SAMPLE FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

School:_____ Date:_____

Los Angeles Unified School District
School Review

Category	SAMPLE QUESTIONS
Classroom Instruction: Intellectual Engagement – Cognitive engagement – Cultural relevance and differentiation – Standards-based projects, activities and assignments – Opportunity to respond	**Students:** • Do you feel challenged in your classes? Do you feel engaged in your classes? • In what ways are you challenged in your classes? How could teachers challenge you even more? • When do you feel connected to the activities in your classroom? **Administrators:** • In what ways do teachers in your school ensure that all students are engaged and challenged in the learning process? • When you visit classrooms, in what ways are lessons aligned to the standards? • How often do you visit classrooms where the lessons are not aligned to the standards? **Parents:** • Is your child challenged in class? If yes, in what ways? If no, how do you think it could be improved? • In what ways is your child connected in his or her classes? In what other ways might teachers connect the classroom to your child?
Classroom Instruction: Learning Environment – Classroom safety – Physical environment – Classroom climate – Teacher knowledge of individuals – Expectations for behavior – Management of Routines, Procedures and Transitions	**Teachers:** • Describe your classroom learning environment. o How do students interact with you and each other? • How does the physical layout support learning goals? When does the physical layout interfere with learning goals? • What are your expectations for behavior in your classroom? How do you share these expectations and ensure that they are adopted? **Students:** • When do you feel respected in your classes? When do you feel disrespected in your classes? • How safe do you feel sharing ideas in your classes? • How well do your teachers know you? How do you know? • How do your teachers share their expectations for behavior with the class? **Parents:** • How well do your child's teachers know your child? How do you know? • Describe the expectations for behavior in your child's classes. • How does the teacher communicate expectations for behavior? • What happens when these expectations are not met?

Unwavering focus on academic achievement

| Unwavering focus on academic achievement | **Classroom Instruction: Classroom Talk**
– Discussion Techniques & Student Participation
– Quality and Purpose of Questions
– Use of Academic Language | Students:
• When you are in class, how much does your teacher talk?
• How often do your teachers create activities where you speak to other students about what you are learning?
• Describe some of the speaking or presenting activities you do in your classes.

Parents:
• How often does your child "bring home" the language of the classroom in the form of new vocabulary, concepts, or questions?
• How well does your child speak about what they learn at school or answer your questions about what happens at school?

Teachers:
• How do you engage students with questions, for examples inquiry-based learning, Bloom's levels of questions, Socratic method?
• What opportunities exist in class and out of class for students to use academic language?

Administrators
• Describe the types of classroom talk you most often see during classroom visits?
• Based on class visits, how do teachers foster academic talk in the classroom?
• How well do students engage in the use of academic language and content-specific vocabulary?
• What opportunities exist for students to use academic language in a larger setting outside the classroom? |
| | **Classroom Instruction: Assessment**
– Assessment Criteria
– Monitoring of Student Learning
– Feedback to students | Teachers:
• Please describe methods you use to determine if a student understands the material set forth in the classroom.
• In what ways do you monitor student learning, and how frequently?
• In what ways do you offer students feedback about their learning or assignments? How often do you offer feedback?

Students:
• Please describe the kind of feedback that teachers give you on your work, or during class. Do you know how well you are doing in class? How do you know?
• How does your teacher know if you, or the class, understand something?
• How does your teacher support you when you do not understand?
• When you have an activity or an assignment, do you know how you will be graded? How do you know?
• When you have an activity or an assignment, do you know why you are doing it? How do you know?

Administrators:
• When you visit a classroom, what methods do you observe teachers using to monitor learning and progress?
• How do teachers monitor student learning?
• How do teachers provide feedback to students about their learning?
• How are students assessed?

Parents:
• How does your child know if they are learning?
• How does the school communicate to you when your student is/is not learning?
• How is your student assessed? What are the standards for good work or proficiency? |

Unwavering focus on academic achievement	**Professional Development** – Collaborative meeting and planning – Focus on content and pedagogy – School-wide instructional strategies – Evidence of PD in classrooms	Teachers/Administrators • Does your school have school-wide instructional strategies? If so, are they implemented? How do you know? • What structures, such as policies or trainings, are in place to facilitate this process? • Do you meet, plan, reflect, and/or work together with other teachers and/or administrators? If **yes,** please describe what you do together, what typically happens, and how much time a week you meet. If **no** why not. • How does professional development impact your classroom? Please provide examples. • What improvements could be made to ensure that PD focuses on content, pedagogy, and reflection? • What types of meetings do teachers attend? How are these meetings aligned with content, pedagogy, collaboration, and reflection? • How often do teachers in your school meet, plan, reflect, and work together? • What is the content or structure of these types of collaboration sessions? How effective are collaboration sessions? • What barriers exist to prevent teachers from meeting, planning, reflecting, and working together? • What professional development is offered to teachers at your school? • How does the professional development address the instructional needs of the teachers and students? • Does your school have a cohesive positive behavior support strategy? How consistently is it implemented? Students: • Do teachers at your school work together? How do you know? • How are students rewarded for good behavior?
	Professional Teaching Culture – Staff self-expectations – Distributed leadership – Support from experts	Teachers: • Describe your role(s) in the school. What are your expectations for yourself and others in these roles? • In what ways is leadership distributed at your school? Who participates as a leader and why? • What leadership opportunities does the administration offer to non-administrators? • In what ways are you supported and coached? Are you satisfied with your opportunities to develop as a professional? • Please describe the staff morale. What factors most affect staff morale? Administrators: • What expectations does your staff have for their own work? Please explain. • In what ways do you distribute leadership at the school? Is it effective? In what ways? • How are students and parents involved in leadership? • How is the school supported by experts?

focus on academic achievement	**Data Use to Guide and Personalize Instruction: School Practices**
	– Collaborative data review
	– Ongoing problem-solving cycles
	– Responsive instruction
		Teachers:
		• How does your school use data to develop lesson plans and work with students? Who participates?
		• How do you use data to drive instruction and improve student learning?
		    o To what extent has using data to drive instruction made a difference in your teaching?
		    o In what other ways might you use data to drive instruction?
		• Describe the data review process at your school.
		• Are you on a problem-solving team at your school? If yes, how does this team collect and use data?
		    o In what ways is it useful?
		    o How often is data collected and/or used?
		• In what ways have you changed instruction to respond to student needs?
		• In what ways does data affect school practices?
		
		Administrators:

		• To what extent do teachers on your campus use data to drive instruction? • Describe the data review process teachers use. Is it consistent? Are you involved? If so, in what ways? • How have using data to drive instruction made a difference in the way teachers perform and students learn? • What barriers exist to using data to drive instruction and influence student learning? • How does the school use data to influence school-wide practices?
	Data Use to Guide and Personalize Instruction: Leadership – Principal & leadership use data-driven decision making – Monitor progress – Ongoing feedback & teacher capacity-building	Teachers/Administrators • Please describe how decisions are made at your school (i.e. Are stakeholders involved? Is data reviewed? Are issues revisited as needed?) • Does your school have benchmarks toward achievement goals? How often are these benchmarks reviewed? • How are stakeholders involved in key decisions? • How do decisions at school align with school-wide goals? How does the school use data to guide leadership or build capacity? • How does the school build capacity? • How often do administrators visit classrooms? How is feedback provided after a visit? • In what ways is feedback provided to teachers?
School culture, climate, & operations	**Safe, Clean, Welcoming Environment** – Physical Safety (Campus) – Cleanliness – Welcoming environment – Orderly i.e. respect, discipline strategy – Attendance	Teachers and/or Administrators: • Describe interactions between students, teachers and others at your school. • Describe the school-wide approach to discipline? How do you think this approach affects interactions between teachers, students and others? • Describe attendance patterns for students and staff. What barriers prevent students from attending every day? What motivates students to attend every day? Students: • How clean is your school campus? Please explain • How safe is your school campus? Please explain. • Describe what you see and hear when you enter the campus in the morning. • Describe behavior in the hallways and at lunch and nutrition breaks. • Where do you feel safe or unsafe on your school campus? • What motivates you to come to school every day? What prevents you from attending every day? Parents: • How safe is the school campus? What concerns do you have about safety? • When do you feel welcome on campus? When do you feel unwelcome on campus? • Describe what you see or hear when you enter campus, in terms of campus environment.

School culture, climate, & operations that support academic achievement	**Environment that Maximizes Time on Learning** – Student access to Core Content – Uninterrupted instructional time	Teachers: • What interrupts your teaching? How often is your teaching interrupted? What systems exist to minimize interruptions? • What systems are in place in your classroom to help students access Core Content? • What systems are in place school-wide to help students access Core Content? • What barriers impede students from accessing Core Content? Parents: • What choices do you and your child have about the classes your child is taking? Do you feel that your child is in the appropriate classes? • What barriers impede your child from accessing Core Content?
	Personalized Respectful, Responsive, Environment for All Students & Staff – Personalization of students and adults experience – Student access to structures that connect them to adult support – Support to address socio-economic needs of students	Teachers and/or Administrators: • How does your school address the socio-economic needs of students? • How are your professional interests and goals incorporated into the environment? • In what ways is the school environment respectful and responsive to you as an individual? • In what ways do you personalize the environment for students? • In what ways do students have access to adult support or mentoring opportunities? Students: • What adult/s on your school campus know you well? • If you had a problem on campus and needed advice or assistance, (like bullying or having trouble understanding how to study for a test) to whom would you go to for assistance? Would you seek out an adult? Why or why not? • What programs or activities are you involved in at school? Parents • How does the school address the socioeconomic needs of your child, for example health care, free/reduced lunch, connections to community resources? • What programs or activities is your child involved in at school? • What adult at school knows your child well and cares about their well-being?

	Collaborative Family & Community Involvement
	– Opportunities for high-quality family and community involvement
	– Regular communication between school and home
	– Families have access to updated student information
		Teachers and Administrators:
		• How are families and/or community involved in your school?
		   o To what extent are their opinions and suggestions respected?
		   o How does the school communicate with parents or community members? How often?
		   o How are parents or community members engaged in meaningful ways?
		   o What barriers impede more parents or community members from engaging?
		Students:
		• Do you and/or your parents monitor your academic progress? If yes, how? If no, why not?
		• When and in what ways does the school communicate with your parents?
		• How is the community involved in your school?
		• When do your parents come to your school? For what reasons?
		
		Parents:
		• Do you know how your child is doing in school? How do you know?
		• If you have concerns about your child, do you feel you can partner with the school to address these concerns?
		• Do you feel adequately informed about events, policies, and your child's progress? Please explain.
		• When do you come to campus? For what reasons?
		• How is the community involved in the school?
		• When does the school contact you? For what reasons?

School culture, climate, & operations	**Leadership Focused on instructional improvement**
	– Engaging stakeholders to set student learning goals/targets
	– Clear communication of goals and expectations
	– Shared direction, coherent policies, practices, procedures
	– Core Curriculum and Intervention program selection.
		Teachers and/or Administrators:
		• Does your school have shared learning goals and targets?
		   o If so, what are they, and how were the goals developed?
		   o How are these goals communicated? And to whom are they communicated?
		   o Do you feel you have the support necessary to achieve these goals?
		   o How are other stakeholders engaged with these goals?
		   o What policies or practices support these goals?
		   o What policies or practices prevent attaining these goals?
		• Think about your schedule. Who has input into your schedule? Why is your schedule the way it is?
		
		Parents:
		• What are the goals at the school? Are these the same goals you have for your child?
		• Who set these goals? If you wanted to discuss these goals, with whom would you speak?

Leadership Focused on Instructional Improvement	**Mission and Data-Driven Resource Alignment and Management**
	– Aligns Resources to School-wide Goals
	– Manages Resources (i.e financial, political, technological, and human resources)
	– Creates teacher leadership and learning opportunities
	– Expectations for school culture of respect and trust
	– Creates and monitors a staff retention strategy
		Teachers/Administration
		• Do you feel that your schools' resources are allocated effectively? Please explain.
		• Who manages various resources at your school?
		• How are available resources used to support school-wide goals?
		• How might resources be managed differently?
		• How are resources used to provide leadership and learning opportunities?
		• How are resources used to foster a culture of respect and trust?
		• Who looks for new funding-sources?
		• What barriers exist to building a culture of respect and trust?
		• Are staff members retained year to year?
		    o What influences staff to stay or go?
		    o What strategies are in place to retain highly effective teachers?
		    o What strategies are in place to develop teachers with high potential?
		    o What leadership opportunities exist for teachers?

	Shared Leadership with Staff, Family and Community with Clear Goals of Supporting Academic Achievement – Reciprocal accountability – Distributed leadership – Partnership with other schools – Partnership with community – Partnership with parents	Teachers/Administration • To what extent does the administration ensure that teachers and staff have the support (e.g., resources, directions, training, regular performance feedback) to do their work? • Do you partner with the community? How does this support student learning? • Who is responsible for student success? • What opportunities exist for vertical articulation with other schools in your feeder pattern? • How often do teachers and leadership meet with other schools to observe practice and/or provide feedback? • How do community, family, and staff hold each other accountable? • What accountability systems are in place? Parents • How often are parents or community members involved in activities that mutually benefit participants and the school?