

Princeton City School District

Empowering each student for college, career and life success

PCSD Instructional Services Update

From the Office of the Associate Superintendent

Departments of . . .

Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

Special Education Services

Student Services

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What a Great Start to the 2018-2019 School Year

We have had a great start to the 2018-2019 school year. With the support of the superintendent and the Board of Education, the district was able to begin the school year with 55 new staff members. This includes teachers and paraprofessionals. With new staff, class sizes are reduced and students are able to receive more direct and individualized attention from teachers and support staff. The district took a proactive approach to hiring by hosting a one-day Interview Symposium in June wherein a team of principals, assistant principals, directors, and teachers interviewed candidates. Depending upon the results of the candidate's interview, they were provided an interview



with the Executive Director of Human Resources and the Superintendent. Based on the results of the second interview, along with positive comments received from reference checks and other on-boarding protocol, candidates were offered the opportunity to come work for the district. A two-day new staff orientation was provided in August for our new staff members. A New Teacher Academy is scheduled quarterly to support new teachers and to provide professional development that focuses on teaching strategies and to continue to orient staff to the *#Vikingdiff*. To ensure that our new elementary and secondary teachers are successful, two half-day professional development

sessions on classroom management techniques are scheduled during the month of October. Butler County Educational Service Center consultants will be conducting the sessions. This continues to confirm that Princeton is still a destination district where teachers want to start and/or continue their career.

PCSD Teachers Are Continuing to Improve Teaching and Learning Through Instructional Rounds

Instructional rounds are beginning to occur at the elementary, middle and high schools for the 2018-2019 school year. This is not a first time instructional practice that is occurring. This practice occurred in past school years and proved to be a successful way to provide quality feedback to teachers to help them improve teaching and learning for students. An instructional round is a practice that looks at classroom instruction in a focused, systematic, purposeful, and collective way. Principals, assistant principals, teachers, learning coaches, and central office administrators will engage in this instructional practice by participating in instructional rounds together. This allows everyone to collectively gather good information from having so many eyes and ears in the classrooms. At the elementary level, one school becomes the host for the day and identifies the instructional areas that will be observed. Instructional rounds were conducted with the Ohio Department of Education Office of Improvement and Innovation on September 19 at Heritage Hill Elementary and Woodlawn Elementary. Instructional rounds were also conducted on October 3 at Evendale Elementary.

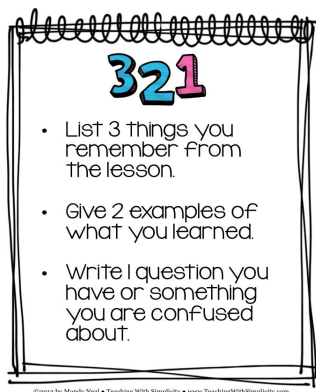
Instructional Rounds

What it is NOT . . .	What It Is . . .
A program	A practice designed to support an existing improvement strategy at the school or system level
An event	A practice that is interactive and woven into existing improvement processes
An evaluation tool	No assessment of individual teachers or schools; separate the person from the practice; focus on the practice; learn about effective learning and teaching
An implementation check	Rounds focus on patterns of practice, predicted results, not compliance with directives
Training for supervision	Rounds focus on collective learning, rather than individual supervisory practice
Passive	A community of practice where we expect to push each other and learn from each other

The SFA consultants provided a list of instructional practices to share with the visiting team at the start of the day and helped frame the observations that took place. Groups of four or five visiting team members observed in five or six classrooms for about 20 minutes each. Evendale Elementary, being the host site, selected the classrooms to observe the instructional practices identified. The most important part of the instructional rounds process is the debriefing protocol where individuals spend time talking about what they saw and heard students and teachers doing. It is an opportunity to reflect on how students were engaged in whole group, small group, think-pair-share groups and other effective strategies that teachers were using. Instructional rounds will continue at the elementary schools and will begin in the middle school and high school during the second quarter.

Formative Assessments, Common Formative Assessments and Data-Driven Decision Making

Teachers continue to use various assessment techniques to determine how students comprehend the instruction along the way. This is called assessment *for* learning or formative assessments. We know that formative assessments truly impact learning. Teachers check for understanding which guides each teacher's decision making about future



instruction. Students also learn how they are performing because it is immediate feedback. Formative assessment is a way that teachers get continual feedback and make improvements to guide their instruction so that learning takes place. Remember to use a variety of assessment activities and change them up frequently to stimulate student learning. Ensure that each assessment you give is an opportunity for students to gain awareness and understanding of the instruction being taught, for you to modify the instructional method you're using and modify your lesson plans if needed. Below are examples of formative assessments strategies that are used by classroom teachers at the elementary and secondary schools.

- Think-Pair-Share
- One Minute Papers
- 3-2-1 Countdown
- Peer Interviews
- Exit Cards
- Thumbs-Up/Thumbs Down
- Exit/Admit Tickets
- Strategic Questioning

In addition, the link below provides a list of other formative assessment strategies, definitions and examples.

[Formative Assessments Strategies, Definitions and Examples.](#)

Along with formative assessments, all elementary and secondary content teachers are implementing **common formative assessments** (CFA) and collecting ongoing and common data to analyze student learning and gain instructional information about their own teaching. By implementing common formative assessment, teachers receive timely teacher/student feedback on student learning and are able to determine curricula alignment to the Ohio Learning Standards.

Common formative assessments are formative (which means that they occur during the learning process) and they assess specific learning targets. This summer, teacher teams designed their own common formative assessments and wrote items to specifically match the learning targets they want to measure while they are teaching that content. That means that before teachers move on to new content in the unit, they are able to correct misconceptions students might have that could impede them learning related concepts. When CFAs are designed by teacher teams they can assure that the items are aligned with the learning targets that are being taught and they can make sure that there is a level of rigor for expected results. From CFA data, teacher teams and subject area departments must have reflective and collaborative discussions in their child study meetings, building leadership team (BLT) meetings and/or professional learning communities (PLC). Discussions must lead to making data-driven decisions to improve instructional practices based on student growth and achievement. In addition, data from CFA should provide teacher teams with information about which students need additional support or extension and allow teachers to examine the effects of their instruction, and gain insight as to which instructional strategies yield high levels of learning. Finally, the data must be used to provide frequent feedback to students that they can use to adjust their own learning strategies. The district has also purchased online assessments that are being used.



Examples of the online assessments that teachers are using are: Study Island; GradeCam; ALEKS; TenMarks; and iReady. It is very important that the items match the learning target being taught and that there is a level of rigor as well. Jakicic, C., *What Are Common Formative Assessments Anyway?* (2017) <http://allthingsassessment.info/2017/10/31/what-are-common-formative-assessments/>

New Process for Requesting Professional Development / Professional Development Calendar

Research has confirmed that the most important factor contributing to a student's academic success in school is the quality of teaching. Princeton is fortunate to have five professional development days throughout the school year and staff members are able to attend professional development outside of the the district. We know that for teachers and school leaders to be effective, they must be exposed to continual learning to expand their skills and knowledge in order to implement the best educational practices. With that said, all information regarding upcoming district professional development will be communicated through the district's professional development calendar located on the Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment webpage. You can also access the professional development link by clicking on the Staff Portal link. The staff portal is located on the right-hand side on the website. Once there, you can click on the "owl" icon. Upcoming District schedules and session agendas will be located there as well as the district professional development calendar. In addition to the calendar, the links containing professional development forms are there as well.



Equity: What Is It and What Does It Look Like?

Equity. What is it and what does it look like? Hopefully, these are questions that you've been asking and having discussions about in your TBT meetings and BLT meetings. Equity in education today is more than just the availability of an education; it's recognizing the fact that some students require more support than others in order to learn and be successful. In order to achieve equity, all students, not some of our students must receive the supports and resources they need to reach their academic potential and become college and career ready for life success. Equity for all students is emphasized in the district's strategic plan under **Goal II: Performance** - Learning will be student-centered, and each student will be challenged to their highest potential, regardless of their starting point and **Goal III: Personalization** - We will celebrate diversity and respect the cultural, academic, and social / emotional uniqueness of each student, and provide them with equitable access to learning opportunities for ongoing and future success.



If we believe in achieving these goals, we must acknowledge the uneven playing field that exists for many of our students: ELs, students with special needs, unconscious bias toward students of color, students experiencing trauma, students experiencing homelessness or poverty.

As teachers and school leaders, the focused questions we must ask are: (1) Can we ensure that all students are receiving high quality instruction through monitoring and support to make certain that there is equity in instruction for all students?; and (2) Can we ensure that all students including English Learners, students with disabilities and students with economic challenges are able to perform to the best of their ability given the support mechanisms that are in place? When pondering these questions, I would say we are absolutely moving in the right direction to ensure that all of our students are prepared for college, career and life success.

In the article titled *Equity vs. Equality: 6 Steps Toward Equity*, Shane Safir shares six steps toward classroom equity. He indicates that teachers should (1) know every child as a unique individual, (2) celebrate their potential, (3) recognize their challenges coupled with a commitment of high expectations for every child's success, (4) become flexible by realizing you may make changes to your plans to individualize instruction, (5) make it safe to fail by teaching students to understand the concept of Growth Mindset teaching them that failure is just another form of data that helps you know what instructional strategies you need to provide so that learning takes place, and (6) use culture as a resource by not being culturally blind but valuing and affirming all forms of differences. Safir, S., *Equity vs. Equality: 6 Steps Toward Equity*, (2016).