GUIDING INSTRUCTIONAL PRINCIPLES

The following principles guide all curriculum and instructional planning throughout the district:

1. **All Children Can Learn**
   All students work toward a common standard (Regents level or beyond) which represents excellence. Instruction is differentiated and various teaching strategies are used to meet the needs of all learners.

2. **Teach Students to Use Their Minds Well/Aim for Mastery**
   Knowledge and skills are important. These are seen not as endpoints but as the building blocks to teaching concepts and applications and developing understanding.

3. **Focus on Results**
   Common academic standards are established in each curriculum area and student performance is reviewed in relation to these. Program progress is assessed through a variety of means. Standardized test results are but one component of an overall evaluation system.

4. **Depth of Understanding vs. Quantity of Coverage**
   Emphasis is less upon "covering" curriculum in a superficial way in order to allow for more focused study which generates a deeper, more meaningful understanding. The goal is to teach that which is truly of value. "Big Ideas" or essential questions are identified for study in each curriculum area.

5. **Student as Active Learner**
   Students have ownership for what is learned. They are required to ask questions, do research, reflect upon their own thinking and challenge ideas as a means to constructing their own understandings. Teachers act as problem-presenters instead of problem-solvers. They facilitate and coach learners in active classrooms. Learning occurs outside of the classroom as well as within it. Technology is an important vehicle for learning.

6. **Relationships Based on Trust, Decency and Respect**
   All of the work in the district occurs in an atmosphere of mutual respect and high behavioral standards. All members of our school community are expected to treat and be treated by others with courtesy and respect.

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