

A TIME TO ACT: A FRAMEWORK TO ACCELERATE LEARNING

HIGH QUALITY, INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

In April 2021, JerseyCAN released [A Framework to Accelerate Learning](#) through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. This document focuses on one element of the Framework – High Quality, Inclusive Curriculum, Instruction and Training – and highlights New Jersey schools and districts who exemplify promising practices in action.



The Opportunity: Using Strong Instructional Materials and Staff Support to Accelerate Learning

To move past the significant learning challenges created by the pandemic, students need access to high-quality curriculum and instruction; this requires flexibility, differentiation and more inclusive approaches. Additionally, educators need opportunities for relevant professional development to help students succeed. New Jersey districts and schools are receiving significant new funding for evidence-based programs and strategies that center around appropriate instructional materials. **JerseyCAN’s [Framework to Accelerate Learning](#) outlines research-based initiatives, as well as New Jersey-specific policy recommendations, which can help to inform local funding plans.**

New Jersey Districts Leading the Way

The following New Jersey districts and schools promote high quality curriculum and instructional practices and prioritize staff development and training to ensure student success.

Personalized Learning and Investment in Student Understanding: [Logan Township School District](#)

Two years prior to the pandemic, Logan Township leaders implemented the “What I Need” (WIN) initiative to accelerate early literacy skills for elementary students. The WIN block schedule ensures daily literacy support is provided, and iReady data helps teachers monitor progress and individualize instruction (i.e., some students can be remediated during WIN while others receive enrichment). Logan now plans to expand WIN to upper grades to mitigate pandemic-related learning loss and accelerate mastery of grade level content. To address the needs of older students, leaders are adjusting WIN based on teacher feedback, including scheduling changes. During the pandemic, teachers found that taking more time to develop relationships and build rapport with students was critical for personalized instruction in a remote environment. Going forward, Logan teachers emphasize the benefits of slowing down to ensure depth of understanding and meet each student’s needs. They’ve found that taking the time to form one-on-one relationships makes students inclined to work harder and achieve more. ★ To learn more, view this [video](#) and our briefs on [Student and Family Engagement](#), [Effective Resource Allocation for Equitable Systems](#) and [Data for Understanding Student Learning](#). ★

“ We want to really make sure we’re addressing specific needs. Our middle school teachers reported that since the pandemic reduced the amount of time available for ELA instruction, kids weren’t reading enough. Through WIN, they wanted to provide book clubs where kids could be taught skills through choice-based texts. We are never opposed to saying, ‘that didn’t work; let’s try it another way.’ We have to get the feedback from the teachers.”

Kristi Jansen, Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction

Educator Support for Instructional Excellence: [College Achieve Paterson](#)

College Achieve public charter schools strives to provide authentic professional development and rigorous support for the whole school community to maximize effective instruction. Prior to the pandemic, College Achieve sought out new, high quality curriculum with enhanced technology tools with the help of [EdReports](#). During the pandemic, teachers had to adapt to new ways of thinking about instruction to engage with students in a remote environment. Their curriculum made it easier to equip teachers with concrete tools to accommodate hybrid instruction and the addition of virtual tutoring for all students, as well as technology training and access to laptops and wifi. School staff realized parents

A TIME TO ACT: A FRAMEWORK TO ACCELERATE LEARNING

HIGH QUALITY, INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION AND TRAINING

“As educators we know that it’s two-fold, it’s not just students — it’s staff and students. The teacher, as research says, is the most impactful person to student learning in the organizational structure, so we want to continue to offer opportunities to make sure the teachers are their best selves.”

Gemar Mills, Executive Director

needed more support, so leaders developed Parent University. Here, the curriculum ranges from financial literacy to technology training to positive behavioral reinforcement strategies for working with students at home. Through this collaboration, College Achieve is looking to reinvent the ‘new normal’ this fall. ★ View our [video](#) and our briefs on [Effective Resource Allocation for Equitable Systems](#) and [Educator Support and Innovative Staffing](#) to learn more about this inspirational work! ★

Response to Intervention as a Foundation for Success: Mt. Olive Township School District

Leaders in Mt. Olive refer to Response to Intervention (RTI) as their “playbook” both prior to and through the pandemic. The three tiers of RTI ensure differentiated instruction, individualized supports and fully personalized learning for students. This systemic foundation allowed Mt. Olive to implement tailored curriculum interventions throughout the pandemic – not only for academics but also for behavioral support. To do this, the district piloted Personalized Success Plans, which include two academic and two behavioral and wellness goals for each student. This whole-child approach recognizes the essential connection between high-quality social emotional learning (SEL) and academics. Mt. Olive plans to continue these efforts into the summer of 2021 and beyond to further accelerate learning past the challenges of education during COVID-19. Further, Mt. Olive has an Equity Task Force with over 60 stakeholders, which is one of many community groups brought to the table to inform decision-making and communications to elevate student and family needs.

★ View our brief on [Data for Understanding Student Learning](#) to learn more about this incredible work! ★

“Dr. Zywicki brought to the district the recommendation to use the RTI model also for behavioral supports. We know that SEL is critical not just for our students, but for our teachers, and being able to use the model that we have in place for academics in the behavioral space has been really important.”

Kimberley Markus, Executive Director

“As a school, we came together and identified the need to focus on writing with our students – we recognized this could impact all content areas. We took on the mindset that we are all writing teachers and created writing portfolios for every content area, including electives. We’ve learned a lot and continue to improve this model year after year.”

Freya Lund, School Director

Leveraging Feedback Loops to Maximize Success: Paul Robeson Charter School

Leaders at Paul Robeson make a point to engage students, families and staff through regular surveys that inform their use of quality, inclusive instructional programs. During the pandemic, school leaders increased the frequency of these communications to ensure they heard concerns, answered questions and could make quick decisions, such as finding the right balance of live, synchronous and independent, asynchronous class time. In addition, educators have taken an individualized approach to the school’s writing curriculum in response to assessment data. Leaders and staff recognized that reworking the writing curriculum could positively impact all content areas, so they developed a system of writing portfolios for each content class.

Teachers report that student communication and writing skills have blossomed as they practice the mechanics and develop deeper understanding of the subject matter across content areas. ★ To learn more about this work, see our brief on [Effective Resource Allocation for Equitable Systems](#). ★

JerseyCAN applauds these leaders across the state for showing how this work can, and must, be done. Looking ahead, JerseyCAN will support policy and programmatic solutions that will expand these efforts.