

By Ann Ware



# Unlocking Excellence with Keys to Quality

## Align Appropriate Technologies Within Your School's Strategic Improvement Plan

The leadership of today's schools supports both students' academic success and their preparation for employment in a global work environment. As stimulus funds become available to U.S. school districts, it remains critical that we align technology acquired with those funds with system-, school-, and classroom-identified student academic outcomes.

In support of embedding technology solutions within the continuous improvement planning process, ed tech leaders acknowledge the need to become actively engaged in the dialogue about research-based strategies supporting student success. Those strategies, valued by school leaders across the United States, include:

- Balanced assessments for learning with an emphasis on frequent formative assessments
- The development of professional learning communities that foster teachers' ability to regularly collaborate together
- Personalization of learning
- Standards-based classrooms
- The effective use of data analysis to inform teaching and learning

These strategies resonate with educational leadership organizations such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), the National School Boards Association (NSBA), ISTE, and the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN).

To align appropriate technology solutions, it is increasingly important that technology leaders have a common language with which to communicate about the school

improvement planning process and proven, research-based strategies. The research-based resources within the Georgia Department of Education's (GaDOE) Keys to Quality: Unlocking Excellence through Georgia School Standards provide a platform upon which technology leaders can build such a common language.

The Keys to Quality describe what Georgia's schools need to know and be able to do in the same way that Georgia Performance Standards describe what Georgia's students need to know and be able to do. The Keys to Quality set of resources, which Georgia has provided to every school in the state, defines targets using rubrics and resources to assist educators with ways to "take their school improvement temperature" periodically to monitor the effectiveness of their school improvement plans.

In the same vein, the Keys to Quality provide technology leaders with a common language about research-based strategies that school leaders value in the pursuit of student and school success. The Keys to Quality rubrics define the optimum target as "fully operational." The areas of instruction, assessment, curriculum, and professional learning serve as examples of where users can easily infuse and align appropriate technologies and 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. The GaDOE plans to make ISTE's NETS for students, teachers, and administrators

available within the Keys to Quality resources during the 2009–10 school year.

Aligning appropriate technology tools and resources within the continuous improvement planning process positions technology leaders to engage in dialogue with system and school leaders who are working toward the common goal of student and school success. Technology leaders can improve the process by considering several of the following action steps:

- Become familiar with the goals and strategies in your schools' improvement plan system
- Align and embed your technology plan within your school system's continuous/strategic improvement plan
- Consider serving as an advocate for the development of technology-infused professional learning as part of the strategies that your schools have identified within their improvement plans
- Participate in conferences that foster research-based strategies, such as ASCD, NSBA, and NECC, and that provide opportunities to learn along with peers
- Read and share publications such as *L&L* and ASCD's *Educational Leadership*
- Consider becoming an active participant in your state's technology leadership organizations
- Consider mentoring or requesting mentorship from your state

To align appropriate technology solutions, it is increasingly important that technology leaders have a common language with which to communicate about the school improvement planning process and proven, research-based strategies.



**Assessment Standard 2:** A variety of effective and balanced assessment techniques is routinely and systematically implemented by all instructional personnel as part of a comprehensive school-based assessment and evaluation.

**A 2.1 Diagnostic Assessment**

<input type="checkbox"/> Not Addressed	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergent	<input type="checkbox"/> Operational	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully Operational
Little if any evidence is present of diagnostic assessment.	Diagnostic assessment is administered sporadically in limited number of classrooms and subject areas with little evidence of teachers' use of diagnostic data to design and adjust instruction.	Diagnostic assessment is used in many but not all classrooms and subject areas to determine students' requisite background knowledge and skills and adjust instruction to accommodate students' readiness levels.	Diagnostic assessment is a systematic, regular component of the school's overall assessment system, with regular diagnosis of students' acquisition of requisite background knowledge and skills and related instructional interventions.

**A 2.2 Formative Assessment**

<input type="checkbox"/> Not Addressed	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergent	<input type="checkbox"/> Operational	<input type="checkbox"/> Fully Operational
Little if any evidence is present of staff use of formative assessment from the beginning to end of instructional units.	Some evidence is present in a limited number of classrooms of teachers' use of formative assessment to monitor student progress over the course of instructional units. Much more attention to this form of assessment is required.	All teachers use a variety of formative assessment tasks and tools to monitor student progress over the course of units and to adjust instruction to maximize student achievement relative to Georgia Performance Standards. All teachers use formative assessment to provide effective and timely feedback to all students throughout the course of instructional units.	Many teachers use some type of formative assessment to monitor student progress from the beginning to the end of units. However, attention to implementing a more schoolwide focus on formative assessment would enhance overall student achievement and the monitoring of individual student progress. Many teachers use formative assessment evidence on a limited basis to provide feedback to students.

Excerpt of a rubric from the GaDOE Keys to Quality website.

The screenshot shows the top of the Georgia Standards.Org website. At the top is a banner for 'KEYS TO QUALITY: Unlocking Continuous Improvement' with three icons representing different aspects of education. Below the banner is the 'Georgia Standards.Org' logo and the tagline 'GATEWAY TO EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES'. Underneath is a section titled 'Key Resources' with a list of links including 'Graduation Coach Initiative Report', 'School Keys', 'Georgia Assessment of Performance on School Standards (GAPSS)', 'Implementation Resource', 'Graduation Counts', 'High School Graduation Coach Information', 'Administrator Calendar 2008-2009', 'Credit Recovery Program (GA Virtual School)', 'CLASS Keys Standards', 'CLASS Keys Placement', and 'Leader Keys Standards Summary'. At the bottom of the screenshot is a section titled 'About School Improvement' with the text: 'On July 1, 2003, the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)'.

The Keys to Quality site hosts numerous helpful resources.

technology leaders who understand the significance of aligning their work to the school improvement planning process

Technology leaders are poised to become actively engaged with educational leaders' ongoing commitment to student and school success. Take time from your busy days to meet with peers to share both proven practices and struggles in aligning your work with the school improvement planning process.

In the accountability oriented environment of education, the continued alignment of appropriate technologies within strategic improvement planning processes can provide results that support job-embedded professional learning, student academic success, and the development of 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills.

**Resources**

- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)
- Consortium for School Networking: [www.cosn.org](http://www.cosn.org)
- Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE): [www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org)
- Keys to Quality: Unlocking Excellence through Georgia School Standards: [www.gadoe.org/tss\\_school.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/tss_school.aspx)
- National Educational Technology Standards (NETS): [www.iste.org/nets](http://www.iste.org/nets)
- National School Boards Association: [www.nsbao.org](http://www.nsbao.org)



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