

Glossary of Terms

Activity-based instruction: Educators have made many attempts to introduce instruction based on tasks or activities. Although the activity-based tasks are useful for instruction, no single activity is likely to be sufficient. A project-based approach, in contrast, defines an overarching challenge and embeds tasks (listening, graphing, identifying features) in a meaningful community project.

Benchmarks: In Philadelphia, benchmarks indicate what students need to know and be able to do by the time they complete elementary school and middle school. The standards and benchmarks are the basis for the development and selection of new curricula.

Block scheduling: Block scheduling, also called "semestering", is a restructuring of the secondary school day into fewer and longer classes, typically four 90-minute periods per day, instead of the usual seven 50-minute periods. In its simplest and most common form, a course that normally covers the subject's entire school-year curriculum is compressed into an intensive half-year. The student takes four subjects in each half-year, for a total of eight subjects per year. Advocates of block scheduling believe that by reducing the number of times each day that students are moving between classrooms, and providing more intense focus, teachers can more easily assure that students have mastered a topic before moving ahead.

Child-centered schools: In child-centered schools, children are empowered to develop responsibility and decision-making skills, to become self-directed, independent learners. Children are active participants in designing their own learning environment, making certain curriculum choices, setting goals and planning activities. The school stimulates students to develop initiative, maturity, resourcefulness, organizational capabilities and social and study skills that will enable them to excel in future educational settings and in adult endeavors.

Children Achieving: In 1995, the School District of Philadelphia, under the leadership of then-Superintendent David Hornbeck, embarked on a reform effort called Children Achieving, toward the goal of ensuring that within a school generation all students would achieve "world-class standards." The key elements of this reform were high expectations, standards, accountability, equity, and supports for students and staff. Early steps in the reform included the development of standards, a performance-based assessment system, and implementation of the first steps in increasing support, including system-wide implementation of full-day kindergarten, increased professional development, and reorganization from seven regions to 22 clusters of K-12 neighborhood schools.

Cluster: In 1996, the School District of Philadelphia was reorganized from seven regional district offices into 22 "school clusters." Each cluster typically consisted of at least one comprehensive high school and the middle and elementary schools in its feeder pattern with a cluster office located in the neighborhood. Clusters were intended to promote teamwork between neighborhood schools, accelerate the reform process and make administrators more easily accessible and responsive to local schools and communities. Most cluster offices were located within schools or existing school buildings, and included staff assigned to professional development, community outreach and liaison efforts with area health and social services. In May 2001, District officials announced that they would dismantle the cluster system created in 1995-96 by then-Superintendent David Hornbeck, as part of several cost-cutting strategies to reduce an enormous operating deficit. The plan calls for reducing the 22 cluster offices to 11 area academic offices.

Cluster leader: In 1996, when the School District of Philadelphia reorganized from seven regional district offices into 22 school clusters, cluster leaders were appointed for each neighborhood cluster office. While the former regional leaders had more responsibility for general operational issues, cluster leaders were expected to focus on instructional leadership and on fostering teamwork among the feeder pattern of schools within their neighborhood.

Comprehensive Support Process (CSP): In Philadelphia, the Comprehensive Support Process (CSP) is a four-tiered process by which the staff within a small learning community

(SLC) come together collaboratively to create an instructional environment that meets the needs of all the students within the classroom community. The process involves regular meetings to discuss problem-solving, classroom practice, analysis of student work/data, instructional assessment and accommodation for whole class, small group and individual students. The process also provides an opportunity to develop, document, implement, and monitor instructional and/or behavioral support plans that draw on resources beyond the SLC on behalf of individual students who are experiencing difficulty.

Constructivism: Constructivist learning theory is based on the view that knowledge is constructed by people; it does not have an objective existence outside the human mind, waiting to be delivered to and imprinted upon us. Constructivist teaching involves creating classroom opportunities for students to test their own understandings of phenomena and to construct explanations that take in new knowledge.

Cooperative learning: Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. Class members are organized into small groups after receiving instruction from the teacher. They then work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it. Cooperative efforts result in participants striving for mutual benefit so that all group members gain from each other's efforts. In cooperative learning situations there is a positive interdependence among students' goal attainments; students perceive that no one group member will possess all of

the information, skills, or resources necessary for the highest possible quality presentation.

Critical Friends Group (CFG): A CFG typically consists of 8 to 12 teachers and administrators who agree to work regularly together to define and produce improved student achievement. CFGs provide deliberate time and structures to promote adult professional growth that is directly linked to student learning. Each group has a coach who has been trained to help the group members focus on how to improve their teaching. The National School Reform Faculty (NSRF), a program of the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University, program sponsors the training of Critical Friends Group coaches.

Curriculum Frameworks: In Philadelphia, academic content standards were adopted and distributed districtwide in Fall 1997. Curriculum Frameworks were later developed to provide more specific examples of what needs to happen in classrooms in order for students to produce work that demonstrates evidence of meeting the standards. Specific Frameworks were created for classroom groupings at the K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 levels. Within each of these groupings, the Frameworks addressed each academic content standard at each grade level and grade-specific content/skills, and also described classroom assessment tools, best practices and recommended resources.

Interactive Math Program (IMP): Interactive Mathematics Program (IMP) is a four-year college preparatory text which was developed by a team of mathematicians and math educators from the University of California, Berkeley and San Francisco State University with funding from the National Science Foundation. IMP conceptually integrates sophisticated statistics and pre-calculus topics with algebra and geometry by embedding these topics in carefully developed large unit problems. To help students solve complex problems independently, IMP utilizes an inquiry-based "math lab" instructional approach.

Family Resource Network: The Family Resource Network is the arm of the School District of Philadelphia which provides non-instructional services and supports to children and families across the city. As a liaison between schools and community health and social service agencies, the FRN supports the mission of Children Achieving by creating an environment where all children can succeed. The goals of the FRN are: to improve students' daily attendance in school; to improve school safety; and to ensure the health of our students; to increase faith partnerships, family and community involvement in the work of schools. The FRN also works to provide support to students with disabilities.

Individual Education Program (IEP): An Individualized Education Program, or IEP, must be written for every child who receives special education services. The IEP describes the child's educational levels and special needs, and also tells what special education services he or she will receive. The IEP is written at an IEP conference. The parent must be invited to the conference, as well as the student if

she/he is over age 14 or if it would otherwise be "appropriate" for the student to be present. Parents may also invite anyone else they choose, such as a neighbor, advocate, psychologist, probation officer, or other person. IEP conference participants must also include a special education teacher of the child, a regular education teacher of the child, and a representative of the district (such as a special education supervisor).

Keystone Schools Program

("Keystoning"): In 1995-96, the School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers agreed to establish a pilot program to address the needs of academically distressed schools. The agreement gave the District the authority to adopt reform measures and replace as many as three-fourths of a school's faculty if student achievement fell below a certain standard. Factors used to determine which school faculty would be dismantled included student attendance, dropout rates and standardized test scores. In February 1997, the Superintendent invoked the Keystone clause to reconstitute two poor-performing city high schools, but the teachers' union strenuously challenged the move. Months later, an arbitrator ruled against the District's plan to impose forced transfers.

Library Power: Library Power is an initiative designed to place school libraries at the heart of educational reform and higher student achievement. Originally funded by a grant from Reader's Digest Dewitt-Wallace and administered by the Philadelphia Education Fund, Library Power has been implemented successfully in 30 schools in the School District of Philadelphia. Strategies include taking steps to: redesign and

refurbish the library; update book and software collections support the school's curriculum and ethnic backgrounds of its students; implement flexible scheduling and independent checkout; establish collaborative planning between librarians and teachers; provide extensive professional development opportunities for librarians, teachers, and administrators; encourage the creation of partnerships among schools, public libraries, community agencies, academic institutions, and parent groups; establish the authentic use of technology as a tool in the research process; and provide a professional librarian and support staff in order to implement the program strategies.

Local School Council (LSC):

In Philadelphia, LSCs are elected to provide advisory and, in some cases, decision-making authority in schools on matters such as hiring, budget and implementation of the school's School Improvement Plan. Made up of parents, teachers, community members, the principal and, for high schools, one student. LSCs set policy and provide leadership to their individual school.

NGA: National Governors' Association

Obey-Porter: The Obey-Porter Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSR), passed by Congress in 1997, gives schools an opportunity to apply for federal funds to help pay for the costs of adopting proven, comprehensive whole school reform designs.

Penn Literacy Network (PLN): is a comprehensive professional development/curriculum enhancement program that is based in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, PA. PLN

provides on-site courses, workshops and mentoring programs to more than 14,000 educators across the United States in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and technology.

Performance-Driven: This term describes the goal to verify that each student is performing at nationally and locally determined levels of competency in order to graduate. It refers to the establishment of an accountability system that focuses on strategies for students to demonstrate knowledge and skill, and answers the question, "How do we know that they know?"

Professional Responsibility Index (PRI): The PRI was an accountability system implemented in 1995-96 as part of the Children Achieving reform agenda of the School District of Philadelphia. The index measures school progress, in two-year increments, toward specific performance targets. The index takes into account Stanford-9 Achievement Test scores and test participation rates, promotion and persistence rates, and student and staff attendance. The PRI was designed to bring every school to high levels of achievement in one student generation (12 years). Individual targets are set for each individual school that take into account the existing level of performance at the outset, and each school is compared against its own baseline performance over time

Project-based learning: In project-based learning, activities are not ends in themselves, but are generated and completed in the service of some overarching goal or problem-solving venture. To the extent possible, students doing project-based learning work in the context of a realistic

simulation of a real-life situation, often with real difficulties to overcome and real feedback to absorb.

Pennsylvania System of School

Assessment (PSSA): The annual PSSA is a standards-based, criterion-referenced assessment. It is used to measure not only individual student achievement, but also the degree to which school programs enable students to attain proficiency of academic standards. Every Pennsylvania student in 5th, 8th and 11th grade is assessed in reading and math, and students in grades 6, 9 and 11 are assessed in writing. School scores provide information to schools and districts for curriculum and instruction improvement discussions and planning.

Reconstitution, reconstituted:

Replacement of some or a majority of the faculty in an academically distressed school.

Rubric: A rubric is an assessment or scoring tool that lists the criteria for how a piece of work will be evaluated by the teacher. For example, a rubric for an essay might tell students that their work will be judged on purpose, organization, details, voice, and mechanics. A good rubric also describes levels of quality for each of the criteria, usually on a point scale. Rubrics help students and teachers define "quality" and make it easier for teachers to explain to students why they got the grade they did and what they can do to improve.

School Improvement Plan (SIP): In Philadelphia, the School Improvement Plan (SIP) is a blueprint for improving academic performance that each school completes annually. Designed to be a living document, the SIP is the product of a school's self-assessment and

collective decision-making. Key to its effectiveness is the incorporation of testing data and other measures of academic performance, attendance and school climate.

School-Community Coordinator (SCC):

School-Community Coordinators are community residents who work with students, parents and school staff to satisfy needs, transmit information, promote mutual understanding and encourage participation between the school and community. The School-Community Coordinators (SCCs) provide home visits, work with students in school and meet with groups of their parents. Out-of-school conferences are held with parents or guardians of pupils on school or self-initiated referral basis. In elementary, middle and junior high schools stress is placed on pupil attendance, basic skills, work habits improvement, behavior and health of the pupils. In high school, accommodation of entry-level pupils, dropout prevention, basic skills, work habits improvement and the pupil's health are stressed.

Small Learning Community (SLC): In light of research that shows that students learn better in smaller, more personal settings, many big schools have divided into smaller groups of teachers and students. These "small learning communities" may use a career theme, such as health or the arts, or an academic area to focus the work across all subjects.

SLC Coordinator (SLCC): Individual in charge of coordinating the activities of the Small Learning Community and functioning as a liaison between the SLC and the principal, as well as the SLC and the community.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

Accommodations for students with disabilities are made only by the student's Individual Education Program (IEP) team. In special education terms, this is commonly known as "specially designed instruction" (SDI). The IEP team is charged by state and federal regulations to make decisions on a student's program, placement and specially designed instruction, as well as if and how a student will or will not participate in state and local standardized testing. The Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act (IDEA), the federal law that directs special education, makes it clear that making accommodations for students with disabilities is NOT intended to give them an advantage or a competitive edge, but rather to "level the playing field."

Standards: The School District of Philadelphia implemented academic standards in 1996, to provide districtwide definitions of what students should learn and what teachers should teach to improve academic achievement. Imbedded in each standard was language that defined, not simply what content would be covered, but how a student would demonstrate their knowledge or skill in regard to that content. The establishment of academic content standards, benchmarks, and performance examples/student work were core components of the District's comprehensive Children Achieving reform agenda:

Standards-based instruction:

Standards-based instruction requires that all students achieve a comprehensive mastery of each subject, based upon performance assessments to document proficiency. The standards in standards-based reform identify what

students should know and be able to do as they progress through school. They are meant to be anchors, aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Within the standards movement is a strong emphasis on educational equity. A standards-based curriculum insures that quality learning is available to every student. Not only are standards intended to make expectations clear and measurable, they also set high expectations for all students.

Systemic reform: Systemic reform refers to the movement to coordinate implementation of standards, improved teaching practices and application of new assessment tools across an entire system, rather than in one school at a time.

Theme-based: Many large schools have divided into smaller groupings of teachers and students, called "small learning communities," that typically adopt a career-based or academic theme around which curriculum is focused.

Teaching and Learning Network (TLN): In Philadelphia, a major component of the Children Achieving reform agenda was the creation of a network of master teachers based in cluster offices throughout the city, whose role was to provide professional development to teachers in the classroom and other locations. The responsibilities of Teaching and Learning Coordinators included coaching and observation of teachers, developing training materials, "training the trainers," and producing ancillary materials to acquaint other school officials, parents, and the public with the new tests.

Urban Systemic Initiative (USI): The National Science Foundation/Urban Systemic Initiative provides teachers with an opportunity to participate in the revitalization of science, mathematics and technology instruction in order to increase student achievement.

Whole-school reform: Whole-school (or comprehensive school) reform covers a diverse set of nationwide and local programs that have in common the assumption that, to bring about measurable improvement, school reform must embrace the whole school. Whole-school reform models require schools to reexamine and change all parts of school life, from attitudes and culture to leadership, parent and community involvement, curriculum, facilities, and, of course, financing. Since 1997, many schools have implemented whole-school reform models with support from \$150 million in federal funding from the Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Act (CSRD).

Work-based learning: Work-based learning encompasses a range of opportunities for students to gain experience with careers through cooperative arrangements between employers and schools. Experiences can include: job shadowing, mentoring, structured work experience, cooperative education, internships, apprenticeships, service learning and school-based enterprises. Employers work with school-age youth to provide structured work opportunities that enable them to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world tasks and ensure that classroom and work activities reinforce each other in ways that are mutually beneficial.