Framework for Improving Teaching and Learning

The purpose of this instrument is to provide a research-based framework for quality conversations around the practice of teaching for improved student learning.
Instruction

How are instructional strategies matched to content and student needs?
• Alignment with standards and indicators is evident
• Teachers have a repertoire of strategies and know when to use them
• Teachers use previewing strategies and building prior knowledge
• Teachers can articulate how strategies match content and student needs

How do teachers check for evidence of student understanding?
• Appropriate frequency is evident
• Teachers check broadly across the class
• There are a variety of strategies for checking
• Teachers use the information to make dynamic instructional decisions
• Student thinking is visible, public and shared

How do students show they understand the learning goal/reason for the activity they are doing and what their work should look like?
• Students show understanding of lesson’s purpose through many means: writing, articulation and actions
• Students can articulate quality work

What evidence do you have that students self-monitor their own learning and set personal goals?
• Students articulate goals and evaluate progress
• Students have access to personal progress
• Students show samples of work that have mastered criteria
• Students describe areas of mastery and areas of need
• Students provide non-judgmental feedback to their peers

How is time used to maximize student learning?
• Appropriate pacing and rhythm are evident
• Instructional time and time on task are protected in the classroom and in the school
• Instruction drives the schedule
• Maximum time is spent on academic engagement
Instruction (page 2)

**How do teachers provide feedback to students about their learning and their work?**
- Feedback is regular and ongoing
- Teachers use a variety of mechanisms

**How do schools use resources to support teaching and learning?**
- Non-classroom-based staff support teaching, learning and problem-solving
- Instructional materials are evident, adequate, relevant, and utilized appropriately
- School leadership teams are focused on instruction
- Time is organized to support student learning
- A feedback loop exists about adequacy and effectiveness of instructional materials

**How do teachers communicate instructional goals and related assignments so students understand them?**
- Teachers match communication to students’ needs and learning styles
- A variety of effective approaches are used
What are the elements/characteristics of highly productive conversations about teaching and learning?
• There is systematic examination of student work
• Non-defensive self-examination of practice exists
• Reaching out to the knowledge base is evident
• Experimentation, analysis, and self-critique occur in groups
• Knowledge-based decision-making occurs

How does collaborative decision-making occur about teaching and learning?
• Structures exist (e.g. faculty administration collaboration committees, quality management councils, instructional councils, etc.)
• Broad participation is evident
• Stakeholder involvement is evident
• There is a focus on evidence of student learning

How is time allocated for important conversations about teaching and learning?
• Time is honored
• Multiple options are available

How does staff share, encourage, listen, and act to examine teaching and learning?
• Conversations about expectations occur
• Experimentation is valued
• Teachers analyze evidence of student learning
• There is group critique
• Staff celebrate successes

How do we show shared responsibility for student learning?
• Reward systems encourage shared responsibility and community, not competition
• Multiple options for supporting students exist (e.g. community programs, mentoring, tutoring, after-school programs, etc.)
• Recognition of student learning across grade levels and across the curriculum is evident

Professional Learning Community (page 2)
What opportunities and resources are in place so that professional learning communities can thrive?
• Faculty meeting time, team meetings, leadership councils, etc., are used
• Space is provided for professional learning community work that is conducive to professional discourse
• Modeling by leaders is evident
• There is access to professional resources
• Peer visitation with reflection exists

How does your school plan for school improvement to create opportunities for student learning?
• The plan relates to data
• There is high involvement of representative faculty and external stakeholders
• All see themselves in the plan; it is meaningful to all
• There is clarity of purpose
• Regular reviews occur over time
• Professional development supports the plan
• Resources support the plan
• There are clear steps for mid-course corrections
• There is alignment with school system goals
• Shared decision-making exists

How do schools and teachers make students feel known and cared about and feel confident about their ability to learn?
• Staff makes appropriate personal connections
• The 3 Key Messages are evident
  This is important.
  You can do it.
  I won’t give up on you.
Planning

What is the evidence that teachers have addressed MCPS curriculum standards and indicators in lesson planning?
• Documents communicate that planning has occurred
• Planned activity is matched to the standards and indicators
• Planning is both long-range and short-range

What is the evidence of flexible, periodic, collaborative planning?
• Planning occurs across grade levels, departments, courses
• Planning occurs by grade levels and courses
• School organization supports time for collaborative planning
• There are common standards for student work

What evidence is there that teachers have planned for student engagement in active learning?
• Students participate in a variety of activities
• There is evidence of student work

How do teachers adapt the plans based on analysis of student performance?
• Evidence of student learning is used in planning, including intervention or acceleration
Expectations: Effort-based Intelligence

How does the view of effort-based intelligence appear in **PRACTICES** in the learning environment?

- Feedback on student work is frequent, specific, respectful and instructional
- There are flexible grouping practices
- There are provisions for re-teaching and extra help
- Student self-evaluation and goal-setting exist
- Grading practices and re-takes demonstrate this
- There is differentiation while maintaining standards
- Staff teaches students how to work smart

How does the view of effort-based intelligence appear in **BEHAVIORS** in the learning environment?

- There is a language of giving help
- Patterns of calling on students reflect this
- Responses to student answers reflect this
- Language of giving assignments reflects this
- Language of response to errors or below-standard work/improvement or above standard work reflects this
- Staff shows tenacity to get students to meet standards
- There are opportunities for reciprocal feedback

How does the view of effort-based intelligence appear in **STRUCTURES** in the learning environment?

- There is a common understanding of high curriculum expectations
- There are common assessments of proficiency that embody high standards
- There are opportunities and access to learning

How does the view of effort-based intelligence appear in “**STAFF TALK**” within the learning environment?

- There is evidence of discussions about getting students to proficiency standards
- There is evidence of discussions about placement, assignment, and program (level to level and class to class)
- Staff is constantly challenging and re-examining beliefs about students’ abilities
**Curriculum**

**What is the evidence that the teacher is teaching the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) curriculum?**
- Student learning experiences link to the MCPS curriculum
- Vocabulary of the curriculum is in evidence
- Exemplars and models of student performance that meet standards of proficiency are in evidence
- Resource materials support MCPS curriculum
- Student work and products can be tied directly to standards and indicators
- Teachers can articulate exactly what part of the curriculum is being addressed

**What evidence is there that teachers are managing the curriculum?**
- A plan for the year, semester or unit is used
- Instruction is paced so that all of the essential curriculum is taught

**What evidence is there that the curriculum focus is maintained when adapting curriculum to student experiences and needs?**
- Instruction of the curriculum is connected to students’ real-world lives and experiences
- Individual learning experiences are based on student questions and ideas and are congruent with the MCPS curriculum
- Extended learning experiences congruent with MCPS curriculum are created for students who achieve early proficiency
- Instructional approach is modified while maintaining curriculum objectives when students need more time and support
Evidence of Student Learning

What evidence are you collecting that indicates students have made progress?
• There is a variety of student work that matches desired outcomes
• There is a variety of data sources and records used to show progress toward proficiency

What evidence is there that student progress is matched to curriculum?
• Student work is aligned with curriculum indicators
• Assessment measures are matched to curriculum indicators

What evidence is there that student progress is based on incremental rigorous goals set for students?
• Self-monitoring and goal setting are apparent
• Communication to parents and community about individual student progress exists in relation to goals
• Teachers communicate that, with effort, students can achieve these rigorous goals