The Teaching/Learning Cycle

The Cherry Creek Instructional Framework

Plan, Teach, Monitor, Adjust
The Cherry Creek School District’s Mission — “To inspire every student to think, to learn, to achieve, to care” — is a compelling charge. To fulfill that mission we must ensure that all teachers have the knowledge and skill to teach the current and future student population, who will be living and working in a global economy. That calls for instruction focused on preparing students for the 21st century and beyond. As a district, we are committed to giving all teachers the tools they need to work effectively with every student so that each child can reach his/her potential.

The Cherry Creek Instructional Framework provides the foundation for instructional excellence. It outlines the most essential components of teaching and learning while giving teachers the flexibility to exercise their professional judgment to meet the needs of individual students.

The document is designed for teachers and supervisors to use together to identify areas for professional growth and development for those teachers new to the profession and veterans alike.
Teaching and planning have always gone hand-in-hand. So, what’s the big deal now? The shifts in the expectations for student learning in all content areas, an expectation of mastery of standards as opposed to surface understanding of topics or ideas, has increased the importance of strategic, intentional instructional plans. Instructional planning needs to include teams of teachers to ensure the instructional plans are responsive and intentional for all learners. Effective instructional planning includes 3 layers of detail: curriculum mapping, unit planning, and lesson planning. *(Quality Standard I & III)*

**Curriculum Mapping**

**Guiding Question:**
What is the roadmap for the entire year?

Answers the question, “How is this year going to go?”

Enables a team of teachers to reflect on where possible holes in curriculum exist and how cross curricular learning can support deep understandings in multiple content areas

Outlines time of the year specific units of study will take place

**Unit Planning**

**Guiding Question:**
In this unit, what will students learn, how will we know they learned it, and what learning experiences do they need to get there?

Determine what will students understand, know, and be able to do

Determine how will students demonstrate what they’ve learned

Determine intentional instructional sequence aligned to student outcomes

**Lesson Planning**

**Guiding Question:**
What instruction and practice do students need that will move them one step closer to the learning outcomes of the unit?

Plan for differentiated instruction with greater specificity

Identify resources and design tasks that promote creativity, innovation, collaboration, and critical thinking

ESSENTIALS OF THE TEACHING/LEARNING CYCLE
To be a teacher means to combine the art of teaching with the science of teaching. As an artist, a teacher must be fluid and responsive to students, create enjoyable learning experiences, and know and adapt to individual students and classes. At the same time, a teacher can attend to the science of teaching, by staying abreast of effective instructional strategies, collaborating with other teachers, and committing to the learning of all students. *(Quality Standard I, II, & III)*

**Guiding Question:** How do I structure my classroom rituals and routines to support student learning?

- **Establish a culture of learning**
  - Create an environment of intellectual and psychological safety
  - Promote culturally responsive/sustaining instruction
  - Value diversity

**Guiding Question:** How do instruction and daily learning opportunities support student learning?

- **Deliver rigorous instruction**
  - Differentiate instruction aligned with standards
  - Design challenging lessons that are adaptable for a variety of learners
  - Hold high expectations for learning and achievement of all students

**Guiding Question:** How do I ensure that all students are learning and achieving?

- **Engage students in learning**
  - Use quality resources and a variety of learning tasks
  - Plan for students who need support and/or extensions
  - Provide targeted feedback throughout the learning process
Monitoring involves both the teachers reflection on practice and an understanding of their students’ achievement. Asking, “How do we know what students are learning?” is at the heart of this work. There is an intentional connection between the teacher’s professional goals and student monitoring. Learning targets are defined during planning and instructional goals clearly link back to the big ideas represented in the standards.

“If we think of our children as plants... summative assessment of the plants is the process of simply measuring them. The measurements might be interesting to compare and analyze, but, in themselves, they do not affect the growth of the plants. Formative assessment, on the other hand, is the garden equivalent of feeding and watering the plants - directly affecting their growth.” (Clarke, Shirley, 2001) (Quality Standard III and IV)

Why Monitor?

Guiding Question:
What is the purpose for utilizing various formal and informal assessments?

To know what students are learning
To track student progress
To drive instructional practice decisions

Monitor When?

Guiding Question:
When is the best time to assess?

In the moment
In preparation for tomorrow’s lesson
In the midst of a unit of study

Monitor What?

Guiding Question:
What can I monitor to guide my instruction?

Student engagement
Evidence of misconceptions and struggles
Student progress
It is essential that teachers demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness by adjusting to meet student needs. Based on knowledge about students and analysis of student learning evidence, instruction is redesigned to guide students to mastery. *(Quality Standard III & IV)*

**Why adjust?**

**Guiding Question:**
What can indicate a need for adjustment?

- Analysis of student work
- Feedback from students, parents, colleagues
- New professional learning

**Adjust when?**

**Guiding Question:**
At what point in time should adjustments be made to maximize learning?

- In the moment
- In preparation for tomorrow's lesson
- In the midst of a unit of study

**Adjust what?**

**Guiding Question:**
What can I adjust to ensure that I am meeting the needs of all students?

- Differentiated instructional approach/teaching strategies
- Resource selection
- Teacher behaviors
- Groupings
- Response options/assessment formats

*Plan  Teach  Monitor  Adjust  Plan  Teach  Monitor  Adjust*
Why a framework? Research tells us it works!

The Cherry Creek School District’s Instructional Framework is grounded in the principles of classroom practice, climate and organization that research has demonstrated are the most effective methods in increasing student achievement.

- According to the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McRel), a nonprofit education and research organization based in Denver, Colorado, one hallmark of successful school districts is the use of a broad but common framework for classroom instructional design and planning that provides a common instructional language or vocabulary, and leads to the consistent use of research-based instructional strategies in each school.

- Other researchers agree — successful schools and school districts promote instructional coherence or an instructional framework that specifies and aligns the content, tools, methods of teaching and assessment (Newman, Smith, Allensworth, and Bryk, 2001).

- Researchers at McREL and other institutions have identified a number of specific instructional practices that lead to higher student achievement (e.g., *Classroom Instruction that Works*). This framework incorporates those practices and links them to the Cherry Creek Teacher Observation Record.

- Using a common instructional framework is consistent with the findings of an in-depth self assessment conducted by the Cherry Creek School District during the 2006–07 school year. That process calls for the district to develop a more coherent and intentional approach to instruction and curriculum. This document was revised in 2014 to reflect current research and updated standards.
"Adopting a broad but common framework for classroom instructional design and planning, using common instructional language and consistently using research-based instructional strategies in each school are the hallmarks of high-performing school districts."

— McREL, a nonprofit education and research organization based in Denver