

The

Summer 2023 Vol. 69, Issue 3

JOURNAL

THE MAGAZINE OF THE INDIANA SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

SCHOOL BOARDS MATTER

— *for* KIDS —





DUNELAND SCHOOL CORPORATION

GUARANTEED & VIABLE CURRICULUM (GVC)

DISTRICT ACCREDITATION 2012-2023

*By Dr. Chip Pettit, Superintendent, Duneland School Corporation
and Donna Biggs, Director of Teaching & Learning, Duneland School Corporation*



Dr. Chip Pettit
Superintendent, Duneland School Corporation



Donna Biggs
Director of Teaching & Learning, Duneland School Corporation

The recent history of American education is dominated by the concept of accountability. A legislative and social consensus has emerged that schools (and, in particular, teachers) are accountable for student performance. In most instances, this has been defined by results from one-time, high-stakes testing.

Although the attempts to quantify district, school, and teacher impact have an important place in the process school leaders use to analyze student performance, too often, the ‘measure of outputs’ overshadows the ‘measurement of inputs.’

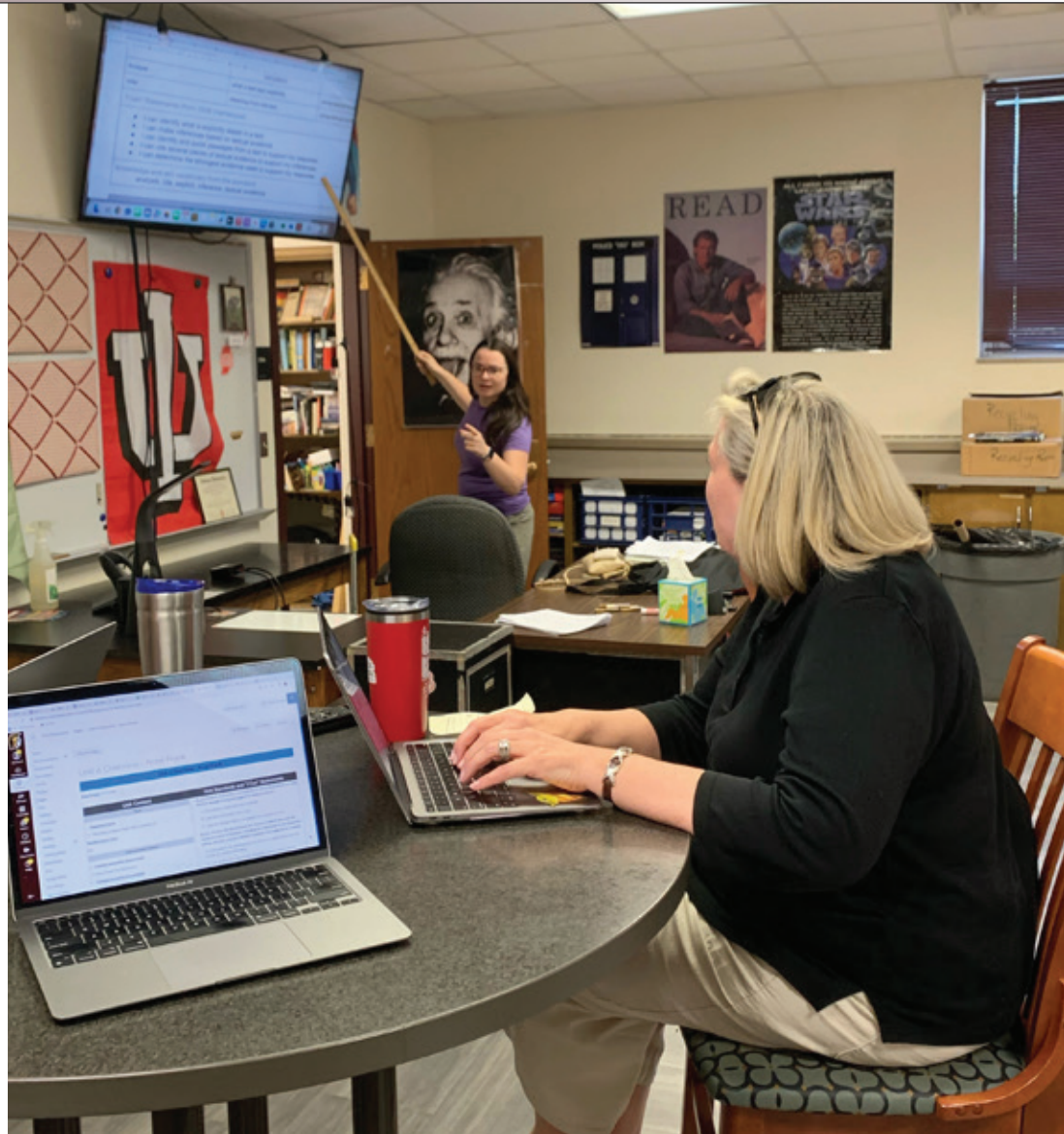
For many years, the Duneland School Corporation has invited an external team of experts to come onsite and evaluate our existing practices for the purpose of gaining insight into the effectiveness of different facets within the school or district program. While this external review process is not considered newsworthy to the media, it is certainly valuable to us in providing educators with feedback on research-based strategies that are proven to positively impact student performance.

In both 2012 and 2018, AdvancED external review teams highlighted ‘powerful practices’ and ‘areas for improvement’. Excerpts shared from ‘areas for improvement’ (see below) provided the evidence district and building leadership needed to work with teachers to establish a systematic process to develop, monitor, and adjust curriculum and assessments.

EDITOR’S NOTE: *This is the third article in a year-long series featuring Duneland School Corporation.*

January 2012, AdvancED External Review Feedback –

While pockets of best practices are evident throughout the district, evidence of a systemic process for teachers to identify and implement classroom interventions was not apparent. During classroom observations and interviews with staff members throughout the district, it became evident that groups of teachers have explored, implemented, and shared successful strategies within their own buildings. However, to reach the level of a high quality system, a formalized structure of professional development should be created that promotes consistent use and evaluation of best practices across system grade levels and departments. Some evidence is available to show that assessments are viewed or revised at the school level. There is limited evidence at the school level that a process is being implemented to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment to collect, analyze and apply learning data from a range of sources. Although not yet formally broached by teachers or administrators, parents and students have expressed concerns about equitable and consistent grading policies and procedures across the system. Reported issues included: quality of assignments, overuse/use of extra credit, using technology, weighting of grading categories versus total points, and monitoring and evaluation of grading practices. After interviewing teachers and building administrators across the system, the external review team identified inconsistent use of best practices because professional development occurs at the grass roots level instead of across the district. Systematic analysis of data does not seem to inform the need for effective classroom interventions. Further, results from analyzed data does not seem to evaluate program effectiveness and subsequent revision.



CHS teachers collaborate to build courses for their departments.

February 2018, AdvancED External Review Feedback -

Through a review of documentation including curriculum guides, written processes, committee agendas and notes and interviews with instructional staff, the review team found limited evidence of a systemic curriculum with common assessments. Evidence that a consistent process to develop and evaluate curriculum initiatives that was directed or reviewed at the system level was not evident to the team. Interviews with system leaders and teachers did not provide evidence that communication among schools regarding the development of curriculum maps and common assessments was directed from the system level. The team did not find evidence that a process to deconstruct standards, identify learning targets, develop common assessments, or analyze data had been designed. When asked about curriculum oversight, one building administrator said,



CMS colleagues participate in the final course review for their 8th grade English course.

“I am unclear about my role in curriculum.” When discussing curriculum, another administrator commented, “My job is climate and culture...I treat them (teachers) as professionals and allow them to do their job.” The system has a Curriculum Committee and Curriculum Council, but the team did not find evidence of a formalized plan for review or overarching expectations or process to ensure their work was transparent or implemented with fidelity across the system. In interviews with teachers, frustration was voiced about the work of the Curriculum Committee and inconsistent follow-through. Each school implements a curriculum with little collaboration with other schools. The review team found inconsistencies in establishing high expectations and rigorous curriculum for students. One administrator referred to current curriculum initiatives as “haphazard.” In response to a question about a systemic curriculum, one teacher commented, “I know what is going on at my school, but I have no idea about what is happening at other schools in the district.”

In the months leading up to the Duneland School Board’s adoption of our 2020-2023 Strategic Plan, we reflected on the AdvancedED feedback and came to several additional conclusions, including:

- ▶ Numerous committees were collecting data but didn’t really know what to do with it - we were “data rich, information poor.”
- ▶ Each school was functioning as an island unto itself (known unofficially as “The Nine Islands of Duneland”).
- ▶ There was no evidence of an established process to develop, evaluate, and make adjustments to curriculum and assessments to meet student needs.

These internal and external reviews culminated in the establishment of a Guaranteed & Viable Curriculum (GVC) implemented collaboratively through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). In short, the GVC requires teachers within the same grade level or course to align curriculum, utilize common assessments, and collectively analyze assessment outcomes. This helps establish equity for students by creating consistency in what is being taught and how student learning is being measured, which in turn ensures that all students are receiving the same high-quality education, regardless of which teacher they have or school they attend. Additionally, using the same assessment tools allows

for more accurate comparisons of student progress across different classrooms, which can help identify areas where additional support or resources may be needed to ensure all students are reaching their full potential.

Our directors, instructional coaches, and teachers have done a tremendous job establishing the district-wide GVC, and we were very excited to see the efforts recognized during our most recent external review.

June 2023, Cognia (formerly AdvancED) External Review

Feedback - Duneland has engaged in a systematic process to ensure the written curriculum is implemented. Curriculum review is an articulated process with multiple layers of stakeholder involvement. Evidence shows curriculum mapping, pacing guides, syllabi, and vertical and horizontal articulation meetings to ensure the guaranteed and viable curriculum is implemented systemically. Attention to the curriculum is critical to the strategic plan, improvement planning, resource allocation, and departmental policy. Adjustments to the curriculum occur formally; however, curriculum work occurs continually.

The remainder of this article outlines the steps we took to establish a GVC. For those considering this type of initiative, we hope to provide some insight into the successes, failures, and ‘stretch opportunities’ that we have encountered during the process.

DUNELAND SCHOOL CORPORATION STRATEGIC PLAN

The development of a Strategic Plan was crucial in establishing a roadmap for everyone (students, staff, parents) to get a sense of where we are going, how we are going to get there and how we know if we are successful for our students. Four key initiatives to promote student performance were identified in the Strategic Plan:

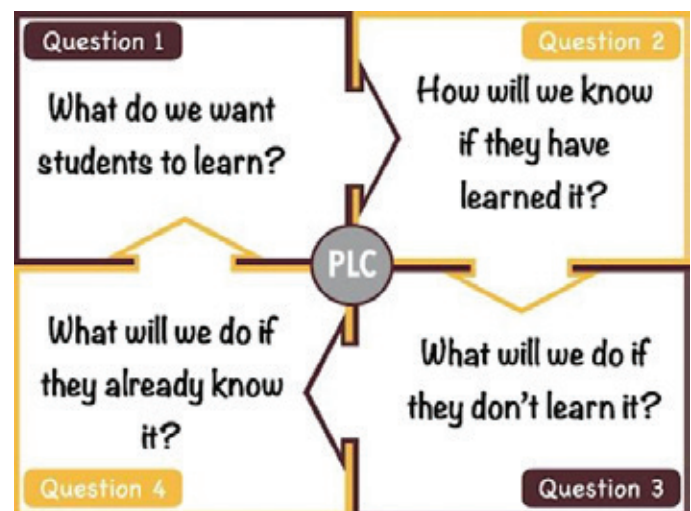
1. Research and develop Birth to School programming. - The Journal, Winter 2023
2. Develop, train, implement and monitor a consistent system for teacher collaboration. - The Journal, Spring 2023
3. **Develop, implement, and monitor a guaranteed, standardized and viable curriculum in a blended learning environment.** - The Journal, Summer 2023
4. Development of equitable academic programs for all students. - The Journal, Fall 2023

The initiation of the GVC process was developed after examining many K-12 research-based practices in curriculum and instructional design. As we planned for the 2020-21 school year, our team felt like we had an opportunity to tie together two strategic initiatives: teacher collaboration via PLCs and the development of a GVC. The GVC initiative is grounded in Robert Marzano’s research that “the number-one factor impacting highly effective schools is a curriculum that is guaranteed no matter which teacher is teaching it and that is viable - meaning teachers have enough time to effectively teach it.” In 2020-21 (COVID year), some of our schools started to work on analyzing priority standards and establishing grade level commonalities. Although we did not yet have a guaranteed, viable and aligned curriculum, our work was beginning in grade-level and content area teams to answer the first question a PLC needs to ask:

“**What do we want students to learn?**” Our commitment to the PLC process (with help from ESSER funds) added intensity to the concept of alignment across levels and content areas. This happened in every school with grade-level and team meetings, as well as across the district with grade-level teams coming together to begin building courses in support of a GVC throughout the corporation.

As conversations began, we quickly realized that we were indeed ‘data rich’, but ‘information poor’. There were several committees that had been meeting over the years to discuss topics and collect information but without the critical steps necessary to create actionable change for student equity and accessibility.

To support the GVC initiative, instructional coaches were hired and trained in a student-centered coaching model to support each of our nine K-12 schools. Their initial focus was two-fold



Common Course Build Vocabulary	
Guaranteed	Items that ALL teachers will include in their course. This should include: learning targets, common summative assessments, common formative assessments, and student reflection opportunities.
Teacher Choice	Teacher specific items that may vary. These can include: content delivery methods, additional assessments, extension/remediation activities, articles, etc...
Priority Standards	A subset of your course specific state standards which has been identified by your PLC.
Learning Target (I-Can Statement)	A breakdown of a priority standard that is written in student friendly language and creates clarity/ common understanding.
Common Formative Assessment	Formative assessments that ALL teachers will include in their course. Formative assessments are meant for data collection and to "inform" your instruction.
Common Summative Assessment	Summative (quarter/unit) assessments that ALL teachers will include in their course. Summative assessments are meant for data collection and demonstrate the "sum" of a student's learning.
Proficiency	Students have demonstrated mastery of a learning target - See Unpacking Document Proficiency Scales (Level 3)

in supporting teachers by providing professional development through coaching and facilitating the beginning of the course build process. Coaches quickly realized they needed to organize their efforts and create a systematic approach to course building—identifying and outlining the build process and establishing what a course would contain for teachers and students as far as content, assignments and assessments and how it would function in a blended learning environment with course content housed in our Learning Management System (LMS). As we moved to 2021-22, we determined ELA courses would be built first (to reach the most students) and we landed on a sequence and protocols for course development. In all, we set out to build between 300-400 courses throughout the district by the conclusion of the 2024-25 school year.

FIVE PHASES OF COURSE DEVELOPMENT

Analysis

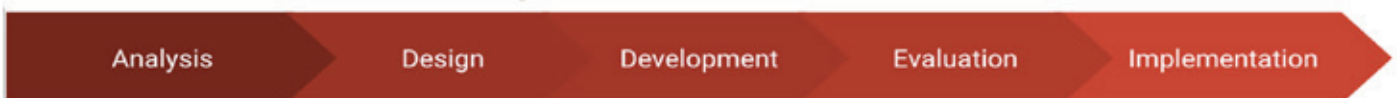
It was a heavy lift to build capacity around the concept of building a GVC throughout the district. The analysis phase began with teachers in course and/or grade-level teams continuing to

focus on, "What do we want students to learn?" Teachers started taking a comprehensive look at priority standards and figuring out how to "let go" of curriculum pieces or projects that were not aligned with their standards. PLC teams utilized ILEARN blueprints and IDOE unpacking standards guidance to review and prioritize 10-12 standards per course (subject and/or grade level) based on the following criteria:

- ▶ **Endurance** - prioritized skills/knowledge will be applied in the contexts beyond the present
- ▶ **Leverage** - prioritized skills/knowledge is transferable to other subject areas
- ▶ **Readiness** - prioritized skills/knowledge serve as prerequisites for successive coursework
- ▶ **Accountability** - students are likely to encounter the prioritized skills/knowledge or successive aligned skills/knowledge on state and national exams

Once priority standards were established, course building teams were on-boarded and began their work. Course building

Five Phases of Course Development





DSC third grade teachers work with one another to design their district math course.

teams are composed of an instructional coach to facilitate the process and typically 2-4 grade level or content area teachers to build the content. A concerted effort is made to include teachers from multiple buildings and/or levels of content instruction. Course builders complete an application to be considered and this application is reviewed by the Department of Teaching and Learning. Application questions include years of teaching experience, a short description regarding why the teacher would like to be a part of the build team, and examples of Canvas (LMS) used to build blended learning lessons and assessments. Most course builds take a school year to complete, so time commitment is a factor. Course builders are financially compensated with a stipend at mid and end points of the build for time spent outside of contracted hours.

Jackson Elementary School Principal Sam Marshall speaks to the shared leadership that has developed with course builders, “Having teachers involved in the course-building process has given them a voice in improving outcomes for students throughout the district. For the first time, our teachers are seeing the tangible impact their decisions have not just in their own classrooms but in classrooms in other buildings with students they haven’t even met. It has empowered our teachers, and has provided a platform for new leaders to emerge within the district.”

The teams begin by outlining the pacing (timeline) of the

course, identifying learning targets expressed through student-friendly “I Can” statements, and building proficiency scales. Proficiency scales provide teachers, students and families with information regarding a student’s level of understanding as it pertains to the skill:

- 4 = Complex content; performing beyond standard expectations**
- 3 = Target context; performance at expected level**
- 2 = Simple content; performance demonstrates basic knowledge**
- 1 = With help; demonstrates particle success**
- 0 = Unsuccessful**

“Working through the creation of the Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum (GVC) allowed me to dive deeper into the priority standards and proficiencies that we wanted our students to reach. Based on this work, I felt like we had a much clearer path and direction through the school year.” – Lauren Ponscak, 6th grade Liberty Intermediate School math teacher & course builder.

Design

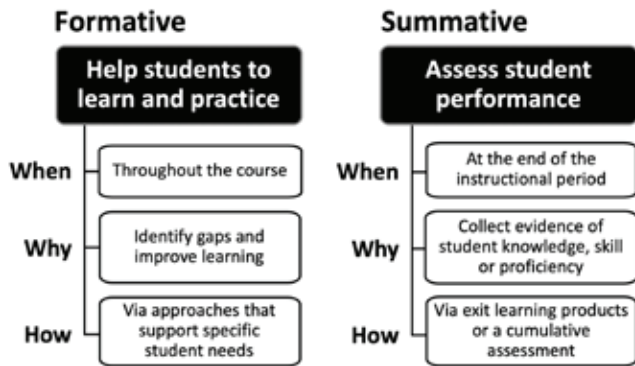
During the design phase, we use a Backwards Design Model to look at the big picture of the course and start by pacing out the course term.

This involves a combination of adjusting pacing guides and evaluating



curriculum maps. Next, the build team plans around previously established ‘calendar dates’ such as grading terms (9-weeks and semester), diagnostic assessments, and standardized testing windows. Teams then evaluate the inclusion of primary resources and develop a draft of how prioritized standards might be paced and sequenced into the learning targets.

Formative and summative assessment timelines, including aligned grading criteria are factored into the course pacing. There is a focus on age appropriateness. Room is left in the course pacing



for teachers to build in lesson autonomy during the year as a result of PLC assessment data review and discussion. We refer to our guaranteed pieces as “tight” and opportunities for autonomy as “loose” in our PLC dialogue.

One teacher notes the benefits of having a GVC as a new teacher.

“I was a new teacher to Duneland and taught 7th grade English at the beginning of the year. . . Having the GVC and the course built, all right there, along with regular PLC collaboration and support made it so much easier to adapt to and transition at the beginning of the year.” – Mark Bruner, Chesterton Middle School eighth grade English teacher

Development

The development phase encompasses lesson development from the previous big picture work down to the small details. This brings to life, the pacing guide development from the design phase. During this time the course builders are creating common formative assessments and exemplar lessons to be included in the guaranteed or tight components of the course. Common formative assessments are intended to provide teachers with standards mastery information to guide instruction.

Chesterton High School Associate Principal Kristen Peterson has noticed a student-centered approach to assessment review. *“I have observed positive changes in the conversations that teachers are now having in PLCs. In one particular PLC, teachers commented that they could see why kids might have missed a question, as opposed to just chalking the data up to student error. In addition, many teachers are discussing question quality, topics that need to be revisited, and sharing instructional strategies with one another that have had a positive impact on student learning.”*

Exemplar lessons contain a high level of rigor for all students to participate in. These guaranteed pieces are monitored for fidelity in their delivery. There is a strong focus on providing students with

cross-curricular content that encourages students to engage in collective inquiry.

Brent Martinson, Chesterton High School principal speaks to the level of engagement that has been reached as a result of the intention behind lesson design. *“Our teachers have collaborated with the intent to create a curriculum that improves student achievement. Our students are more engaged in the learning process and experiencing success more than ever before because of the collaborative work our teachers are doing in creating a Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum.”*

The lesson components are organized into modules that are housed as blueprint master courses in the learning management system (Canvas).

Evaluation

Prior to the implementation of a new course, a review team will begin the evaluation process. This process involves multiple phases and stakeholder groups and takes approximately one month to complete, with the majority of the time given to the content review portion that lies within the PLC groups.

Phase	1. Builder Self-Evaluation	2. Best Practice Review	3. Content Review	4. Administrator Review
Person Responsible	Course Builders (2-4 ppl)	Instructional Coaches & Build Team (up to 5 ppl)	Fellow Content Teachers/PLC (up to 25 ppl)	Course Admin. & Dept. of Teaching & Learning (2 ppl)

Implementation

Once the course has moved through the evaluation phase, our Instructional Technology Coordinator (ITC) assists with the synchronization of the master, or blueprint, course into the learning management system (Canvas). The ITC is a certified staff member (experienced teacher with leadership responsibilities in instructional design and software implementation; liaison to IT staff) who supports the development and use of Canvas. Additionally, they provide blended learning ‘best practice guidance’ and professional development throughout the district. A master copy of the course(s) is preserved for teachers and an online version is available for students. Throughout the year, teachers are meeting in school-based grade-level teams (weekly) and district-wide grade-level teams (quarterly) to discuss successes and challenges they are encountering relative to the course. The master copy of the course is adjusted once consensus is reached within the PLC. Course managers are then established to make adjustments to the course(s) when necessary. Course managers are grade-level and content area leaders that are established to collect feedback to

Partner with Schneider Electric to realize your district's vision

Let us work alongside your team to
help you reach your district's goals



Federal Stimulus



Capital Lease



Local and Regional
Programs



Rebate Programs



Tax Rebates
and Incentives



Competitive Grants

Schneider Electric has partnered with school leaders across the country on Energy Savings Performance Contracts and Design-Build projects. Contact us to learn how we can join your team to help you dramatically improve mission-critical infrastructure, create healthier indoor environments, and benefit students for years to come.

Reach out to begin discussions today

Ty Miller

(317)709-0616

Ty.Miller@se.com

se.com/enable



update and modify the course quarterly, based on PLC input.

Through the PLC process teachers are continually providing feedback on the course. Brummitt Elementary Principal Nino Cammarata notes, *“Our curricular journey at Brummitt has become more rigorous and is now specifically focused on providing feedback to give each student what they need to be successful.”*

Lead Instructional Coach Sara Atkinson notes, *“The initiation of the GVC course-build development process and implementation has highlighted the need to reach district-level consensus and formulate systems for certain curricular elements (next up, common grading practices). Because the course building process merges with professional*

learning community structures, we are confident that we will be able to build educator background and make necessary modifications to courses that are responsive to students’ needs.”

CONCLUSION

As the GVC becomes established, the PLCs must take on the evolution of the courses for the initiative to be sustainable.

“The course build process has not only provided an opportunity for meaningful cross building collaboration, but it has allowed teacher teams to reflect on their current teaching practices, align assessments, analyze data and provide students with intentional remediation and enrichment. The GVC has provided a springboard for meaningful PLC conversations and provided clarity around essential understandings,” notes Amanda Vasilak, Brummitt Elementary School instructional coach.

For the process to survive when leadership changes at the school or district-level, teachers must be empowered to make meaningful adjustments to the course(s). Both the PLC process and the GVC work will continue as we revisit the four PLC questions centered around student learning. In addition, we will start exploring research-based, best practices around grading practices that align with the newly developed curriculum and assessments (standards-based, mastery learning) and looking for new and creative ways to capture more “time” for teachers to meet and discuss student learning and achievement. This is the right work, and it is never done. 🌟



2023 CALENDAR AT-A-GLANCE

AUGUST 18

ISBA/IAPSS Collective Bargaining Seminar

Ivy Tech Conference Center

SEPTEMBER 25-26

ISBA/IAPSS Fall Conference

Indiana Convention Center

NOVEMBER 1-20

ISBA Fall Regional Meetings

Statewide

DECEMBER 8

ISBA December School Law Seminar

Ivy Tech Conference Center

For more information on ISBA meetings and locations visit our website at www.isba-ind.org



DSC fourth grade teachers work together to build a math course.