

Office of Curriculum and Instruction
2016 - 2017 Lackawanna City School District
Instructional Priorities

The LCSD Instructional Priorities set the annual instructional focus for the District and foster conversations about school practice.

Instructional Priorities help schools reflect upon and refine their practice in order to strengthen the integration of district-wide initiatives to prepare all students, including Students with Disabilities and English Language Learners, to graduate college and career ready. Implementation of the expectations will support schools in building coherence among their culture, structures, and instructional core and support them in reaching the benchmarks for school quality described in the Diagnostic Tool for School & District effectiveness.

Surveys and conversations with teachers, school leaders, and support staff have helped to define the following principles that anchor the 2016-2017 LCSD Instructional Priorities:

- Schools need time to reflect upon and refine their practice, including the selection of Essential Standards for every grade level and course;
- Selecting only a few high-leverage actions to deepen the ongoing work of preparing students for college and careers helps schools make sense of multiple initiatives, including implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards, DTSDE Rubric, Collaborative Culture and Expansion of our "Fab-Five" instructional strategies.
- Using a common language and building a shared understanding of high-quality instruction enhances LCSD educators' ability to communicate and align resources within and across schools.

Summary of the 2016-2017 LCSD Instructional Expectations

In the 2016-2017 school- year, schools will reflect on previous years' successes and areas for growth in order to create and refine Title I, LAP, and PD plans that best support their students. **Specifically, the 2016-2017 LCSD Instructional Priorities call on each building to:**

1. **Ensure knowledge of students and their work**, and use this knowledge as the starting point for planning; Data Driven Decision Making
2. **Identify "Essential Standards"** for every grade level and course.
3. **Develop a culture of collaborative professional learning** that enables school and individual development.
4. **Develop learning targets** to ensure all students have the underlying skills to master grade level essential standards.

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Knowledge of Students

In 2016-2017, school leaders will ensure that systems and structures are in place so that each student is known well by at least one staff member. It is the responsibility of that staff member - or a team - to be able to clearly articulate the student's development, including how a student is progressing as an individual, as a learner, and as a member of the community in order to coordinate student support services and to advocate for that student.

The work of schools is to support students to demonstrate academic and personal growth, achieve at their highest levels, and be afforded opportunities for college and career participation. The success of that mission depends on a school's ability to know its students well. All students should experience rigorous instruction that is aligned with school-wide goals for preparing students for success in college and careers. It remains the responsibility of the classroom teacher to know how each of his or her students is progressing towards mastery of the content and standards. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that each student's academic and social-emotional development and progress toward meeting the benchmarks for college and career readiness are well known and addressed. Schools will strategically align their work, including their instructional focus, professional learning, and related supports based on regular assessment of student strengths and needs.

Identify Essential Standards

In order to ensure a rigorous, coherent curriculum that allows all students access to grade level content, teachers will work together to identify Essential Standards for all grade levels and courses.

The criteria for selecting the Essential Standards will be:

1. Endurance: Will this standard provide students with knowledge and skills that will be of value beyond a single test date?
2. Leverage: Will this standard provide knowledge and skills that will be of value in multiple disciplines?
3. Preparation for the next level: Will this standard provide students essential knowledge and skills necessary for success in the next grade or level of instruction?

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Culture of Collaborative Professional Learning

As a key element of professional learning, collaboration supports both teacher and student growth. It is the collective responsibility of all school members to engage in professional collaboration that serves the needs of their students. The culture of reflecting on and refining practice to drive the work within schools builds upon previous years' expectations. Collaborative professional learning among school leaders, staff, families and communities increases the impact of strong instruction. In 2016-2017, schools will refine and develop systems and structures that foster collaborative professional learning in support of their instructional foci and identified areas for teacher and student growth.

School teams that work together to study and implement prioritized instructional practices have a strong impact, not only on student learning, but on their own professional learning. Professional collaboration can happen in a variety of ways, including:

- Colleagues from similar content areas or grade levels meet to look at the standards and to coordinate when each standard is addressed in the year;
- Teachers engage in professional development and then bring instructional strategies back to vertical and horizontal teams;
- School leaders support teacher' reflection on their practice and development of pedagogical strengths based on identified areas for growth by providing professional learning opportunities, facilitating visitations, and modeling a commitment to their own learning goals and strategies;
- Targeted intervention teams (IIT and/or PBIS), comprised of administrators, teachers, and other staff regularly analyze relevant screening and diagnostic data, student work, and observation notes to develop targeted interventions and engage in ongoing process monitoring protocols.

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- Throughout the year, schools will analyze multiple sources of information to assess the impact of professional learning and inform the refinement of collaborative structures and practices. The impact of this collaboration will be seen in classroom practice and related student work.

Develop Learning Targets

Unlike instructional objectives, which are about instruction, derived from content standards, written in teacher language, and used to guide teaching during a lesson or across a series of lessons, **learning targets** frame a lesson from the student point of view. A learning target helps students grasp the lesson's purpose--why it is crucial to learn this chunk of information, on this day, and in this way. Learning targets written in a student friendly way, often are posted beginning with the words "I CAN..."

For example, if you own a global positioning system (GPS), you probably can't imagine taking a trip without it. Unlike a printed map, a GPS provides up-to-the-minute information about where you are, the distance to your destination, how long until you get there, and exactly what to do when you make a wrong turn. But a GPS can't do any of that without a precise description of where you want to go.

Think of shared learning targets in the same way. They convey to students the destination for the lesson—what to learn, how deeply to learn it, and exactly how to demonstrate their new learning. The intention for the lesson is one of the most important things students should learn.

No matter what we decide students need to learn, not much will happen until students understand why they are supposed to learn during a lesson and set their sights on learning it. Regardless of how important the content, how engaging the activity, how formative the assessment, or how differentiated the instruction, unless all students see, recognize, and understand the learning target from the very beginning of the lesson, one factor will remain constant: The teacher will always be the only one providing the direction, focusing on getting students to meet the instructional objectives.

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The students, on the other hand, will focus on doing what the teacher says, rather than on learning. Students who don't know the intention of a lesson expend precious time and energy trying to figure out what their teachers expect them to learn. And many students, exhausted by the process, wonder why they should even care.

Although teachers derive them from instructional objectives, "I CAN" Statements differ from instructional objectives in both design and function. Instructional objectives are about instruction, derived from content standards, written in teacher language, and used to guide teaching during a lesson or across a series of lessons. They are not designed for students but for the teacher. An "I CAN" Statement, on the other hand, frames the lesson from the students' point of view. A shared learning target helps students grasp the lesson's purpose -- why it is crucial to learn this chunk of information, on this day, and in this way. Students can't see, recognize, and understand what they need to learn until we translate the learning intention into developmentally appropriate, student-friendly, and culturally respectful language.

In 2016-2017 teachers, with support from district and school leaders, will continue to develop and refine learning targets to ensure all students have the access to meet grade level Essential Standards.