

September 12, 2025

Dear Cheltenham Community,

I am writing to provide a comprehensive overview and explanation of the [Superintendent's Report](#) presented to the Board of Education and the public on September 9, 2025. This report, titled "Our Instructional Framework: Aligning for Excellence," outlines our clear and structured approach to curriculum development and instructional practices, ensuring all students receive a high-quality education.

The central theme of this framework is the principle of **"all arrows pointed in the same direction."** This core principle highlights how systemic change takes root and accelerates when there is alignment across all efforts within the school system.

What is Our Instructional Framework? Our Instructional Framework is designed as a clear and structured approach to curriculum development and instructional practices. It is deeply connected to our district's essence, mission, and vision, articulating our collective beliefs. The framework provides clear descriptions and expectations for what effective teaching and learning looks and sounds like in our classrooms. It is firmly grounded in sound, effective, research-based, evidence-based best practices and philosophies. Moreover, it serves as a consistent roadmap that backward maps to our articulated goals and outcomes, which are referenced in our Strategic Plan. This framework also guides our themed professional learning arc and the selection of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM).

Our Core Beliefs: Why We Do This At Cheltenham School District, we are driven by the belief that **ALL** students can achieve academic success and will find success, as articulated in our Mission and Vision statements. We believe all students belong in inclusive and engaging learning environments and deserve and should advocate for justice. This framework aims to foster belonging by creating environments where students can be their authentic selves, provide inspiration through engaging, student-centered instruction, and offer equitable resources to achieve our mission and vision.

Components of Our Instructional Framework: The "What" and the "How" The framework clarifies two essential components of education:

- **Curriculum (The "What"):** This is defined as a structured guide outlining what and when content is taught for each subject, aligned with rigorous grade-level standards, district policies, and procedures. It is organized in articulated district curriculum guides, including unit plans, which allow teachers flexibility in creating lesson plans while ensuring the curriculum is culturally responsive and authentic. It also incorporates diverse assessment methods for intervention and enrichment and is implemented with integrity.
- **Instruction (The "How"):** This refers to the methodologies and strategies used to deliver curriculum effectively. It includes differentiated instruction, scaffolding, engagement techniques, and continuous assessment and feedback. Effective instruction relies on the utilization of approved High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) and technology in culturally responsive, inclusive, and engaging environments, emphasizing planning and execution with fidelity.

Alignment to Our Strategic Plan – Our Shared Vision The Instructional Framework is deeply aligned with the district's mission and vision, reinforcing the "all arrows pointed in the same direction" principle for systemic change. Our Mission Statement is "To provide inspiration and resources to every student to achieve academic excellence and pursue their highest potential by creating an equitable and inclusive community that fosters social and emotional well-being and a passion for learning". Our Vision Statement, "Belong, Engage, Seek Justice," outlines a community where all students know they belong, engage and excel, and are prepared to act as champions of social justice. This framework ensures that every policy, program, and practice supports these goals, fostering a self-reinforcing cycle of growth and preventing fragmentation or failure due to a lack of alignment.

Norming Best Practices through the Danielson Framework To ensure consistent, high-quality instruction across all schools, we are actively **norming best practices** using the **Danielson**

Framework for Effective Instruction. Instructional Rounds, a key practice adapted from medicine, offer a structured way for educators to identify and solve teaching and learning issues. These rounds promote a collaborative approach to norming a shared vision of high-quality teaching and learning, fostering collaboration, and diagnosing areas for professional growth. Our work in instructional rounds is anchored in the Danielson Clusters. Importantly, Central and Building Administrators will use these rounds to create **consistent "look fors"** for walkthroughs, specifically to **elevate best practices** observed in classrooms, and this process is explicitly **not a "gotcha"** for teacher evaluations.

Fostering Cross-District Collaboration and Eliminating Silos The "all arrows pointed in the same direction" principle signifies that:

- **Alignment Maximizes Impact:** Collective efforts are compounded when all departments, schools, and classrooms work toward the same defined goals.
- **Consistency Reduces Confusion:** Consistent expectations, language, and instructional priorities from the superintendent's office to the classroom provide predictable support systems for students and clear focus for staff and parents.
- **Systemic Change Requires Coherence, Not Silos:** A shared direction fosters cross-departmental synergy, ensuring resources, policies, and supports reinforce, rather than compete with, one another.
- **Accelerated Learning Through Common Practices:** Shared goals facilitate the spread of effective strategies across all schools and grade levels, making successful practices immediately replicable.

The **MTSS Teacher Leader** role is a prime example of this collaborative approach, supporting the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) process within school buildings to enhance responses to individual student needs, classroom instruction, and behavioral/social-emotional learning, ultimately promoting positive student outcomes.

The 2025-2026 Professional Learning Arc: Focusing on Instruction Our professional development (PD) arc is designed to deepen instructional acumen through intentional, quarterly-organized learning opportunities, supporting the norming of best practices district-wide. Key focus areas include:

- **Danielson Clusters:** Deepening instructional focus through walkthroughs as a mechanism to norm practices, with specific attention to Clarity & Accuracy, Professionalism, Learning Environment, Intellectual Engagement, and Successful Learning.
- **DEBI (Diversity, Equity, Belonging, and Inclusion):** Focusing on instructional strategies that support all student learners.
- **HQIM (High-Quality Instructional Materials):** Heavy focus on PD for new K-12 Science and K/6-12 Math programs, continuing our Curriculum Cycle, including a K-5 ELA pilot in Quarters 3 and 4.

Data-Driven Decision-Making – Making Data Meaningful When all arrows point in the same direction, **data collection and analysis become truly meaningful**, effectively informing decision-making. With unified targets, patterns emerge, comparisons are valid, and progress can be tracked to clearly show whether strategies are working. Instructional Rounds also contribute by collecting data during classroom visits and debriefing to identify patterns and inform action plans. We utilize several data tools to support this:

- **FastBridge Universal Screener:** Used for reading, math, and SEL to identify student needs, organize small group instruction, and monitor progress, showing improvements from fall to spring.
- **LinkIt!:** Employed for common assessments, housing and administering them to provide specific feedback to teachers on student understanding.
- **MTSS Process:** This process is data-driven, using universal screening, progress monitoring, and data-based decision-making by the MTSS team to identify the best instructional approaches for students' academic or behavioral needs.

Conclusion – Collective Transformation In summary, when **all arrows point in the same direction**, our school system moves from isolated acts of improvement to **collective transformation**. Our new Instructional Framework provides a clear, consistent, and collaborative path for enhancing curriculum and instruction. By norming best practices through the Danielson Framework and Instructional Rounds, we build a shared understanding and elevate teaching and learning across all schools. This approach, embedded in our Strategic Plan, fosters cross-district collaboration, breaks down silos, and ensures that resources and efforts are aligned for maximum impact on student outcomes. We are committed to this unified direction, ensuring every student belongs, engages, and excels, prepared to act as champions of social justice.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to these vital initiatives as we work together to achieve our shared vision for student success.

Sincerely,

Dr. Brian W. Scriven
Superintendent of Schools