Observational Framework for Competency-Based Instruction in Kid•FRIENDly Schools

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Central Components

Competency-Based Instruction

- Advancement through curriculum occurs through mastery
- Learning objectives are learnable and manageable by the learner
- The teacher and the learner utilize various assessments regularly throughout instruction

Theoretical Background

The purpose of this theoretical framework is to provide a foundation on which to build a protocol for evaluating the Kid•FRIENDly program. This program, funded by the Race to the Top through the U.S. Department of Education, has the ultimate goal of increasing student achievement through leadership and research-based instructional practices. Competency-based instruction is an important component of the larger Kid•FRIENDly.

The seminal understanding of competency-based instruction can be extrapolated from the foundational work of Bloom (1968) and Keller (1968). Bloom’s model of learning by mastery emphasizes designing instruction around clear and meaningful standards. Students should demonstrate progressive achievement, regardless of prior achievement. This level of achievement would require that instruction change from whole-class instruction to differentiated instruction tailored to the needs of the students. In a practical sense, Keller developed the initial format of self-paced instruction. Students are provided with instructional materials and resources, including time in class. Keller also wrote on the value of assessment and its uses in instructional practices.

Advancement Through Mastery

At its core, competency-based instruction promotes students achievement by encouraging the student to firmly achieve in one respect before moving on to more complex material or a different topic. Clearly differentiated instruction is the most practical tool for this component. It follows that certain aspects would be observable:

- Varied instructional practices
- Student-level instruction
- Individual
- Groups

Learning Objectives

In accordance with frameworks for effective teaching by Danielson (2007) and Marzano, Froniter, and Livingston (2011), clear objectives derived from local, state, and national standards are essential for instructional design and student learning. If competency-based instruction is the prime pedagogical factor, then specific components would be observable:

- Lesson objectives are present and clear
- Students understand the objective of the lesson

Varied Assessments

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<th>Common Activities/Strategies</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Prior Learning Assessment (PLA)</td>
<td>PLA test what students have learned inside and outside of the “sweet spot” related to certain subject matters</td>
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<td>Performance Assessments</td>
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<td>Promoting Student</td>
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<td>“Five Facets of Understanding”</td>
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<td>Demonstration of Student</td>
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<td>Peer Assessment</td>
<td>Peer Involvement</td>
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CBI Logic Model

Next Steps

The goal of this theoretical framework is to guide the construction of an observation protocol. This protocol will be used to evaluate fidelity level of competency-based instruction implemented in Kid•FRIENDly schools. While observational protocols exist for evaluating instruction (Danielson, 2007; Marzano, Froniter, & Livingston, 2011), these protocols do not specifically address or evaluate competency-based instruction. Once developed, the observational protocol would be evaluated for reliability and validity. Ultimately, this observation protocol will serve as a critical tool of the implementation evaluation of the Kid•FRIENDly program.

References
