Considerations for Planning, Aligning, and Evaluating a First 10 School and Community Team

The following guide is intended to start and facilitate conversations around alignment for First 10 Schools and Communities. Alignment is the concept referring to the range of policies and practices designed to put children from birth to age ten on a positive developmental pathway that takes what they have learned in preschool and builds on it through the early elementary grades. The following nine components each contain five cross-cutting keys with multiple questions for consideration to help identify strengths of current practice and opportunities for growth. Use this guide to encourage growth in your First 10 Schools and Communities.

Curriculum Alignment	
Description: Curriculum is a guide to determine what is essential for teaching and learning, so that every student has access to equitable educational opportunities. Curriculum alignment is the process by which caregivers/educators across all levels evaluate standards, teaching, learning, and needs, to eliminate gaps in whole child development across student populations.	
Cross-Cutting Keys	**Considerations:**
Layering of Support	• Do all students have access to high-quality core/universal curriculum? • Is the curriculum flexible enough to provide intensified support for areas of need? • Are the chosen instructional programs evidence based? • Does the curriculum align with the school needs based on data?
Family Engagement	• Do families have input on curriculum? • Are families provided with information on programming and curriculum across all age spans and subjects (settings)? • Are families provided support to understand the programs and curriculum? • Are families invited to engage with the school curriculum? • Do families feel comfortable to ask clarifying questions about the school curriculum?
Early Childcare/ Early Education	• Are the chosen instructional programs evidence based? • Is the curriculum age and developmentally appropriate across the continuum of child development? • Is instructional programming comprehensive and supportive across all of Maine's Early Learning Development Standards and Learning Results?
Community	• Are there afterschool programs to support programs and curriculum? • Does the curriculum meet the needs of the community? • Is the curriculum being supported with community resources? • Does the community have access to public information as it pertains to programs and curriculum?
Leadership	• Do educators have access to continued professional learning that support the implementation if high quality instructional programing? • Does the leadership team have a clear process to select evidence based high quality instructional programs? • Does the leadership team assess for culturally appropriate and equitable factors when selecting instructional programs? • Does leadership provided ample opportunities for educators to collaborate for the purpose of including intensified support for students with varying levels?

Assessment and Data Alignment	
Description: Aligned assessments accurately match up so that students learn what you intend, and you accurately assess what students are learning across student populations. Assessment data are aligned to standards, instructional programing, and research on children's progressions and milestones of learning and development. (https://education.illinoisstate.edu/csep/b3/Aligned%20Assessments%20Overview.pdf)	
Cross-Cutting Keys	**Considerations:**
Layering of Support	• Are assessments aligned with the goals of each tier of instruction? (Tier 1 = Core instruction for all learners. Tier 2 = Targeted or strategic instruction/intervention layered over core instruction for some learners. Tier 3 = Intensive instruction/intervention layered over core and targeted instruction for few learners.) • Is assessment data reviewed in conjunction with other data points at each tier (instructional data, curricular data, environment data, and fidelity(integrity) data)? • Do assessments become increasingly detailed and individualized to identify instructional needs as students move up the tiers of support?
Family Engagement	• Are families aware of the kinds of assessments being administered to their children and the purpose of these assessments? • Are families given opportunity to review the data generated by the assessments their schools use? • Is there a place where families can get additional information regarding assessments when they have questions or concerns?
Early Childcare/ Early Education	• Are the assessments age and developmentally appropriate? • Do the assessments provide information that is relevant to decision making for intensifying or reducing supports as needed? • Do assessments across age and grade spans align to learning progressions and connect across those progressions to document children's growth and inform instructional practice? • Are assessment procedures individualized to the child?
Community	• Are selected assessments culturally responsive to the population?
Leadership	• Does the leadership team communicate the assessments teachers and interventionist will use for monitoring achievement? • Has the leadership team developed a timeline for assessments? • Has the leadership team established a schedule for reviewing data generated by the assessments? • Has the leadership team determined decision rules to determine if instruction and curriculum are effective?

Instructional Practices Alignment	
Description: Instructional practices are strategic and purposeful methods and strategies used to move students towards learning outcomes and transfer of learning. Strong practices are guided by evidence based, high-quality instructional programming that enable the growth of the whole child.	
Cross-Cutting Keys	**Considerations:**
Layering of Support	• Do the instructional practices align with evidence based high quality curriculum? • Does purposeful instruction within each layer (i.e. tier) of support align? • Do instructional practices support transfer across levels (age/grade)?

	• Does instructional intensity build across tiers without creating confusion for students who need additional support? • How is the pace of instruction and material considered across added layers of support? • Is there a clear process and communication method for general education and special education teachers around clear IEP goals and instruction, including modifications? • Are supports provided for all children to access the least restrictive environment? • Are the accommodations and/or adaptations provided for children to access the general education setting as much as possible?
Family Engagement	• Are families aware of instructional practices used in care and educational settings and how to support them at home? • Are families provided opportunities to learn with children? • Are families provided with materials and supports that align with instructional practices in the learning environment? • Do families feel comfortable expressing uncertainty, giving feedback or asking for clarity around the purposes and processes implemented during instruction?
Early Childcare/ Early Education	• Do instructional practices best meet the developmental and learning needs of the whole child? • Do instructional practices support learning and transitions for children as they develop and progress in age/grade? • Is there clear and consistent communication between early childcare/early education and elementary education about consistent supports for instruction and instructional practices? • Is there continuity between environments, routines, instructional practices across age/grade spans to support smoother transitions? • Do instructional practices support play and student choice?
Community	• Do instructional practices reflect the needs and resources of the community? • Are community strengths called upon to strengthen instructional practices? • Is there clear and open messaging about instruction to the community? • Is there an opportunity for community members to provide instructional feedback?
Leadership	• Does leadership have a clear understanding of schoolwide instructional practices? • Does the leadership work alongside educators, families, students, and community to support best practices of instruction? • Are goals developmentally appropriate and aligned across age/grade spans?

Schedule and Routine Alignment	
Description: Children thrive in environments that have routine daily schedules and expectations. Maintaining a space that offers consistency in instructional and behavioral expectations can decrease challenging behavior and support the typical academic, social-emotional, and behavioral growth in all students.	
Cross-Cutting Keys	**Considerations:**
Layering of Support	• Are routines/standard operating procedures routinely followed and coordinated across other same-grade classrooms? • Does scheduling encourage full participation in core/universal instruction in addition to other layers of support rather than replacement or removing students during times of the day which are highly engaging (such as student directed center)?

	• Are changes in routine announced in advance with ample time for students and teachers to prepare? • Is the daily schedule posted and referred to throughout the day?
Family Engagement	• Are families made aware of the daily schedule and classroom routines? • Are schedules made in collaboration with families to meet the needs of their children (e.g., mealtime, rest, toileting, etc.)? • Are families welcomed and encouraged to join the class at any time during the routine schedule?
Early Childcare/ Early Education	• Are routines created to meet the needs of students as opposed to the scheduling needs of other adults/teachers? • Is the daily schedule posted and referred to throughout the day? • Is there communication with community providers to align schedules and transportation times as needed?
Community	• Are schedules and transportation times created in alignment with community providers? • Does the schedule work around the community needs for care and transportation?
Leadership	• Does the administrative team have access to each daily schedule? • Are daily schedules made with administrative input? • Does leadership have adequate knowledge/understanding of early childhood environments and routines?

Developing Teams/Capacity Alignment	
Description: Commitment and shared responsibility is developed through a strong, inclusive culture with varied levels of expertise, a broad range of knowledge, and experiences that promote the sharing of information.	
Cross-Cutting Keys	**Considerations:**
Layering of Support	• Is there representation from all relevant stakeholders to provide effective layering of support? • Do teams develop capacity for shared ownership of all students?
Family Engagement	• Are families invited to participate in teams and decision-making processes? • Is there a consideration for timing, frequency and method of communication and family involvement that are inclusive of family needs and timings? • Are there systems that support family-initiated teams and decisions?
Early Childcare/ Early Education	• Are there team building opportunities across childcare, private preschool, and public-school educators? • Are there times and processes that encourage communication across childcare, private preschool, public school?
Community	• Are outside organizations and community partners invited to participate in decision making and as active members of teams? • Are there opportunities for community members to access school resources and the school setting to enhance relationships and develop high levels of comfort for smooth transitions? (i.e., Play & Learn Groups, Community Groups, Student Organizations) • Is the school perceived as a welcoming and open community hub?
Leadership	• Is a leadership team in place? • Are there clear roles and responsibilities within the leadership team?

	• Does the leadership team have a process in place to fill roles and keep a broad scope to diverse involvement and action? • Are there clear and consistent goals and objectives stated and updated?

Communication Alignment	
Description: Communication is important to all aspects of a child's social emotional, academic, and behavioral growth. All stakeholders in a child's educational experience need to communicate with one another to support the child with consistent expectations.	
Cross-Cutting Keys	**Considerations:**
Layering of Support	• Are all stakeholders (everyone who interacts with a child) involved in ongoing communication about the child? • Is there a clear process and communication method for general education and ESOL teachers around clear ILAP (Individualized Language Acquisition Plan) goals, and instruction, including differentiation strategies? • Is time held aside to allow for proper, uninterrupted communication? • How often is communication happening? Is it enough? • Is communication accepted and given in a variety of methods? • Is the child involved in the communication?
Family Engagement	• Are families provided information in a language/and or modality, that they can fully access? • Are families provided the resources to fully communicate their thoughts and feelings? • Are supporting resources available and communicated to families? (e.g., literacy, mathematics, whole-child development, social emotional, etc.) • Are strengths and goals about children shared in a timely and strength-based manner? • Is incoming communication accepted and used across educators? • Are families able to receive and send communication in ways that work easily for families? • Is the child involved in the communication?
Early Childcare/ Early Education	• Does communication happen across age/grade spans? Across content areas? • Does communication happen across building and departments? • What types of information is shared across transitions from year to year? • What other types of information is needed to align communication?
Community	• Is information shared with the community? • Is the community invited to be part of ongoing conversations or committees? • Is the community asked to be part of the education of a child? What opportunities could be brought in by the community?
Leadership	• Is leadership involved as a stakeholder in communication? • Is time dedicated for educators to communicate and collaborate around alignment? • Is communication stressed as a priority? • Does leadership share and/or involve others in decision making? • Is leadership willing to hear others' ideas?

Conduct/Citizenship Expectations Alignment	
Description: A community-based program should be culturally responsive to the community it represents. Stakeholders must have avenues to see themselves within the school and community, offer input and understand program-wide expectations.	
Cross-Cutting Keys	**Considerations:**
Layering of Support	• Are positively stated program-wide expectations in place? • Are the expectations around positive conduct and citizenship modeled by adults and consistently enforced? • Are their conduct expectations in place to support SEL skills, promote positive guidance, and include prevention perspectives? • Do clear policies exist to limit/prevent use of suspension or exclusion from programming?
Family Engagement	• Are parents and families made aware of the expectations for all students and adults in the school? • Are parents and families supported in helping students around SEL skills, positive guidance, and prevention at home, if needed? • Are families and parents able to engage with the school in culturally responsive ways? • Are parents and families offered a means to give input/offer feedback about expectations?
Early Childcare/ Early Education	• Are expectations for conduct and citizenship within the school age and developmentally appropriately and across all grade spans? • Are ECE receiving training in age/developmentally appropriate conduct expectations and citizenship, in a way that ensures high-quality consistency and engagement?
Community	• Do school/program expectations reflect the cultural norms and values of the community? • Are materials available in which all students can see themselves identified and represented in the classroom and in the community? • Are the codes of conduct built to reflect stakeholders in the community?
Leadership	• Is there a leadership team in place? • Do educators and staff have opportunity to offer suggestions around program wide expectations? • Are program-wide expectations designed to encompass students, families, staff, and other adults? • Is professional learning offered to staff and educators around expectations? • Are expectations clearly posted in multiple locations?

For technical assistance support, reach out to Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov, Early Learning Team Coordinator. She will help connect you to the appropriate resources within the Maine DOE