

Carson City School District's Alignment Process and the Learner Centered Focus on Educator Effectiveness

Key components for academically effective Districts

1. Guaranteed and viable curriculum – all grade levels all subjects
Wiggins & McTighe (1988); Marzano (2006)
2. Common summative and formative assessment systems
Stiggins (2005)
3. Instructor Stance and the Learner Centered Organization - Classroom
Pradere (2010)
4. High quality instruction and methods for measuring the existence of high quality instruction
Tomlinson & McTighe (2006); Fitterer – WestEd – T4S (2009)
5. Instructional Leadership – Classroom level, school level, district level
NAESP (2008) Leading Learning Communities
6. Professional Learning Communities
DuFour, Dufour, Eaker (2008);
7. Family Engagement

Identifying the organizations knowledge, skills, and practices in each area:

SIP/DIP Processes

Utilizing a District/School improvement planning process throughout the organization that is aligned with the common goal of the district to develop each of the six elements- an organization does not have the human or organizational capital to address more than two of these seven elements at one time.

- Organizations must utilize an effective SIP/DIP process to identify the most important or reasonable area to begin their effort. If an organization has needs in all areas it may focus on curriculum and assessment may be the best investment.

Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum and Assessment System

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Following the work of Wiggins and McTighe (2006) and Marzano (2006) effective districts are able to identify what students are to know and be able to do at every grade level in every subject area. As we know students learn at different rates, but there must be established learning targets for all students to meet at specific times throughout the year in each subject. How does an organization know if this is part of their system?

- Every teacher has a curriculum outline and series of summative and formative assessments already developed for every class and every grade level.
- Curriculum and assessments are developed and organized into high quality units of study.
- All stakeholders are clear about what mastery looks like prior to entering the units of study
- The teacher can produce the hard copies of the curriculum and assessment in every classroom at the moment of every request.
- The teacher utilizes student mastery on unit assessments to measure his or her success as well as the success of their students.

Guaranteed and viable curriculum – all grade levels all subjects; Wiggins & McTighe (1988); Marzano (2006); Common summative and formative assessment systems
Stiggins (2005)

Common Summative and Formative Assessment System

Every educational system should measure its success by its ability to bring the students who it supports to be college/technical skills schools and/or work ready. In order to reach that goal they system must **back-map the assessment system** so that mastery within each unit of study throughout the system will lead students to this level of success.

- Every course has a series of assessments that serve as summative and formative information for stakeholders (students, teachers, administrators, and families) as to mastery of the guaranteed curriculum.
- Teachers utilize pre-assessment data to determine student skill level and educational needs prior to entering into a unit of study. He or she then adjusts instruction to meet the individual needs of students within each group or class.
- Teachers review planned unit and differentiate instruction depending on the needs of the student groups
- Teachers develop learning opportunities that will lead all students to mastery on post unit assessments.
- Students complete the post assessment and teachers review student progress and determine if mastery is achieved by all.
- Students who did not meet mastery must have additional learning opportunities and then move on to mastery
- It is critical that the teacher does not measure their success as a teacher by what they deliver, but what students can do on the summative unit assessments.

Common summative and formative assessment systems; Stiggins (2005)

High Quality Instruction:

- **Instructional Stance**

What I believe is the single greatest barrier in the American Educational System is the Stance of the Instructor. Stance refers to the system of beliefs they live under when serving as a teacher. In this theory there are two primary stances:

- **Delivery Stance:** In this stance the teacher measures his or her success by what work they do in the classroom. Delivery stance teachers measure success by the lessons taught, information presented, and how active or on task he or she kept their students throughout the lesson.
 - "I taught it, it is up to them to get it." "I have so much curriculum to get through, they have to keep-up so that all the information can be covered"
 - "I hold the knowledge"
 - "My students failed the assessment, they should have studied harder"
- **Learner Centered Stance:** In this stance the teacher measures his or her success by what their students can demonstrate. Especially on the targeted assessments (end of unit assessments). If students do not do well on the assessment learner centered instructors believe they have failed their students.
 - "I know what students are to know and are able to do while in the unit of study" – clear set of learning targets before entering the unit of study"
 - "I will pre-assess my students and be clear about the skills they have and the skills they need as they enter the unit of study"
 - "I will be sure that all students understand the learning targets prior to entering the units of study"
 - "I will travel the learning experience (units of study) with my students measuring their progress regularly (formative assessment) making sure that each can complete complementary skills that lead to unit mastery."
 - "At the conclusion of the unit of study I will assess my students and I believe that they will all reach mastery"
 - "Students who do not reach mastery will receive additional learning opportunities until they can reach mastery"
 - ***Most importantly in a learner centered stance I measure my success by why my students can know and demonstrate as a result of our interaction in the classroom. If my students fail, I have failed.***
 - ***In initial observation it appears that the further one travels up the educational system the more one encounter teachers who are delivery centered in his or her professional belief system.***

Pradere (2009)

- **High Quality Instruction:** This includes methods of instructional delivery that engages all learners in the curricular experience. Effective teachers engage utilize strategies that make participation mandatory. They utilize strategies the support special education and English Language Learners. Effective districts have methods for measuring high quality instruction.
 - Teachers utilize high quality instruction methods that will support all learners
 - District have tools to measure the existence of recognized practices
 - Districts support teacher and administrators to improve recognized practices within each classroom
 - T4S is a good example of a high quality instructional program
 - Planning is a critical component of effective instruction. The level of teacher effectiveness will always be limited by the quality of the curriculum and assessment system.

High quality instruction and methods for measuring the existence of high quality instruction Tomlinson & McTighe (2006); Teach for Success (T4S) Fitterer – WestEd (2009)

- **Instructional Leadership:**

The goal of the system is to build a Learner Centered Education system where student success in the system is measured by student success within each unit of study. This success is correlated to mastery on district and state assessments. The role of leadership is to foster this commitment to excellence within the unit of study.

Professional learning communities are a critical component of this model. Teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators need to have a way to work together on the development, delivery, and monitoring of student success within the units of study.

Building leaders must focus efforts on this concept by changing his or her focus to that of student learning. Here is a simple example:

The administrator has a short conversation with one of the teachers he is supervising.

Scenario 1 Teacher Centered

- Principal, “How was class today?” The teacher responds “Today was a good day; students were well behaved and we were able to cover the material I had planned. I have a test next week and I need to get through the rest of the material the next couple of days to be able to give the test prior to the end of the quarter.”

Scenario 2 Learner Centered

- Principal, “What is the focus of the unit that you are studying in math this week?” Teacher “The focus is on calculating the surface area of cubes and rectangles.” Principal, “What are the key skills that students will need to master if they are going to meet the minimum score on the unit assessment?” Teacher “Each student must be able to find the surface area of each face of the figure and then be able to combine the values for each side. They will also have to identify the amount of material it would take to cover each surface.” Administrator “How many students have the basic skills? How do you know? How many students may need special help to meet the minimum learning target?

As you can see, this takes a systemic change in the way questions are asked, what is identified as important in the system and the steps necessary to bring students to mastery within the system. A critical component from a systems approach is setting aside resources and asking key questions at every level from superintendent to classroom teacher.

A systemic approach to this issue will be critical to leverage the resources to make this type of system a reality.

Pradere (2010); Tomlinson & McTighe (2006); Fitterer-WestEd (2009); NAESP (2008); DuFour, Dufour, Eaker (2008);

These are general reference notes that can be used to help organize and plan professional conversations. If you would like further information about each topic you can contact Dr. Steven Pradere spradere@carson.k12.nv.us or go directly to the referenced author in the notes summary.