

TITLE: Theory of Action for Change: Aligned Instructional System

A. OVERVIEW

Our Theory of Action (TOA), Aligned Instruction System, is a set of organized coherent strategies designed to bring about dramatic positive improvements in the results of our district and to operationalize the School Board's Core Beliefs and Commitments. An Aligned Instructional System (AIS) clearly articulates how schools and departments are to implement a standards-based school design through an aligned system of:

1. Performance Standards – define what students are expected to know and be able to do and the quality of student performance needed to meet those standards. Based on Florida's Sunshine State Standards, the standards are organized by content area and grade level.
2. Curriculum – presents what is to be taught in each course and grade in order for students to meet the performance standards. Using the Understanding by Design framework, the curriculum has been organized into units of instruction with recommended pacing guides and end-of-unit assessments, helping teachers and students focus on the key questions and big ideas leading to enduring understanding. Model lesson plans for each curriculum unit are being developed to assist teachers in their instruction.
3. Instruction – describes the way in which the curriculum is presented, is focused on the needs of students, and is therefore differentiated because of student's background knowledge and experience, styles of learning, and personalities are all different. In alignment with our curriculum focus on enduring understanding, we emphasize a workshop model which includes direct instruction of content, modeling and coaching its application, and thoughtful class discussions to ensure understanding.
4. Assessment and Analysis – the district uses a number of common assessments to determine the instructional needs of students and to determine effectiveness of district curriculum, instruction, and programs. These include end-of-year assessments, FCAT-like Benchmark Assessments, and end-of-course exams. We also use extensive diagnostic assessments in reading in elementary grades and in secondary grades for students who need to improve reading performance. A management tool called AIDE/MAP helps school leadership teams look at data disaggregated from a number of perspectives to improve their school improvement efforts.

5. Professional Development – includes both traditional workshops at the Schultz Center, especially in literacy and mathematics, supported by regional and school coaches to support teachers in implementing best practices in their classrooms.

All other district operations – Budget, Operations, Technology, Human Resources and Communications – are to be organized to support the aligned Instructional System.

B. THEORY OF ACTION

A complete description of the Theory of Action (TOA) follows:

Preamble

We, the Duval County School Board, do hereby set forth in this document our Theory of Action to effectuate the commitments in our statement of Core Beliefs and Commitments, namely, to create a high performing school district that educates all children to high standards and eliminates the achievement gap. This Theory of Action will provide a framework to drive forward and align goals, strategic plans, policies, budgets, and administrative actions. Over time, we believe it will transform the culture of Duval County Public Schools.

Our Theory of Action builds on our beliefs about how children learn, the conditions that best promote learning, and the policies, management systems, and culture that best promote the commitment and high performance of adults. It also rests on our knowledge of the history and current state of urban education in the United States and the unique circumstances in Duval County Public Schools and the communities it serves. Finally, our Theory of Action springs from our commitment to American democracy and our beliefs about how democratic institutions should interact with and serve the people who own them.

Aligned Instructional System

Our Theory of Action is to implement an Aligned Instructional System. An Aligned Instructional System is a comprehensive theory of action that embraces many partial theories of action, including adequate resources, effective management, small learning communities, highly-qualified teachers, and more. At its heart is our belief that Duval County Public Schools must be re-designed to align its core business of teaching and learning in the most efficient and effective way possible.

In accordance with our Theory of Action, Duval County Public Schools must create a comprehensive, coherent system of curriculum, instruction, and accountability. This begins with the Sunshine State Standards, assessments (FCAT), and consequences (A+), which are directed by the state accountability system in alignment with No Child Left Behind. Building on this foundation, the essential elements of Aligned Instructional System are performance standards using the New Standards Performance Standards (NSPS), a comprehensive and rigorous district curriculum, professional development focused on the curriculum, a comprehensive student information system, formative and summative assessments, appropriate instruction and interventions, and results reported by

child, by teacher, by subject, by school, and district. All other district systems—budget, operations, technology, human resources management, etc.—must be aligned to support the Aligned Instructional system. And using the best change management techniques, district leadership needs to develop a new district culture that embraces the district’s Theory of Action.

The School Board clarifies our intent by expanding on this brief description of the Aligned Instructional System Theory of Action.

- Duval County Public Schools must have a district curriculum that covers every subject for every grade in elementary school and every course in middle and high school. The curriculum must be coherent, aligned, and include recommended pedagogy, teaching materials, and sample assessments, all of which must be available to teachers for easy and timely access. Using data-based decision making, teachers will differentiate instruction to assist students in meeting the standards.
- To teach this curriculum, Duval County Public Schools must have a system for attracting and maintaining a workforce of effective instructional leaders and teachers. Human resource policies, structures, and practices must support this objective. Special focus must be placed on policies and strategies to attract and retain the most effective teachers and administrators in schools with the greatest challenges.
- Duval County Public Schools must have in place a comprehensive professional development system that centers on the curriculum and effective ways to teach it, based on the best evidence-based research. This system will include coaches in the schools, daily monitoring (including observation) of teaching and learning and just-in-time professional development to support teachers in the classroom.
- Periodic formative and summative assessments of student achievement must be conducted, and the results must be disaggregated by classroom, subject skill area, ethnicity, gender, poverty level, disability, teacher, or in any other way useful to drive continuous improvement.
- These assessments will require the establishment of a comprehensive student information system.
- Instruction and interventions by child, by teacher, by subject, and by school must be carefully calibrated, appropriate, and timely.

To further clarify our intent, the Duval County School Board makes clear that the Aligned Instructional System is not envisioned to prescribe all elements of instruction. The intention is that teachers be given freedom to teach based on best practices and

expectations for quality instruction, consistent with high levels of student mastery of the district curriculum. Consistent with this intent, management will, as needed, prescribe required professional development, monitor, assess, and issue directives regarding professional practice, and intervene.

Change Management

The superintendent is responsible for designing and managing the Aligned Instructional System. Pursuant to this, we expect him or her to bring forward policy recommendations and budget proposals for Board consideration. Significant district redesign may be necessary to align all district systems with the instructional management systems.

Establishing and operating an effective, aligned instructional management system is not simply making the current system work better. It is a fundamental change from a loosely coupled to a tightly integrated instructional system. The roles and responsibilities of nearly every adult and nearly every process related to instruction will need to be reviewed and possibly changed. Teachers, administrators, parents, and community leaders must understand and support the Aligned Instructional System. Accordingly, effective change management leadership by the superintendent, supported by a comprehensive internal and external communication system, will be required.

It is the intention of the Board that the Aligned Instructional System as a Theory of Action for change provides a stable, long-term framework for improving student achievement in Duval County Public Schools. However, we recognize that from time to time, based on research and experience, this Theory of Action will need to be revised. While we welcome opportunities to continuously improve our Theory of Action, we are committed to an Aligned Instructional System as a broad path for improving student achievement. We pledge our best efforts to educate the workforce and the public and mentor new Board members so that subsequent Boards will hold constant to this vision.

C. ANNUAL REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually in August.