

Vision & Purpose

STANDARD: The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a shared purpose and direction. The school establishes expectations for student learning aligned with the school’s vision that is supported by school personnel and external stakeholders. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing student performance and school effectiveness. The school’s vision guides allocations of time and human, material, and fiscal resources.

Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school’s responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
In fulfillment of this standard, the school:					
1.1	Establishes a vision for the school in collaboration with its stakeholders			X	
1.2	Communicates the vision and purpose to build stakeholder understanding and support		X		
1.3	Identifies goals to advance the vision			X	
1.4	Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the school, its students, and the community			X	
1.5	Ensures that the school’s vision and purpose guide the teaching and learning process		X		
1.6	Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate			X	

Definitions of Indicators Rubric

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging practice	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions regarding the processes that are in place to support the school's implementation of the research-based practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school's self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. What is the process for establishing and building understanding of and commitment to the vision statement among stakeholders?

The school establishes and builds an understanding and commitment of the vision statement by communicating the statement to the stakeholders. The school ensures the vision statement is effectively disseminated throughout the school community. The school community includes parents, partners in business, school council, district administration, school administration, faculty and support staff, and students. The mission statement is posted throughout the school, conveyed to the parents at Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) meetings, school council meetings, as well as parent/teacher conferences. The mission statement is published on school letterhead, the school's brochure, the school's website and an array of other documents used for school business. The Russell Parent Coordinator supports the vision through communication with parents by monthly newsletters and through evening parental involvement activities.

The stakeholders establish ownership by providing input during PTO meetings, open forums at school council meetings, and parent surveys. The input is then evaluated and designed to create the mission and vision of the school.

2. What is the school's process for developing a profile and systematically maintaining and using information that describes the school, its students, and their performance?

We ensure that all stakeholders are informed of the schools profile by developing a yearly brochure which includes the following information:

- Data from FTE counts concerning school-wide demographics (ethnicity, socioeconomic level, mobility rate, etc...).
- Teachers' qualification information, gathered from central office human resources, highlighting levels of degrees as well as years of experience. This information conveys to stakeholders the high quality and expertise our students receive from Russell teachers.
- School-wide performance goals that are determined by disaggregating test data to determine strengths and weaknesses among grade levels and subpopulations. These yearly performance goals are the thrust of our school improvement plan.

The school profile information is compiled and obtained through the AS-400 data base provided by the Houston County Central Office.

Our school's yearly performance goals are posted on our school's website, on school newsletters and brochures as well as posted in target areas throughout the school.

In addition, our school posts school-wide, as well as grade level test scores and yearly comparisons. This ensures that all stakeholders are aware of our strengths and weaknesses in regards to student achievement.

3. How does the leadership ensure that the school's vision, purpose, and goals guide the teaching and learning process?

The leadership of the school ensures that the school's vision, purpose, and goals guide the teaching and learning process by ultimately involving everybody in the process. The leadership continually reflects on the goals and reassesses the learning process to ensure the faculty and staff revisit the vision and purpose during faculty meetings, Better Seeking Team meetings, and grade-level meetings to revisit and review the vision and purpose. The leadership empowers each faculty member to take ownership and make decisions based on the vision and purpose.

The leadership team fosters the learning community by collaborative planning; ensuring every member has an input. Staff development is utilized for redelivery and open discussion of pertinent information to enrich the learning environment.

4. What process is used to ensure that the vision and purpose of the school remain current and aligned with the school's expectations for student learning and school effectiveness?

The School Improvement Plan is an on-going process. We start in the spring of the ending year and work throughout the year on our school's goals, expectations and effectiveness. With a safe environment students are able to achieve academic success, self-worth, self-discipline, responsibility, and cooperation.

Our Discipline Committee meets on a regular basis to evaluate discipline procedures that are implemented to enhance a safe learning environment. All stakeholders determine changes that are needed. The committee is comprised of a diverse group of individuals; to include parents, teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators. Meetings are held on a monthly basis.

Teachers are given common planning time daily to discuss ways to enhance the curriculum. Teachers are also given an additional 45 minute planning time once a week to work on curriculum mapping and unit plans. Strengths and weaknesses are identified and ways to improve are the focus. While teachers are meeting, students are instructed on GPS objectives in a large group. We also meet during grade level meetings with our administrators. We have faculty meetings to discuss our school wide plans for improvements. Measurable goals are aligned with county goals.

During the summer, the Better Seeking Team meets to discuss end-of-the-year data to determine if changes in our academic focus are needed. Throughout the year our Better Seeking Team has meetings to ensure unity among our faculty. Discussions take place to determine necessary resources, activities, and timelines.

These processes ensure that the vision and purpose of Russell Elementary remain current and aligned with the school's expectations for student learning and school effectiveness.

Governance & Leadership

STANDARD: The school provides governance and leadership that promote student performance and school effectiveness.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has leaders who are advocates for the school's vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement curricular and co-curricular programs that enable students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for school improvement among stakeholders. The school's policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation.

Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
In fulfillment of this standard, the school operates under the jurisdiction of a governing board that:					
2.1	Establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the school				X
2.2	Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the school				X
2.3	Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations				X
In fulfillment of this standard, the school has leadership that:					
2.4	Employs a system that provides for analysis and review of student performance and school effectiveness			X	
2.5	Fosters a learning community			X	
2.6	Provides teachers and students opportunities to lead			X	
2.7	Provides stakeholders meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership			X	
2.8	Controls curricular and extracurricular activities that are sponsored by the school				X
2.9	Responds to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction			X	
2.10	Implements an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel		X		

Definitions of Indicator Rubric

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging practice	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
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Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions that focus on the processes that are in place to support the school's implementation of the practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school's self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. What is the process for establishing, communicating, and implementing policies and procedures for the effective operation of the school?

At the onset of each school year, the administrators at Russell Elementary School verify that each teacher is aware of and upholds the guidelines of professional practice. This is to include, but not limited to maintaining a level of professionalism and complying with school and system regulations. The administrators establish, communicate and implement policies and procedures using student and teacher handbooks, agendas and the Teacher Code of Ethics. Information is regularly shared during faculty meetings, grade level meetings, school council, and various team meetings.

School and county policies are discussed during pre-planning. Within the procedures, teachers are given schedules, guidelines for collecting money, the protocol for field trips, information for clubs and organizations, requirements for professional leave, and data about the school. This is an opportunity for teachers to review the Teacher Code of Ethics as well as handbooks. To verify that each teacher has read and understands the contents, a signature page is included to be turned in as evidence.

Administrators and teachers are held accountable to uphold state, county, and school policies daily. Stakeholders are involved in ensuring that situations are handled in the most effective manner. Communication is the key in making sure stakeholders are informed of policies and expectations. Russell Elementary School makes it a priority to disseminate information in a timely manner. A calendar of

events is posted on Channel 17 on a monthly basis while for more immediate activities or announcements the principal utilizes the calling system where a recorded message is sent to all parents.

The Meet & Greet is the first organized opportunity at the beginning of each year for students and parents to learn more about the school and teachers. Teachers have the chance to discuss procedures while parents and students may ask questions concerning school organizations or financial obligations, such as lunch money.

Shortly after the first day of school, parents are invited to come to the school to get a better idea of what the students are doing and to ask any further questions of the teachers. Open House creates an environment where parents and teachers can have meaningful conversations about instruction while showcasing student work. Throughout the school year, teachers meet with parents for conferences as well as communicate through the agenda or class newsletters.

The Parent Involvement Coordinator is also a vital tool in communicating with parents. The coordinator sends a monthly newsletter home from the school. She is also an essential member in generating participation in different activities for parents, such as our Science and Math Parent Nights and our English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Parent Night.

The School Council at Russell Elementary School has also been a key component of school improvement, which involves the community as well as the school. The School Council conducted an extensive research on the safety of our children during drop-off and pickup. The study has rendered a modified plan, which will improve the process and create a safer environment for our children. They have also mapped out a technology plan that will place more equipment in the reach of students and teachers to meet the advancing needs in the field of technology.

2. What process does the school's leadership use to evaluate school effectiveness and student performance?

To develop a process of evaluating the school's effectiveness and student performance, the administrators, as well as teacher leaders discuss and analyze data on a regular basis. Student progress is monitored using student work samples in addition to various instruments used throughout the year to maintain student mastery. At the school level, the results of a mock Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) are examined to determine instructional strategies that need further work. We also administer benchmark assessments, which are used to determine what professional

development and budget allotments are needed. Mock writing tests are used to collect data and to plan for more focused instruction in scheduling resources in areas where the students are weak. Student reading levels are also monitored through the Houston County Literacy Inventory (HCLI) and benchmark assessments. At the county and state level, students take the CRCT and Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) where the school obtains further data on the strengths and weaknesses. Teachers are able to effectively measure student performance with these tools.

Each year, ESOL students are given the ACCESS test to measure the level of language acquisition. These results create an avenue from which administrators and teachers may obtain a better picture of what the student should be able to do at the level in which the student tested.

Fourth graders are administered the CogAT annually. The results from this test as well as the ITBS and screening activities are used in decisions surrounding testing for Fostering Originality, Creativity, Unique Ideas, and Self-direction (FOCUS), our gifted program. Students who score a predetermined percentage are automatically screened for this program.

Formative assessments are used to measure student progress. Classworks, a computer program, is a more individualized program in which students work at their pace and obtain mastery of skills in preparations for the CRCT.

A Pyramid of Intervention, a tool used in taking a systematic approach to monitoring academics and behavior is used in conjunction with any of the mentioned assessments in addition to classroom performance. School effectiveness is a result of student performance, therefore when students are not performing to the desired ability, steps are taken to help close the achievement gap.

Administrators preserve an active role in the process by conducting classroom walk throughs. The Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument (GTOI) is also used to discuss classroom and instruction for greatest success. Feedback is often given through notes or emails. Broad topics may be discussed during faculty or grade level meetings.

3. In what ways are stakeholders, including staff, given opportunities to provide leadership and to contribute to the decision-making process?

Russell Elementary School is comprised of several decision teams composed of administrators and representatives from each grade level. As the teams meet, the representative is responsible for informing the

teachers that they work with to ensure that everyone is informed of what was discussed and what the next step will be.

The Better Seeking Team is a group of administrators, classroom teachers, and support personnel who drive the School Improvement Plan (SIP). Meetings are generally once a month to discuss the progress of the SIP. Issues concerning the academic and instructional progress of the school are discussed in these meetings and then taken back to the other members of the grade level or team.

The Discipline Committee maintains our school wide discipline program. The discipline program involves reasonable rules and logical consequences while maintaining the dignity of the students and teachers. The discipline plan was developed by the discipline committee with a great deal of input from the teachers. This committee discusses the success of the program while modifying when necessary. The school wide plan allows teachers to handle discipline issues in a fair and consistent manner. Students and parents are also aware of the plan and are not surprised by any part of it.

The Literacy Committee discusses school wide issues in the area of literacy. This committee is responsible for creating and implementing methods for improving our literacy rate and ultimately student achievement. The goal of this committee is to promote literacy in all grades. While implementing the Comprehensive Literacy Instructional Framework (CLIF) program, the Literacy Committee aids in devising better ways to implement the county adopted curriculum.

The Student Support Team (SST) is a collaborative effort to help children with academic difficulties. Student success is the ultimate goal of the interventions that are discussed in this group. Parents are invited to join the meeting whenever their child is being discussed so that they may share information or ask questions as needed.

The Media Committee is responsible for obtaining the literature the teachers need to be able to effectively deliver a lesson. They also make sure appropriate literature is available for students to check out and read.

Grade levels meet regularly to discuss pertinent information from other meetings and for grade level issues. The administrators meet with the grade levels on a regular basis.

School Council is comprised of administrators, teachers, parents and business leaders. This group has formulated a three-year technology plan to include two newer computers in each classroom, projectors in each room, and Promethean boards.

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) of Russell Elementary School meets monthly to discuss the school's academic needs and assists in funding these needs. They have provided teachers with money to help cut the out-of-pocket expenses, aided in the purchase of the Renzulli software for all students, and will share some of the financial burden of advancing the technology available to the students. The Renzulli Learning System was first used with our FOCUS students then purchased for school-wide use. This learning tool for enrichment may be used both at school and at home. It provides an academic challenge based on almost 30 years of research designed to help students learn more about their own interests and talents. Renzulli Learning searches through thousands of pre-screened resources on the web and within the Renzulli Learning database. The program finds enriching, challenging opportunities for all students in their specific areas of interest and choice.

In addition to the diverse committees that represent Russell Elementary School, we also offer teachers the opportunity to attend conferences with the expectations on training or redelivering the obtained information to the faculty.

4. What policies and processes are in place to ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation?

Each student that enters any classroom in Russell Elementary School is greeted by a Highly Qualified teacher who is teaching in-field. The students all have the same opportunities available to them, whether it is the curriculum, trips away from school, or other learning goals. The method of teaching is differentiated in each class to accommodate the student population of general education, special education, or English Language Learner.

Teachers were given a weekly, extended planning time where students were instructed by a Highly Qualified teacher during the Student Tutorial Extra Planning (STEP) time.

As students are exposed to the same curriculum, the teachers are also receiving training that is aligned by grade level. There is a collaborative nature in what we do. Teachers provide support for innovations and allow changes to better equip our children for the future. Teachers support trying new programs that have proven to assist students, teachers, and parents, such as Renzulli Learning Systems, Classworks, Accelerated Reader, Media Programs and ADVANCE.

To be eligible for ESOL services, Special Education services (to include our self-contained Autism class), SST services, Early

Intervention Program services, Reading Recovery services, etc., all students must meet preset guidelines. These students are identified by homeroom teachers who follow procedures set by the Houston County Board of Education and the Georgia Department of Education.

Parents of Russell Elementary School are given ample opportunities to contribute to student activities and any other decisions that are made concerning the educational procedures that affect their children. We encourage parents to become an active member of the school to help us help their children uphold our mission to empower students to be high achievers with a sense of self-worth, self-discipline, responsibility and cooperation.

Teaching and Learning

STANDARD: The school provides research-based curriculum and instructional methods that facilitate achievement for all students.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a curriculum based on clear and measurable expectations for student learning that provides opportunities for all students to acquire requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers use proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process. Teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations. Teachers give students feedback to improve their performance.

Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
In fulfillment of this standard, the school operates under the jurisdiction of a governing board that:					
3.1	Develops and implements curriculum based on clearly defined expectations for student learning			X	
3.2	Promotes active involvement of students in the learning process, including opportunities for them to explore application of higher-order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to applying their learning			X	
3.3	Gathers, analyzes, and uses data and research in making curricular and instructional choices		X		
3.4	Designs and uses instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that are research-based and reflective of best practice			X	
3.5	Offers a curriculum that challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity			X	
3.6	Allocates and protects instructional time to support student learning			X	

3.7	Provides for articulation and alignment between and among all levels of schools		X		
3.8	Implements interventions to help students meet expectations for student learning				X
3.9	Monitors school climate and takes appropriate steps to ensure that it is conducive to student learning				X
3.10	Provides comprehensive information and media services that support the curricular and instructional programs			X	
3.11	Ensures that all students and staff members have regular and ready access to instructional technology and a comprehensive materials collection that supports the curricular and instructional program		X		

Definitions of Indicator Rubric

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging practice	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions that focus on the processes that are in place to support the school's implementation of the practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school's self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. How does the school ensure that the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments are aligned and articulated across grade levels in support of the expectations for student learning?

The curriculum is aligned and articulated across grade levels beginning with the Georgia Performance Standards (curriculum) required by the state of Georgia. Grade levels meet and plan weekly using the Georgia Performance Standards, pacing guides, and curriculum maps. The teachers have an additional designated grade level planning period. They are provided this extended time while

their students have extended time in the Specials areas. They are also given one grade level planning day each year to develop units of study to correlate with the GPS and testing data from the Georgia CRCT state test results to ensure planned curriculum addresses student needs and state standards.

Evaluations utilized to ascertain student learning include the Houston County Literacy Inventory, weekly or biweekly running records for reading, EIP pretests and post tests, language arts and math benchmark assessments, grade level created common assessments in math and language arts, Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), third and fifth grade writing assessments, and daily teacher observations and conferencing with individual students. Information gathered from assessments is used in developing differentiated instruction to address the needs of students. Additional instruction is provided for third grade students, identified by teachers, through weekly intersession tutorials during fall and winter. STEP provides a weekly additional 30 – 45 minute tutoring for all students in reading and math. After school tutoring is also provided for identified students in grades one through five in math and reading.

Administrators use GTOI (formal observations), walk through observations (informal observations), review of teacher lesson plans, conferring with grade level teachers during planning sessions, and informal student interviews to insure that the curriculum and instructional strategies are aligned and articulated throughout the school and across grade levels. Teachers hear successful teaching strategies and curriculum information at administrator led faculty meetings throughout the year.

2. In what ways does the school ensure the implementation of research-based instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that facilitate achievement for all students?

Research-based instructional strategies are implemented at Russell Elementary School through the use of reading and writing workshops, professional learning with emphasis on reading and writing, and collaboration between specialists and classroom teachers.

Specific blocks of time are allocated to reading and writing workshops which use the Comprehension Literacy Instructional Framework. Within this research-based framework, students listen to a mini-lesson. They are then actively engaged in learning by practicing the elements of the lesson, then regroup to share their new learning. Literacy coaches from Houston County have given intensive training to teachers by sharing additional research-based information concerning

readers' and writers' workshops that teachers are using within the classroom. The additional training has enabled teachers to achieve better implementation of the workshops through more focused lessons that address the specific elements and desired outcomes of the workshops. Knowledge gained through GPS training, as well as professional book studies and teacher observations, also help teachers implement research-based instruction strategies. Our school's focus is to provide instruction that facilitates learning that will meet the students' individualized needs and abilities. In order to accomplish this goal, classroom teachers are in close collaboration with EIP, Reading Recovery, Focus, ESL, Special Education and Speech Specialists.

Russell displays innovation in implementation of research-based instructional strategies through the use of Promethean boards, PowerPoint lesson presentations, and visual standards displays. Several of our school's classrooms have the Promethean boards installed. All students are highly motivated by this advanced technology and because the boards tabulate student responses in real time, their use affords teachers the opportunity to provide immediate feedback to the students. This feature makes the boards powerful instructional tools. Teachers are applying their creativity through the use of engaging PowerPoint lessons that stimulate and encourage active participation by the students. All classrooms are moving towards displaying Georgia Performance Standards in appropriate language for each grade level in order to establish a valuable connection for students to grasp the concepts that are being taught.

In order to address activities that facilitate achievement for all students, Russell provides on-going formal and informal assessments to gauge student progress. Throughout the year, students that are considered at-risk are provided with tutorials and a February intersession where their specific needs are addressed. Teachers collect, analyze, and document students' data from formal assessments such as CRCT, HCLI, CogAT, ITBS, Bracken, GKIDS, and grade level records in order to plan for individualized differentiated instruction. On-going informal assessments such as rubrics, running records, unit study tests, and writing samples are used to monitor students' progress to ensure mastery level is achieved for all students. Differentiated styles of learning are addressed through the use of the Renzulli on-line education learning tool. This tool is designed to identify the differentiated learning styles, interests, and needs of individual students. The learning environment of each classroom encourages diversity of learning styles to include partner, small groups, and personal individualized instruction.

3. What processes are implemented to ensure that teachers are well prepared and effectively implementing the curriculum?

In order to implement the curriculum, or Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) effectively, training is provided for teachers, primarily through professional learning. Training takes place at in-services scheduled throughout the year, according to the state timeline. Several staff members from various grade levels are attending GPS training at the state level in science and social studies, and are involved in writing units for these subject areas. As these teachers return to redeliver the information to the school and county levels, they continue to assist their colleagues in their efforts to understand and implement the new curriculum.

Additional professional development, which incorporates best practices and the GPS, is provided to teachers in several ways. Teachers participate in monthly faculty meetings in which presentations relate to instruction and student achievement, much of which focuses on training for the Comprehensive Literacy Instructional Framework and Writers Workshop. Weekly grade level meetings allow for teachers to collaborate as they plan for implementing the new curriculum. Planning days are also scheduled throughout the year to provide for a more in depth understanding of the standards in the new curriculum. Teachers are encouraged and allowed to visit other school sites and to report on their observations to the staff. Representatives from the school are responsible for attending math cohort meetings and reporting the information back to the various grade levels.

The administrative staff ensures the implementation of the curriculum through various methods. Administrators share the responsibility of assessing classroom practices through both formal and informal observations. Administration provides feedback to the teachers to ensure quality instruction. In the making of a master schedule, accommodations are made for a common planning time to allow for teachers on the same grade level to share units and methods of instruction. Benchmark assessments are also provided by administrators to help teachers assess student progress and to identify areas of weakness. Administrators alert teachers to online resources that may assist them in their understanding and implementation of the curriculum.

4. How does the school provide every student access to comprehensive information, instructional technology, and media services?

A variety of methods are used at the school level that provides students access to comprehensive information, instructional technology, and media services. Comprehensive information is provided to the students through various web-sites, materials and one-on-one instruction. Several workshops that provided the parents and students more information regarding reading, writing, math and science concepts were offered throughout the school year. The teachers send home weekly newsletters that provided the parents and students with information regarding daily instruction and assignments.

Various computer programs are accessible to the students not only in the classroom, but also in the two computer labs in the building. The computer labs offer Classworks, Accelerated Reader, CRCT online, Renzulli, and Harcourt Math Online. These programs reinforce the concepts that have been taught in the classroom and provide enrichment activities to those who have mastered these skills.

The teachers are also able to provide information and provide assessment through the use of Promethean boards, CPS system, United Streaming and Examview. The programs will also allow the students to master benchmark skills through many different mediums.

The Media Specialist assists the students in the selection, location, and use of media resources. Lessons are taught to students in grades 1 – 5 on research skills and the general use of the media center. The Media Specialist periodically meets with teachers to review standards that correlate with library research and concepts that are being taught in the classroom. She will then align her instruction with the classroom teacher.

Our Instructional Technology Coordinator (ITC) provides training for the implementation of student programs and teacher resources. He also compiles testing data for teacher reference and use.

Documenting & Using Results

STANDARD: The school enacts a comprehensive assessment system that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly defined performance measures. The system is used to assess student performance on expectations for student learning, evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction, and determine interventions to improve student performance. The assessment system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to school leaders, teachers, and other stakeholders in understanding student performance, school effectiveness, and the results of improvement efforts.

Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
In fulfillment of this standard, the school:					
4.1	Establishes performance measures for student learning that yield information that is reliable, valid, and bias free				X
4.2	Develops and implements a comprehensive assessment system for assessing progress toward meeting the expectations for student learning			X	
4.3	Uses student assessment data for making decisions for continuous improvement of teaching and learning processes			X	

4.4	Conducts a systematic analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness and uses the results to improve student performance			X	
4.5	Communicates the results of student performance and school effectiveness to all stakeholders		X		
4.6	Uses comparison and trend data of student performance from comparable schools in evaluating its effectiveness			X	
4.7	Demonstrates verifiable growth in student performance			X	
4.8	Maintains a secure, accurate, and complete student record system in accordance with state and federal regulations				X

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Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions that focus on the processes that are in place to support the school's implementation of the practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school's self-assessment on the indicators rubric.

1. How is the assessment system currently used in your school to analyze changes in student performance?

Instruction is driven by the results of our assessments which we use to determine student needs and to measure academic performance. Assessments are done in three stages. As a result, faculty and staff work as a professional learning community to continually analyze changes in student performance.

The first stage occurs at the beginning of each school year. During pre-planning and the first two weeks of school, the faculty and staff study data from CRCT, ITBS, HCLI, CogAT, SST documentation, IEPs, and EIP checklists. Student profile sheets, available through pivot tables and SharePoint, are provided by the Instructional Technology Coordinator to help teachers analyze student performance and plan instruction.

The second stage of assessment is an on-going one. Assessments are used throughout the school year during the learning process to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction in regards to changes in student performance. On-going assessments include STAR tests, AR test, Classworks, CRCT online practice tests, HCLI, benchmark tests, teacher-made common assessments, teacher observations of student performances, and rubrics.

The final stage involves formal post assessments done at the end of the school term again for the purpose of analyzing changes in student performance. CRCT, HCLI, and EIP checklists are used to determine growth in student learning and to identify students that may have academic deficiencies. The end of the year data are recorded in a student's cumulative records and used during pre-planning by the next teacher, thus ensuring a continuous cycle of analyzing data and student achievement.

2. What are you doing to ensure that assessment results are timely, relevant, and communicated in a way that can be used by teachers, students, parents, and external stakeholders to aid the performance of individual students?

Criterion Reference Competency Test results are shared with the teachers immediately upon arrival at the school. Plans are made for students who do not meet requirements for promotion in grades 3 and 5. They are referred to summer school for remediation. Then they have the opportunity to retest in either reading and/or math. Action plans are created based on the needs of students for those students who failed to meet the standards and/or are considered at risk.

Our school improvement plan is driven by the school-wide testing results. These results are posted in our community conference room to inform all stakeholders of our school's performance. The state's report card regarding our school AYP status is available on our school's web page so as to provide parents /stakeholders easy access to this data.

County as well as school benchmarks are administered to measure student performance. Weekly graded papers are sent home on Tuesdays to inform parents of assessment results and grades in academic areas. In an effort to keep parents informed, daily information is written in agendas. Every four and a half weeks, midterm progress reports are sent home to inform parents of student growth and areas that need improvement. Based on the student's academic progress, retention notices are sent home in January. A series of parent-teacher conferences continue throughout the remainder of the year, and tutorial services are offered to improve student achievement.

Open communication is utilized by both teachers and parents to ensure academic progress of all children. Teachers hold parent conferences, science night, EIP nights and communicate frequently through emails, weekly newsletters, phone calls and daily agendas. Our parent/teacher coordinator is also used to facilitate school/home connections.

3. How are data used to understand and improve overall school effectiveness?

Data are used to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of the students at Russell Elementary School. Teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents use the information collected to provide a candid picture of the academic needs of the students. It also provides teachers with valuable information so they can individualize instruction for their students. Our school improvement plan is reevaluated on a yearly basis and directly ties to the data from the previous school year. Once the data are evaluated additional assistance and enrichment can be provided through intercession, after-school tutoring, STEP time, summer school, and extended school year for special education students as needed.

4. How are teachers trained to understand and use data in the classroom?

Training is provided on student data by both the administrators as well as the Instructional Technology Coordinator at Russell Elementary School. This training is offered during faculty meetings, professional learning days, and technology related in-services throughout the school year. Teachers are trained on effective methods of accessing, interpreting, and disaggregating data so as to provide the necessary information to ensure individualized instruction and student achievement.

Data from the previous year's CRCT are generated in the form of pivot tables within Excel to provide the teachers with both class and individual student profile sheets. Data are further broken down by class, gender, ethnicity and other subgroups for teachers to ensure the specific target population's needs are addressed. Teachers are trained in data analysis on the HCLI so they can individualize reading instruction for the students here at Russell.

Beginning with the 2008 school year, teachers were also provided training on accessing data through the Houston County SharePoint Portal. This data library provides an interface to student data in a secure, real-time, web-based environment. Teachers are also trained on how to utilize reports within various software applications such as the CRCT Online Website, Classworks, Computer Performance System assessment devices, STAR, and Accelerated Reader to analyze student progress.

Resource & Support Systems

Standard: The school has the resources and services necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure achievement for all students.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement a curriculum that enable student to achieve expectations for student learning, to meet special needs, and to comply with applicable regulations. The school employs and allocates a staff that is well qualified for their assignments. The school provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The school ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
In fulfillment of this standard, the school:					
5.1	Recruits, employs, and mentors qualified professional staff that are capable of fulfilling assigned roles and responsibilities			X	
5.2	Assigns professional staff responsibilities based on their qualifications (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience)				X
5.3	Ensures that all staff participate in a continuous program of professional development				X
5.4	Provides and assigns staff that are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the school			X	
5.5	Budgets sufficient resources to support its educational programs and to implement its plans for improvement				X
5.6	Monitors all financial transactions through a recognized, regularly audited accounting system				X
5.7	Maintains the site, facilities, services, and equipment to provide an environment that is safe and orderly for all occupants			X	
5.8	Possesses a written security and crisis management plan with appropriate training for stakeholders			X	

5.9	Ensures that each student has access to guidance services that include, but are not limited to, counseling, appraisal, mentoring, staff consulting, referral, and educational and career planning				X
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Definitions of Indicator Rubric

- Not Evident Little or no evidence exists
- Emerging Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
- Operational Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
- Highly Functional Evidence indicate practices and procedures Are fully integrated and effectively and Consistently implemented

Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions that focus on the processes that are in place to support the school’s implementation of the practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school’s self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answer, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. What is the process for recruitment, induction, placement, development, evaluation, and retention of qualified teachers, administrators, and support staff?

In order to recruit teachers, Russell Elementary School (RES) participates in the county-wide job fair, opens its doors to college-enrolled teachers-in-training, and welcomes qualified substitutes and paraprofessionals. Once on staff, new teachers to RES participate in a mentoring program conducted by a veteran teacher of Russell that is certified in the Teacher Support Specialist Program. Professional development and training at RES is ongoing with activities during faculty meetings, monthly technology meetings, during planning, and on-going literacy training. New teachers are required to participate in five professional development classes offered by the school system.

For teacher retention, RES teachers participate in team-building activities at faculty meetings, grade level planning, retreat days, special holiday secret pal activities, and teacher appreciation meals throughout the school year. School morale has been raised by teachers working together as a team, not only for academic purposes for students, but to support and encourage each other. A Teacher of the

Year is chosen each spring, as well as a Paraprofessional of the Year.

2. How does the leadership ensure that the allocation of financial resources is supportive of the school's vision, educational programs, and its plans for school improvement?

Financial resources given by the federal, state, and county governments are appropriately allocated to programs at Russell based on the SIP.

Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) gives a \$100 gift to each teacher to purchase items needed throughout the school year. The PTO also sets fund-raising goals to purchase innovative instructional materials for teachers. PTO fundraisers include an annual Spring Fling Carnival and merchandise sales such as Coke and Coke products. School sponsored fundraisers involve a variety of programs such as Box Tops for Education, Publix Partners, school picture sales, discount cards featuring local merchants, sales of miscellaneous merchandise and products such as cookie dough. Our teachers are also given a \$100 gift card from the Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue, for classroom purchases at the beginning of the school year.

Teachers are encouraged to attend workshops and conferences based on faculty and student needs assessments. These are paid for through professional development funds and based on our school improvement plan. Participants report back to the faculty the beneficial information learned at these workshops and conferences. At bi-monthly faculty meetings, groups or individuals share best practices based on information learned at conferences, from in-service specialists, or county-wide training for specific academic areas.

3. How does the leadership ensure a safe and orderly environment for students and staff?

Russell Elementary maintains a safe and orderly environment by establishing clear procedures for students, staff, and visitors. Visitors are required to check in through the front office and sign in using the I-Dent-A-Kid computer program. A webcam snaps a picture of all visitors. Parents and other visitors are encouraged to visit our campus, but must have an appointment before going to a child's classroom.

Parents are welcome to eat lunch with their child, but must wait in the front lobby to accompany their child's class to the lunchroom.

Faculty and staff members are familiar with daily procedures, emergency plans, and mock drills. All faculty and staff members are

required to wear a Houston County school system ID badge each day. Russell staff and faculty are required to report any visitors who do not have on a yellow visitor's badge. Each classroom has an emergency flip chart to use in aiding communication for emergency purposes.

Non-homeroom teachers are strategically placed throughout the building during morning arrival and afternoon departure. Adults are present at the car rider ramp each morning to greet arriving students and open car doors for safety purposes. At dismissal time, car riders will be escorted to the car pick-up area in the front of the school by grade level teachers. Students are walked to the car by teachers on duty as parents arrive.

Bus riders are called by bus and report to the front of the school. Students remain in line as they board the bus. Administrators monitor both car riders and bus riders.

Homeroom teachers are required to be at their doors welcoming students as they arrive. Students practice code red, code yellow, fire drills, and severe weather drills to rehearse proper procedures.

Students are properly supervised at all times. Teachers are strategically positioned on the playground to monitor safety during recess. Each grade level is issued a walkie-talkie for use in maintaining contact with the front office when not in the building.

The school uses a security system with fob locks. A key fob is a small security hardware device with built-in authentication used to control and secure access to door locks. Teachers have a key fob that is programmed to work between the hours of 7 A.M. and 7 P.M. Fobs are issued by numbers keyed in to the computer database. The program can report information back to the principal of who used fobs and the time they were used.

Classroom substitutes and In-School Suspension teachers both have guidelines to ensure knowledge of all procedures in case of any emergencies that may arise.

Russell maintains a safe and orderly environment for our students by establishing and implementing our discipline plan school-wide. The plan involves a system of rules with rewards and consequences. Our students and teachers are trained in *Think Time*, which allows students a chance to stop behaviors that are detrimental to classroom order before escalation occurs. Good behavior is rewarded with a point system that culminates in Good Behavior Celebrations at the end of the nine week grading period, and a Mega Celebration at the end of the year for students who have attended all four celebrations. Daily good behavior incidents can be recognized with the giving of "Praise

Bucks” to the student which may be traded in weekly for small toys and favors at the "Praise Bucks" store each Friday. Students may be issued a blue slip when out of their homeroom by another teacher or supervising adult for undesirable actions in special area classes, the lunchroom, assemblies, or hallways. This slip informs the homeroom teacher that the student deserves to lose a point off their behavior score. More serious offenses are recorded on PFI (Plan for Improvement) forms that go home to inform parents. Parents sign and return PFI's to the classroom teacher. The accumulation of PFI's results in detention, ISS, and possible home suspension. Office referral forms are written to accompany students to the office informing administration of the behavior requiring immediate attention. Our students, parents, teachers, and administrators have responded favorably to this discipline plan. A discipline committee meets regularly to discuss the plan, make recommendations for improvements, and plan the celebrations.

4. What process is used to ensure and monitor that each student has access to guidance and resource services that meet the needs of the student?

Russell's intervention process is four-tiered. It begins with general strategies and a program offered to all students and expands to more specific services as needed on an individual basis. As different strategies are implemented, students may not experience success. In this case, a student may need to move to a tier with more student-specific interventions to be successful. A change in tier level will provide additional access to guidance and resources. In order for students to move to a different tier, teachers may meet with counselors, administrators, SSTs, social workers, school psychologists, and program specialists to discuss concerns.

Based on documentation and committee recommendations, students could be placed in Early Intervention Programs (EIP), Student Support Teams (SST), tutoring, or qualify for special education testing.

Students referred to special education are tested by a school system psychologist, and a committee then meets to discuss test results and determine placement. If placement is needed, Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) goals are determined and monitored through the special education teachers.

Schools are also allotted "20 Day” funds for after school tutoring and intersession opportunities. Intersession is a remediation program offered twice a year during the fall and winter breaks to help struggling students. Students having difficulties in reading, math, and language arts are also recommended by teachers to join an after-school tutoring group that is funded by the "20 Day" instructional funds. Letters are sent to parents and once approval is obtained, students begin tutoring.

After-school tutoring begins in October and ends in April. Students can be recommended throughout the school year if they begin struggling with concepts.

Our character education program is designed to motivate students to practice good character traits. A character word is presented each week during morning announcements. Students from a designated homeroom define the word and give examples to motivate students to incorporate the word into their daily lives.

All students receive classroom guidance from a certified school counselor. Classroom guidance programs consist of classes that inform students on *Good Touch, Bad Touch*, test-taking skills, study skills, career awareness, conflict resolution, communication skills, personal hygiene, and the *Caring About Me* program that explains puberty to boys and girls in separate sessions.

Students needing additional services are referred to the counselor by a teacher, a parent, or another adult. Small group counseling programs consist of support groups for students dealing with parents absent due to military deployment, divorce and separation issues, or grief issues due to the death of a parent or sibling. The counselor also provides small groups for test preparation for struggling students, middle school transitions, and specific conflict resolution issues such as bullying.

Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

STANDARD: The school fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its stakeholders.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of stakeholders. School personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.

Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
In fulfillment of this standard, the school:					
6.1	Fosters collaboration with community stakeholders to support student learning			X	
6.2	Has formal channels to listen to and communicate with stakeholders			X	
6.3	Solicits the knowledge and skills of stakeholders to enhance the work of the school			X	
6.4	Communicates the expectations for student learning and goals for improvement to all stakeholders			X	

6.5	Provides information about students, their performance, and school effectiveness that is meaningful and useful to stakeholders			X	
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Definitions of Indicator Rubric

Not Evident	Little or no evidence exists
Emerging practice	Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice
Operational	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented
Highly Functional	Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions that focus on the processes that are in place to support the school's implementation of the practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school's self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. How does the school's leadership ensure that the school is responsive to community expectations and stakeholder satisfaction?

The leadership team endeavors to bring in community involvement in the school such as parents, local businesses, and various other sponsors. Administrators are visible each day for parents to discuss any concerns, wants, or needs. The leadership responds to all problems quickly and professionally and with empathy and concern. The leadership sponsors retreats and other over night workshops to plan ways to communicate with our community and its stakeholders.

Community and stakeholder concerns are addressed through individual newsletters from classroom teachers and Parent Coordinator. Teachers also address concerns through phone calls, conferences, letters home, daily agendas and e-mails. At the administrative level, concerns are addressed through conferences, phone conferencing and School Council meetings which are attended by community business leaders, civic leaders, parents and faculty. Concerns at the leadership level are also addressed through phone calls by the school message system and individual phone calls made by administrators and other staff members.

Our school utilizes a Parent Coordinator who is responsible for fostering open lines of communication between parents, teachers,

administrators and other school personnel. The school's Parent Coordinator records parent contacts, recruits parent volunteers and creates a school wide parent newsletter. Mini workshops, hosted by the Parent Coordinator and staffed by teachers, are offered to parents and students. The Parent Coordinator also created and distributed a Parent-Teacher-Student Compact. These compacts are signed by parents, teachers and students indicating their pledge to fulfill the responsibilities necessary for a successful school year.

2. How does the school's leadership foster a learning community?

The leadership continuously provides professional development in areas of need, monthly instructionally focused faculty meetings and Better Seeking Team decision making. Teachers are encouraged to plan together and share ideas on various projects. Teachers are given the opportunity to visit other schools to observe instruction. The leadership also provides STEP (Student Tutorial/ Extended Planning) time which allows grade levels to have extended common planning to incorporate GPS (Georgia Performance Standards) and create common assessments.

Administrators conduct formal Georgia Teacher Observation Instrument (GTOI) evaluations and provide immediate feedback to teachers through written documentation. Each teacher is scheduled for an end of the year evaluation with the administrator to discuss each teacher's performance and contributions to the school. Teachers are assisted in gaining insights on their strengths and weaknesses.

Administrators are proactive in providing assistance when a concern or need arises. Teachers also benefit from formal, as well as, informal observations by the administrators.

Teachers attend workshops, conferences and training such as the Homegrown Writing Conference, Reading and Writing conference, ESOL Summer Project and the Math Cohort Training. Teachers are encouraged to share ideas with the faculty discussing strategies learned. These instructional opportunities enhance faculty insights on best practices. Teachers also meet continually as grade levels to plan together, give feedback on student work and benchmarks. The review of these assessment results guides further instruction to best meet students' needs.

Monthly faculty meetings focus on enhancing the learning community. Our faculty participates in administrative led book studies such as Ruby Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty and How Full is Your Bucket?* by Tom Rath and Donald Clifton. Through these studies we have adopted the philosophy that "every child can learn." In addition, our faculty meetings include

teacher led instructional workshops on topics such as Writer's Workshop, Reader's Workshop, and GPS enhancement strategies.

Our learning community is further fostered through programs involving teacher, student and community participation. These programs include after-school mentoring and tutoring, Science and Math Nights, Book Fair Family Night, Drama Club, FSEA, CRCT and ESOL Family Nights. Our staff welcomes community members to serve as mentors to assist with at-risk students to work on individual needs. Community volunteers are encouraged to aid teachers in a variety of ways both in and out of the classroom.

3. What avenues are used to communicate information to stakeholders about students, their performance, and school effectiveness?

To effectively communicate school-wide information to stakeholders, Russell Elementary uses the Public Access Channel 17, the school marquee, weekly grade level newsletters, the school website, student agendas, informational notices, automated phone messenger, a looped PowerPoint at the school's entrance, test data posted in the conference room, monthly Parent/Teacher Organization programs/meetings, and school and county handbooks. County handbooks are provided in Spanish, and several Russell faculty members fluent in Spanish assisted in providing information to parents.

To effectively communicate academic and behavioral performance to stakeholders, Russell teachers provide graded papers for parent and student review each week. Midterm progress reports are provided. Honor Roll information is submitted to local newspapers each nine weeks. In grades K - 2, student behavior is documented daily using agendas which are provided by the school. In grades 3 - 5, student behavior is documented daily and is available to parents. The discipline plans mandates parental notification of disruptive behavior. Student achievements in academics, behavior, and physical fitness are celebrated in a formal awards ceremony at the end of the year. Parents of third and fifth grade students were invited to a forum regarding CRCT requirements prior to testing. ESOL parents were invited to a separate session regarding the CRCT. Interpreters for language groups represented at Russell translated the information via a headphone/microphone system. The Title I Parent Involvement Coordinator organized a hands-on science night with the help of the Museum of Aviation. A Title I parent survey was sent home to all parents to provide them with a voice in enhancing the work of the school. Parents of special needs children completed a state of Georgia survey which provided them an opportunity to give feedback on

services which their children received at Russell Elementary. Teachers communicate successes and concerns with parents via e-mail, phone calls, written correspondence, and conferences.

Commitment to Continuous Improvement

STANDARD: The school establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that focuses on student performance.

Impact Statement: A school is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement that aligns the functions of the school with the expectations for student learning. Improvement efforts are sustained and the school demonstrates progress in improving student performance and school effectiveness. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process.

Indicators Rubric

Please indicate the degree to which the noted practices/processes are in place in the school. The responses to the rubric should help the school identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement as well as guide and inform the school's responses to the focus questions and examples of evidence.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly
In fulfillment of this standard, the school:					
7.1	Engages in a continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the school is pursuing (Vision); maintains a rich and current description of students, their performance, school effectiveness, and the school community (Profile); employs goals and interventions to improve student performance (Plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (Results)			X	
7.2	Engages stakeholders in the processes of continuous improvement			X	
7.3	Ensures that plans for continuous improvement are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school and expectations for student learning				X
7.4	Provides professional development for school personnel to help them implement improvement interventions to achieve improvement goals				X
7.5	Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to stakeholders				X
7.6	Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its continuous process of improvement			X	

Definitions of Indicator Rubric

Not Evident

Little or no evidence exists

Emerging
practice

Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of

Operational

Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented

Highly Functional

Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

Focus Questions

Please respond to the following questions that focus on the processes that are in place to support the school's implementation of the practices outlined in the indicators rubric. Responses to these questions should support the school's self-assessment on the indicators rubric. Be thorough and concise in your answers, focusing on quality and depth over quantity.

1. What is the process for continuous improvement used by the school and what are the results that this process is delivering for student performance and school effectiveness?

During the first few months of school, the teachers use class profiles containing information such as CRCT and ITBS scores for their students. This data is analyzed for strengths and weaknesses and then utilized in planning and improving instruction. In addition, this information is used for differentiating instruction to meet the needs of the struggling student who may be referred to the Student Support Team for guidance and assistance in meeting their specific needs. If several methods and alternatives are chosen, employed over a period of time and success has not been met, then the committee will attempt to identify, through meetings with experts in fields related to a specific area, what services or resources will meet the needs of the child.

The faculty has a Data Room on campus which houses student data from local and state mandated tests and assessments. The information provides the teachers with a resource which assists in short and long term planning of goals and objectives for each grade level based on prior achievement. The results are also made available via the internet and school website as well as the HCBOE website.

For individual classes, the teacher is given an overall summary of performance and an individual student summary which is used for planning and delivery of instruction so the areas of weakness can be identified and addressed. Included in the assessment results, there is typically a comparison of grade level, system, and state results to further assist the faculty on implementing corrective or enrichment strategies.

For each test or assessment, the teacher is able to determine how each student and the class as a whole performed on each objective and what areas of instruction including pedagogy and methodology that she may need to pursue through professional development. This also allows an opportunity to seek guidance and assistance from others on grade level or within the faculty whose students achieved higher results in specific areas.

CRCT Summary

Students in grades first through fifth are administered the CRCT in April of each year. Grades three through 5 take the Reading, English/Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science portions of the CRCT. Students in grades one and two are administered the ELA, Reading and Math portions.

According to 2008 CRCT results, RES had a high percentage of students who met or exceeded standards in Reading, Language Arts, Social Studies and Science. In third and fifth, the scores were above 92 percent in Social Studies and proved an overall increase of 9 percent in Science. In addition to these accomplishments, the performance levels met or exceeded school-wide goals within in all areas. In the areas of Reading and ELA, the scores exceeded 90 percent and were overall a total of 94.4 school-wide. These results will contribute to an additional year of meeting the state of Georgia's AYP as well as a second year status of *Distinguished School*. The overall results have been encouraging and have demonstrated that the school improvement plan is functioning as it should.

2. What steps are taken to ensure that the improvement goals reflect student learning needs that are aligned with the vision and purpose of the school?

Many of our school based decisions are made with assistance from our Better Seeking Team also referred to by other institutions as the School Improvement Team. This title reflects the desire to seek out ways to improve instruction with the goal of obtaining the highest achievement possible rather than just simply showing improvement. The BST is made up of teachers, specialists, and administrators. Our team meets to discuss issues related to school improvement and student achievement. Each year a team of teachers attend Leadership Retreats where two days are spent analyzing test data and setting goals for our school which has and will result in high achievement for our students. From the BST there have been additional teams that have branched off to form sub groups:

- *Discipline Team* –develops strategies to increase appropriate student behavior in order to maximize student learning
- *Literacy Team* – meets to create a pacing guide, to develop school-wide consistencies in Language Arts instruction, and to establish incentives which will foster motivation in the Language Arts areas

In addition, teachers are given an annual survey requesting input on how the school meets the needs of the students as well as additional

stakeholders. The 2007 responses demonstrated a need for more time in horizontal collaboration. The teachers felt that they needed more release days for grade level planning. Therefore, there has been an allocation so the teachers received three release days to plan together to become even more effective in meeting the needs of our students. In addition, the teachers are also given time to observe other master teachers during the instructional day for professional growth opportunities at Russell and other top performing schools.

Furthermore, a literacy coach was highly recommended by the teachers as part of our professional plan. Funds were made available through Title I for a part-time literacy coach at our school during the 2007-2008 school year. This assisted in the desired instruction and provided the much needed support in regards to improving our Language Arts program and using Language Arts in a cross-curricular approach at Russell Elementary so that all areas of the curriculum were positively impacted.

3. What process is used to ensure that the school personnel are provided professional development and technical assistance to implement interventions and achieve improvement goals?

Russell Elementary continues to provide the highest level of educational opportunities by highly qualified teachers who understand the importance of continued personal and professional growth in all areas of the elementary curriculum, instruction, and administration. Since the demographics of the school have rapidly changed from 34 percent on free/reduced lunches in 2004 to over 60 percent at the beginning of the 2008 school year the administration realized the need for the Title I funds as a new clientele had to be reached and a new approach to student growth and achievement were necessary. Therefore, one of many school-wide book studies emerged which was first introduced by one of the school's assistant principals who has several years of experience working with children and families from lower SES situations. The book study was conducted with the entire faculty and focused on understanding the unique issues and needs faced by families that Russell Elementary is now serving. *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* by Ruby Payne allowed the faculty to enter into the lives of children in poverty and to understand how to reach all students. Knowledge of support systems from the state and city were discussed and ways in which these could be utilized by the students and families when necessary.

In addition, another series of book studies were conducted school wide as the administration and teachers assisted in facilitating the meetings and discussions on books such as *Closing the Achievement Gap* by P. Davenport and G. Anderson, *What Works in Schools: Action Research* by R. Marzano and *Assessments that Work* by Ann Davies. Not only was the entire faculty engaged in book studies, but there

were grade levels that sought more professional development in specific areas such as Language Arts and integrating this subject throughout the curriculum. The kindergarten teachers began a book and program study on the *Four Blocks: Building Blocks* series by Dorothy P. Hall and Elaine Williams. The grade level has shared many of their findings and will continue to incorporate this framework into the county's adopted Language Arts series by Lucy Calkins and the CLIF model also mandated by the HCBE.

Another example of professional development the lower grade teachers arranged was to have a guest speaker and writer for the *Four Blocks and Building Blocks Model* to conduct an integrated Language Arts conference. Cunningham, Hall, & Defee (1998) documented in a summary of an eight year quantitative research study on the *Four Blocks* literacy framework that the use of the framework for developing lesson plans and teaching strategies provided significant gains in student reading achievement. The findings indicated that the schools using the framework obtained standardized reading results with 90 percent of the students placing within the top two quartiles. The *Four Blocks* framework and findings were reviewed and named a new balanced literacy "Promising Practice" (Education Commission of the States, 2001).

Elaine Williams was one of the creators and writers for the *Building Blocks* model and therefore was an expert who provided a wealth of knowledge for the teachers which was then shared in a PowerPoint presentation during a faculty meeting during the following school year. Materials were also shared with the faculty on ways to integrate CLIF and a balanced framework which had been researched and proven effective through the use of these models. The teachers are in the process of arranging a follow-up visit by the group to note changes and growth as well as other opportunities for improvement.

The administration also realized that our staff needed to build bridges and bonds to ensure that all knowledge and learning opportunities were disseminated by teachers horizontally and vertically. In order for this to occur there must be an understanding and continual work toward building a community of learners. The administration and two lead teachers conducted the book study using *How Full Is Your Bucket* by T. Rath and D. Clifton which resulted in positive feedback and an increase in grade level planning and communication among all levels and specialty areas. A survey revealed that the teachers seemed to be approaching areas of difficulty with a more positive attitude and also with members of the faculty and staff.

To further improve the concept of building a community of learners for professional growth, the faculty has weekly extended morning planning time for collaboration which affords us the opportunity to

work together as a team. We also have planning time after school for the same purposes. These combined professional development opportunities will ensure that teachers have enough time to plan, create common assessments, use data to improve instruction, and reflect on improvements that are necessary to meet the students' needs.

As noted previously, the faculty and administration are committed to continual growth in their profession and on a quest to gain as much pedagogy, methodology, and skills necessary to ensure ultimate success for each child at Russell Elementary. To accomplish this monumental task, the faculty has first embraced the state training in the areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and the upcoming social studies series. Ten of the teachers at Russell were selected to become a part of the district mathematics cohort which members are trained over a series of several work sessions during July of 2007 and throughout the school year. These teachers then redeliver and provide support for various grade level teachers as they are implementing the GPS and the county adopted mathematics textbooks and curriculum. These teachers were more than willing and excited about the opportunity to become teacher-leaders and being on the fore front of the innovations and technology that will be used. In addition, two teachers from Russell volunteered to join the social studies cohort to begin developing the units of study and guide the implementation and development of a school-wide plan for the county social studies textbook adoption.

Faculty members are more than willing to attend professional learning conferences in order to grow as professionals. Conferences that we have found valuable include Georgia Reading, Writing and Home Grown Institute, Four Blocks and Building Blocks, and the National Reading and Writing Conference held last year in Alabama. Various members of the faculty will be attending conferences throughout the summer of 2008 in preparation for the 2008-2009 school year. The faculty also looks forward to attending more professional learning conferences in the next year as plans are being made in various areas of the curriculum and as funds become available.

Russell Elementary is continuing to incorporate technological innovations into our teaching curriculum. We currently have 366 computers on site, and two academic labs. Each classroom is equipped with at least four student workstations that can be accessed throughout the day to be used for *Accelerated Reader*, *Classworks*, *Starfall*, word processing programs, computer programs that correlate with our curriculum, internet research, and state generated practice tests. All computers in the school may be used for individualizing students' work as correlated with the Georgia Performance Standards. Once a student is placed in a particular track, he may work at his own

pace until he successfully completes particular domains. Teachers may track the time a student spends on each activity, see reports about the progress the student is making, or re-assign non-mastered domains.

Numerous classrooms will be equipped with ACTIV boards with projector set-ups. These boards will allow the teachers and students to be more interactive during daily instruction. These funds have been made available through the use of Title I funds allocated for this specific purpose by administration.

The school also has two-sets of E-Instruction Computer Performance Systems available to allow increased interaction with students during instructional time.

4. How does the leadership ensure that the improvement plan is implemented, monitored, achieved, and communicated to stakeholders?

The Russell Elementary administration, especially the principal, attempts to provide support and assistance to all stakeholders for the combined purpose of conveying, and accomplishing the school's mission and vision. Russell Elementary Administration has an "open-door" policy which seeks to increase the interest and involvement of parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in the academic and behavioral needs of the children. This policy allows for open communication with the administration and teachers within the limits of the instructional schedule. The faculty and staff are visited on a daily basis for the purpose of conveying the mission and vision of the school through informal as well as formal interactions in the form of verbal and written interactions. These daily interactions serve as a reminder of each stakeholder's purpose and to especially guide and monitor the daily instruction of the faculty in order to meet criteria aligned with the evolving vision of the school.

The suggestions made by the NPTA are also supported and used in the federal regulations set forth by the government to ensure that the Title I school promotes a successful communication plan and an involvement plan for all stakeholders. The Title I stakeholders will be informed of any changes to this status and addendums to the following policy guidelines as they are invited to attend and assist in the review and development of this plan as well as other instructional plans and objectives through PTO meetings, School Council, and Better Seeking Team meetings.

This Title I policy will be included in the school handbook and available to all interested stakeholders. This plan will also be translated

as previously mentioned so that all stakeholders have an opportunity to choose involvement.

1. At the beginning of the year each student will receive a letter explaining the significance of the school's mission and vision as well as the impact of being a Title I school and the many advantages and opportunities this will afford.
2. Each year an Open House will be scheduled for all parents at which time information about the Title I program will be disseminated through an administrator as a speaker and through literature.
3. Each grade level will plan a specific date and send invitations to parents for an open session to discuss the grade level curriculum, testing, assessments, and ways that parents can assist the students with difficult areas.
4. PTO meetings will be held monthly to involve the parents in discussions about the performance data, assessment results, school improvement, and other legalities concerning Title I regulations. This information will also be made available on the school's website for parents to peruse at their convenience.
5. The teachers will be prepared to disclose community resources that can aid in various situations when needed by the student or for the family unit. The teachers will work with the parents and assist them with delicate situations in a compassionate and respectful manner.

The faculty and staff understand the importance of making Russell Elementary the "Best School in the Universe" but there cannot be success without the commitment of all stakeholders especially within the parent/school relationship. We are determined to make this daily adage a reality.