

## WCSD #7 Strategic Design Goals

As a Future-Ready School district within our Future-Ready Wyoming State, Superintendent Balow discussed the need to ensure that each district be ready to build college, career, and military readiness:

“This necessitates integration of new techniques into the classroom to prepare our students appropriately. Our classrooms will need to use digital tools to teach a new tech literacy, increase personalized and competency-based learning opportunities, and foster innovate instruction and learning.”

The overarching goals of implementing Customized Learning in grades K-12, Weston School District #7 are:

**Goal 1--Professional Learning: To build capacity via professional learning coursework for new pedagogical approaches that are consistent with an ideal learning environment.**

Teachers in the WCSD #7 will engage in professional learning experiences, facilitated by Technology and Innovation in Education (TIE), to gain skills and pedagogical strategies to support a more personal and relevant learning journey for students that prepares all students to graduate college, career and military ready. A portfolio of strategy implementation evidenced through student work will measure changes in teacher practice.

Update October 11, 2017: The staff learned about the TIE modules and the TIE Reads online library at a couple of sessions in August and early September. Staff was encouraged to review the choices and also to talk with their building principal or director if they had other learning opportunities that would help them grow in their own journeys toward customizing learning. Based on feedback, the first goal will be to complete a module or an alternate form of learning (as agreed upon by the teacher and the supervisor) and implement some strategies in the classroom by November 15<sup>th</sup>. Additional goals and timelines will be established at a later time. A shared Google drive folder has been established for teachers to share artifacts and principals will log learning sessions with staff.

**Goal 2--Structural Rebuild: To alter and customize traditional school structures and processes to support an ideal learning environment.** The Structural Redesign Team (SRT) will be identified and tasked with the responsibility of developing a strategic plan, with assistance from TIE Learning Specialists, which includes proficiency-based reporting. In order to set the stage for moving to a proficiency-based system, Grades K-12, where quality is the constant and time is the variable, it is essential to move away from a grading system where instructors average scores and generate ABC grades. The traditional averaging of grades across a time period does not ensure student proficiency of each skill, which results in learning gaps that impair a student’s future success. Currently, students are batch processed based on age, not on skill attainment. With assistance from TIE, WCSD #7 will develop a strategic plan that includes a Structural Rebuild that features proficiency-based learning. Other elements of the redesign could include new schedules, calendar, elimination of grade-based organization, etc.

Update October 11, 2017: A team comprised of elementary, MS, HS, and special education teachers as well as leadership and students met on September 6, 2017 to discuss the work of the rebuild team as well as to discuss the “Weight-Bearing Walls” we learned about in the book

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inevitable. The team will work to discuss the walls with the greatest need to review and will develop an action plan for next steps, including building a comprehensive plan draft by February 2018 and a final draft by mid-April for the next two school years. The plan for this year includes a number of activities to build awareness and capacity as well as research.

The team began by brainstorming ideas based on their various knowledge and research as to what Customized Learning might look like. Here are the results of that brainstorming list:

<b>What does customized learning look like?</b>
students working on different tasks
small groups working on different tasks/working in a variety of methods
students may be in the hallway
louder than what you may be used to
working with students interests and passions
5th grader may be working in a 6th grade atmosphere
teacher responding to student needs- not the teacher saying "do this"
collaboration within the group. peer to peer and teacher to teacher
technology engagement.
free flow, not bound by the 30 minutes of a topic
variety of medias
pace and need- no limit
student choice opportunities
focus is on individual needs, not the grade needs (such as 4th grade)
focus on skill bank rather than grading or "passed that class"
teachers are not turning in lesson plans
teachers are adjusting to student needs on a daily basis and teaching what needs to be addressed
more thinking going on /problem solving
owning the learning/ student responsibility
being more innovative ("can we try this")
calm in the face of change
learning is not contained in the walls of the 8 hours of the day at school
sometimes "classes" go into the summer- can get credit for their learning
seeing a 5 year senior would not be out of the question
mindset of understanding that "this is what works for me so that is what is best right now"
don't penalize a kids for geography- options exist outside of their zip code for learning

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focus on skills and competencies versus arbitrary grades

The **Five Levers of to Improve Learning** was discussed (it is part of the TIE Reads library) led us into conversations about structure and practice within the system where we considered the following weight-bearing walls:

Grade levels, students assigned to classrooms, class periods/bell schedules, courses/curriculum, textbooks, paper/pencil, ABC grading, report cards and learning happens in schools.

Based on this work, the team discussed various implementations and processes already in place or being implemented and the following three areas developed as our initial focus for conversation:

Utilize flexible schedule to be responsive to individual learner need	Develop the learning continuum to communicate competencies and facilitate learner ownership	Create grading and reporting practices that communicate learner competency progress
Activity: Gain experience using flexible schedules in elementary and MS	Activity: Review the Standards Evolution from TIE (ELA/Math/SS) to develop a K-12 learning continuum that transcends courses and grade levels	Activity: Build capacity for and establish a common philosophy and vocabulary of grading practices
Activity: Identify concerns with and refine the flexible schedule at the HS	Activity: Create K-12 learning continuums for other content areas	Activity: Implement a pilot for competency-based reporting

At the September 29, 2017 meeting, the team added a board member who participated as an active listener role and added another HS student. The team discussed the three objectives and began conversations around the activities that would need to be implemented to move forward. At that point in the work, the team members expressed their thoughts regarding the pace of the implementation of various elements of customized learning, including concerns regarding time for the adult learners to learn and implement different strategies. The team discussed the benefits and positives of the work thus far and discussed some initial solutions to assist in the work.

The team also discussed the need to build parent/community engagement into the model as part of the activities for each of these areas.

As part of an Assessment training on September 11, 2017, the following recommendations were made from the staff regarding grading and reporting practices that will be discussed as part of Goal #3:

	Recommendation	Recommendation	Recommendation
<b>Practice/Procedure</b>			
<b>1. Grading for Behavioral Issues</b>	Either eliminate grading for behavior, or keep it separate via a method	Create a rubric for "employability points" part of the grade.	

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	such as "employability points"		
<b>2. Incorporating Teacher Expectations and Judgements into Grades</b>	Eliminate character judgement from assessment of student work	Use the standard/skill being assessed to determine proficiency	Judge students based on ability and effort toward standard mastery
<b>3. Using zeros as punishment</b>	Eliminate the 100 point grading scale	Use the standard/skill being addressed to show proficiency (not necessarily the same assignment for each student)	Improvement plans (with team) when needed to come up with an action plan to implement for specific students
<b>4. Using a Point System and Averages</b>	Focus on Proficiency Scales	Look into going into Median scores instead of Mean	Yes on allowing retakes
<b>5. Grading Homework and Other Formative Assessments</b>	Extensive and specific feedback leads to more accurate grades and does not cause completion rates to go down. Fosters reflection and adaptability.	Pre-test. Formative assessment based more on daily work, observation, discussion. Allows students to improve based on feedback and be accountable for growth.	Summative assessments are to provide communication and reporting purposes. Follow through and goal realization are supported.
<b>6. Grading on a Curve</b>	Students grades should not be determined based on other students performance.	Using a "curve" to eliminate teacher error or concepts missed in grading practices is acceptable. Eliminate parts of an assessment that were unclear, and cover the material again.	We find the bell curve model unacceptable because it is making it seem like some students cannot master the content.
<b>7. Extra credit</b>	Giving extra credit skews the meaning of a student's grade, because it awards them for extra effort as opposed to achieving proficiency.	Give a second chance to correct mistakes rather than extra credit to make up points missed.	

**Goal 3--Curriculum Redesign: To build/rebuild path(s) for learning in a mode consistent with an ideal learning experience.** If learning is not parsed out in arranged bits over the course of nine months, then content and curriculum need redesign. Learning must meet learners at their achievement levels, accommodate learning styles, and be relevant, interesting, and culturally appropriate. At its core, a proficiency-based system personalizes learning by allowing students to develop and demonstrate mastery of skills critical to lifelong learning. With assistance from TIE, WCSD #7 will tap a Curriculum Redesign Team to develop a strategic plan that includes a Curriculum Redesign utilizing the statewide LMS and Infinite Campus in order to meet Wyoming Content and Performance Standards.

Update October 11, 2017: As a common thread to being able to consider changes to the weight-bearing walls in the structural rebuild, the work keeps coming back to developing accurate and robust curriculum learning continuums that work to identify the key skills/competencies that are necessary to show proficiency or mastery in a given area. The staff had an introduction on

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September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017 to introduce the “Why” as determined by the Structural Rebuild Team. The next steps have been to work collaboratively with TIE and staff to build WCSD #7 Learning Continuums in K-12 Math, K-12 Science, MS/HS Social Studies, and soon to be K-12 English/Language Arts followed by all of the other content areas. The continuums provide a matrix of skills and levels as well as proficiency scales that articulate what it looks like to master those skills. This work will contribute to our ability to have flexible and self-paced learning while ensuring that individual student needs are met on a daily basis regarding the “What” of learning.

**Goal 4--Learner Agency: To build Learner Agency among students so they develop the capacity to engage strategically in their learning without waiting to be directed.** Building Learner Agency is key to addressing WDE’s aspirations of preparing all high school graduates for postsecondary and workforce readiness. The school district will partner with TIE to build teacher and learner understanding regarding this key factor of student success. Teachers will engage with students to generate baseline data about the status of Learner Agency, and they will measure growth in specific factors at the end of the school year.

Update October 11, 2017: On August 17<sup>th</sup>, the staff worked with TIE representatives to begin building adult and child learner agency. This work is critical in a customized environment as it is the basis for a growth mindset and the ability to see oneself as a learner and own the learning. The three schools worked together with all staff to establish their own learning profiles and build plans to work with students to understand their learning profiles and own their learning process working toward a Learner-Driven system. To date, the various levels have introduced the learner agency idea and collectively will beef up their implementation with students. The goal will be for all learners (adults and children) to identify three areas in which to improve over the course of the year, all leading to stronger learner agency and working toward the Profile of a Learner. MS and HS both have established mentoring groups that will continue to work with young learners to be a guide in the learning process and to develop learning to learn skills that will benefit them in the future.