

## 09. PROGRAMS, STANDARDS, AND CURRICULUM

A. CONTENT AREAS. District leaders ensure that quality programs of study are in place that provide all students opportunity to meet the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards in all content areas.

**i. The district monitors the quality of programs of study in all content areas using student results (i.e. products, performance, and test scores).**

A program of study is the sequence of courses and/or competencies within each of the content areas required by Wyoming statute. Quality programs of study in all content areas are important to a well-rounded education. "Literacy and math skills are necessary but not sufficient for success in college, careers, and life" (USDE, 2016).

**ii. A coherent curriculum is in place for literacy and math for all schools in the district with alignment and coordination within and between grade levels.**

Achieving the basics of literacy and numeracy is the highest priority for improving school systems (Mourshed, Chijioke, & Barber, 2010). Non-fiction reading and writing should be integrated into all programs of study (Mattheissen, 2018). An evidence-based review of curriculum and instructional materials for math and language arts is available at [www.edreports.org](http://www.edreports.org).

**iii. The curriculum in all content areas is aligned to and inclusive of the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards.**

Content and Performance Standards provide guidance to districts and schools for each content area. The development or adoption of a curriculum that is aligned to and inclusive of the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards is the responsibility of the district. Curriculum developed in accordance with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) meets the needs of all students (CAST, 2018).

B. CURRICULUM. District leaders ensure that learning goals and targets, aligned to and inclusive of the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards, are logically sequenced and are the same for equivalent courses.

**i. Teacher teams across content areas and grade levels develop and continuously refine a guaranteed and viable curriculum.**

The curriculum should be taught and assessed uniformly across equivalent courses (guaranteed) and should be concise enough that it can be taught in the amount of time available (viable) (McRel, 2017).

**ii. Curriculum maps or proficiency scales are used to define the learning goals and learning targets.**

“Any system that organizes statements of what students are expected to know and be able to do enhances student learning because it provides clarity to students and teachers alike. Educators should feel free to create their own systems or adapt those that others have proposed” (Marzano, 2013). For example, curriculum maps can be used to define the unit goals, learning targets, and aligned assessments with a projected timeline. Schools that use standards-based grading may use progression scales (e.g. proficiency scales) to define levels of performance.

**iii. A district curriculum manual is used to clarify expectations, define key terms, and provide sample documents.**

The vocabulary associated with curriculum and assessment can be confusing. “An internally consistent system helps ensure that all practitioners use terms—such as *learning targets*, *instructional objectives*, and *learning goals*—in the same manner. Ideally, this effort should be conducted at the district level” (Marzano, 2013). This may be the same manual or plan for curriculum and assessment. (See 10.A.iii)

## 10. DISTRICT ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

A. ASSESSMENT PROCESS. The district defines the assessment system and methods used to determine levels of student performance for each standard or learning goal.

**i. The district has determined expectations for assessment literacy for all educators, and provides training to ensure assessment literacy.**

Assessment literate educators develop clear learning targets, match assessment type to the learning target, use quality assessment items, tasks and scoring guides, use assessment results in a manner aligned with the purpose of the assessment (e.g. formative versus summative) and involve students in the assessment process (Chappuis 2017, pg. 1). According to James Popham, increased assessment literacy is the most cost-effective way to improve schools (Popham, 2018).

**ii. Collaborative teams use common formative assessments to determine needs for intervention or enrichment.**

Research supports the use of formative assessment to inform instructional decisions and provide feedback to students. Teachers modify instruction or provide learning support based on formative assessment results. While individual teachers can and should use formative assessment, working in teams to develop common formative assessments increases the consistency across equivalent courses, develops collective expertise and reduces the workload for individual teachers (Popham, 2018).

**iii. A district assessment manual or plan defines key terminology and assessment processes used by all educators across the district.**

The vocabulary associated with curriculum and assessment can be confusing. Districts should clarify expectations, define key terms, and provide teachers with examples of documents used across the district. These may be the same manual or plan for curriculum and assessment. (See 09.B.iii)

B. GRADING AND REPORTING. The district grading system provides information on the level of student performance for each learning goal.

**i. Educators and stakeholders have developed a position statement to clarify the purpose of grading and use a grading approach that achieves this purpose.**

Discussions about changing grading practices should begin with a discussion about the purpose of grading. If the sole purpose of grading is to determine college readiness, research indicates high-school grade point average is already a consistent and reliable predictor of college performance (States, 2018).

**ii. Grades reflect a level of proficiency on selected standards or standards-aligned units. Behavior is reported separate from content.**

The challenge of grading that uses points as a percent of total points is that it is difficult to differentiate between what students have learned and what part of the grade is based on their behavior (e.g. turning work in on time). Some grading experts support a grading approach that separates content from behavior. Some schools have adopted standards-based grading which allows for reporting of specific knowledge and skill attainment. Others have adopted a competency-based approach where content is separated into units with a minimum percent (e.g. 80%) necessary to demonstrate competency on the unit (Stack & Vander Els, 2018). Either standards-based or competency-based systems are preferable for tracking and ensuring student mastery of content.

**iii. The district grading policy ensures consistency in grading practices, and prohibits grading practices that are a deterrent to student proficiency.**

Grading practices which are a deterrent to proficiency include taking points off for late work or not accepting late work; not allowing retakes on assignments or assessments; allowing retakes, but averaging the attempts; and grading assignments for accuracy on the first attempt (Weinstein, 2017).

## 11. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

A. INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES. Teachers use the shared instructional practices and social routines defined in the district instructional framework to engage students in the subject matter in all content areas.

**i. Teachers demonstrate instructional methods that are consistent with the instructional priorities defined in the instructional framework.**

Some districts have defined a few key instructional strategies that are the focus for all teachers. For example, research shows that observer ratings on lesson objective, instructional delivery, teacher questioning strategies, clarity of presentation of concepts, time on task, and level of student understanding (i.e. formative assessment) are highly correlated to standardized test scores (Gargani & Strong, 2014).

**ii. All teachers post and communicate learning targets, and communicate success criteria for the learning targets.**

Learning targets are the critical link between curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Success criteria is synonymous with assessment task, or what students must do to meet the learning targets. John Hattie contends students must know what they are supposed to be learning and how their performance will be judged. (Schwartz, 2017).

**iii. High quality instructional strategies that elicit high levels of student engagement are used by all teachers.**

Richard Elmore cites a “common situation in American classrooms: Teachers are doing all, or most, of the work, exercising considerable flair and control in the classroom, and students are sitting ‘passively’ watching the teacher perform” (City, 2009, p.25-26). Elmore states, in contrast to other countries, in American schools, particularly secondary schools, teachers are often focused on “delivering” the content rather than paying attention to “whether students are actually interested and engaged in learning” (City, 2009, p. 27).

B. ACADEMIC TASKS. Teachers expect all students to demonstrate knowledge, apply learning, engage in thoughtful dialogue, and develop high quality work products in all classrooms.

**i. Teachers enable deeper learning and integrate skills for success through rigorous units/lessons with real-world scenarios and performance tasks.**

Elmore contends the task is the “actual work students are asked to do in the process of instruction” (City, 2009, p. 23). *Architects of Deeper Learning* details an approach that links content standards, skills for success (e.g. teamwork, collaboration) and student engagement through real-world scenarios (e.g. role playing) that results in student presentations, products or performance (Pijanowski, 2018).

**ii. Classroom management practices in all classrooms promote positive relationships, student motivation, and skills for success.**

Teachers should emphasize structure and routines, promote active learning, and identify and teach important student behaviors (Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2018). This includes a classroom environment with positive, collaborative relationships and tasks that nurture student social-emotional learning (Yoder, 2014). Positive behavior and motivation increases when students value the task and expect to succeed with reasonable effort (Cushman, 2014).

**iii. Student products and performances that integrate technology, art, and design with essential content are showcased for all students.**

Implementation of *Turnaround Arts*, a whole school arts integration model, in some low performing schools has resulted in increased student achievement and decreased disciplinary problems after years with no progress (Kennedy, 2018). Research supports music, art, and exercise as aids to academic learning for traumatized students (McREL.org, 2017). One study showed project-based learning, internship opportunities, group work and long-term assessments such as portfolios and exhibitions, study groups, and student participation in decision making are correlated with a range of positive student outcomes (AIR.org, 2016)

## 12. LEARNING SUPPORT

A. INTERVENTION. The district and all schools maintain a coordinated approach to supporting students who are experiencing difficulty achieving proficiency on the learning goals.

**i. All schools implement a pyramid of interventions (i.e. RTI, MTSS, PBIS) to address student needs, in which student participation is required.**

Well-established academic support and non-academic support to meet individual student needs is common to improving schools (AIR, 2016). School counselors and psychologists play an important role in the identification of student needs and provision of support. A common way of describing intervention is a pyramid with the foundation as Tier 1, or the core instruction provided for all students (Criterion 9-11). The first priority is excellent Tier 1 instruction. The next level, or Tier 2 is typically small group instruction. The third level, Tier 3, is individualized (Morin, 2014).

**ii. All schools provide comprehensive interventions for students with disabilities, and support for English learners.**

The services provided to students with disabilities are individualized for each child's specific needs. The focus is on providing each student with the resources and support necessary to make progress in school (Understood.org, 2014). Research shows that English learners need to learn many words to perform on par with their native-English-speaking peers. Consequently, comprehensive vocabulary instruction is necessary for English learners (WWC, 2007).

**iii. All schools in the district involve families, and learning support is coordinated between the home and school.**

Family engagement that includes shared responsibility, trusting relationships, and mutual respect is beneficial for students. The Dual Capacity Framework is a valuable resource for developing an effective process for family engagement (SEDL, 2013) The National PTA standards are another excellent resource (PTA, 2018).

B. EXTENSION AND ENRICHMENT. The district and schools provide extended learning opportunities and enrichment for students that have demonstrated proficiency on the learning goals.

**i. Students who have demonstrated proficiency are provided with enrichment and extended learning that is highly engaging, rather than just more work.**

Students who have demonstrated a strong understanding of the content should be provided options for deepening their understanding (Fisher & Frey, 2017). In competency-based systems, this includes additional competencies beyond the required minimum (Stack & Vander Els, 2018). One enrichment activity that is proven to enhance achievement is playing board games (e.g. chess, Monopoly, and Scrabble) (Catapano, n.d.).

**ii. Gifted and talented students are provided qualitatively differentiated instruction that includes academically rigorous tasks.**

The National Association for Gifted Children recommends that every school provides access to curricular resources designed for gifted learners; professional development for all teachers regarding the needs of gifted learners, differentiation in general, and flexible grouping approaches; and resource specialists who can support the classroom teacher in assessing gifted learner differences, making adjustments to the curriculum, and implementing differentiated instruction (NAGC, 2014)

**iii. Active, hands-on after-school and out-of-school enrichment opportunities are provided for students that support a range of positive learning outcomes.**

“Dozens of studies of afterschool programs repeatedly underscore the powerful impact of supporting a range of positive learning outcomes, including academic achievement, by affording children and youth opportunities to practice new skills through hands-on, experiential learning in project-based after school programs” (Wong, 2008).



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