Raising Achievement

Focused Instruction is one of MPS’ key strategies for raising the achievement of all students, closing the achievement gap and preparing students for college and careers. It is a strategy rooted in the belief that all children can succeed in school and that their ability to do so does not depend on race or socioeconomic status.

Put simply, Focused Instruction is about making sure that learning expectations are consistent and high across MPS. It also helps ensure that teachers have the materials, training and time they need to provide all children with rigorous learning opportunities.

To support Focused Instruction, MPS is writing new curriculum guides and unit assessments, improving our analysis of student data, transforming our teacher training and identifying proven strategies to support students who struggle academically and behaviorally. We are proud to be developing this system through collaboration with our teachers.

About Minneapolis Public Schools

Minneapolis Public Schools promises an inspirational education experience in a safe, welcoming environment for all diverse learners to acquire the tools and skills necessary to confidently engage in the global community.
Meeting Every Student’s Needs

Learning Targets
Learning targets are the foundation of Focused Instruction. They are the knowledge and skills students are expected to master by the end of a given unit or course, and they are based on state and national standards. Learning targets appear throughout a student’s lessons and form the criteria that will be used in his/her assessments.

Focused Instruction puts learning targets front and center by establishing common targets across all schools. This helps ensure that we hold students at all schools to the same high standards. It also means that if you move, your child will not see disruption in coursework.

Differentiation
One of a teacher’s greatest challenges is adapting instruction to meet individual student needs. Since not all students come into a class at the same place in their learning, we know it is necessary to differentiate, or tailor instruction uniquely, for every student. Focused Instruction curriculum guides help support teachers in differentiating for students according to their levels of readiness, interests and learning styles.

Using Focused Instruction to Help Your Child

Ask your child what he or she learns each day.
Checking in with your child about what he or she is learning at school is always a great idea. All MPS students should be familiar with the term “learning targets.” Learning targets are the learning goals that teachers set for their students. The learning targets may be for just one day or may apply across an entire unit of study.
Ask your child to name his/her learning targets from the day and explain about the activities that helped him/her meet or exceed those targets.

Talk with your child’s teacher.
Talking with your child’s teacher is a great way to stay informed about what he/she is learning and how you can help your child be successful in the classroom. Through the Year-at-a-Glance (YAG) curriculum maps, Focused Instruction provides parents with an easy way to talk with teachers about what students are supposed to learn in a given class and where their child stands relative to end-of-class goals.

Visit http://tl.mpls.k12.mn.us/tools to find the Year-at-a-Glance maps for your child’s grade. They are available in English, Hmong, Somali and Spanish for grades K, 3, 6 and 9. Other grades will be added over the next two years.

Some possible questions for your child’s teacher:

- How much of the Year-at-a-Glance have you already covered?
- On which learning targets is my child doing especially well? Where is he/she struggling?
- Can you show me assessments that demonstrate my child’s performance in this area?
- What are some resources I can use at home with my child to help him/her improve?

For More Information:


Contact: Tina Platt, tina.platt@mpls.k12.mn.us or 612.668.5300

English Learners: The English Learners (EL) program at MPS is a comprehensive language development program for English learners that supports the development of reading, writing, speaking and listening in English. Focused Instruction provides teachers clear guidance about how to help English learners meet the same high academic standards as other students.

Advanced Learners: MPS believes in providing enrichment and advanced learning experiences for all students. Focused Instruction curriculum is differentiated to provide greater depth, complexity, novelty and/or pacing based on individual strengths, talents and interests of advanced learners and provides teachers with tools and training to meet their needs.

Struggling Learners: Even where classroom instruction is strong, some students need more help than others to be successful in school. Focused Instruction provides teachers with resources to support students who may be behind in their learning. It also identifies programs and strategies that can help students with specific learning needs.

Focused Instruction puts learning targets front and center.