

Vassal Lane Upper School

School Improvement Plan

**SY23-24
to
SY24-25**

DRAFT School Improvement Plan

SY23-24 to SY24-25

Key Resources:

- [SIP Draft Timeline](#)
- [CPS Targets](#)
- [School Council Handbook](#)

Guiding Premises:

- **Premise #1:** The SIP is a tool to guide each learning system and space through an anti-racist, and culturally affirming lens within CPS.
- **Premise #2:** The goals articulated in this document are geared towards equitable and accelerated learning and SEL outcomes for all students and specifically the students from historically resilient communities.
- **Premise #3:** All learning takes place through culture. We are purposefully designing learning spaces that are culturally affirming and linguistically sustaining for each scholar.
- **Premise #4:** Data and improvement processes are used to guide our work.
- **Premise #5:** We are striving for collective educator agency and efficacy.
- **Premise #6:** The ultimate goal of the School Site Council is to support systems and structures that humanize our collaborative partnership with students, families and the community at large.

Establishing SMARTIE Goals:

- Strategic & Specific
- Measurable
- Attainable & Ambitious
- Relevant
- Time-Bound
- Inclusive
- Equitable & Explicit

Data Wise Improvement Cycle



Literacy / ELA Goal

Data Overview: 2023 MCAS data indicates some ongoing rebounding growth in literacy skills. 57% of all students were Meeting/Exceeding (M/E), compared to 59% of students in 2019. When looking at the growth from 2022 to 2023, we saw a significant increase in students M/E in all three grades of students in general education ELA classes (42% in 2022 to 66% in 2023). There was also an increase in SGP for students in general education ELA classes from 48% to 59.8%. In Grade 8, there was an increase in M/E in all subgroups. In Grade 7, there was significant growth in reducing achievement gaps and Black/African-American and White students (from a 59 point gap for these students when they were in Grade 6 to a 9 point gap as 7th graders).

Key Successes to Build Upon: Continue focus on improving Tier 1 instruction, with a focus on improving opportunities for students to engage in close reading and on-demand writing tasks that include novel passages to compare/contrast. In addition, to build on success of Tier 2 and 3 interventions, particularly focusing work on in-class supports and progress monitoring for key literacy targets.

Key Areas of Need to Address: Without a standards-aligned, rigorous ELA curriculum centered on complex, grade level texts, ELA educators and coaches have been creating their own curriculum materials for years, resulting in the lack of common, standards-aligned instruction and assessment.

By 2025/Year 2 SMARTIE Goal:

90-day Milestone September '23-January '24

The targeted list of students in the case management system begin to complete iReady individual instruction at least once a week for a minimum of 45 min per week.



90-day Milestone January '24-June '24

As a result of iready engagement, 80% of general education students identified as 2+ grades below in literacy will meet their iready stretch goals.



90-day Milestone September '24-January '25

2024 MCAS scores will indicate that more than 65% of students are M/E and that students receiving Tier 2 instruction will demonstrate high growth based on their SGP.



90-day Milestone January '25-June '25

As a result of iready engagement, 80% of general education students identified as 2+ grades below in literacy will meet their iready stretch goals.

Action Plan

Increased Academic Achievement & Growth – Literacy/Language Arts: *Create an environment that promotes active student engagement and consistent improvement in academic achievement in Literacy/Language Arts among preK-12 students from all backgrounds and programs.*

District Objective	What is the strategic, research-based solution you will try? What is the “safe to fail” experiment(s) you will run to support this strategy?	In what way does this strategy advance equitable outcomes for all students and staff ?	Who is responsible for leading the team’s work on this strategy? <small>(Principal, A.P. Instructional Coaches, ILT, Grade level)</small>
Deliver Ambitious Instruction & Effective Supports <i>What is your instructional improvement strategy to achieve your outcome?</i>	Implementation of Fishtank ELA units of study with a focus on close reading and tiered instruction.	Fishtank’s curriculum centers diverse, relevant, and rigorous texts that build knowledge to nurture critical thinking.	VLUS Literacy Coach, Principal
Effective Staff Learning & Support <i>How will you train and support staff to carry this plan out?</i>	All ELA teachers will participate in district wide grade level SOA days to prepare to teach each new unit and weekly school-based coaching.	The ELA department is engaged in common curriculum across all upp schools in service of more equitable outcomes across Cambridge and diverse student populations.	District 6-8 ELA Lead Teacher and VLUS Literacy Coach, Principal
Build Welcoming & Supportive Schools & District <i>How will you actively engage families and caregivers, community partners, out-of-school time partners, and/or business partners in this plan?</i>	The literacy coach will attend School Council meetings to share about new curriculum implementation; ELA teachers will communicate regular process on standards based learning reports.	Families and caregivers will be informed advocates for the success of their children in ELA.	VLUS Literacy Coach and ELA Teachers, Principal

Mathematics Goal

Data Overview: The math data shows that as a school we are making progress towards returning to 2019 levels of Meeting/Exceeding (M/E). Nearly all indicators and student categories improved from 2022 in both M/E %ages and SGPs (Student Growth Percentile). As a school, 49% were M/E, with a median SGP of 56.

Key Successes to Build Upon: Tier 1 teacher and coaching consistency for SY23-24 and beyond is a key component of building on the momentum in Math instruction and student achievement. Improving Tier 2 and 3 intervention and flexibility of scheduling to meet student need mid-year is another key strategy towards our Math goal.

Key Areas of Need to Address: Improving Grade 6 math instruction and improving pacing in both Grades 6 and 7 are two key areas of improvement.

By 2025/Year 2 SMARTIE Goal:

90-day Milestone September '23-January '24

All students should be at at least 50% growth for the year on iReady assessment.



90-day Milestone January '24-June '24

All students should be at 100% or more growth for this year's iReady assessment.



90-day Milestone September '24-January '25

All students should be at at least 50% growth for the year on iReady assessment.



90-day Milestone January '25-June '25

All students should be at 100% or more growth for this year's iReady assessment.

Action Plan

Increased Academic Achievement & Growth – Math: *Create an environment that promotes active student engagement and consistent improvement in academic achievement in math among preK-12 students from all backgrounds and programs.*

District Objective	What is the strategic, research-based solution you will try? What is the “safe to fail” experiment(s) you will run to support this strategy?	In what way does this strategy advance equitable outcomes for all students and staff ?	Who is responsible for leading the team’s work on this strategy? <small>(Principal, A.P. Instructional Coaches, ILT, Grade level)</small>
<p>Deliver Ambitious Instruction & Effective Supports <i>What is your instructional improvement strategy to achieve your outcome?</i></p>	<p>Utilize Illustrative Mathematics for Tier 1 instruction. Math teachers will ensure that they are increasing academic discourse in the math classroom. Provide rigorous Tier 2 pull out intervention for targeted students. Implement Complex Instructional strategies for equitable instruction.</p>	<p>Ensuring grade-level content is being taught with a lens on equitable instruction</p>	<p>Math Coach, Principal</p>
<p>Effective Staff Learning & Support <i>How will you train and support staff to carry this plan out?</i></p>	<p>All Math teachers will participate in district-wide professional development around Complex Instruction and Illustrative Mathematics curriculum implementation and receive ongoing support around implementation from the math coach</p>	<p>Staff are equipped to teach curriculum with fidelity and rigor.</p>	<p>Math Coach, Math Teachers and interventionists, Principal</p>
<p>Build Welcoming & Supportive Schools & District <i>How will you actively engage families and caregivers, community partners, out-of-school time partners, and/or business partners in this plan?</i></p>	<p>Math teachers will communicate regular progress to families on standards based learning reports. Math coach will work with district coaches and Complex Instruction professional development experts around implementation.</p>	<p>Partnerships with families around student growth on specific learning goals.</p>	<p>Math Coach, Math Teachers, Principal</p>

Chronic Absenteeism (CA) Goal

Data Overview: Data from the last four years shows an increase in the number of students labeled “Chronically Absent” (CA) at the end of the year (defined by the state as students missing 10% or more of their school year). This September, we identified 18 incoming 7th and 8th grade students as having been chronically absent last school year. There were an additional 20 6th grade students entering VLUS having been chronically absent the year before.

Key Successes to Build Upon: We saw some success last year in developing formal communication with families who were in danger of being chronically absent halfway through the year. In addition, we worked individually with students to help develop plans to help them reduce the number of days that they are absent.

Key Areas of Need to Address: Working with families to ensure that they are availing themselves of the sabbatical process for planned family travel; informing families of best practices in regards to when to send students to school with slight illness versus when to keep students at home.

By 2025/Year 2 SMARTIE Goal:

90-day Milestone September '23-January '24

Internal tracking and follow-up indicate that we are projecting <13% CA students for June '24.



90-day Milestone January '24-June '24

Reduce the percentage of chronically absent students from 15% to 13% (~32 students)



90-day Milestone September '24-January '25

Internal tracking and follow indicate that we are projecting <10% CA students for June '24.



90-day Milestone January '25-June '25

Reduce the percentage of chronically absent students to below 10%.

Action Plan

Increased Student Attendance: *Maximize partnerships with internal and external stakeholders (student, families, staff and the community) to implement a multi-tiered approach to reducing barriers to student attendance.*

District Objective	What is the strategic, research-based solution you will try? What is the “safe to fail” experiment(s) you will run to support this strategy?	In what way does this strategy advance equitable outcomes for all students and staff ?	How will you leverage the Data Wise Improvement process to monitor your progress? <small>(How, how often, by who?)</small>	Who is responsible for leading the team’s work on this strategy? <small>(Principal, A.P. Instructional Coaches, ILT, Grade level)</small>
<p>Deliver Ambitious Instruction & Effective Supports <i>What is your instructional improvement strategy to achieve your outcome?</i></p>	<p>Creating individual point people for students identified as having been CA the previous school year. Ongoing follow up with students and families as students attendance approaches concerns re: CA. (e.g., 10% of a quarter/semester).</p>	<p>Students who attend school are likely to have better outcomes than those who do not. Having a specific point person for families will lessen any barriers to access to school staff.</p>	<p>Bi-weekly attendance check in using data provided by the district at SEL Team meetings.</p>	<p>Principal</p>
<p>Effective Staff Learning & Support <i>How will you train and support staff to carry this plan out?</i></p>	<p>Staff will use the chronic absenteeism spreadsheet regularly to identify students who are approaching CA.</p>	<p>Using regular checks of the data as well as reviewing intervention strategies will improve our responsiveness to attendance challenges.</p>	<p>Bi-weekly attendance checks along with reviewing current intervention strategies will make this an iterative process.</p>	<p>Principal, Assistant Principal</p>
<p>Build Welcoming & Supportive Schools & District <i>How will you actively engage families and caregivers, community partners, out-of-school time partners, and/or business partners in this plan?</i></p>	<p>Create opportunities for families to meet with and share their concerns and suggestions for increasing student attendance as well as create opportunities for established community partners to attend meetings at the request of families.</p>	<p>Focusing our attention on families who might need additional support rather than a blanket all-school approach differentiates our intervention strategies.</p>	<p>Use CA data to determine which students are recommended for dynamic meetings.</p>	<p>Principal, Assistant Principal, Family Liaison</p>

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Average
I look forward to going to school most days	2.8	2.6	2.7	2.70
I have an adult at school who I feel like I can trust and talk to	3	2.9	2.9	2.93
My teachers see me as someone who can be successful	3.3	3	3.1	3.13
I feel treated with respect at school	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.83
I see myself as someone who can be successful in school.	3.2	3	3.3	3.17

Data Overview: The above chart reflects student feedback from a survey we had all students complete in the fall of 2023. The scale is 1-5. Previous data from YRBS surveys, MCAS questionnaires, etc., have indicated similar trends in terms of students' levels of connection with adults and feelings of whether school is a supportive and respectful place. 47% of students in June of 2022 reported having at least one adult that they could talk to about a problem. We look forward to reviewing the climate survey data coming out later in December.

Key Successes to Build Upon: We continue to utilize Advisory as our foundation of relationship building within our school. This model aims to build strong relationships at a 6:1 ratio so that students have at least one go-to person at VLUS.

Key Areas of Need to Address: Helping to identify the barriers to students identifying a “trusted adult” versus someone they “could talk to about a problem”

By 2025/Year 2 SMARTIE Goal:

90-day Milestone September '23-January '24

TBD based on December 2023 climate data



90-day Milestone January '24-June '24

By June 2024, 53% of students can identify that they have at least one adult they can talk to about a problem.



90-day Milestone September '24-January '25

Entering 7th and 8th graders rate themselves on a belonging survey with an average score of 3.2 or higher on the five metrics listed above.



90-day Milestone January '25-June '25

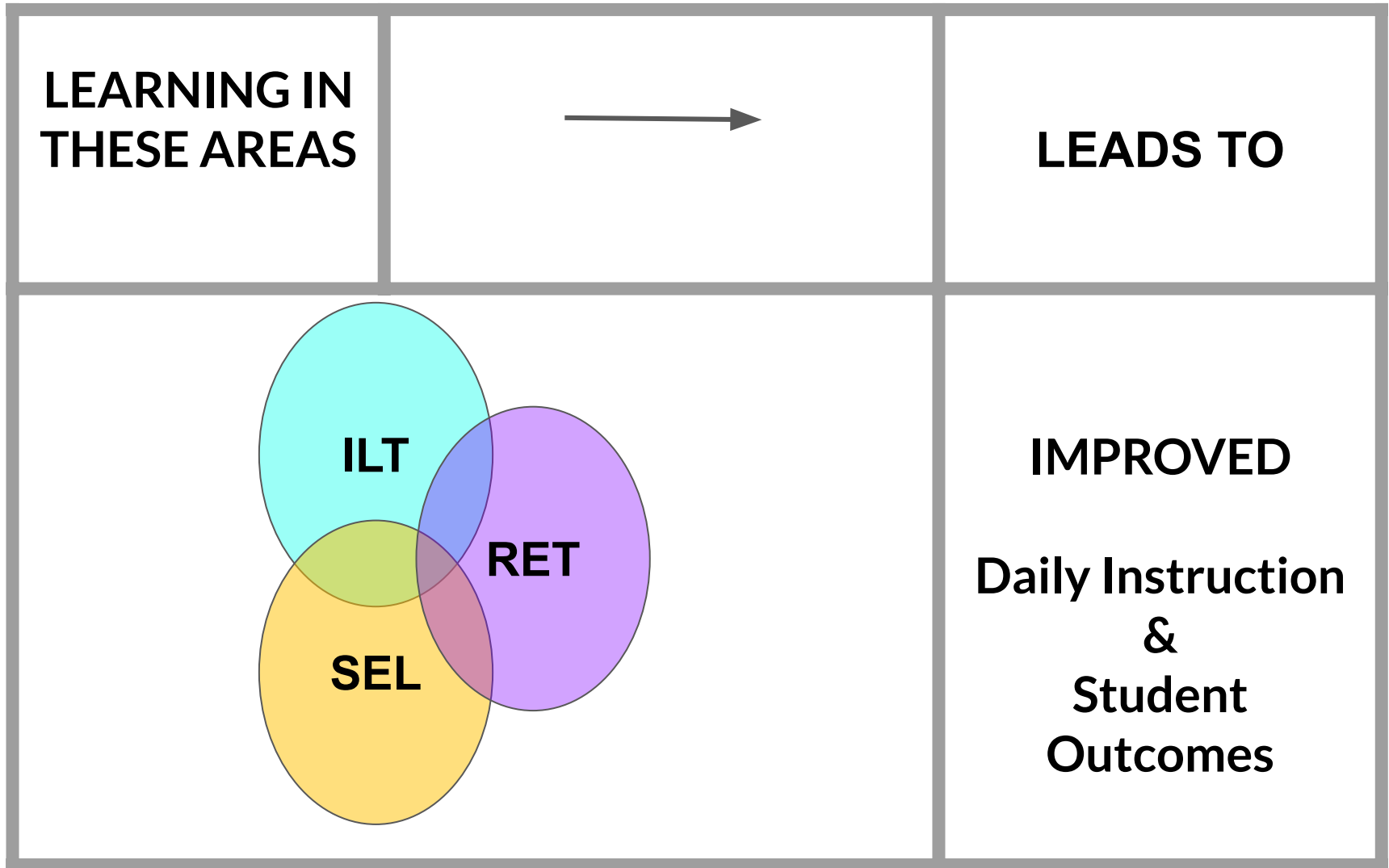
By June 2024, 60% of students can identify that they have at least one adult they can talk to about a problem.

Action Plan

Increased Student Attendance: *Maximize partnerships with internal and external stakeholders (student, families, staff and the community) to implement a multi-tiered approach to reducing barriers to student attendance.*

District Objective	What is the strategic, research-based solution you will try? What is the “safe to fail” experiment(s) you will run to support this strategy?	In what way does this strategy advance equitable outcomes for all students and staff ?	How will you leverage the Data Wise Improvement process to monitor your progress? <small>(How, how often, by who?)</small>	Who is responsible for leading the team’s work on this strategy? <small>(Principal, A.P. Instructional Coaches, ILT, Grade level)</small>
<p>Deliver Ambitious Instruction & Effective Supports <i>What is your instructional improvement strategy to achieve your outcome?</i></p>	<p>Creating individual point people for students identified as having been identified in screeners and self-reports as needing instruction or support related to SEL skills and overall SEL functioning</p>	<p>By identifying specific students needing support, we will be differentiating our interventions based on student need rather than providing just one whole-school approach</p>	<p>Bi-weekly SEL check in using data provided by the district at SEL Team meetings</p>	<p>SEL Team, Principal</p>
<p>Effective Staff Learning & Support <i>How will you train and support staff to carry this plan out?</i></p>	<p>SEL Team is identifying targeted SEL competencies aimed at training adults in teaching core skills related to academic organization</p>	<p>By identifying common PD goals related to SEL skills, we are aiming to develop a whole-school approach to a trauma-informed, skill-based SEL platform aimed at improving student’s resilience, problem-solving skills, and increased emotional vocabulary</p>	<p>We are in Year zero of this work; the SEL Leadership team will take this on in draft form in the spring of 2024, with the goal of embedding this PD into our school’s ongoing PD plan for SY2425 and beyond</p>	<p>SEL Team, Principal</p>

2023-24 VLUS: Big Picture



Our VLUS Vision guides what we do.

At VLUS, we are building an anti-racist school. A learning community where:

1. We can thrive as our joyful and whole selves.
2. We believe in everyone's capacity for learning and we design and engage in meaningful work.
3. We are actively dismantling White Supremacy Culture.
4. We connect and learn with each other through relationships.
5. We listen to, hear, and act on feedback: student and adult voices are equally important.

At VLUS we become better together.

Vision for VLUS Learners

LEARN

I meet the **content and skill standards** in my classes.

CONNECT

I treat all people with **kindness**, including myself. I work to make our community a place where **everyone belongs** and I **stand up against injustice**.



TRY

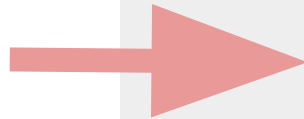
I **persevere** when work is hard. I **organize** my materials and **use my time well**.

GROW

I use **feedback** to **revise** and edit my work.

Pedagogy of Compliance

- Hierarchy of power: teacher wields expertise and distributes content
- Lecture-style instruction, students in rows, teachers carrying the cognitive load
- Rests on invisible norms of dominant culture (quiet, compliant, individualistic)
- Traditional tests, quizzes, and grades



Pedagogy of Voice

- **Democratization of power: teacher and students build knowledge together**
- **Active learning through inquiry, dialogue, projects, simulations**
- **Rests on collective cultures (collaborative, independent, relational) and includes students' cultural references in learning.**
- **Student reflection, standards-based grading, portfolios**

VLUS Social Emotional Learning Team (SEL)

Where we've been

- Well, given that this is a new team, we technically haven't been anywhere just yet
- But, over the last number of years, we have tried multiple different team structures and protocols to help us really get at how to talk about students, staff, challenges, and data-driven

Where we're going:

- Explore our current structures and ways to change the ways in which we identify, talk about, problem solve, and keep data on our interventions

VLUS Race & Equity Team (RET): Jenny and Jo

Where We've Been

- SY 22-23: focus on introspection through Team Learning reflection protocols (all staff)
- Role of RET: prepare for, facilitate, reflect on Race and Equity Team Learning

Where We're Going

- SY 23-24: personal introspection → reflection on practice based on student voice through Team Learning protocols (all staff)
- Role of RET:
 - Collect and prepare student voice materials
 - Identify patterns in student voice data
 - Identify areas of focus for continued professional learning

VLOS Instructional Leadership Team (ILT)

We are in the middle - YEAR 2 - of a three year instructional learning plan.

Student-Engaged Assessment (EL Education)

- Our assessment practices motivate students to become leaders of their own learning.
- Students track their progress toward standards-based learning targets, set goals, and reflect on growth and challenges.
- Students and teachers regularly analyze quantitative and qualitative data that informs goals and instruction.
- Students regularly present evidence of their achievement and growth through student-led family conferences, celebrations of learning, and portfolio presentations.

Why Student-Engaged Assessment Matters

- Motivates Students to Care
- Changes student and educator mindsets about intelligence, effort, and success
- Engages students as leaders of their own learning
- Builds student reflection skills
- Builds a community of collaboration, trust, and evidence
- Strengthens home-school connections

Communicating Student Achievement

Student achievement is communicated in ways that allow students to take the lead in speaking about their own learning.

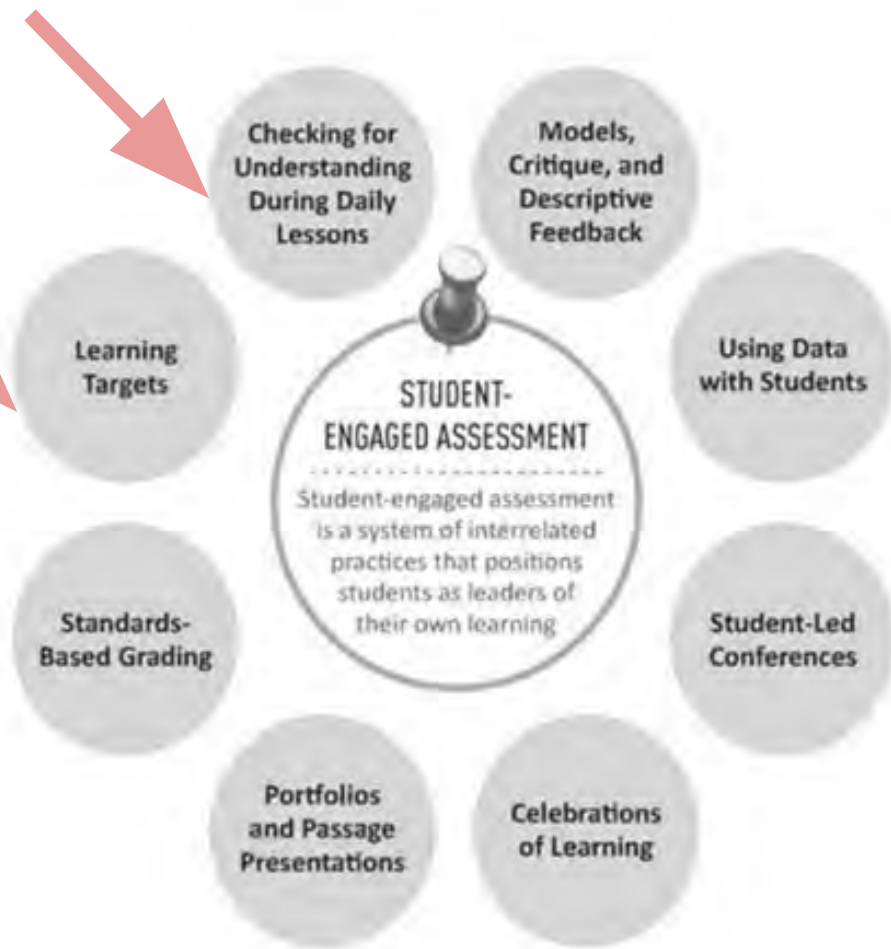
Previous Years: Educators and grade level teams experiment with standards-based grading.

Year 1 & 2: Educators and leaders implement **school-wide standards-based grading systems** that communicate academic outcomes relative to specific required standards.

Years 2 & 3

- Students can articulate what they have learned and speak to their own strengths, struggles, goals, processes of learning, and preparation for college and career success.
- Educators engage with families around standards-based grading.

*Leaders of Their Own Learning:
Transforming Schools Through
Student-Engaged Assessment*



An EXCITING shift toward a focus on instruction...

Moving from school-wide structures to daily classroom instruction and teaching practices.

Teaching & Learning Framework



Design
Engage
Teach & Learn
Reflect



CPS Teaching and Learning Framework

Design: Create cognitively demanding, student-centered learning experiences grounded in measurable objectives, grade-level standards, and knowledge of student learning needs.

Engage: Employ various strategies (hands-on activities, interactive multimedia, real-world examples, scholar choice and autonomy, effective questioning techniques, timely feedback, safe and inclusive classroom environment).

Teach & Learn: Support the application of knowledge and skills and meaningful understanding of concepts... Create opportunities for scholars to perform at grade level or above so that they can be life-long independent learners.

CPS Teaching and Learning Framework

Reflect: Scholars have the opportunity to think critically about their learning experiences, identify what they have learned, and evaluate their progress toward achieving the lesson objectives. Scholars become active participants in their own learning. Educators gain insights into their scholars' comprehension, identify areas that need further clarification or review, and make adjustments to their teaching strategies accordingly. Both scholars and educators reflect on continuous improvement.



Create cognitively demanding, scholar-centered learning experiences grounded in measurable objectives, grade-level standards, and knowledge of scholar learning needs.

Educator Practices	What's It About?	Special Populations
Learning Objective/Target	What will scholars know, learn, and/or do by the end of the lesson?	All scholars benefit from overviews of the learning experience and intentional explanations of what they will learn, be able to do and how they will learn it. Understanding the learning goal will help minimize many unintentional barriers to learning. With clear goals, educators can intentionally plan for all scholars including Multilingual learners and students with disabilities (SWDs) by integrating accommodations and adaptations into the initial design of the lesson.
Language Objective	How will academic vocabulary be used to demonstrate understanding of the learning objective/goals? Which academic vocabulary words will they be expected to know and use in speaking, listening, reading or writing to demonstrate they have met the learning target?	Language objectives support all scholars including Multilingual learners and SWD, to gain access to new vocabulary and improve overall comprehension.
Assessment/Checking for Understanding	How will you know scholars are engaged and acquiring proficiency in learning throughout the lesson? How will you know which adjustments are needed in the lesson?	Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and SWDs benefit from frequent formative assessments and just-in-time adjustments in instruction. Formative assessments/checking for understanding should occur daily and be aligned to learning and language objectives/goals.

2023-24 INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS AREA 1:

Crafting and Using Learning Targets (DESIGN & REFLECT)

Teachers translate required standards into learning goals for courses, projects, units, and lessons in language that students can understand and own.

Students demonstrate their ownership of their learning by articulating the connections between learning targets and the work of the lesson and by showing evidence of their progress toward meeting them.

2023-24 INSTRUCTIONAL FOCUS AREA 2:

Checking for Understanding in Daily Instruction (REFLECT & DESIGN)

Teachers plan opportunities to check for student understanding of learning targets during lessons and analyze student work to inform future goals and instruction .

Students understand what they know and can do at the outset of learning and as they progress toward learning targets.