to transfer and apply knowledge. These assessments demonstrate the degree to which students integrate knowledge, skills, and higher-level thinking both within and across disciplines. Student work is evaluated based on common criteria, and results are analyzed and used over time to inform curriculum and instruction.

### **Questions for Study and Reflection**

1. What is the process in place for developing and implementing performance-based assessments K-12?
2. Describe the common criteria and common learning outcomes linked to the performance-based assessments.
3. Who is involved in designing or selecting performance-based assessments to measure student learning?
4. What change in student performance over time can you identify that you attribute, in part, to the use of performance-based assessments?

## **Student Metacognition in the Learning Process**

### Student Performance - Indicator #2

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**Definition:** Educators design and provide a learning environment that enables students to engage in metacognition continuously and systematically. As a result, students build the capacity over time to assess, reflect upon and make choices that advance their own learning.

### **Questions for Study and Reflection**

1. What is the process or plan in place in the district to ensure that students are purposefully and effectively reflecting upon their own learning?
2. How do educators design, embed, and provide opportunities for student metacognition and model it within the learning environment?
3. How do teachers create regular opportunities for students' choice in their learning?
4. What change in student performance over time can you identify that is attributable, in part, to the encouragement of student metacognition?



## **Student Performance Data**

### **Student Performance - Indicator #3**

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**Definition:** Norm-referenced and criterion referenced tests provide data on student knowledge and higher level thinking. The district has in place a system for collecting, analyzing and disseminating student performance data to teachers and administrators. Teachers and administrators use this data collaboratively to make informed decisions on improving student performance.

### **Questions for Study and Reflection**

1. Describe the district process for disaggregating and analyzing test data from national and state norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests.
2. What types of data are collected on individual students and groups of students that track performance over time?
3. Who engages in this analysis and who receives the data? What training is provided for educators to make meaning of the data?
4. What change in student performance over time can you identify that you attribute, in part, to the disaggregation and analysis of standardized test results?

## Curriculum and Instruction

### Internal Support - Indicator #4

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**Definition:** Teachers and administrators collaborate and develop an articulated and aligned curriculum that ensures optimal student results. Assessment data from multiple sources are analyzed by teachers and administrators when making curricular and instructional decisions. In their planning, teachers purposefully select from a variety of teaching techniques and tools to help students improve, and they differentiate curriculum and instruction to address all students' learning needs.

### Questions for Study and Reflection

1. Describe the district process for developing and articulating a K-12 curriculum.
2. How do teachers collaborate with colleagues across grade levels to analyze multiple forms of student assessment data to inform curriculum and instruction?
3. How are educators supported in developing a repertoire of instructional practices?
4. How extensively do teachers differentiate curriculum and instruction to address the learning needs of all students?
5. What evidence of improved student performance is attributable, in part, to revisions in curriculum and modification of instructional practices?

## **Professional Learning, Supervision, and Evaluation**

### **Internal Support - Indicator #5**

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**Definition:** The professional learning plan is based on current student and teacher needs linked to district goals. Professional learning is embedded, collaborative and reflective. The district is attentive to providing the time and resources for this learning to take place. Professional learning is evaluated using a supervision and evaluation process that focuses on the efficacy of instruction and attendant growth in student learning.

### **Questions for Study and Reflection**

1. Describe the district process for developing the district's professional learning and supervision and evaluation plans.
2. To what extent are educators actively involved in embedded, collaborative and reflective professional learning? How has the district addressed the issue of providing time for this learning?
3. Describe the link among analysis of student performance data, the supervision and evaluation process, and professional learning.
4. What evidence of improved student performance is attributable, in part, to the implementation of the district's professional learning and supervision and evaluation plans?

## **Equitable Support for Student Needs**

### **Internal Support—Indicator #6**

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**Definition:** Processes and practices are in place in the district that identify and meet students' academic and non-academic needs. These processes and practices are informed by data gathered from a variety of sources and are aligned with learning goals for students at all performance levels. Policies and practices that govern student access to all programs are non-discriminatory and set high expectations that challenge each student. All students have equitable access to all programs.

### **Questions for Study and Reflection**

1. Describe the district process for identifying and meeting students' academic and non-academic needs.
2. What policies are in place to ensure that access to all programs is non-discriminatory and to set expectations that all students are equitably challenged?
3. What is the district's process for disaggregating and analyzing student data related to access and performance—both standardized and non-standardized—by gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status? How is this disaggregated data shared with educators?
4. Describe the lines of communication and the level of collaboration between resource and support personnel and classroom teachers.
5. What evidence of improved student performance is attributable, in part, to the implementation of the district's policies and practices to identify and meet student needs?

## **Shared Vision and Environment for Change** Internal Support - Indicator #7

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**Definition:** Shared vision and goals focused on student performance have been developed with the staff and community, are well articulated, clearly communicated, and consistently pursued throughout the district and school community. This vision expects, supports, and recognizes change and creativity. It values and encourages progressive innovation that leads toward higher student achievement. Data are utilized to support decisions for change. This includes a process to review work and learn from experimentation.

### **Questions for Study and Reflection**

1. Describe the district process for building and sustaining a shared vision that encourages change and creativity.
2. To what extent do teachers, administrators and community members understand, share and support the vision and goals?
3. How are experimentation and innovation encouraged in the district?
4. What evidence of improved student performance is attributable, in part, to the implementation of the district's shared vision?

## **Parent and Community Support**

### **External Support – Indicator #8**

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**Definition:** The active involvement of parents and the community, and two-way communication are encouraged and utilized to improve teaching and learning. A wide range of community resources extends the classroom and enriches the educational experience of students. The budget development process supports the mission, vision, and goals of the district and is aligned with efforts to improve student performance.

### **Questions for Study and Reflection**

1. Describe the district process for encouraging the active involvement of parents and the community in the educational process.
2. Describe the district process for developing the district's annual and long-term capital and operations budgets.
3. How and to what degree does the district (teachers, administrators, and central office) communicate with parents and the community on the education of children?
4. What evidence of improved student performance is attributable, in part, to the implementation of the district's process for encouraging the active involvement of the community?