Effective school divisions demonstrate the ability to continuously improve, adhere to a vision, maximize student learning, provide strong leadership, offer high quality instruction, and conduct relevant professional development. The school division leadership team cultivates a culture of capacity-building and continuous improvement (Continuous Improvement). The school division consistently adheres to a vision that drives strategic planning and subsequent actions (Strategic Planning). The school board and superintendent intentionally organize the division to maximize student learning (System Organization). Leaders are proactive and intentional, and allocate resources to achieve the vision. Leaders model systemic thinking by communicating and making transparent decisions (Leadership). Leaders continuously align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Leaders implement and monitor differentiated, research-based instruction, and services provided to meet diverse student needs (Curriculum, Instructional Practices, and Services). The school division provides and assesses the effectiveness of professional development that is needs-based and job-embedded (Professional Development). Evidence-based, tiered support programming is provided to students; multiple sources of data, gathered from regular and intentional student progress monitoring, are used to develop programming that includes a continuum of support options for students (Student Support Systems).

Directions: Use the Virginia Department of Education’s Second-Order Transitional Change Map and the guiding questions below to conduct a needs sensing interview with the division leadership team.

Participants: Members of the division leadership team (Title I, Instruction, Special Education, and ELL, if applicable)

Step 1: The division liaison will explain the purpose of the needs sensing interview to the division leadership team.

The needs sensing interview is a tool for diagnosing needs and determining resources that will be needed to support a division leadership team and/or schools in improvement.

Step 2: The division liaison will review student achievement data (i.e. preliminary SOL data, AYP data, PALS data) with the division leadership team.

Guiding Questions:
1) Based on the data, what subgroup trends did the division leadership team observe?
2) Did the achievement data surprise the division leadership team? Why?
3) Based on the data, evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of the current reading and/or mathematics programs
4) Based on the data, what is/are the area(s) of focus for the upcoming school year for the schools in Title I school improvement? Subgroups?
5) Based on the data, what revisions to the division improvement plan are needed? What indicators and/tasks will be added to the Indistar Web-based improvement plan?
Step 3: The division liaison will utilize the *OSI Change Map* and the *Guiding Questions* below to determine the stage of implementation and level of support needed.

1. **Continuous improvement** – Effective school divisions demonstrate the ability to continuously improve, adhere to a vision, maximize student learning, provide strong leadership, offer high quality instruction, and conduct relevant professional development. The school division leadership team cultivates a culture of capacity-building and continuous improvement.

   **Guiding Questions:**
   a) Describe how the school division works to build capacity of all employees?
   b) How is professional development used as a tool for building the capacity of all employees?
   c) Describe the process used by the division leadership team and superintendent to monitor school improvement efforts. How is data analysis integrated into this process?
   d) Describe setbacks, resistance, and obstacles to continuous improvement encountered by the division leadership team and individual schools during the previous year. How were these issues addressed by stakeholders?
   e) Describe how the division ensures that schools and community representatives are included as active partners in decision-making.

2. **System organization** – The school board and superintendent intentionally organize the division to maximize student learning.

   **Guiding Questions:**
   a) Describe how teams are organized at both the division- and school level.
   b) How does the work of division- and school-level teams impact student achievement? Cite examples of data points to support your response.
   c) Does the division leadership team meet on a regular basis with school-level improvement teams? If so, please describe how these meetings are structured to focus the priorities of the division and schools on student achievement.
   d) Describe how the division leadership team reviews and synthesizes leading and lagging indicators at the division, school, and classroom levels. How is this information used to reallocate resources?

3. **Strategic planning** – The school division leadership team cultivates a culture of capacity-building and continuous improvement. The school division consistently adheres to a vision that drives strategic planning and subsequent actions.

   **Guiding Questions:**
   a) What is the school division’s vision statement? Describe how the vision is demonstrated in policies and actions affecting schools in Title I School Improvement.
   b) Describe how division and school improvement strategies are aligned with the vision.
c) Describe how the division ensures that resources are available to allow the vision to be realized through strategic planning and subsequent actions.

4. **Leadership** – Leaders are proactive and intentional, and allocate resources to achieve the vision. Leaders model systemic thinking by communicating and making transparent decisions.

**Guiding Questions:**

a) Describe how the school division trains and supports leaders who demonstrate the capacity to improve schools.

b) What data points are schools required to use when developing improvement plans?

c) Describe needs assessment activities that are implemented by the school division to determine how resources are allocated to individual schools.

d) How does the division leadership team ensure that teachers are provided differentiated professional development to assist them with implementing tiered, research-based intervention strategies in the classroom on a consistent basis with fidelity?

5. **Curriculum, instructional practices, and services** - Leaders continuously align curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Leaders implement and monitor differentiated, research-based instruction, and services provided to meet diverse student needs.

*Note: Emphasize the revised mathematics and English Standards of Learning, and look for evidence that the division has revised its curriculum to reflect the revised standards and assessments.*

**Guiding Questions:**

a) Describe how teachers use curriculum guides and other resources provided by the Virginia Department of Education to plan instruction and formative assessments aligned with the revised mathematics and English Standards of Learning.

b) Describe how the division leadership team ensures that instruction and formative assessments are aligned with grade-level Virginia Standards of Learning.

c) Describe how the division has prepared students for the online SOL assessments.

d) How are benchmark assessments aligned with the revised SOL and online assessments?

d) Describe how the division leadership team works with school leaders to cultivate a climate of effective teaming and collegial support in developing, implementing, and monitoring differentiated, research-based instruction.
6. Professional development - The school division provides and assesses the effectiveness of professional development that is needs-based and job-embedded.

Guiding Questions:
a) Describe how professional development is designed, implemented, and evaluated for all employees.
b) How are multiple data points used to determine individual professional development needs?
c) Describe how professional development for all employees is linked directly to student achievement.

7. Student Support Systems - Evidence-based, tiered support programming is provided to students; multiple sources of data, gathered from regular and intentional student progress monitoring, are used to develop programming that includes a continuum of support options for students.

Guiding Questions:
a) What sources of data does the leadership team analyze and share with faculty to identify students who are not achieving at grade-level standards and those who are failing?
b) How does your student support system identify struggling students in the areas of attendance, behavior, and other early warning signs?
c) What are the components of the school’s student support system? Is participation mandatory or voluntary? How do you identify students for each level or tier of support within the system?
d) How do you assess participation and the impact on student achievement of each component of your support system?
e) How do you help students and their parents become aware of and access the support system?
f) Describe your efforts to identify and form community partnerships to provide authentic community-based learning experiences as part of your system of extra help and student support.

Step 4: Complete the Needs Sensing Interview Form and submit to Yvonne Holloman and Lucia Sebastian via SSWS on or before November 2, 2012.