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small schools
INITIATIVE

School Change Rubric
Self-Assessment Tool

ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The Oregon Small Schools Initiative seeks to create small, equitable, and high achieving high schools throughout Oregon. The project, which began in 2003, is part of *E3: Employers for Education Excellence* and is generously supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Meyer Memorial Trust. Information about the Initiative can be found at www.E3oregon.org.

ABOUT THE RUBRIC

Staff at the Initiative developed the School Change Rubric to help educators and others interested in high school redesign better understand the critical elements of high achieving and equitable small high schools. The version of the Rubric shown here reflects the thinking of the Initiative Design Team, research on best practices in school redesign from around the nation, and suggestions from the Initiative's Advisory Cabinet and expert faculty.

The Rubric is made up of four broad strands *(School Structure and Culture, Teaching and Learning, Leadership Development, and Community Engagement)* reflecting 22 individual dimensions. While some overlap exists between dimensions, each one represents an important set of indicators of school excellence.

School Change Rubric: Strands and Dimensions

STRAND 1: School Structure and Culture	STRAND 3: Leadership Development
1.1 Equity 1.2 Autonomy 1.3 Personalization 1.4 Scheduling 1.5 Collaboration 1.6 School Climate	3.1 Equity 3.2 Distributed Leadership 3.3 Effective Governance 3.4 Learning Community 3.5 Professional Development
STRAND 2: Teaching and Learning	STRAND 4: Community Engagement
2.1 Equity 2.2 Focus on Powerful Teaching and Learning 2.3 Personalization 2.4 Academic Rigor 2.5 Expectations and Accountability 2.6 Assessment and Evaluation	4.1 Equity 4.2 Community Awareness and Support 4.3 Parent Involvement 4.4 Student Involvement 4.5 Employer and Community Partnerships

Each dimension of the Rubric describes three general levels of development, culminating in a "New Paradigm" descriptor that paints a picture of the school design goals of the Initiative. Since the Rubric is intended to be used as a self-assessment tool for schools, each dimension page includes a large "evidence box" where indicators of progress can be documented as well as a box for self-scoring.

Schools are encouraged to use the Rubric as a tool to help assess their reform progress. To do this, assemble a team, develop a clear understanding of the Rubric dimensions, brainstorm and record evidence, and select a score of 1-3 for each dimension. This process can be repeated periodically to help guide school redesign efforts.

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SCHOOL CHANGE RUBRIC: SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND CULTURE STRAND

1.1 **EQUITY**

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Attempts are made to provide open enrollment to most courses. However, some students still face barriers to enrolling in rigorous courses, and forms of tracking still exist.	All course offerings are aligned with college admission requirements, barriers to course enrollment are mostly removed.	School structure and culture fosters challenging and relevant learning opportunities for students from all cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and special needs backgrounds. There are no students assigned to low-achieving classes. Demographics of individual classes reflect demographics of the entire school. Each student receives unique support and academic preparation to achieve college-readiness. Sample Strategies: ■ Tracking eliminated ■ All students provided with multiple college-prep options during their high school career ■ Honors-level core courses for all students ■ Regular tutorial periods help all students access additional support ■ Every student provided with an adult mentor ■ Peer teaching and peer tutoring programs ■ Extra periods used to deliver intensive support services ■ Summer school for enrichment and remediation ■ Strategic use of distance learning tools

EVIDENCE:

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SELF-SCORING: Based on the evidence listed above, our school most closely aligns with rubric level **--** . (select 1, 2, or 3)

SCHOOL CHANGE RUBRIC: SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND CULTURE STRAND

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1.2 **AUTONOMY**

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Small schools or SLCs operate under a school-within-a-school model with very limited autonomy.	Small schools have limited control over one or more of the following: budget, curriculum, schedule, staffing, leadership and governance, and space.	Small schools have sufficient control over budget, curriculum, schedule, staffing, leadership and governance, and space to carry out their own vision of schooling. Sample Strategies: ■ Large school converts to a multiplex approach; coordinating council helps facilitate communication and cooperation between schools. ■ Districts write policies that clearly and unequivocally support autonomous small schools.

EVIDENCE:

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SELF-SCORING: Based on the evidence listed above, our school most closely aligns with rubric level **--** . (select 1, 2, or 3)

SCHOOL CHANGE RUBRIC: SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND CULTURE STRAND

1.3 **PERSONALIZATION**		
1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Some structured attempts at grouping or creating long- term adult contacts may be in place such as advisory programs or limited small learning communities.	Advisories, teaming, and small learning communities provide connections for a majority of students.	School enrolls 400 students or less. Student interests and passions drive learning opportunities. Students from all cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and special needs backgrounds develop meaningful, long-term connections to peers and adults. Mentors guide students to develop a post-high school plan. Sample Strategies: ■ Enrollment limits used to maintain small size ■ Course offerings based on student interests ■ Every student paired with adult mentor ■ Peer connections promoted through advisory groups and project teams

EVIDENCE:

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SELF-SCORING: Based on the evidence listed above, our school most closely aligns with rubric level -- . (select 1, 2, or 3)

SCHOOL CHANGE RUBRIC: SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND CULTURE STRAND

1.4 SCHEDULING

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Traditional daily schedule and school calendar still in place, but school may be exploring unique features such as extended time or year-round calendars.	Extended time or other flexible features in use, school calendar may still be traditional.	Instructional time used strategically and flexibly. Time provided for teachers to work with individuals and small groups of students. School calendar maximizes potential for year-round learning. Facilities used beyond traditional school day. Sample Strategies: ■ Pre-periods, night classes, and tutorial periods ■ Flex time for teachers ■ Year-round school calendars ■ School as center of the community – open for learning around the clock

EVIDENCE:

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SELF-SCORING: Based on the evidence listed above, our school most closely aligns with rubric level **--** . (select 1, 2, or 3)

SCHOOL CHANGE RUBRIC: SCHOOL STRUCTURE AND CULTURE STRAND

1.5 COLLABORATION		
1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Some teacher teams are provided with release time or common preps for planning, professional development may be episodic or underutilized.	Growing use of teacher professional development time for collaboration and common planning.	Teachers are provided time and structures within the workday and designated staff development days to engage in formal, meaningful discussions about their practices. Sample Strategies: ■ Collaborative planning periods ■ Cross-curricular teaming of teachers ■ Late-start and early-release schedule to facilitate collaborative instructional design

EVIDENCE:

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SELF-SCORING: Based on the evidence listed above, our school most closely aligns with rubric level **--** . (select 1, 2, or 3)

1.6 SCHOOL CLIMATE

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
School may be an unsafe place for some students, staff recognizes that social climate may negatively impact students; dialogue on issues may be underway.	Focused attention on school climate issues to make school a safe and positive environment for all students.	School operates as a safe, positive, inclusive learning community where cooperation, respect, and responsibility are the norm. Social climate is an ongoing focus. <u>Sample Strategies</u>: ■ Discipline policies and practices aligned to reflect the priority of student learning ■ Diversity is consistently celebrated as a strength through all messages and actions of the school ■ Facilities reflect care for students ■ Peer mediation programs help solve student conflicts

EVIDENCE:

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SCHOOL CHANGE RUBRIC: TEACHING AND LEARNING STRAND

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2.1 EQUITY

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Growing awareness of how equity issues impact student learning and opportunities.	Policies, practices, and support systems provide rigorous opportunities for nearly all students.	All students have equal access to highly challenging coursework that is relevant and connected to real life experiences. Teachers are knowledgeable about cultural, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, linguistic, and special needs characteristics that affect learning and capitalize upon students' backgrounds when designing curriculum to meet individual learning needs. Sample Strategies: ■ Specific attention given to unlearning negative self-stereotypes ■ Instructional materials are differentiated to meet the needs of all learners ■ Teaching strategies selected to target a variety of learning styles ■ Explicit connections are made between student backgrounds and curricular topics ■ Rigorous performance standards are upheld for all students in all classes ■ Professional development explicitly addresses issues of equity in the classroom

EVIDENCE:

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SELF-SCORING: Based on the evidence listed above, our school most closely aligns with rubric level **--** . (select 1, 2, or 3)

2.2 FOCUS ON POWERFUL TEACHING AND LEARNING

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Teachers have limited repertoire of instructional strategies. Many teachers rely heavily on direct instruction strategies such as lectures and text-based activities. Curriculum tends to be broad and shallow.	Teachers learn and use a variety of effective instructional practices. Curriculum becomes more focused and in-depth.	School has adopted and consistently employs a variety of engaging and effective teaching strategies. Learning goals and expectations are clearly articulated and understood by all students. Curriculum supports in-depth study. Sample Strategies: ■ Differentiated instruction ■ Project-based learning ■ Community-based or service learning ■ Exhibitions or public demonstrations of learning ■ Internship and mentorship programs ■ Publication and dissemination of learning goals ■ Staff meetings regularly used for discussions and demonstrations of best practices ■ Professional development provides opportunities to learn effective teaching strategies

EVIDENCE:

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2.3 **PERSONALIZATION**

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Attempts to incorporate student interests and choice into learning plans and classroom instruction are limited and vary greatly across the school.	Instruction in some courses takes advantage of student interests; individual learning plans may be available but are underutilized.	Student work is meaningful and taps into their passions and interests. Students are given numerous opportunities to demonstrate their personal attributes, gifts, knowledge and skills publicly. Students, parents, and teachers partner in the development of personal learning plans to prepare students for post-high school education. Sample Strategies: ■ Differentiated instruction ■ Negotiated curriculum – topics and themes selected with extensive student input ■ Student choice in project exhibition modes ■ Personal learning plans developed for every student

EVIDENCE:

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SELF-SCORING: Based on the evidence listed above, our school most closely aligns with rubric level **--** . (select 1, 2, or 3)

2.4 **ACADEMIC RIGOR**

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Some alignment with standards, some teachers begin to engage students in complex problems or projects.	Curriculum increasingly aligned with standards. Academic challenge is growing but remains uneven throughout the school.	Instruction is aligned with state and district standards and community expectations to prepare students for post-high school education. Students actively explore, research, and solve complex problems to develop a deep understanding of core academic concepts. Students are given multiple opportunities to engage in sophisticated and reflective learning experiences Sample Strategies: ■ Curricular mapping used to ensure alignment with local and state standards and expectations ■ Course sequences carefully articulated with lower grades to eliminate gaps and overlapping ■ Students supported to produce work that approaches industry standards ■ Courses regularly pursue depth over breadth ■ School chooses to have all senior Language Arts courses aligned with college-level coursework

EVIDENCE:

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2.5 EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Teacher expectations for student performance levels vary across the school. While some teachers experience growing accountability through teaming and evaluation, others operate in silos with little or no accountability. Student accountability mostly limited to report cards.	Growing understanding that high expectations for student performance are essential, however, implementation may be uneven. Teacher accountability encouraged through teaming and peer review programs. Increasing student accountability through competency-based performance measures.	Mission, goals, and expectations of excellence are developed and internalized by community, staff, and students. Teachers model accountability throughout their daily work with students and colleagues. Student assessments demonstrate mastery of skills and learning outcomes. Communication strategies are clear, goals are publicly displayed. Sample Strategies: ■ Community engagement strategies used to develop instructional goals and expectations ■ Staff regularly discusses student performance standards and how to push all students to higher levels of achievement ■ Multiple assessment tools used to demonstrate student progress, process, and proficiency ■ Peer review and assistance programs promote professionalism ■ Data used regularly to assess students, teachers, and programs and increase accountability ■ School engages community in an ongoing dialogue concerning student performance

EVIDENCE:

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2.6 **ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION**

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Limited use of performance-based or other varied evaluation measures. Most student work involves paper-and-pencil exercises.	Some teachers use multiple measures of evaluation and performance-based assessments.	The use of ongoing, formative feedback is seen as a key learning tool. Student mastery is demonstrated through multiple performance measures, including collection of evidence as presented in portfolios and exhibitions which include research, oral presentations, and creative components. Sample Strategies: ■ In-process, formative feedback is a key feature in every classroom ■ Students required to publicly present and defend their learning results ■ Demonstrations of learning usually include two or more different modes ■ Students demonstrate learning growth through portfolios

EVIDENCE:

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SCHOOL CHANGE RUBRIC: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT STRAND

3.1 EQUITY

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Real or perceived inequities relating to site leadership and decision-making may exist. Dialogue concerning equity in leadership may have begun.	Equity issues related to leadership are discussed openly and steps have been taken to recruit staff and school leaders from diverse backgrounds.	School decision-making bodies and leaders reflect the racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic differences of the community. The school recruits, retains, and develops staff from diverse backgrounds at all levels. Sample Strategies: ■ School decision-making bodies actively recruit and develop representatives who reflect the diversity of the school community. ■ Specific attention is given to hearing the voice of teachers who look like the students they teach ■ Teacher leader positions are shared by staff from different backgrounds and with different perspectives. ■ Hiring practices are strategically inclusive and aggressively seek to attract staff of color.

EVIDENCE:

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3.2 **DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP**

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Occasional or limited opportunities exist for participation in decisions; process is still ultimately top-down.	Real opportunities exist for meaningful participation in decisions by many stakeholders.	Decision-making authority and influence are spread throughout the school. Leaders know the demographics of their schools and provide opportunities for all members to participate in key decisions. Staff and students have structured leadership opportunities to grow professionally. Leadership model enables sustained progress despite changes in leadership. Sample Strategies: ■ Representative decision-making councils ■ Town-hall meetings, focus groups, and surveys used to gather feedback from constituents ■ Leadership development and professional growth pathways designed and promoted ■ Explicit capacity building plans grow leadership for ongoing support of school redesign efforts

EVIDENCE:

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3.3 EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Growing awareness of the key role of governance structures. Early attempts at broad representation may be underway. Decision-making process may still be unclear or closed to some stakeholders	Governance structure serves stakeholders fairly and provides an efficient decision-making process. Most constituents can clearly describe the school decision-making processes.	Meaningful decisions are made in an efficient and timely fashion by a diverse and representative governance body. Individuals from all constituent groups can clearly articulate the school decision-making process and the avenues for participation. Sample Strategies: ■ Key school decisions are made by a representative leadership body ■ School leadership body holds regular meetings that are open to all constituents ■ School leadership body publishes meeting minutes in a timely fashion ■ Decisions are made in a fair and efficient manner throughout the school ■ Constituent groups regularly communicate with their leadership council representatives regarding school issues and decisions

EVIDENCE:

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3.4 **LEARNING COMMUNITY**

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Awareness that change must occur and that collaborative approaches are needed.	Active steps to develop a shared vision of change that focuses on learning. Collaboration and trust-building are a growing emphasis. Leaders from all levels aware of school vision.	The staff intentionally puts learning first and is mindful about the change process and their work together. Staff, students, and community work together to enact the vision through relationships characterized by trust, respect, and responsibility. Principal, superintendent, school board, and community leaders actively support the school vision for student success. Sample Strategies: ■ Professional development and staff meeting time explicitly focus on change processes, developing a common vision of change, and student learning ■ Ongoing dialogue, events, and forums foster school-wide community building ■ Leaders from the school to the district to the school board participate in regular reviews of the school vision for student learning

EVIDENCE:

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3.5 **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Professional development opportunities somewhat sporadic, teacher reflection and collaboration may be limited, and plan may not align with school or district goals. Accountability measures absent.	Professional development combines external opportunities with internal capacity building. Teacher collaboration around common themes or strategies is the focus. Plan is becoming more aligned and initial accountability measures are in place.	Staff has time to reflect on their practice, collaborate with peers to improve instruction, and network with others beyond the school. Strategic professional development plan is aligned to vision and includes accountability measures. Sample Strategies: ■ Teachers are allowed to choose from a menu of professional development options that align with school vision for student learning ■ Teachers are provided with regular time and support to reflect on their practice, review student performance data, conduct action research, and share effective teaching strategies ■ Teachers regularly network with educators, employers, and experts beyond the school ■ Professional development plan aligns with school learning vision and takes a multi-year perspective ■ Accountability measures such as oral and written reports, peer reviews, classroom observations, and data analyses are used to provide feedback on training activities.

EVIDENCE:

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SCHOOL CHANGE RUBRIC: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRAND

4.1 EQUITY

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Few stakeholder groups access school resources and/or participate in school programs and reform plans, in part due to walls that exist between the school and the community	School is aware that some community subgroups are underrepresented in many aspects of the school, strategies to connect diverse elements of the community to the school have been identified	Parents and community members from all cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, special needs, and socioeconomic backgrounds are involved in all aspects of the school. School and community create open and explicit dialogue regarding issues of student achievement, equity, diversity, and empowerment. Sample Strategies: ■ School actively engages community through forums, town hall meetings, and visits to community organizations and events ■ School staff visits the homes of incoming 9th grade students to welcome them to the school ■ School explicitly reaches out to underrepresented parent and community groups, gathers their views, and uses them ■ All school newsletters and communications offer options for translation into different languages

EVIDENCE:

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SELF-SCORING: Based on the evidence listed above, our school most closely aligns with rubric level -- . (select 1, 2, or 3)

4.2 COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Community support limited to fundraising and occasional public events.	School strategically engages community through a variety of meaningful opportunities.	Individuals and organizations throughout the community act as design partners who collaborate on the development of the school vision, curriculum, and programs. Sample Strategies: ■ Community forums and town hall meetings ■ Focus group sessions that target specific subgroups in the community ■ Inclusion of community partners on key committees and leadership bodies ■ Inclusion of community partners in professional development and curriculum design meetings

EVIDENCE:

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4.3 PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Parents involved primarily on "booster" level, still may not connect to curricular issues or school change process.	Parental involvement extends to governance and limited instructional connections. Some parents aware of school change plans.	Parents understand the vision and are active partners in curriculum design, student learning plans, school improvement, and school decisions. Sample Strategies: ■ Communication plans target parents from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds ■ Parents are active and meaningful participants in school governance bodies ■ Parents participate regularly in professional development days and school reform conferences ■ Parent representatives serve in key roles on committees throughout the school and are voting members on school decision making bodies ■ Parents partner with students and school staff to develop student learning plans for all students

EVIDENCE:

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SCHOOL CHANGE RUBRIC: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRAND

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4.4 STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
Limited awareness and involvement of students in school reform efforts.	A few students are involved in reform work through site councils, design teams, etc.	Students understand the vision and are active partners in all aspects of school reform work, curriculum design, and community connections. Students provided with opportunities to have a meaningful impact on reform work and key school decisions. Sample Strategies: ■ Student representatives are voting members of site leadership bodies ■ Students participate regularly on school reform panels, committees, and task groups ■ Students work with teachers to shape curricular themes, project topics, etc. ■ Students help to develop partnerships with employers and organizations in the community

EVIDENCE:

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SELF-SCORING: Based on the evidence listed above, our school most closely aligns with rubric level **--** . (select 1, 2, or 3)

4.5 EMPLOYER AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

1	2	3
Early Steps	**Growing Innovation**	**New Paradigms**
A few classrooms build employer partnerships in school- and work-based settings, but connections mostly limited to guest speaking appearances.	Employer partners provide most students with at least one in-depth learning interaction each school year.	Employer partners develop rich learning experiences for all students and staff and reap tangible rewards from their relationships with students and the school. Partners actively work to bring school vision to fruition. Partners have opportunities to influence curriculum and program development. Partners receive regular updates on key curriculum and policy changes. Sample Strategies: ■ Work-based learning, student internships, and job shadowing ■ Employer and community partners work with teaching teams to develop community-based projects ■ Employer and community partners regularly serve as audience members for student exhibitions ■ Student internships and projects target real needs of employers and community organizations ■ School communication plans target employer and community partners

EVIDENCE:

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SELF-SCORING: Based on the evidence listed above, our school most closely aligns with rubric level -- . (select 1, 2, or 3)