HUSD COMMON CORE INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The new California Common Core Standards (CCCS) are an opportunity for educators to reevaluate and reflect on our current approaches to teaching and learning. HUSD has taken full advantage of this opportunity by working with teachers and school leaders to begin to define how our district will implement the Common Core. Our intent is to collaboratively develop a Common Core Instructional Framework (CCIF) that can guide our transition to the Common Core.

CCIF: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Key principles that guide the development of our Common Core Instructional Framework (CCIF) include:

- Focusing on *depth* over breadth
- Identifying *structures* (not scripts) to guide teaching and learning
- Working *in collaboration* with teachers and school leaders
- Identifying *best practices* in HUSD on which to build our approach

Our DRAFT Common Core Instructional Framework outlined below represents our current best thinking about how to engage with the CCCS. This is and will continue to be a work in progress as we move forward with CCCS implementation. This approach reflects an effort to thoughtfully implement the Common Core, and ultimately realize our vision of *The 3 R's for 21st Century Success: Rigor, Responsibility, and Results*.

CCIF: KEY COMPONENTS

Our CCIF has three key components. These components are not novel. They are based on what educators know to be good teaching and learning and best practices from schools and classrooms throughout HUSD. Below is a more detailed explanation of each component.

COMMON CORE INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK

- Common Core Standards-Based Unit Plans
- Common Core Lesson Design
- Common Core Assessments

COMMON CORE STANDARDS-BASED UNIT PLANS

Teaching and learning is often best organized in units of study. A well-planned unit of study provides opportunities for teachers to teach several essential standards over a period of time. When standards-based unit plans guide our work – as opposed to textbooks, scripts, or daily pacing guides – learning experiences are organized to support the kind of thinking and problem-solving expected by the CCSS. Last summer teachers had opportunities to plan these types of units and we are currently piloting teacher-developed CC Standards-Based Unit Plans.

From these experiences and conversations at schools and in curriculum councils, we are identifying key features of CC Standards-Based Unit Plans. These include:

- A few essential standards for each unit
- The "Depths of Knowledge" associated with CCCS
- Backwards planning from what it looks like when students meet the standard to where students are at when starting the unit
- A timeline for the unit (e.g. 6 weeks) that bounds the learning time for the unit and still allows for flexibility to meet student needs

A COMMON CORE LESSON DESIGN

Our Common Core Lesson Design has a structure and elements that allow for students to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving on a daily basis. While these features are often identified as simply "good teaching," our lesson design provides a comprehensive planning guide so that the CCCS and the requisite thinking and skills can be addressed in every lesson.

Our Common Core Lesson Design includes:

- *Lesson Elements*
  - A focused learning objective
  - Engagement strategies so that all students participate during every lesson
  - Culturally Relevant Practices
    - Relationships
    - EL Support
    - Academic Language
    - Culturally relevant materials
  - Checking for understanding

- *Lesson Structure: Gradual Release of Responsibility*
  - Connect (Activating Prior Knowledge)
  - I Do (Modeling)
  - We Do (Guided Practice)
  - You All Do and/or You Do (Group work or independent work)
  - Closure

The *Lesson Elements* should be imbedded in every lesson we teach. The *Lesson Structure* provides a generic guide for planning lessons. Many lessons are typically planned in this order. However, there are times when the order of the lesson will be intentionally changed. For example, when exploring a concept in science of math, we may want students to engage in group work (the "you all do") before we lead them in guided practice ("we do"). Regardless of the order, the most important aspect of our lesson structure is that students have time to engage in independent or group work in every lesson. If there is not that release of responsibility – whether at the beginning, middle, or end of the lesson – then students are not active learners during the lesson.

COMMON CORE ASSESSMENTS

The CCCS demand that students show what they have learned in more authentic ways than multiple choice tests. The Common Core assessments provide students opportunities to show their learning in a variety of ways. These assessments include:

- *Selected Response:* Questions for which there may be more than one answer
- *Constructed Response:* Questions for which students need to "construct" a response and explain their thinking
- *Performance Tasks*: Tasks that students perform to demonstrate mastery of various essential standards

COMMON CORE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

When developing the CCIF, teachers and site leaders discussed how these components need to be a part of an overall supportive learning environment. A safe and effective learning environment is crucial for the achievement of students. The creation of this learning environment must start from the beginning of the year. Explicitly teaching rituals and routines ensures that students work purposefully together in a learning centered environment.

Creating a learning community involves both the physical space as well as the cognitive space. The physical space is managed by both the teacher and the students. Once expectations are clearly taught and modeled the students develop ownership of the room and routines. The cognitive space is based on the learning expectations the teacher exhibits for their students. These expectations include value and effort. To be motivated students must see the worth of the work and know that the teacher values their work and of their classmates.

Maintaining a learning environment requires teachers to actively monitor students, continually check for understanding and keep activities well paced. An effective learning environment allows for high task engagement and enduring academic achievement.

COMMON CORE INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK: NEXT STEPS

We will continue to develop our CCIF based on feedback and further conversations with educators throughout HUSD. As we move forward, our CCIF will become the foundation of our work to meet the ambitious learning goals imbedded in the CCCS. This means …

- Further developing the CCIF at our Curriculum Council meetings
- Planning professional development to support the CCIF
- Working with teacher leaders at the district level and at schools to develop Common Core Standards-Based Units
- Incorporating a focus on the CCIF into schools' Single Plan for Student Achievement

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We are excited to begin this journey together to bring the CCCS to HUSD. Questions or feedback can be sent to mwayne@husd.us