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Cheatham

Elementary School

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Desert Meadows School

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Laveen

Elementary School

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Maurice C. Cash

Elementary School

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Traditional School

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What are the challenges associated with implementing standards-based assessment, instruction, and reporting to promote student mastery of academic standards in K-3?

- Lack of consistent/constant definition of what constitutes “mastery”
- Student motivation
- School-Family connection (including the understanding of traditional letter grades versus standards-based reporting)
- Lack of adequate funding for initiatives and reforms
- Lack of time and/or funding for common planning and collaboration
- Teachers who have not received adequate preparation in their college programs to meet the realities and demands of today’s classrooms
- Teachers who rely on textbooks for page-by-page instruction and not as supplemental resources for teaching to the standards
- English Language Learners who are required to perform at the same level as regular education students to meet State and Federal benchmarks
- Special Education Students who are required to perform at the same level as regular education students to meet State and Federal benchmarks
- Half-day Kindergarten/Public perception of Full Day Kindergarten as social skills and not academic
- Legislation, such as mandating every district consider 30 minutes of instructional time be channeled to structured and purposeful recess for kindergarten programs and grades 1 through 5
- Lack of time and funding to implement Professional Learning Communities
- Lack of time and funding to implement effective Professional Development
- Development of Formative Assessments
- Changes in the State Standards
- Changes in State assessments
- Test-based accountability
- Covering a full year curriculum in three quarters due to State testing in April
- Laveen: hyper-growth of district resulting in 85% of the teachers being within their first three years of teaching (inexperience; providing mentors)

How can these challenges be effectively addressed?

State and Federal Level:

- Curricular coherence to make sure reforms work together (standards, assessment, instruction, and professional development)
- Growth measures and value-added models to measure student growth
- Address the inequities among schools in resources, the needs of the students they serve, and the qualifications of the teachers and leaders they are able to attract and retain
- Career academics and other occupational-themed programs to improve student motivation
- Set ambitious, but realistic, targets for teaching and learning

- Use multiple measures of reading and math progress (such as portfolios along with standardized tests; measures of academic growth beyond reading and math; indicators of school climate and non-academic goals; tracking of progress for subgroups)
- For AYP, consider a compensatory model, where strengths can offset weaknesses, rather than the current conjunctive model in which failing in any one area equates to automatic school improvement
- Continue the Tier System for School Improvement started this past year
- Move State testing to the end of the year
- Accurately and fairly assess English language learners and students with special needs
- Create a clear description of the knowledge/skill represented by the assessment so that teachers can have an understanding of the cognitive demands required for student success

District and School Level:

- Intensive Learning Time, including identifying and eliminating wasted transitional minutes
- Identify and eliminate activities that have no real academic value (non-monitored Sustained Silent Reading, word searches, coloring, etc.) and make all activities structured and purposeful
- Make students an active part of the learning process through the use of peer teaching, peer coaching, and peer remediation, thereby increasing teacher effectiveness and student mastery

What are some of the ways in which your district is currently implementing standards-based assessment, instruction, and reporting to currently address educational reform with a focus on student mastery of academic standards in grades K through 3?

- Data Analysis (for test scores, instructional practices, teacher practices, and district standards); the use of objective data to make needed reforms and to direct instruction, including enrichment and remediation
- Extended the school day from six and a half hours to seven hours, K-8
- Partnership with the Center for Teacher Success for the development of Curriculum Maps
- Curriculum Maps written at Bloom's Taxonomy higher levels
- Unit Planning/Lesson Planning/Assessment Development (summative, formative, and pre-assessments)
- Professional Development and resources aligned to teaching the standards
- Differentiated Instruction
- Research-based programs (Study Island)
- Research-based practices (Active Student Engagement/Kagan Cooperative Learning)
- Progress Monitoring (AIMS-Web)
- Formative assessments (ATI/Galileo)
- Benchmark assessments (ATI/Galileo)
- Response to Intervention (RtI)
- Instructional Coaches (general education, technology integration, and the English Language Development model)
- Professional Learning Communities/Collaboration
- District initiatives (Curriculum Cabinet, Instructional Leadership Team, Instructional Coaches)
- Targeted tutoring (during the day and extended day)
- Comprehensive training
- Goal Setting by administrators, teachers, and students
- Data assemblies for students and parents

What kinds of data from your standards-based systems are being utilized to facilitate decision-making related to educational reform?

- Informal Observations (tracking of general expectations, student engagement, and cooperative learning) by site administration as well as weekly informal observations by the superintendent, the human resources director, and each academic services administrator
- Anecdotal data
- Classroom-based pre-assessments
- Formative assessment data (versus post mortem summative assessment data)
- Quarterly benchmark assessment data

What kinds of outcomes are occurring as a result of your locally designed initiatives?

- Increase of Intensive Learning Time, including identifying and eliminating wasted transitional minutes (start/end of day, before/after lunch and specials, transitions between subjects)
- Increase of rigor and expectations due to an increased awareness of the cognitive demands of the grade level performance objectives
- Increase in instructional accommodations (meeting the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners through the use of think-alouds, modeling, visuals, and manipulatives; teaching key vocabulary and assess prior knowledge; implementing cooperative learning methods)
- Common understanding among the parents, students, and teachers
- Increase in student achievement on AIMS
- Understanding and use of backwards planning
- Structured activities with purpose (and identifying and eliminating activities that have no real academic value, such as word searches, non-monitored SSR, coloring, etc.)

What are some of the ways in which the ADE and other stakeholder groups and organizations within Arizona can support and help strengthen your local initiatives?

- Continue the Tier System for School Improvement
- State and Federal accountability that is supportive of improvement rather than punitive
- Create performance objectives explicitly linked to well-designed content standards and curricula
- Produce learning progressions and assessments that measure both content knowledge and higher-order, problem solving skills
- Accurately and fairly assess English Language Learners and student with special needs
- Expand the availability of technology
- Develop valid and useful measures of classroom teaching and learning practices

What recommendations might you have for school districts who are implementing or in the process of implementing programs, instructional improvement systems, and strategies for meeting local and federal educational reform initiatives?

- Ownership/Support from all stakeholders, and continually involve stakeholders
- Capacity building
- Be systematic: align curriculum to the standards; provide resources and training to teach the standards; use formative and summative assessments to monitor progress; analyze data to direct instruction, including enrichment and remediation
- Keep the focus on student achievement (socially, emotionally, and academically)
- Continually monitor the progress to identify areas of growth and areas to target energies