Operating Principles of Schools as a Competent System

- For staff development to be effective, it must be an integral part of a deliberately developed continuous improvement effort.
- In a competent system, all staff members believe that what they have collectively agreed to do is challenging, possible, and worthy of the attempt.
- Each school is a complex living system with purpose.
- A competent system is driven by systems thinking.
- Every staff member must be regarded as a trusted colleague in the examination of assumptions and habitual practices.
- A shared vision articulates a coherent picture of what the school will look like when the core beliefs have been put into practice.
- The legitimacy of a shared vision is based on how well it represents all perspectives in the school community.
- Once staff members commit to the shared vision, they must gain clarity on their responsibility for achieving that vision.
- When staff members perceive data to be valid and reliable in collection and analysis, data both confirm what is working well and reveal the gaps between the current reality and the shared vision in a way that inspires collective action.
- All staff must see the content and process of staff development as a necessary means to achieve the desired end.
- It is not the number of innovations addressed in the staff development plan but rather the purposeful linkage among them that makes systemic change possible and manageable.
- Staff development must promote collective autonomy by embracing teaching as a distributed quality of the school.
- Planning must provide the clear, concrete direction necessary for systemic change while remaining flexible enough to accommodate the “non-rational” life in schools.
- Staff development must reflect the predictable stages of teacher concern about the complexities of moving from new learning to systemic consequences.
- A competent system proves itself when everyone within the system performs better as a result of the collective endeavors and accepts accountability for that improvement.