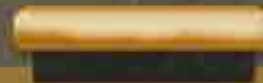




# CORE QUALITIES FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS



The National Council of La Raza (NCLR)—the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States—works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. Through its network of nearly 300 affiliated community-based organizations (CBOs), NCLR reaches millions of Hispanics each year in 41 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. To achieve its mission, NCLR conducts applied research, policy analysis, and advocacy, providing a Latino perspective in five key areas—assets/investments, civil rights/immigration, education, employment and economic status, and health. In addition, it provides capacity-building assistance to its Affiliates who work at the state and local level to advance opportunities for individuals and families.

Founded in 1968, NCLR is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan, tax-exempt organization headquartered in Washington, DC. NCLR serves all Hispanic subgroups in all regions of the country and has operations in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Antonio, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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# NCLR CORE QUALITIES FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

## INTRODUCTION

The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) Core Qualities (CQs) for Successful Schools exemplify best practices for schools serving Latino students and their families. The CQs focus on eight areas: high expectations and high supports; collaborative leadership; partnerships with institutions of higher education; cultural competence; bilingualism/biliteracy; sustained meaningful relationships; family engagement and community collaboration; and continuous performance-based assessment. Adherence to the CQs ensures that schools are providing the best instruction for Latino children while taking advantage of the strengths these children and their families bring to school.

Each CQ includes indicators that NCLR network schools are expected to meet. Schools can assess how closely they are meeting the indicators through the measures that are aligned with each indicator. Also matched to each indicator are examples of evidence that schools can use to demonstrate their adherence to the CQs. These examples are not intended to be a checklist; rather, they serve as a starting point for schools to assess their achievement of the CQs. Schools are encouraged to develop their own lists of examples of evidence to clearly show that each indicator is fully met. NCLR acknowledges that network schools are leaders in implementing innovative policies and practices to serve Latino children and therefore need flexibility in meeting the CQs. At the same time, NCLR has high expectations for all schools in the network and is committed to an accountability system that will work to strengthen the NCLR school model.



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CORE QUALITIES FOR SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLS

## HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND HIGH SUPPORTS

The school community defines goals, establishes high expectations for the academic, intellectual, and social growth of all its members, and allocates resources to ensure that its members have the means to meet their shared goals.

INDICATORS	MEASURES	EVIDENCE
Goals for student success are made explicit to all in the school community, including parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School community articulates goals for student success.</li> <li>School provides evidence that parents understand and support the goals for student success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wide variety of forums that present high expectations for student achievement and school improvement</li> <li>Contracts with parents to support student success</li> <li>Student goals posted throughout the school</li> <li>Faculty and staff consistently articulate goals for students and the school.</li> </ul>
Curriculum and instruction are aligned to state content standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One hundred percent of classes meet state content standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of alignment among state content standards, curriculum, and instruction</li> </ul>
Teachers are highly qualified and highly effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One hundred percent of teachers are certified or will be certified within three years of being hired.</li> <li>Teachers regularly participate in ongoing and meaningful professional development to improve their skills.</li> <li>Teachers maintain a positive relationship with each student.</li> <li>Teachers use student data to differentiate instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of teacher degrees and state credentials</li> <li>Documentation of teacher certification in content area or grade level</li> <li>Administrative and peer observations</li> <li>Required hours of professional development</li> <li>Measures of student engagement and time on task</li> <li>Teacher portfolios</li> <li>Teacher evaluations</li> </ul>
The principal is a highly effective school leader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal provides instructional leadership.</li> <li>Principal participates in professional development activities designed to improve his/her skills.</li> <li>Principal uses school-level data to allocate and maximize resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of principal's credentials</li> <li>Documentation of time principal spends in classrooms</li> <li>Documentation of principal's participation in curriculum development, instructional planning, data analysis, and professional development</li> <li>Principal evaluations</li> </ul>
School leaders continuously focus on school-wide improvement to enhance teaching and learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School continuously uses school-level and classroom-level data to improve instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data-driven decision making</li> <li>Professional development activities aligned with school improvement plan</li> </ul>

## HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND HIGH SUPPORTS, CONT'D

INDICATORS	MEASURES	EVIDENCE
The school provides extended learning time to all students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School day and calendar year offer significantly more instructional time than traditional public schools provide.</li> <li>Extended learning time reflects high-quality instruction that is aligned with content standards and student needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation that annual school hours significantly exceed national average of 1,170 (180 days at 6.5 hours per day)</li> <li>Documentation of the number of instructional hours per school year and the number of enrichment hours per school year</li> <li>Extended learning time incorporated into planning for educational program</li> </ul>
The school meets achievement targets set by the state.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All student subgroups meet state annual achievement targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disaggregated student achievement scores with state targets identified</li> </ul>
Expectations for academic achievement and student conduct are communicated consistently throughout the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School creates and maintains a positive, supportive school culture to foster student learning and growth.</li> <li>School implements positive, proactive discipline practices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faculty and staff consistently articulate expectations of student conduct.</li> <li>Low numbers of student disciplinary referrals and truancy rates</li> <li>Positive school-wide behavioral supports and interventions</li> </ul>
The school sets high academic standards to ensure that all students are ready for postsecondary education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School maintains a college-going school culture for every student.</li> <li>School offers rigorous coursework to students that may include early college, dual enrollment, and AP or IB courses.*</li> <li>School meets appropriate state standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faculty and staff consistently articulate expectations of college attendance for all students.</li> <li>College preparation resources readily available to students and parents</li> <li>Individual student and family conferences on preparing for college</li> <li>Internships based on student interest made available</li> <li>Career days or career fairs</li> </ul>

\* Applies to secondary schools only.

## COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

The school community values, validates, and benefits from each member's contributions to the school's culture and development. Through collaborative leadership, the school community incorporates alternative perspectives and fosters a strong sense of collective commitment to the school's success.

INDICATORS	MEASURES	EVIDENCE
All instructional staff are engaged in planning instructional activities, assessing student growth, and improving the school's performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School provides consistent and sufficient instructional planning time.</li> <li>Teachers and school leaders collaborate across grade levels and subjects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data-driven decision making</li> <li>Common instructional planning time</li> <li>Vertical and horizontal integration in instructional planning</li> </ul>
All school staff are given opportunities to take on leadership roles in different areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal ensures a school culture that supports the development of new leaders.</li> <li>School supports career ladders for teaching staff and provides coaching, mentoring, and advancement opportunities.</li> <li>Non-teaching staff are recognized as school stakeholders and given opportunities to participate in professional development activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meaningful leadership roles assigned throughout the school</li> <li>Awareness among stakeholders of opportunities for engagement in the school</li> <li>Support for teachers seeking National Board Certification</li> </ul>
The school solicits input from all stakeholders to inform school-wide decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School leaders ensure open communication among stakeholders.</li> <li>School leaders provide opportunities throughout the school year for staff to participate in the decision-making process, whenever appropriate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decision-making procedures of the school understood by stakeholders</li> <li>Tools available for two-way communication with stakeholders</li> <li>Documentation of school responsiveness to stakeholder input</li> <li>All stakeholders represented by school's governance body</li> </ul>
The school provides opportunities for all staff to be involved in its professional learning community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development is embedded in the weekly school calendar.</li> <li>School trains all staff members on school-wide initiatives designed to support student achievement and school improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development calendar</li> <li>Staff participation in professional development (e.g., sign-in sheets, evaluation forms)</li> </ul>
Parents are provided opportunities to assume leadership roles in the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents assume active leadership roles in the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership opportunities provided to parents</li> <li>Accomplishments of parent leaders within school community (e.g., deliverables, plans)</li> <li>Logs of parent participation in activities</li> </ul>



## PARTNERSHIPS WITH INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The school community fosters a college-going culture which permeates the curriculum and is reflected in the physical environment, school activities, and established partnerships with institutions of higher education.

INDICATORS	MEASURES	EVIDENCE
The school has a formal relationship with at least one institution of higher education (IHE).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with at least one institution of higher education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of formal MOU or MOA</li> </ul>
The institution of higher education provides learning and mentoring opportunities for students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IHE faculty lead classroom or site-based learning opportunities.</li> <li>IHE faculty mentor individual students or small groups.</li> <li>IHE faculty collaborate and plan activities with school staff.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classroom or site-based learning opportunities led by IHE faculty</li> <li>Individual students or small groups of students mentored by IHE faculty</li> </ul>
The school provides learning and research opportunities to institutions of higher education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School provides access to institutions of higher education for teaching, learning, and research.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School has a program to support student teaching</li> <li>IHE faculty can conduct research in the school.</li> <li>IHE students can complete student teaching requirements in the school.</li> </ul>
The school offers parents and students opportunities to become knowledgeable about different college options.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School provides resources and employs a formal program to support students in the college application process.*</li> <li>All students prepare college portfolios that include a sample application, Free Application for Federal Student Aid, personal essay, and letters of recommendation.*</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students have college portfolios.</li> <li>School holds conferences with students and families on preparing for college.</li> <li>College visits and/or college fairs organized by school</li> </ul>
The school has a college-going culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All students will be prepared to enroll in postsecondary education the first year after leaving the school.*</li> <li>College-going expectations are fostered at the elementary and middle school levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectation of college attendance for all students consistently articulated by faculty and staff</li> <li>College resources readily available to students and parents</li> <li>Teachers, parents, and community members mentor, counsel, and advise students on career and college options.</li> </ul>

\* Applies to secondary schools only.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Building on the strengths and values of Latino cultures, the school community respects and incorporates the cultures of its members—their values, history, language, experiences, and traditions—in every aspect of school life. The school embraces the diversity and cultural contexts of the community it serves, manages the dynamics of difference, acquires and institutionalizes cultural knowledge, and conducts a self-assessment on how well it demonstrates cultural competence.

INDICATORS	MEASURES	EVIDENCE
The school integrates the culture and values of its students and families into the school environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School has a process in place to assess the culture of the school community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-assessment on values and goals of the school's community (parents, community-based organizations, businesses, religious institutions, and other organizations)</li> <li>Alignment of school and community cultures</li> </ul>
School staff understand the Latino culture and can function effectively within it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development is provided to staff on cultural sensitivity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff relate well to parents and community members from different cultural backgrounds.</li> </ul>
Culturally relevant and sensitive materials, instructional methods, and assessments are intentionally integrated into the curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Instructional and enrichment materials reflect students' Latino culture.</li> <li>Cultural values, norms, and experiences are deliberately integrated into instructional planning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Latino culture integrated into curriculum, instructional materials, methods, and activities</li> <li>Training and professional development for staff on culturally relevant classroom instruction and classroom management</li> <li>Enrichment activities promoting Latino culture</li> </ul>
Students can function effectively within different cultures while maintaining and celebrating their own ethnic heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students use their Latino culture as a reference point to understand other cultures.</li> <li>Students can compare and contrast diverse cultures.</li> <li>School maintains a positive climate based on understanding of common culture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding and acceptance of similarities and differences across cultures</li> </ul>



## BILINGUALISM/BILITERACY

The school adopts an educational program that supports the goal of students becoming bilingual and biliterate, and it establishes standards and expectations for all children in both languages. The school community uses best practices in language acquisition to support academic development in at least English and Spanish. The school seeks opportunities for its staff to become bilingual and biliterate as well.

INDICATORS	MEASURES	EVIDENCE
The school has adopted evidence-based instruction that leads to students becoming proficient in Spanish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction is aligned to Spanish language standards.</li> <li>• School employs effective instructional practices to develop academic Spanish language skills.</li> <li>• Students' oral and written academic Spanish proficiency levels are assessed regularly.</li> <li>• Students can demonstrate Spanish language proficiency through a variety of assessments.</li> <li>• Assessments are used to improve instruction in Spanish.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of Spanish language standards</li> <li>• Variety of assessments used to measure Spanish language proficiency (e.g., observation, teacher reflection, action research within the classroom)</li> <li>• School builds on students' existing Spanish language skills.</li> <li>• Documentation of alignment of instruction to standards</li> <li>• Evidence-based instructional methods and techniques</li> <li>• Documentation of frequency of assessment of academic language</li> <li>• Data-driven instruction</li> <li>• Principles of language development and acquisition applied to instruction</li> <li>• Teachers support Spanish academic language development.</li> </ul>
The school uses evidence-based instructional practices for its English language learners (ELLs) that lead to students becoming proficient in English.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction is aligned with the state's English language proficiency (ELP) standards.</li> <li>• ELLs are provided with appropriate instructional practices.</li> <li>• Students are assessed regularly in the four domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) with instruments aligned to the state's ELP standards.</li> <li>• Students can demonstrate English language proficiency through a variety of assessments.</li> <li>• Assessments are used to improve instruction in English.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of state ELP standards</li> <li>• Variety of assessments of English proficiency aligned to state ELP standards</li> <li>• Documentation of annual levels of progress and attainment on state ELP assessment</li> <li>• Differentiated instruction for ELLs</li> <li>• Documentation of alignment of instruction to standards</li> <li>• Evidence-based instructional methods and techniques</li> <li>• Frequent assessment of academic language development</li> <li>• Data-driven instruction</li> <li>• Principles of language development and acquisition applied to instruction</li> <li>• Teachers support English academic language development.</li> </ul>

## SUSTAINED MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS

The school community believes that meaningful, respectful relationships and clear communication among all members of the school community support student growth, learning, and success.

INDICATORS	MEASURES	EVIDENCE
Every student has an adult advocate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School ensures that each adult advocate maintains personalized relationships with assigned students.</li> <li>Advocates provide support for students' well-being and success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocates meet with students on a regular basis.</li> <li>Increased academic success</li> <li>Increased active participation in school activities</li> <li>Improved attendance</li> </ul>
All students receive personalized instruction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School provides small group and individualized learning and enrichment opportunities.</li> <li>Teachers differentiate instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small learning communities and teams</li> <li>Individual and small group enrichment and learning opportunities</li> <li>Faculty familiarity with student achievement data, student characteristics, and relevant community information</li> <li>Classroom observations of differentiated instruction</li> <li>Lesson plans demonstrating differentiated instruction</li> </ul>
The school staff build relationships with students and their families based on care, dignity, and respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School engages families and uses support networks that foster student learning and growth.</li> <li>School staff observe, monitor, and engage students in dialogue to promote social, emotional, and academic growth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avenues for two-way communication with parents</li> <li>Student satisfaction and motivation to learn</li> <li>Advisory programs</li> </ul>

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

The school highly values family engagement and community collaboration and creates structures and resources to promote them. Parents and families are actively engaged in their children's learning, their own learning, and the development of the school.

INDICATORS	MEASURES	EVIDENCE
School staff personally know the parents or guardians of each child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers and school leaders meaningfully engage in family outreach activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Home visits by teachers and/or school leaders</li> </ul>
Parents are encouraged to become advocates for their children's education, participate in school activities, and actively engage in making education-related decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School maintains an open-door policy to facilitate communication between parents and school staff.</li> <li>School gives parents an opportunity to participate in a parent-training program.</li> <li>All parents participate in at least one parent-teacher conference per year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parent-teacher conferences</li> <li>Parent participation in school activities and governance</li> <li>Avenues for two-way communication with parents (e.g. oral, written, or electronic)</li> <li>Parent-training program (e.g., Parents as Partners)</li> <li>Documentation of participation rates in parent-training program</li> </ul>
The school provides links to parents and families with community-based organizations and social services agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School engages outside community organizations or agencies.</li> <li>School fosters links between families and local organizations or agencies.</li> <li>School mobilizes community resources based on parents' needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notes from community advisory committee meetings</li> <li>Community-based resources available in school for students and families</li> <li>Documentation of parent or family referrals to community-based organizations or social service agencies</li> </ul>
The school maintains partnerships with local organizations, including businesses, community-based organizations, and other entities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School has ongoing relationships with school partners.</li> <li>School brings community partners into the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of formal agreements with after-school partners</li> <li>Partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and social service agencies</li> <li>Speakers on specific topics related to school, student, or family goals provided by community partners</li> <li>Brochures, flyers, and press releases documenting collaboration</li> </ul>
Students are active contributors to their community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School provides opportunities for students to participate in community service.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of core subjects that require service-based projects in the community</li> <li>Internships in the community</li> <li>Service-learning projects</li> </ul>

## CONTINUOUS PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT

The school uses continuous performance-based assessment to measure the acquisition of student knowledge and skills aligned with high expectations as well as guide decision-making around its instructional program. This reflective process assists the school community in holding itself accountable for student achievement and school success.

INDICATORS	MEASURES	EVIDENCE
Assessments are aligned to state content standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School aligns assessments with state content standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formative and cumulative assessments aligned to state content standards</li> </ul>
Students are assessed against state standards at regular intervals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School makes use of benchmarks and/or interim assessments to measure student growth and guide instruction.</li> <li>School participates in annual state assessment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation of strategies used to determine gaps between achievement goals and expectations for improvement</li> </ul>
Students are assessed using multiple measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School tracks student progress over the academic year using a variety of measures.</li> <li>Students analyze their own assessment results to improve academic achievement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple measures (e.g., teacher-made tests, portfolios, and observations) used to assess student achievement</li> <li>Students articulate expectations for their own performance</li> </ul>
School staff analyze assessment results and calibrate instruction accordingly.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School staff are trained in using data to improve instruction.</li> <li>Teachers and school leaders use common planning time to analyze student data to improve instruction.</li> <li>Teachers use assessment results to differentiate instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion of data analysis in team and school meetings</li> <li>Use of disaggregated student assessment data</li> <li>Documentation of how teachers are using data to improve instruction for individual students and modify instruction in their classes or throughout the school</li> <li>Differentiated instruction reflected in lesson plans</li> <li>Use of data walls</li> </ul>
Principal and teachers use student achievement data to target professional development activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School intentionally links professional development to student needs.</li> <li>Teachers receive professional development on how to use data to inform instruction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development on data analysis for planning and instruction</li> <li>Professional development on differentiated instruction</li> </ul>

## NOTES



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