



Proud Past, Successful Present, Growing Future

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History of Teaching and Learning Decisions in Glenwood Community School District November 2014

Four years ago, leaders in Glenwood schools began a process of considering new and evolving ways of teaching and learning. A committee of staff members and parents, known as the School Improvement Committee, came together to research the best ways to introduce and teach new curriculum to students. The group looked at five different comprehensive curriculum models. They chose two of these models and brought representatives from the companies to Glenwood for interviews. Ultimately the group recommended GCSD partner with [Curriculum Leadership Institute](#) from Emporia, KS, for this work. The Glenwood Board of Education approved this recommendation, and the partnership began.

The Board then approved the formation of the GCSD Curriculum Coordinating Council. This is a group of parents, community members, school board members, staff and leadership. The CCC guides all teaching and learning work in GCSD. It meets monthly. The Board also approved a [long-range curriculum improvement plan](#) in which curriculum for every subject and grade in GCSD would be reviewed and updated periodically.

This work began with the formation of Subject Area Committees. Teachers serve on SACs, which began working in the 2011-12 school year. Math, business, computer and fine arts teachers were the first to begin SAC work. Teachers met in their subject area committees to talk about and research the things their students need to learn. The fancy word for this is “outcome.” An outcome in geometry, for example, would be that students must be able to find the area of two-dimensional figures. The [Iowa Core Curriculum](#) helped to inform many decisions about outcomes for Glenwood students. Once decisions about outcomes were made, teachers developed the components. Components are the steps students need to take to learn the outcome. Lesson plans and tests (known as outcome assessments) were also written. Materials – books, online resources, etc, - were located and/or purchased. Training for teachers in these new concepts is ongoing.

Then began the work of discovering how to determine if students were learning what they needed to know. Members of the Curriculum Coordinating Council spent hundreds, perhaps thousands, of hours researching and discussing these issues. The group considered the concept of mastery and [competency based learning](#).

The group settled on a Statement of Mastery as a guiding document for this work.

“We expect all students will learn and independently demonstrate mastery of academic outcomes over time. Academic outcomes are described in the Glenwood Community School District’s published curricula. Students will demonstrate mastery through quantitative and/or qualitative measurements and will be evaluated using common outcome assessments and predetermined criteria developed through the curriculum process.

Through core instruction using multiple teaching strategies and differentiation, all students will demonstrate mastery. Students who have met or exceeded mastery will continue learning through activities that will broaden and deepen their understanding. Students who have not mastered outcomes will achieve mastery through supplemental and/or intensive instruction. Time, grouping and methodology are the variables; achieving mastery is the constant. “

Now the question became, how do we measure “mastery?”

The CCC settled on a scoring rubric. A scoring rubric is a set of criteria and standards linked to a component or outcome. It is used to assess how a student has responded to an assignment or a test. Continuing with the geometry example, a rubric can help a teacher determine if a student took the right steps toward finding the area of a two-dimensional. At our elementary schools, students now receive a number on their report cards on a scale from 4 to 1. A 4 means the student is exceeding the expectations of the outcome; a 1 means the student is not meeting the outcome and is not making positive progress toward it. Students at secondary schools still receive letter grades on report cards, based on the scale of “exceeding” down to “not met.”

The CCC made two other decisions, these both in 2013, about homework and test taking. Homework was renamed “work outside the classroom.” In a new policy that was approved by the School Board, homework was redefined as “practice for concepts and skills.”

The official School Board policy is:

“Work assigned outside the classroom as practice for concepts and skills, or as background to participate in the next day’s lesson will not be used in the calculation of a grade on an outcome, component, or a subject. The students’ work will be corrected, feedback will be provided and work completion will be recorded. Students are expected to complete work as assigned in order

to practice essential skills for which students will be held accountable. The record of work completion will be used to help determine a student's "Citizenship/Employability Skills".

Test taking was redefined in the new reteach/reassess protocol by the CCC. Reteach/reassess is a completely new of looking at testing. [This video from teacher Rick Wormeli](#) gives a great explanation of the reasoning behind the practice. The full GCSD protocol can be [read here](#).

This process is ongoing in GCSD. SAC work now touches almost every area of learning in Glenwood schools.