

# Appendix A

## Glossary

### **action items**

Concrete things you can do this week, this month, this year toward reaching your milestones and long-term goals for improvement.

### **benchmark**

The proven approach or method that can help schools and districts reach their improvement goals. In the context of this workbook, the words benchmark and best practice are used interchangeably. The best practices or benchmarks listed on The Knowledge Loom in each spotlight are recognized for causing demonstrable success or positive results. Best practices for teaching and learning can range from broad methodologies to very focused teaching and learning strategies. Most of the best practices that appear on The Knowledge Loom are research-based and have been successful in one or more school settings. One example of a best practice, or benchmark, for professional development is: "Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved."

### **benchmarking**

A process of looking at best practices (in this context, best practices for teaching and learning), and especially looking at how these practices are successfully implemented in other organizations.

### **best practices**

The proven approaches or methods that can help schools and districts reach their improvement goals. In The Knowledge Loom, most of the practices listed are based on evidence and research (see benchmark).

### **collaborative inquiry**

Process in which colleagues talk together, share insights, and ask questions to plan improvement efforts and strategies. In the context of schools, groups of educators, such as a school improvement team, come together to explore issues of teaching and learning.

**focus theme**

A recognized topic area around which to concentrate improvement efforts. For schools, a focus theme might be early literacy, adolescent literacy in the content areas, parent involvement that supports student achievement, and so forth. The content in The Knowledge Loom spotlights is organized around focus themes.

**guiding documents/school planning documents**

The written records that guide improvement efforts at schools. They can include comprehensive education/school improvement plans, state and local curriculum mandates, curriculum standards and frameworks, student test score data and comparisons, examples of student work, individual student learning plans, and so forth.

**long-term goals** (see school improvement goals)**milestones** (see short-term goals)**performance indicator (performance measure/success measure)**

The actual activity that you can see in action indicating that an identified benchmark, best practice, or desired way of operating is being implemented. Think of performance indicators as evidence. One example of a best practice, or benchmark, for professional development is “Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and in the development of the learning experiences in which they will be involved.” An example of a performance indicator or success measure for this best practice is that teachers are observed meeting annually by grade level to look at student work and test scores, evaluate weak points, and then recommend professional development activities that will strengthen the delivery of curriculum in these areas.

**performance measure/success measure** (see performance indicator)**school improvement goals**

The end result people are hoping for when engaging in change efforts. School improvement goals are the expectations that everyone has for the end result—the explicitly stated intentions of improvement efforts. Sample improvement goals include increased student achievement in identified curriculum areas, systematized opportunities for job-embedded professional development, and increased participation of family and community members in academic initiatives. Sometimes these are referred to as long-term goals.

**short-term goals**

A series of progressive phases or big steps toward reaching a long-term goal. These can also be thought of as milestones.

**spotlight (Knowledge Loom spotlight)**

Collections of rich resources organized around a selected theme. Each Knowledge Loom spotlight contains lists and explanations of best practices, supporting success stories and research summaries, links to related resources that can be found on other Web sites, and a set of interactive tools that prompts users to input knowledge of their own.

**success story**

In the context of The Knowledge Loom, an informal case study that describes how a best practice is implemented at a given school, district, or organization. Many of the success stories on The Knowledge Loom include background information about the site, an explanation of how they put the practice into action, and reporting on various results attributed to the practice. In some cases, schools are just beginning to implement practices and report on anticipated results that are being tracked, based on promising observations of individual student achievement, shifts in attitudes, and so forth. In other cases, the practices are well-established, and the stories offer both quantitative and qualitative data.

